Trapped in Transit: 
Rendering Bodies Subject or Suspect at the Airport

by

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INTRODUCTION

Abstract

The airport is an integral site of both movement and deterrence in the United States. We must consider the increased security and surveillance techniques and technologies that are being produced and implemented in airports, rendering them as ambiguous sites of rights and agency. The purpose of this paper is to grapple with the tension of movement and deterrence within airports today and to center the airport as an important part of security and surveillance studies. The airport is not only a fascinating area of study for critical race and gender theorists because of the disproportionate violence that it enacts on bodies that are rendered “suspect,” but also because there are invisible agents, both human and non-human, that enact this violence. Anthropologist Jason De León conceptualizes human and non-human actants deterring Latin American migrants coming into the US at the desert above the border. An examination of De León and other theorists work will help to re-conceptualize, queer, and re-draw the border at the modern day US airport.

Theoretical Framework

Airport techniques and technologies are intended to ensure efficiency and safety. In doing so, however, they render bodies bare and strip individuals of identity, personhood, and rights. Unseen strategies of deterrence enacted by the state complicate notions of safety and security at the airport through both humans and technology. Yet, how does one give agency to both machines at the airport and the people who operate them? It is imperative to engage critically with these questions because the airport is a defined space of movement, an overlooked aspect of the state, and an ambiguous site of agency.

Although infrastructure may still be thought of as the background upon which humans act, recent scholarship invites one to reconceptualize infrastructure as a non-
human actant. Bruno Latour, a leading theorist in Science and Technology Studies (STS), writes about what he terms as actant-network theory. He urges one to think more broadly about networks of agency to include non-human actors, such as technologies (“mundane artifacts”). In simpler terms, humans are not the only agents in the world; rather, non-humans also have agency. One of the most compelling critiques of actant theory is that it displaces blame for discrimination to non-humans. In doing this, humans are not held accountable for their behavior. However, by re-conceptualizing actant theory to what Michel Callon and John Law term the “hybrid collectif,” human agents are not absolved of responsibility for their actions.

Callon and Law in their piece, “Agency and the Hybrid Collectif,” argue that agency stems from both human and non-human actants that perform agency in a nexus of connections. Agents within the collectif differ in power; however, the collectif of agency could not operate if one agent was not present. The clearest way to understand this is to think of a network without the non-humans that make it up: “…every time you want to know what a non-human does, simply imagine what other humans or other non-humans would have to do were this character not present.” For instance, imagine a library that has everything except books, or a café that has everything except coffee.

These sites lose their meaning and take on entirely different functions without these non-human actants.

1 “Non-human” is used here for lack of a better term. In the spirit of Donna Haraway, I do not wish to re-draw the binary between humans and non-humans, however, “non-human” is the best current term to discuss these techniques and technologies.
4 Ibid., 155.
Jason De León’s scholarship speaks to the desert at the US-Mexico border, as an example of a “hybrid collectif”, and a site at which deterrence is paramount. De León writes, for example, “[h]ow do we level the analytical playing field to simultaneously account for bored agents sitting in air-conditioned SUVs watching green video surveillance screens along with flash floods, scorpion bites, dislocated knees, 100-degree weather, drone planes scouring the desert for heat signatures, and carrion eaters who tear human flesh from the bone? How can we begin to understand the structure of a wall of deterrence that is equal parts human, animal, plant, object, geography, temperature, and unknown” (emphasis added)? Throughout this piece, De León figures human and non-human actants at the desert as collaborating, cooperating, and interacting with one another to perform agency. All of these actants together are what make the hybrid collectif in the desert, and thus deter people from coming into the United States. De León also writes, “It is not my intent to downplay the agency of nonhumans in PTD [Prevention Through Deterrence] but quite the opposite. In the Arizona desert nonhumans are major players without which this system of boundary enforcement could not exist. My point is rather that the Border Patrol has intentionally set the stage so that other actants can do most of the brutal work…I see this environment as the perfect silent partner in boundary control.” At the site of the desert, Border Patrol agents use the natural environment of the desert as a means of doing the “brutal work,” as well as blame the desert for the injuries to migrants that occur within it.

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6 Ibid., 61.
This thesis posits a connection between contemporary conceptualizations of the modern-day US airport, and those around the desert, as a similar site of deterrence. It is necessary to acknowledge these similarities because examining deterrence at the desert will render visible deterrence at the airport. Drawing on Jason De León’s theoretical framework of the hybrid collectif, this thesis asks: In what ways do security checks, the design of the airport terminal space, and facial recognition technology act on bodies? How do differently embodied subjects move through the airport? Who is considered a subject, and who is considered suspect? In what ways does one critically engage with politics of agency and politics of mobility?

To address these questions, one must first explore the unexpected ways in which the effects of deterrence at the airport are similar to those at the desert, although they manifest in different ways. First, while the desert exists as a hybrid collectif of human border patrol agents, scorpions, unruly weather, and lack of water and sustenance, the airport is a hybrid collectif of human TSA agents, full-body scanners, X-ray machines, and surveillance cameras.

Second, both the desert and the airport can be thought of as non-places and liminal spaces. Yet, they are sites that are defined by all of the various actants that perform violence on bodies. Although the desert exists as a “natural” physical landscape that consists of non-human agents native to the area, the desert functions as a violent backdrop that migrants are attempting to cross. The same can be said of the technologies at the airport. Technologies at the airport are incorporated into both the architecture and
the day-to-day functions of the security state. Although these sites are structurally different, their function is the same.

Similar to the Border Patrol agent in the desert, the Transportation Security Administration and Customs and Border Protection agents at the airport often let the machines and other non-humans do the “dirty work” of labeling passengers as “suspect.” Border Patrol agents at the US-Mexico border say that the desert does not discriminate.7 Customs and Border Protection agents at the airport say that the technologies do not discriminate. Both Border Patrol and Customs and Border Protection are able to diffuse culpability to the non-human agents that act collaboratively with the human agents.

This thesis asserts that the airport is a hybrid collectif of agency of both human and non-human actants. These actants perform violence on individuals who take domestic flights within the United States as well as individuals who take international flights into the United States. In thinking about the airport as a space of various different actants that are working together in this “hybrid collectif” to perform agency, agency is not attributed to only humans or to only non-humans. What would an airport look like with only human agents? What would the airport look like without any human agents and only technology? In order to theorize about the airport and think about the connections between the airport the desert, Callon and Law’s theory of the hybrid collectif is both useful and necessary. In the spirit of Donna Haraway’s, A Cyborg Manifesto (1985), it is imperative to break down the human/non-human binary, refuse human exceptionalism, and queer perceptions of how agency operates in the world.

7 Ibid., 43.
This project will also look at the effects these actants have on differently embodied subjects. In order to do this, one must consider Giorgio Agamben’s theory on “bare life,” or “naked life,” that he sets forth in his book, means without end: Notes on Politics. Agamben writes, “The puissance absolue et perpétuelle, which defines state power, is not founded—in the last instance—on a political will but rather on naked life, which is kept safe and protected only to the degree to which it submits itself to the sovereign’s (or the law’s) right of life and death. (This is precisely the originary meaning of the adjective sacer [sacred] when used to refer to human life.) The state of exception, which is what the sovereign each and every time decides, takes place precisely when naked life—which normally appears rejoined to the multifarious forms of social life—is explicitly put into question and revoked as the ultimate foundation of political power. The ultimate subject that needs to be at once turned into the exception and included in the city is always naked life.” Agamben asserts that the state power renders bodies bare when they believe them to be an exception, however, the state power will include them in everyday life because they will submit to the state’s will to power and thus, reinforce state power. At the United States airport, one can see that differently embodied subjects, specifically those who are not white, cis-gendered, able-bodied men are being rendered bare at the airport. The state power, particularly within the United States, wants to render these bodies bare because the state has claimed a “state of exception” in claiming a “war on terror,” as well as a “war on illegal immigration.” In doing so, the state defines who belong within the state and who does not. That is, they define who constitutes as a

8 "Puissance absolue et perpétuelle" roughly translates from French to “absolute and perpetual power.”
“subject” of the state, render bodies bare to state power, and assert the “ultimate foundation of political power.”

Foucault writes, “It is the power to ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die. The right of sovereignty was the right to take life or let live. And then this new right is established: the right to make live and let die.” The state apparatus not only uses the airport as a means to render the body as “bare,” it also, “makes live and lets die.” The ways in which the airport immobilizes and deters people from moving into and within the United States speaks to this Foucaultian sense of “Biopower.” This thesis will redefine one’s understanding of “let die.” In the context of the airport, it is used in the sense that individuals can be completely humiliated, dehumanized, and deported, often back to countries that could kill them. It will become increasingly apparent that the state functions to produce “bare bodies,” as well as make certain people “live,” and let other people “die” at the airport.

State of the Field

“Airport Studies” is a relatively new field of research. It is situated within the broader fields of security and surveillance studies and transportation studies. Considerable academic scholarship has been produced in these latter two fields; however, most of this scholarship has not been specific to the airport as a site of study. Scholars that write about security and surveillance practices, like biometric technology, may mention the airport but are not honing in on the US airport as a specific site of these

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10 Ibid., 5.
12 Scholars who focus specifically on the airport, as a site of study, include: Mark B. Salter, David Lyon, Bartholomew Elias, and Peter Adey.
practices. Airport studies is an ever growing field due to the events surrounding 9/11, a push from the government to change the ways in which security and surveillance are conducted at the airport, and increased paranoia around air travel. Only more recently have race and gender scholars contributed to the field. This project contributes to the greater field of security and surveillance studies, however, it will be utilizing a lens of race, gender, and embodiment, as well as locating the study at the modern day US airport.

One of the leading thinkers on airports is Mark B. Salter. Salter is a professor of political science at the University of Ottawa, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. He focuses on border studies, migration, and security studies, as well as various other subfields within security and surveillance studies. In his book, Politics at the Airport, Salter reflects upon the airport and about mobility critically. He writes, “[s]imilarly, attempts to control mobility are precisely multiple, private, nascent, incomplete, overlapping, redundant, and untidy—yet the results of these attempts is not disorganized freedom but a kind of radical entanglement. The airport is a messy system of systems, embedded within numerous networks and social spaces; it does not simply create freedom or incarceration.” Although Salter thinks thoughtfully about the ways in which the airport exists as a site of increased Governmentality, he does not engage closely with race, gender, and citizenship status at the airport. Another important scholar of airport studies,

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13 These scholars include: Shoshana Magnet, Simone Browne, Lauren L. Martin, Lauren Wilcox, and Kelly Gates.
14 These scholars include: Shoshana Magnet, Simone Browne, Lauren L. Martin, Lauren Wilcox, and Kelly Gates and Jasbir K. Puar.
15 Mark Salter, “Airport Assemblages,” in Politics at the Airport, ed. Mark Salter (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xii.
who has written four pieces on the airport since 9/11, is Peter Adey. Peter Adey is a professor at the University of London, where he teaches social, cultural, and historical geography. His most recent article on airport security studies is, “Facing Airport Security: Affect, Biopolitics, and the Preemptive Securitisation of the Mobile Body.” In it, he talks about the different axes of mobility at the airport and the biopolitics that are involved in the security practices at the airport. Other scholars who have thought more intentionally and intersectionally about security and surveillance studies include, Simone Browne, Kelly Gates, Shoshana Magnet, and Jasbir K. Puar. These four leading feminist security studies scholars have contributed a good deal to the field, however, are not necessarily focusing on the airport, but are rather honing in on biometric technologies generally. Most early scholarship and thinkers on security and surveillance following 9/11, though, were advocating for radically increasing the security and surveillance technology that was at play in the space of the airport, instead of critiquing it as a site of violence, immobility, and deterrence.

**Key Terms**

Before illustrating airport deterrence strategies, some background is needed. One of the most essential key terms in this project is “deterrence.” In order to understand deterrence in the context of the United States, one must look to the treatment of immigrants at the US-Mexico border. The techniques of deterrence at the desert run parallel to the techniques and technologies of deterrence employed at the airport. Jason De León discusses the “Prevention Through Deterrence Strategy” employed by the

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government at the border, which frames the desert and the other actants within the
desert as natural deterrents that the government does not claim accountability for.\textsuperscript{17} By
thinking through De León’s conception of deterrence at the desert, one is better
equipped to understand the use of technology at the airport as a non-human deterrent
that the government similarly does not take accountability for.

Another critical term, which this paper coins, is “gray movement” or “gray
territory.” “Gray territories,” are the sites at which movement is ambiguous and subject
to authoritative power, control, and domination. “Gray movement” is the moment in
which bodies are rendered bare for the benefit of state power—it is the space between
when an individual is considered “subject” or “suspect.”\textsuperscript{18} Gray movement exists at the
site of the airport.

Finally, “biometrics” and “biometric border” need be defined. Shoshana Magnet
defines a biometric attribute as, “…a physical or psychological trait that can be
measured, recorded, and quantified.”\textsuperscript{19} She goes on to write, “[v]endors represent
biometric technologies as able to answer two questions. The first question refers to
identification and asks, Who am I…[t]he second question that biometric technologies
are imagined to be able to answer concerns verification: Am I who I say I am?”\textsuperscript{20}

Biometric technology is a form of identification technology that utilizes parts of the
human body in order to record the body and test the body against the biometric

\textsuperscript{18} In regards to the term “state power,” I will often alternate between terms such as “security state,”
“deterrence state,” and “state power.” All of which are meant to imply the same systemic hierarchical
power structures that are at play in the United States.
\textsuperscript{19} Shoshana Magnet, \textit{When Biometrics Fail: Gender, Race, and the Technology of Identity} (Durham: Duke
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid 21.
information of other individuals. Biometric identification technology today takes on many different forms, some of which include: fingerprint scanning, iris scanning, and facial recognition. More simply, one can think of the passport as a form of biometric identification technology.

It is also imperative to contextualize the use of biometric technology in history and how biometric technology such as, facial recognition, operates today. In her book, “Dark Matters,” Simone Browne writes on “branding blackness” and “branding biometrics. She traces biometric technology back to when people who were enslaved in the United States were branded.21 Biometric technology, such as branding, carries a fraught history to the context of airport security and surveillance technology. These technologies, especially facial recognition, are always already encoded with gendered and racialized stereotypes in order to identify individuals. Magnet writes, “[i]t is useful to reduce the size of the database against which a particular individual is matched, especially when performing a one-to-many (I:N) search, and they rely upon gender, racial, and other categories of identity to reduce the population size (the N) against which the individual is screened.”22 In short, facial recognition technology, in order to identify someone, will narrow the search by screening for gender and race, along with other physiological and socially constructed characteristics.

The Importance

Conducting intellectual work at the airport is important for various reasons. One is the issue of deterrence in the United States as well as other countries that aggressively

reassert state power. What kind of policies and practices are reflected in the hybrid
collectif of the airport? In what ways is the airport as a structure insidious and in what
ways does it target individuals? The re-conceptualization of agency and how one must
attribute agency to non-humans is another compelling reason to engage with the airport
as a site of research. Without certain actants at the airport, one cannot think of the
airport as an airport. With these actants in play, one can begin to think of the airport as a
border-site. Lauren Martin writes, “[f]or critical security studies scholars, the collection
of biometric data, the tracking of transaction data, and newly linked intelligence and
crime databases mark a change in the spatiality of immigration and border enforcement,
producing a border that is ‘everywhere and nowhere’ and imbricated with everyday
life…they operate both as ports of entry into the USA and as rather mundane workplaces
for business travelers and airport employees.”²³ It is important to think about what is
meant by “border,” to think critically about what a border looks like or what it is made
to look like. How are airports both sites of deterrence for many and sites of unrestricted
movement and mobility for others? The ambiguity of what the airport actually does and
what the airport is meant to do creates a border that is both everywhere and nowhere: a
border that is a part of everyday life.

Scholars must continue to study this topic because it is ubiquitous and topical. It
affects nearly everyone, whether in similar or different degrees. The airport immobilizes
some while renders others legible. It is imperative to engage with this common strategy
that the government employs and what Jason De León writes of as, “Prevention Through

²³ Lauren L. Martin, “Bombs, Bodies, Biopolitics: Securitizing the Subject at the Airport Security
Deterrence.”\textsuperscript{24} Especially in light of the recent Trump administration laws and policies concerning immigration into the United States, it is important to reflect critically on the nature of family separations at the border. The political rhetoric around refugees and asylum seekers coming into the United States, who are fleeing persecution from Honduras, and the ensuing calls to “close the border” so that thousands of these individuals cannot come in, must be considered. The labeling of these refugees as a “migrant caravan,” should be taken seriously and thought about critically when one talks about deterrence. The Trump administration has even referred to its policies as “deterrence.”\textsuperscript{25} Donald Trump has made it explicitly clear, with rhetoric around building a wall, closing the border, and sending troops that he is actively attempting to deter people from coming into the United States.

In relation to the airport, the current administration’s new policies and executive orders around air travel further raise issues concerning deterrence and mobility, with again a lens focusing on race and gender. Federal courts repeatedly declared Trump’s “Muslim ban,” unconstitutional. However, the third version of the “Muslim ban” was upheld by the Supreme Court and is a clear example of deterrence.\textsuperscript{26} The third version of the “Muslim Ban” imposes limits on travel from seven predominantly Muslim countries. These countries are Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad, and North Korea. Since Trump has taken office, visitors and immigrants from these countries have dropped

dramatically, and the number of refugees admitted to the United States has hit a record low. Amongst these refugees, particularly the percentage of Muslim refugees has declined.\(^27\) Although the executive order of the Muslim ban is itself a deterrent, the techniques and technologies at the airport that have been structurally built into the airport deter individuals as well. This thesis is not advocating to shift attention away from the various oppressive policies and orders that have been enacted, but rather to think of the airport as a whole and the various unseen forces that are working to deter bodies.

Finally, security and surveillance studies have been dominated by the voices of those who want to see increased security and surveillance at the airport in the name of “safety and security.” Bartholomew Elias, for instance, wrote an extensive history on global terrorism and how it has impacted the ways in which the United States government has changed its aviation security system.\(^28\) However, he focuses on the ongoing threats and vulnerability to the aviation infrastructure, instead of questioning the system as a whole. It is often argued that increased security and surveillance practices are for the “safety” of the country. This thesis re-imagines what is meant by “safety,” that is, whose safety is being privileged at the airport, and whose safety is being sacrificed at the airport.


Structure

This project will take the reader through the modern day U.S. airport. It will explore the complexities between the body of the passenger in addition to the machines and other humans that the body interacts with. It will render visible the human and non-human actants that exist at each juncture of the airport as well as the specific effects that it has on differently embodied subjects: specifically, how they employ Biopower, render the body bare, and deter and immobilize. The three agents conceptualized at the airport are the human agents (ex. the TSA), the architecture and design of the airport (i.e. the physical layout and where things are positioned in space), and technologies (i.e. full body scanners, facial recognition technology, etc.). These three forms work collaboratively in order to enact violence on bodies, re-affirm borders and national identity, and deter and immobilize. In short, this project will look at the various security and surveillance techniques and technologies that affect embodiment at the US airport.

While the focus of this thesis will be on the passenger moving through the airport, it will not touch on the politics of those who are employed at the airport. This thesis will also not engage with consumerism at ports of entry such as airport shopping malls and hotels. Even though highly priced airport retail and eating options deter certain subjects, this thesis will primarily focus on surveillance technologies and architecture at the airport. This thesis will also not engage with the act of flying or being on a plane. While these are all critical jumping-off points to examine in airport security studies, they will not be engaged with in this project.

29 For the purposes of this project, the reader will be moved through the entirety of the airport space, but it must be acknowledged that because of differently embodied identities that people hold, the body can be stopped and is often stopped and deterred at any juncture discussed.
Chapter One will look into the security line and more specifically the ways in which humiliation is leveraged as a deterrence strategy. It will first look into how the security line has been constructed to specifically service the lives that the state wants to protect. It will also look at the ways in which the airport has been constructed to render “bare and “let die” the lives that the state does not care to protect. It will explore the X-ray machine and see the ways in which this non-human actant both intentionally and inadvertently targets and deters certain individuals. The next section will explore the history of the full-body scanner at the airport, as well as its specific embedded design that permits and reinforces gendered, racist, as well as able-bodied stereotypes. The chapter will then think about the TSA agent and the technique of the pat-down. It will explore which areas of the body are being signaled out for a pat-down and why they are being signaled out. It will also look into the nature of being “randomly screened,” and the performance of security. The first chapter will think through various case studies from social media, such as Twitter, that discuss identifying along axes of difference while traveling. The chapter will conclude with a thorough analysis of what exactly the security line is doing to differently embodied subjects, and the role that the state plays in these decisions.

The second chapter will follow the same structure as the first chapter. Instead though, it will look at the waiting area of the airport. In the waiting area of the airport, targeted hyper-surveillance is leveraged as the deterrence strategy. This chapter will first think about the architecture designed to hold bodies in place in the waiting area, and the intentional decisions put in by architects to do this. One such example is the chairs and
how they are designed to keep travelers alert and from falling asleep. The chapter will conceptualize the display screens at the waiting area and how these screens are designed to immobilize passengers in the waiting area. Also, bathrooms will be looked at as an issue of accessibility at the airport. Next, Chapter Two will look at “Behavior Detection Officers (BDOs)” and how they determine if someone looks like they have “criminal intent” or the “intent to harm” based “micro-expressions.” It will look into the ways in which the perception of this is racist and gendered: it is made to instill fear in the traveler and to render them as “suspect.” It will also be looking into the policy of “If You See Something, Say Something,” and the role that passengers play in profiling other passengers and labeling each other as “suspect.” Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) plays a huge role in the space of the airport in the ways in which it records the public and can be used later for “evidence.” CCTV will be looked at in the Foucaultian sense of the “panopticon,” as well as begin to re-imagine the airport as the panopticon. Similar to Chapter One, case studies will be incorporated to illustrate the harmful effects of these actants on travelers.

The third chapter will situate the reader at Customs and Border Protection. Following the same pattern of the first two chapters, the third chapter will look into the human and non-human actants that are enacting violence on individuals at this location in the airport. Specifically, Chapter Three will explore the ways in which the border is constituted at the airport through biometric technologies. Again, it will begin by examining the architecture of Customs and Border Protection: the ways in which the body is shuffled along and cannot physically leave the airport without first going through
 Customs and Border Protection. Specifically, it will investigate how the architecture very literally erects another border to cross. Then it will look into the non-human actant of the passport. It will think about the history of the passport and how this functions in viewing the passport at this juncture, such as, what happens when the passport does not match one’s presentation or name. In conjunction with the passport, this chapter will also look at facial recognition technology used to match a passport photo to a live photo of one’s face. Like the passport, the racist and gendered history associated with facial recognition technology will be contextualized within the airport today. As for the human actants at Customs and Border Protection, Customs and Border Protection agents enact power and violence over differently embodied individuals. In order to highlight these actants at Customs and Border Protection, various case studies will be examined that discuss travelers’ experiences at Customs and Border Protection.

In all, it is important to remember that everything at the airport, all of the techniques and technologies, are being employed in a purposeful manner. They intentionally render certain bodies “bare,” and deter and immobilize those bodies from coming in or moving within the United States. However, these actants may be invisible and difficult to pin down. The airport is a border that reasserts a national identity while at the same time asserts who is “suspect” and whom the government, and its supporters, believes does not belong.
CHAPTER I: HUMILIATION ON THE LINE

This chapter will think through the various forces that are acting on differently embodied subjects moving through the security line. Who gets deterred and/or immobilized at the airport? Who constitutes as a “citizen,” a subject of the state, at the airport? Who is rendered “suspect?” It will become increasingly apparent over the course of this chapter that every technique and technology that is employed at the airport is targeted, calculated, and purposeful. This chapter will especially highlight the ways in which humiliation is leveraged as a deterrence strategy on the security line. These techniques and technologies at the security line are rooted in a white, heterosexual, cis-gendered, masculinist state history and continue to deter and immobilize differently embodied and already precarious subjects.

Simone Browne writes, “[i]n this way, certain bodies are understood as unlawfully invading social spaces that belong to citizens and other documented state subjects. As well, it points to the fears and anxieties surrounding the idea of ‘our’ porous borders that could easily be breached.”30 In this quote, Browne brings up the concept of “documented state subjects.” The re-drawing of borders asserts a national identity that inherently excludes as well as deters people from coming into the United States. This national identity is predicated and depends on exclusion as well as the biopolitics that act on precarious bodies at the airport. This chapter will problematize what the U.S. government and the airport mean by terms like, “safety” and “security.” What does it mean to exist along multiple axes of difference at the airport? Who is kept “safe” by

Airport humiliation strategies? By highlighting the humiliation and invasiveness of these practices, one may better understand who is kept safe at the airport and who is not.

*Architecture as Regulating Flows*

Architects who design airport spaces grapple with the same question: how does one balance government demands for heightened security screening and passenger desires for fast travel in the space of the airport? Architects have created a new binary pinning mobility against security that begs investigation. Prior to 9/11, airports were designed to “speed passengers along” and were acclaimed a key site of “freedom of movement” in the United States. Blair Kamin writes, “In the striking work of architecture, passengers were supposed to glide effortlessly from a spacious, skylit ticketing pavilion to ‘flow-through’ ticket counters on their way to soaring, barrel-vaulted concourses. The design was based on the widely accepted premise of the era: Ease of motion was paramount; security was an afterthought…in the years that followed, as airlines routed vast numbers of passengers through O’Hare and other hubs, air travel became an exercise in frustration. September 11 made things much worse, turning a relatively seamless process into a cumbersome, time-consuming, physically demanding hassle.”31 The airport was considered a beacon of movement, yet, a site that could easily be breached.

Following 9/11 architects had to grapple with a call for increased security at airports along with the desire for freedom of movement. The airport has attempted to both increase security, as well as regulate the flow and evaluate the “riskiness” of passengers. However, it is crucial to analyze who has been making complaints about the

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airport, whose complaints are being prioritized, and what those complaints concern.\textsuperscript{32} The majority of the concerns that are heard regarding the security line at the airport are concerns of \textit{time} and \textit{convenience} (emphasis added). What’s more, all of the solutions to concerns around the airport have centered on time and convenience. The focus on time and convenience prioritizes the travel of privileged passengers in the United States: those who are primarily white cis-gendered heterosexual men, especially those who have the financial means. Solutions for time and convenience include the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Pre✓\textsuperscript{®}, a program that passengers pay into for expedited screening. This program works in tandem with the immobilizing architecture that is the security line by fracturing the flow of passengers.

A passenger may purchase TSA Pre✓\textsuperscript{®}, which allows the passenger to wait five minutes or less going through security for a five year, eighty-five dollar membership. TSA Pre✓\textsuperscript{®} assures that one will not have to remove one’s “shoes, laptops, liquids, belts, and light jackets.”\textsuperscript{33} However, this poses a serious financial barrier to fast and easy travel for many. What’s more, in order to get TSA Pre✓\textsuperscript{®} one has to have an in-person appointment where they do a background check and scan for one’s fingerprints. TSA Pre✓\textsuperscript{®} constructs separate lines for those the state has already deemed “subject” and those who may be considered “suspect.”

The irony, however, is that the TSA website states that, “[t]he TSA uses unpredictable security measures, both seen and unseen, throughout the airport. All

\textsuperscript{32} I couldn’t conduct fieldwork at the airport for this project because you require a boarding pass to gain access to the rest of the airport. This clearly demonstrates how the design of the airport has changed dramatically following 9/11: not just anyone can walk into an airport without a boarding pass.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
travelers will be screened, and *no individual is guaranteed expedited screening*”34 (emphasis added). TSA Pre✓® may seem as though a traveler automatically gets to skip security lines at the airport, however, every individual is subject to further “random” screening. Often, this affects minority groups who buy into TSA Pre✓®.

Thus, one is stuck waiting and cannot “speed through” security lines, regardless of whether or not one chooses to and can afford to purchase TSA Pre✓®. TSA Pre✓® may seem like a good idea for a trans passenger or a gender non-conforming passenger, however, the National Center for Transgender Equality states that, “the program does not guarantee that one can avoid body scans or pat-downs,” and that “applicants likely must disclose prior names during the approval process.”35 This same paradox also applies to people of color, and more specifically Brown passengers, moving through the airport. As one continues along the TSA website it states, “[s]ecurity measures begin long before you arrive at the airport. TSA works closely with the intelligence and law enforcement communities to share information. Additional security measures are in place from the time that you get to the airport until you get to your destination.”36 The ambiguity in what these pre-security measures are and what information is being shared is what contributes to the mystery and the threat of the security state at the airport.

When engaging with the terms, “safety” and “security” at the airport, it is imperative to question who is kept safe. Also, whom do people need protection from?

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34 Ibid.
The safety of the white cis-gendered passenger is preserved at the airport, which comes at the expense of everyone who is not. The safety and human rights of those who are differently embodied at the airport are constantly being negotiated, as well as taken away by techniques and technologies. In 2018, the Trump administration, added about one million people to the government watchlist database. Most of these people, including one mentioned in the case studies section, are Muslim and/or racialized as Brown. Every piece involved in the security line is purposeful in an effort to deter people who do not fit the state’s conception of “subject:” “Meaning that these technologies of border control (passports, biometrics, airport preboarding passenger screening zones) are developed within, put to use, and often replicate existing inequalities.”

The security line at the airport fractures the flow of passengers in determining who constitutes as “subject” and who constitutes as “suspect.” In sorting passengers into these categories and identifying who needs further screening, whether that be “random” or not, the airport security line enacts violence on already precarious travelers. Humiliation is leveraged to label passengers as “suspect,” and those interpolated as “subject” are sped along.

The First Stripping

The security line at the airport enacts a “stripping” that is two-fold: the first that occurs at the X-ray machine and the second that occurs while inside the full-body scanner. People passing through the security line at the airport must place their carry-on items, as well as their shoes, belts, jewelry, and electronics, through an X-Ray machine.

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All personal electronic devices larger than a cell phone must be removed from the carry-on bag and placed in a separate bin. All food and liquids can remain in the carry-on bag, however, the amount of liquids, gels, aerosols, creams, and pastes, must follow the TSA’s “3-1-1” rule. That is, none of these substances can exceed 3.4 ounces or 100 milliliters. These items must all fit into a quart-sized bag, and a traveler may only have one bag.

One must pack items larger than these amounts in one’s checked baggage. There are certain exemptions to the 3-1-1 rules that include medication and “infant and child nourishments.” However, if a traveler brings these exempted items that are larger than 3.4 ounces or 100 milliliters, they must declare them to the TSA officer when they get on the security line. These items are subject to further screening for explosives.38

It is important to think through these seemingly inconsequential rules regulating travel in relation to the X-ray machine, and whom these rules are affecting. These rules cultivate humiliation by signaling people out in the security line. They were formulated following an arrest in the United Kingdom of a group that was “suspected of planning to blow up a large number of airplanes using a sports drink and other chemicals to make an explosive cocktail.”39 The X-ray machine contributes to the performance of security by stressing the liquid carry-on rule. The majority of people that are affected by this rule are those who need to transport their breast milk, as well as people with disabilities who need to transport their medication. The solution for the TSA is for these people to tell the agent that they have these items so that they can be further screened, however, this rule

explicitly affects certain individuals. Thereby, those who need to carry breast milk or have a disability are rendered “suspect” at the airport. Passengers are also asked to strip themselves of any metal on their body and to take off their shoes. Inherently, this poses an issue for people with metal in their body.

Furthermore, passengers are required to surrender their phone, watch, and any personal possessions to the X-ray machine. This is a surrender of any connection to anyone outside of the airport, one’s means of recording anything if something goes wrong at the security check, and access to all of one’s documents and information about where to go. The first step in a security check at the airport is stripping the passenger of all devices that keep them secure, thus, rendering the passenger “bare.” The concept of “sousveillance” is an important one to think about at this nexus. Sousveillance is the process of recording an activity by a participant in an activity, usually by the means of a portable camera like a phone.\textsuperscript{40} It works directly against state surveillance practices. Sousveillance is a common and pertinent practice in the recording of police mistreatment of people of color. The use of sousveillance at the airport has become increasingly restricted. Not only is one’s phone going through an X-ray machine while one is going through a body scanner or are being pat-down, if anyone else is seen engaging in sousveillance, they too will be rendered as “suspect.” What’s more, not everyone on the security line is willing to record discrimination, in the sense that they believe it is happening for their safety, or they are oblivious to it happening. This restriction of resistance at the airport primarily affects people of color and inherently places these

bodies into the area of “gray movement.” The security line is effectively transformed into a site where bodies are rendered bare, suspect, and subject to the unlimited power and gaze of the security state.

The Second Stripping

Full body scanners were first introduced to airports in the United States after an incident on December 25, 2009, when a person on an aircraft coming to the United States attempted to detonate an explosive hidden in his underwear. The U.S. government, as well as the TSA concluded that airports needed technology to scan through clothing at the security line. The TSA then began to test two different kinds of full body scanners at airports across the country: backscatter technology units and millimeter-wave technology units. “Millimetre wave systems scan travelers by bombarding them with radio waves and collecting the reflected radio waves via antennae to generate an image. This technology does not use x rays. In contrast, backscatter systems use low intensity [x] rays to scan the body. The x rays do not penetrate the body but bounce off the skin, and are then captured by detectors to create images.” When these technologies were first implemented, they displayed an incredibly graphic image of the passenger’s body on a screen that was then analyzed by a TSA agent. This faced heavy criticism from the public on the basis of privacy issues. In 2012, the Electronic Privacy Invasion Center (EPIC) filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) arguing that airports were violating the Administrative Procedures Act, the

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Privacy Act, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the Fourth Amendment. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, decided that backscatter units could be used in airports just as long as there was an alternative choice provided to passengers on the security line.\textsuperscript{43} However though, under increasing pressure from human rights organizations and the general public, corporations who manufactured this technology decided to implement “Automated Target Recognition” (ATR) software in their scanners. Automated Target Recognition uses a “generic outline” of the human body in order to identify any irregularities on the body.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Left: X-ray of passenger’s body (no longer used in full-body scanners), Right: Automated Target Recognition (ATR) Software that scans for gender and identifies “anomalies” on the passenger’s body (still used today) (Source: http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/human_nature/2011/07/fully_digital_penetration.html\textsuperscript{44}}
\end{figure}

Full-body scanners target and humiliate passengers in the space of the airport by affecting a literal stripping of identity and personhood. Advocates for more security in the space of the airport believe that these technologies act neutrally on bodies and that they effectively eliminate any bias that a human, in this case a TSA agent, may have against a passenger. However, these technologies are embedded and encoded with meaning and enact and perform violence on bodies regardless of their “intended purposes.” When the machine conducts a full body scan, it not only scans for potential explosives on the body, it also scans for gender. The diagram on the right in Figure 1 exhibits Automated Target Recognition (ATR) Software. There are two buttons that the TSA agent may press, depending on how they gender a traveler. Unsurprisingly, the buttons perpetuate gendered stereotypes. The first button is blue and scans for men and the second button is pink and scans for women. The highlighted boxes on the “generic outline” of the individual signify any “anomalies” in the screening process that require further evaluation.

A number of scholars have identified the ways in which sex and gender serve as markers in airport security, particularly in WBI scanners.45 When one steps into the full body scanner, the TSA agent looks for “anomalies,” and tells the machine to code a body as either male or female. The machine then identifies any “bodily anomalies” for whichever binary gender it is coding for. In her piece, “Practising gender, queering theory,” Lauren Wilcox, a gender theorist and professor at the University of Cambridge, writes, “[h]owever, the practice of screening individuals relies upon the security agent

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pressing a pink or a blue button, signifying whether they believe the person about to be screened presents as a woman or a man. This indicates that the software is set to define bodily anomalies differently for men and women based on pre-programmed parameters for bodily morphology that assumes a coherence between the gender a person is perceived as and how the software algorithm will interpret an image of their body as belonging to either a man or a woman.”

The full body scanner does not act neutrally in deciding what gender a person presents as, and neither does the TSA agent who must press a button that codes for gender. The TSA agent determines the gender that a passenger presents as when they screen the passenger. This presents serious problems of identity, personhood and recognition for the trans and queer body. It is a clear example of the hybrid collectif at the airport in action. That is, the human and the machine existing in a complex relationship with one another and collectively performing humiliation and violence on an individual. Airport security scholar, Peter Adey, writes, “[h]ere, surveillance effectively breaks down the barriers of the clothing and individual, although in the case of X-raying the purposes of identifying a threat become less about the identity of the passenger and more about the particular object that may cause a particular danger.” Reading Adey’s use of the word “object” in this quote to mean genitalia, one can clearly see that the trans body and the queer body is being read as “dangerous” and an “anomaly” that the state must account for and question. It is unclear why still, passengers, even though they, under imminent danger, out themselves as trans,

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are committing an act of terror by not having their gender expression match their genitalia. Yet still, the TSA encourages trans passengers to book flights with information that matches the gender and name on their government-issued ID.\textsuperscript{48}

A passenger may refuse to go through the full-body scanner. However, if they choose to do this, then they must undergo a thorough full-body pat-down.\textsuperscript{49} If a passenger still chooses to go through the full-body scanner, this does not necessarily mean that they will not be asked to undergo a thorough pat-down. The passenger is rendered as “suspect” when both the full-body scanner and the TSA agent misread them. They are also rendered suspect when they refuse to comply with state discriminatory regulations and procedures at the airport.

“State-Sponsored Public Groping”

The performance of security at the airport is a strategy of deterrence just as the machines and technologies at the airport are. “Expecting the state to provide security, ‘we’ thereby demand its performance and, in turn, submit to our interpellation as potential terrorists…thus the performance of security is as uncertain as its impending disruption. In this sense the performance of security is as much a counter-terrorism strategy as the discovery of actually existing bomb materials”\textsuperscript{50} (emphasis added). Both the performance of security at the airport by human agents as well as the technologies that exist at the airport, and the physical architecture and the layout of the airport, act as deterrence and act to re-draw borders within the United States. Lauren Martin, a border

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 365.
\textsuperscript{50} Lauren L. Martin, “Bombs, Bodies, Biopolitics: Securitizing the Subject at the Airport Security Checkpoint,” \textit{Social and Cultural Geography} 11, no. 4 (2010): 17-34.
and security studies professor at Durham University, looks at how the TSA agent treats the “bomb joke” at the airport, as a means of performing security on bodies. The performance comes with the TSA’s belief that there is a possibility of violence. In inciting both paranoia in themselves and other passengers, then the TSA has performed security well. The other passengers in line will now know that they too can be interpolated as a terrorist at any point, that everyone has the potential to be a terrorist, even through a joke. The airport heavily relies on the performance of safety and security to carry out its discriminatory policies and practices. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website advises that the, “TSA incorporates unpredictable security, both seen and unseen, to accomplish their [our] transportation security mission.” At the airport, one cannot prepare for the security that one will undergo because it is always already “unpredictable.” This unpredictable screening often involves “random” screening of passengers that can take the form of a pat-down.

Not only do the machines at the airport facilitate humiliation, so too do the humans. When one conceptualizes the security line and the various human and non-human actants that are working on bodies and enacting violence on individuals, one must also think critically about the pat-down. The pat-down is a technique of the TSA, however, one may conceptualize the pat down as a technology in and of itself. The TSA writes on their site, “You may be required to undergo a pat-down procedure if the

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52 This section does not aim to generalize all TSA agents, as many individuals employed by the TSA exist along the many axes of difference that this section discusses. What’s more, many TSA employees face similar discriminatory acts from airports and the state writ large. However, this section will highlight the ways in which the TSA is taught to, and what many TSA agents actually do, to travelers moving through the airport.
screening technology alarms, as part of unpredictable security measures, for enhanced screening, or as an alternative to other types of screening, such as advanced imaging technology screening. Even passengers who receive expedited screening such as TSA Pre✓® passengers, may at times receive a pat-down.” The TSA’s screening procedures are completely unpredictable—not even those who purchase Pre✓® are exempt from a TSA pat-down. But why do they do the pat-down? The pat-down is a performance of security in and of itself. By signaling out certain people to get a pat-down they are simultaneously performing security on the body, and enacting violence by rendering certain bodies suspect, while others on the line remain subject. People who have described being “randomly selected” for a pat-down on the security line at the airport often use the words: humiliation, targeting, and harassment.

So, what are the techniques involved in the pat-down? The TSA writes that, “A pat-down may include inspection of the head, neck, arms, torso, legs, and feet. This includes head coverings and sensitive areas such as the breasts, groin, and the buttocks…You will receive a pat-down by an officer of the same gender…At any time during the process, you may request private screening accompanied by a companion of your choice. A second officer of the same gender will always be present during private screening.” The pat-down focuses on certain areas of the body, specifically, sensitive areas like the groin, breasts, and buttocks, as well as, the head. People are signaled out for a pat-down for the purposes of “random screening” as well as if they “set off an alarm” from the full-body scan. However, even if they do not set off an alarm in the full-body

54 Ibid.
scanner, people are most often profiled by TSA officers and asked to conduct a “random screening,” because of what they look like or what they are wearing. The pat-down is a technique that enhances and targets specific parts of the body that are profiled as “suspicious” by the TSA agent. For the trans or non-binary person, the pat-down signals out the breasts, groin and buttocks. For a Black traveler hair is signaled out, and for the Brown traveler wearing a headscarf, hijab, or turban, the TSA agent will signal out the head. In fact, “…Sikh advocacy groups received complaints that turbaned men were being asked to remove and unravel their turbans at airport security checkpoints to check for weapons; alternatives recommended by Sikh advocacy groups included x-ray technology (sensor wand, x-ray machine) to scan the turbans.”\textsuperscript{55} No dangerous items have been found in any passenger’s hair, hijab, headscarf, or turban by the TSA. The TSA also signals out travellers for wearing other articles of clothing, such as baggy pants—a discerning act that carries heavy racialized meanings. The TSA states in their description of the pat-down that travelers will have an officer of the same gender conduct the pat-down. This takes little into account of trans and non-binary people and various other gender identities. It means that the TSA officer will read one within the binary of male or female, or will read one’s gender based on one’s government issued document. Many travelers describe the new pat-down technique by the TSA as a “public groping.” Many more have filed complaints with the ACLU feeling humiliated, traumatized, and likening their psychological impact from the experience to sexual assault.\textsuperscript{56}


It is no coincidence that the TSA is able to use the pat-down as an effort to make their screening “unpredictable” and to “keep the traveling public safe,” the pat-down is a targeted effort to signal out individuals along different axes of difference and label them as “suspect.” This act of humiliation and state-sponsored public groping is a deterrent in itself.\(^{57}\) It is an effort to perform for the white cis-gendered able-bodied passengers to show that they are being protected from “people who have the potential to be terrorists.” It is imperative to re-think what is meant by the word “safety” at the airport—who is actually protected by the state?

**Case Studies**

In order to better envision the ways in which the security line humiliates differently embodied subjects at the airport, this section will look at case studies. These case studies were collected from social media platforms like Twitter, of people that identify along different axes of difference. They will illuminate the specific ways in which the techniques and technologies being employed at the airport affect differently embodied subjects, and render them as “suspect.” Twitter is primarily being used to queer common perceptions of “primary research.” Using Twitter as a source is feminist in that it rejects any “authoritative knowledge” to gathering facts, and rather prioritizes every-day lived experiences.\(^{58}\) These case studies are in no way all encompassing of every experience that passengers have experienced at the airport. However, they will help to highlight specific identities at the airport that are being targeted on the security line. This


\(^{58}\) These personal stories were sourced from public Twitter and blog accounts by looking up specific hashtags.
section is not attempting to reduce these identities, as they all intersect with one another. For the purposes of this paper, each identity will be isolated to highlight the ways in which the specific techniques and technologies target aspects of an individual’s identity. The reader is encouraged to think critically and intersectionally about the identities put forth, and to see the ways in which each of these identities are deterred from movement, whether that be one identity or various identities that an individual embodies when moving through the airport.

As a case study for trans people at the airport, one can look to Shadi Petosky’s live tweets, and her experience as a trans-woman. Shadi Petosky is an American comics author, designer, and television animator. Petosky experienced a barrage of violence and humiliation at the airport while she was in Orlando. After initially going through the full body scanner, Petosky tweets, “I am being held by the TSA in Orlando because of an ‘anomaly’ (my penis).”\(^{59}\) Here, one can see that the full body scanner has labeled Petosky as an “anomaly,” simply because when scanned for “female” it identified areas on her body that did not fit into a cis-gendered female body. The machine has re-asserted what it means to be female in the United States on a trans body, therefore, enacting humiliation and violence. Petosky continues in her tweets, “The TSA at the Orlando Airport told me I couldn’t take photos but this is denigrating, I have missed my flight.”\(^{60}\) Not only has the TSA removed her rights to sousveillance at the airport, but Petosky has also missed her flight. The actants at the airport have immobilized Petosky’s body so that she could not physically leave. “TSA agent Bramlet told me to get back in the machine as

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\(^{59}\) Shadi Petosky, @shadipetosky, *Live Tweets at the Orlando Airport*, Twitter, September 21, 2015, https://twitter.com/shadipetosky.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.
a man or it was going to be a problem...TSA agents are now saying their [there] are explosives alarm from my hands and the officers gloves when she gave me a full body pat down.”

Not only is Petosky being told to conform to a cis-gendered standard and perform as male, she is now being accused of having residue of explosives on her body. The TSA is not sensitivity trained for screenings of passengers, and they try to cover up their violence by asserting that a passenger was perhaps carrying explosives on them. They are continuously reasserting the label of “suspect” on trans passengers, whether by labeling their bodies as anomalies or labeling them as potential “terrorist threats.” Often at the airport, this distinction becomes increasingly muddled. Petosky writes, “I am through. It was about 40 minutes, 2 full body pat-downs, fully disassembled luggage. I missed my flight...American Airlines manager is telling me that ‘in the future ask for a private screening’... I literally want no lectures from American Airlines on how to travel while trans. I want the same privileges as cis-people.”

Shadi Petosky’s story is a clear indication that cis-people’s movement is being privileged at the airport.

Other trans and non-binary passengers at the airport speak of being required to have their prosthetic organs screened. One account from Ivan Coyote, a non-binary person traveling through the US, says, “I made the mistake of wearing a small, soft packer in my underwear last week... Then I was subject to a genital pat-down [from the full-body scan]. I managed to convince her it was the wad of $20s I had from selling books in my front left pocket (I dress left), and she radioed back that the ‘object had been identified’ and let me go, but my hands did not stop shaking for a couple of

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
hours...I heard a story about a woman having to remove her prosthetic breast and show it to the agent." In fact, many trans and non-binary people are asked to show their prosthetic organs to the TSA. A trans-man named Kyle writes about how the TSA asked him to remove his prosthetic penis from his underwear, "...it was so wrong to stand there with my cock on the table, exposed to the world and about to undergo inspection by people who, though polite, didn't understand what it really was, what it signified to me." Still yet another account from Cary Gabriel Costello concerns their chest-binder as being read as an “anomaly” by the full-body scanner. Trans people and non-binary should not be made to comply and “perform the right gender” at the airport. Instead, the TSA should be sensitivity trained. Machines at the airport should not be labeling bodies by gender and render non-cis-gendered bodies as “anomalies.” The airport humiliates, immobilizes, deters, and reasserts a national identity. These are all important concerns to grapple with in order to fully re-conceptualize the airport as a hybrid collectif of both human and non-human actants that work on and through bodies and perform violence.

One should also turn to the treatment of Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern, and South Asian passengers, as well as any other passengers racialized as Brown, attempting to enter the U.S. A tweet from a woman named, Maryum speaks to what a lot of Muslim folk face at the airport: “haha i love getting ‘randomly’ selected at 3/3 airports i

66 In my analysis I particularly look at stories from Muslim and Sikh passengers, however, these stories are not indicative of the entire Muslim community or the entire Sikh community. They demonstrate common threads in the treatment of passengers who are racialized as Brown in the United States.
go through and getting a full-body pat down by a complete stranger in front of other strangers and having my luggage that i carefully organized get emptied out…#travelingwhilemuslim #justhijabithings.”67 These “random screenings” are not random. They are a product of the profiling implicit in the techniques of the TSA. In signaling out and patting down these passengers, the TSA agent is performing security for the white cis-gendered able-bodied passenger. They create a spectacle to confirm who they want to be mobile and whom they want to render immobile.

An account from a Muslim-American woman named, Zainab Merchant reveals the exceptionally de-humanizing and humiliating ways in which Brown people are treated at the airport in the United States. Zainab Merchant is an American citizen and a graduate student at Harvard University. She was also put on the government watchlist database. Every time she goes to the airport, even though she goes through the full-body scanners and is cleared, she is subject to thorough pat-downs. During these pat-downs the TSA puts their hands in private and sensitive areas on her body—such as, inside of her hijab. On one occasion, the TSA officers asked for the passcode for her phone and she was worried that they would see photos of her without her headscarf on. In front of all of the other passengers, they remove and inspect all of the content in her bag, including her bras and underwear. On one day, in a private screening, the TSA agent asked Zainab to expose her menstrual pad.68 Zainab’s experiences at the U.S. airport have

67 Maryum™, @maryumsaidwhat, #travelingwhilemuslim, Twitter, September 23, 2018, https://twitter.com/maryumsaidwhat/status/1021546204654649344.
been so bad and so frequent that the ACLU has filed a formal complaint on her behalf with the Department of Homeland Security.

![Figure 2: Zainab Merchant being pat-down by a TSA agent at the airport. Credit: Nadia Hallgren/ACLU (Source: https://www.aclu.org/blog/national-security/discriminatory-profiling/womans-endless-ordeal-shows-how-watchlisting-system)](https://www.aclu.org/blog/national-security/discriminatory-profiling/womans-endless-ordeal-shows-how-watchlisting-system)

There are a few things that are important to note concerning Figure 2. Here one sees Zainab Merchant being pat-down by a TSA agent at the airport. More specifically, one sees the TSA agent patting-down Zainab’s hijab. Zainab, as a Muslim-American woman, sees her hijab is an integral part of her identity. By patting-down her hijab, the TSA agent is invading this aspect of her identity in an intrusive and humiliating way. Zainab’s gaze is poignant in this photo; it is clear that she is uncomfortable and in need of help. It is essential to critically analyze is who is conducting the pat-down. The TSA agent is a white woman. Zainab Merchant is a Brown Muslim-American woman. The TSA has little regard for the specific embodied identities of each passenger, and fails to see that this pat-down is not only a violation of privacy, it is also enacting violence. The

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69 Ibid.
TSA is not sensitivity trained and they assume that passengers, who are wearing a hijab, headscarf, or turban, are hiding something dangerous. They also disregard any need of the Brown traveler who does not want a white person touching their hijab or looking through photos on their phone. These discriminatory practices extend to all Brown passengers, not just Brown Muslims. Jasbir K. Puar, professor and queer theorist at Rutgers University, has written extensively on Sikh individuals having their turbans screened for explosives.\footnote{Jasbir K. Puar, \textit{Terrorist Assemblages: homonationalism in queer times}, (Durham: Duke University, 2017).}

Black women are also targeted and deterred from travel at the airport. In fact, Black women on the security line have the highest likelihood of being strip-searched and are more likely to have their belongings x-rayed after being frisked or patted down. What’s more, Black women are half as likely to be carrying contraband than white women.\footnote{Simone Browne, \textit{Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness}, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 131.} Simone Browne writes about the singer, Solange Knowles’, experience at the airport. Solange got her hair searched at a Miami airport by TSA officials and then tweeted to her followers: “Let’s play a little game called: ‘What did the TSA find in Solange’s Fro.” She also tweeted, “Discrim-FRO-nation. My hair is not a storage drawer. Although I guess I could hide a joint up here. *Blames ‘Romnesia’ (my wigs name).’”\footnote{solange knowles, @solangeknowles, “What Did the TSA Find in Solange’s Fro,” Twitter, November 14, 2012, https://twitter.com/solangeknowles.} Solange opened up a dialogue for other Black women to expose the discrimination against them by the TSA. Often the full-body scanners are used as an excuse for why their hair needs to be searched, when in fact; it is the TSA agent’s prejudice and discrimination against the Black woman. The TSA agent diffuses blame to these
technologies when in fact; these technologies are a strategic “silent partner” in the hybrid collectif that is the airport. It is important to contextualize these incidents at the airport against Black hair with the larger history of rendering Black hair as “dangerous” and “capable of hiding dangerous items.” Simone Browne writes about the death of George Jackson in August 1971 at San Quentin State Prison in California, when guards thought that his Afro, or wig, was being used to smuggle guns into the prison.73 The history of racial discrimination against hair, as well as headscarfs, hijabs, and turbans, is rooted in a racist history of violence and criminalization of Black people and people of color. One can see the various ways in which a Black woman at the airport is profiled, signaled out for extra screening, and thus, discriminated against.

The final, but certainly not the last, axis of difference that this chapter will look into is disability. The space of the airport is yet another site of incredible inaccessibility for people with disabilities. As aforementioned, folks who need medication are immediately targeted by the X-ray machine because of the 3-1-1 liquids rule. As well as folks who cannot move through the full-body scanner because they are in a wheelchair or need other aids for movement, or have metal in or attached to their body. Those with invisible disabilities, such as anxiety, are also affected by the security line spectacle, the pressure to speed things along, as well as being signaled out for further screening. There are several accounts on Twitter that reveal airport staff has lost a person’s wheelchair and/or assistive equipment.74 The airport fails to recognize the diversity of disabilities and

needs that each passenger has, and fails to provide need and individualized care for every passenger.

What is the Security Line Doing?

What do the various human and non-human actants effectively do to the body at the airport? First, they target and humiliate bodies on the security line. By not being read as legible by the machines, one is no longer read as legible by the TSA agent. One is immediately signaled out for questioning because the TSA agent assumes that one is a “threat to security.” Therefore, one is a threat to other passengers. Trans people, as well as gender non-binary people, have a forced outing at the airport because they are read as illegible and must explain their gender expression for survival. The TSA agent does not ask the trans or the gender non-binary person who should pat them down and will pat them down in front of all other travelers. Not only does this effect humiliation on the trans passenger, it also is a physical assault on the trans body. Some scholars have described this full-body scanning technology at the airports as state-sponsored sexual violence. On the other hand, a Brown traveler moving through the airport is read and humiliated in a different way. Even though most pass the full-body scanner, they are often signaled out for “random screening.” Or, in the case of Zainab Merchant, put on the government watchlist database and always already considered for “random screening.” The partnerships between human and non-human actants at the airport leverage humiliation as a deterrent against differently embodied passengers moving through the airport in both of these cases and in every case.

The hybrid collectif of the security line at the airport re-asserts a national identity. This gives the power to the government and to the TSA to define who constitutes as a “subject.” This allows the TSA to label precarious Brown bodies, and precarious queer bodies as either “suspect” or “subject”—an insider or an outsider.

Lauren Wilcox, the Director of the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Cambridge, writes, “[t]he use of biometric screening practices is another practice that effectively ‘screens’ for one’s competent practice of gender according to a norm of alignment between gender presentation and bodily morphology.” On the one hand this affirms the misconception that in order to be a certain gender, one must perform gender correctly as well as reflect cis-body parts. On the other hand, it causes trans and non-binary passengers to perform gender in a ways that sacrifices their identity and personhood. In order to move through the airport as a trans or non-binary person, one has to “perform the right gender” so as not to be signaled out and called into questioning. For many, this is impossible, while still others get surgery in order to be read as “correct.” This still poses a serious problem for those who do not choose to get surgery in order to be “read” as the “right” gender, and for those who are gender queer or gender non-conforming. This is one example of how a differently embodied individual is rendered suspect at the airport because of a re-assertion of a national identity, however, many other differently embodied individuals are rendered this way because of the hybrid collectif of actants as well.

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The security line re-draws what a “border” looks like in the United States, and deters and immobilizes individuals attempting to travel. Laura Sjoberg, professor of political science at the University of Florida, writes, “…gender deviance is associated with deviance more generally. As such, deviance from traditional sex organ configuration is read as a signifier of more general disregard for the rules—including, possibly, the rules prohibiting politically violent attacks…appearing to be a sex different from the one that is assigned on government-issued identification is read as a problem with honesty rather than as a problem with sex binaries.”77 When trans and non-binary bodies are thought of as “deviant” and “dishonest,” one asserts that those individuals are of risk to other travelers. The border at the airport is gendered and racist. Those who are read as risky and dishonest at this site may not cross the border.

It is necessary re-draw and queer what one can possibly conceive of as “the border.” Some borders are not as visible as a fence or a “wall” along the US-Mexico border, nor do they necessarily have “migration centers” that detain and mistreat migrants coming into the United States. Although these sites of violence are imperative in the ways one thinks about deterrence within the context of the United States, the United States border is constantly being drawn and re-drawn, and co-opted for certain ends. The border at the airport is insidious and is not as visible as the border at Mexico. How long are people left waiting at airports when they are immobilized? How are they treated when they are immobilized? After a traveler is deemed to be an “ambiguous” body or an “untrusted traveler,” the TSA agent at the airport questions them. This not

only enacts further humiliation on the (attempted) passenger, it also inhibits them from continuing on in their travels. There are countless stories of how various differently embodied passengers have missed their flights because they were being further questioned by transportation security at the airport.

The airport, especially visible at the security line, affects an erasure of resistance and an enactment of complicity. Resistance is taken away from the passenger in some regard. When one first gets on the security line, one is literally stripped of a primary tool for resistance—one’s phone. What’s more, everyone on the line is similarly stripped of this tool of resistance. The act of recording as a process of resistance and bearing witness to and rendering visible, violence, has been imperative for activists and people in the United States who are working against a state power. When one does not have this tool, one cannot render visible the acts of violence that are being committed on the security line. Many passengers, like Shadi Petosky, write about how when they were asked to a private screening, they were told they could not record anything. It is impossible to think of the airport as a site of resistance, but rather it must be thought of as a site of complicity. The airport is a site of complicity in the sense that the traveler has to comply with the discriminatory techniques and technologies being employed at the airport so that they can travel. In short, there is little room for resistance at the site of the airport.

In order for differently embodied subjects to move through the space of the airport, there is a certain amount of sacrifice of identity that occurs. Since not everyone who is traveling through the airport is a white cis-gendered man, in fact most people are not, these differently embodied subjects need to conform to the airport’s discriminatory
techniques. The transgender passenger is constantly being told, even on websites like “the National Center for Transgender Equality,” that their documents need to conform to their presentation. That “everything should match.” Government documents, though, do not accommodate for the passenger that sits in-between gender identities. There is no protocol or correct action for the non-binary body at the airport, nor is there a standard government issued documents that affirms and validates non-binary gender identities. For the transgender and non-binary body at the airport, one must sacrifice an essential part of one’s own identity so that one can travel. This might mean going by a dead name, or even presenting in a normative gendered way when going to the airport. The airport is a forced site of complicity in order for mobility, avoiding humiliation, and survival. One must examine how and why this resistance is being erased at the security line. The security line, and the airport at large, affects a new kind of compulsory heterosexuality, compulsory white-ness, and compulsory normativity, which is rooted in this concept of complicity.

It is imperative to conceptualize these actants as working together in a hybrid collectif of agency at the airport. What would the TSA agent be without the technology that they were taught in the pat down? What would the TSA agent be without body scanners and X-ray machines that enact the literal stripping of identity and personhood of passengers? All of these different actants, both human and non-human work together to enact agency on precarious bodies that are moving through the airport, to re-draw borders in new and insidious ways, and to deter both mobility and halt movement between coming into the United States and moving within the United States. Without
these techniques and technologies the airport would not exist and deter in the same way that it currently does. Humiliation is the primary approach of deterrence at the security line. The humans and non-humans at the security line simultaneously humiliate and violate travelers, thus, rendering bodies bare to the security state apparatus.
CHAPTER II: LYING IN WAIT

While the security line at the airport utilizes humiliation as its primary mode of deterrence, the waiting area of the airport leverages targeted hyper-surveillance to deter travelers. The structure of this chapter will follow the same structure as Chapter One; however, the architecture and design of the waiting area of the airport will be particularly emphasized. Architecture aids in the techniques and technologies that are present at the airport, especially in the waiting area. It is both seen and unseen and acts as a silent partner in deterrence strategies.

To understand how the waiting area is a site of deterrence, this chapter will look closely into the use of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) technology, which often is used to transform spaces into sites of surveillance, as well as, a TSA program known as the Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT), which employs Behavior Detection Officers (BDOs) to surveil passenger bodies moving through the terminal space in the airport. The same questions will be asked and accompanied by similar theoretical, visual, and narrative sources: who gets deterred and/or immobilized at the airport? Who constitutes as “citizen,” a subject of the state, at the airport? Who is rendered “suspect?” This chapter and the proceeding chapter will focus primarily on immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees discouraged and deterred from coming into the United States through the usage of various techniques and technologies. However, these chapters will also look at how the hybrid collectif of these techniques and technologies effectively deter and immobilize individuals who identify along many axes of difference. The lack of awareness and knowledge about the human and non-human actants at the
airport by everyday travellers effectively allow this system of discrimination and
deterrence to continue.

Architecture as Panoptic

Architects and airport personnel have effectively designed the airport to prevent
specific individuals to exist and move within it. The architecture and design at the
modern day United States airport waiting area intentionally immobilizes and targets
certain bodies more than others: “From the ground-level control of baggage, technical
and support staff, to the separate levels of arrivals and departure and the distinction
between domestic and international flights, airports are designed to survey, discriminate
and control mobile bodies.”78 David Pascoe, architect and writer with a focus on airport
architecture, writes in his book, Airspaces, “…passengers are still subject to ordered
movement within the terminal; but while the activities taking place in this space are still
predicated on a single logarithm bounded in space, and applied rigidly to the physical
presence of the passenger using the airport—the flow of passengers per hour—the vista
which may once have been so exhilarating has been closed off in order to provide room
for three main functions pertaining to passenger handling: circulation, process,
containment”79 (emphasis added). This is surprising considering airports have been hailed
as sites of unrestricted flow and freedom of movement.80 Although, architects have tried

78 Mark B. Salter, “At the threshold of security: a theory of international borders.” In Global Surveillance
and Policing: Borders, Security, Identity, ed. by Elia Zureik and Mark B. Salter, (Cullompton: Willan
80 Blair Kaman, Terror and Wonder: Architecture in a Tumultuous Age, (Chicago: The University of
Chicago Press, 2010), 25.
to grapple with security requirements and ease of movement in the airport, security
requirements and surveillance techniques have continued to take precedence.

For example, this is illustrated by the seating available in these waiting areas and
how urban design functions to deter some while rendering others immobile. Seating at
airport terminals specifically immobilizes the body in one spot. Martha Rosler, an
American artist, writes, “The seats in most waiting areas are individual buckets screwed
to the floor in rigid patterns that, in an effort to prevent sleeping, enforce isolation.”81

David Pascoe also focuses on seating at the airport terminal in his analysis of the check-in
area of Terminal 1 at Madrid Barajas Airport. On seating he writes, “However, the
severity of its design [the seats] serves another, stricter function: it forces people to
remain awake. Each bench consists of five seats and four armrests, but there are no more
than two seats without an intervening arm-rest, a design feature intended to discourage
passengers from reclining. Terminals need to ensure that delayed passengers remain
pacified yet vigilant; to allow them to sleep in concourses might lead to missed flights, or
worse.”82 Perhaps even more illuminating and discriminatory, David Pascoe looks into
the ways in which the seating at Charles De Gaulle (CDG) airport in France, and how
the seats are meant not to accommodate homeless people. He writes, “In early 1993,
perhaps in emulation of Heathrow’s seating policies, the management at CDG installed
new rigid benches throughout the airport, replacing the famous circular seats designed by
Joseph Motte and installed in 1974. The rationale was that Motte’s seats were too

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81 Martha Rosler, “In the Place of the Public: Observations of the Frequent Flyer,” *Assemblage*, no. 25
‘comfortable’ and were attracting large numbers of individuals ‘sans domicile fixe’ [homeless people].”83

This utilization of seating to deter homeless people comes as no surprise. Urban designers consciously design public benches to discourage sleeping. Common tactics include partitions that separate sitting spaces and armrests that also divide the bench surface. Although these benches are not explicitly advertised as benches that deter homeless, they are occasionally listed as including “anti-loitering features.”84 The airport is just yet another site of these discriminatory deterrence strategies, acting through design, in practice.

Figure 1: Seats at John F. Kennedy International Airport, Terminal 4 (Source: https://onemileatatime.com/wingtips-lounge-jfk-review/)85

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83 Ibid, 209.
Screens are yet another technology of immobility at the airport. The technology and architecture involved in the airport terminal space, especially flight information displays, are designed to immobilize travelers by engaging them in spectatorship. The airport’s primary form of communicating flight information to the passenger is through the use of the flight information displays (FIDs), which, for the most part, are located in the terminal area. Designers strategically place FIDs here to build up spectatorship at these sites. Without a doubt, this is an operational and practical use of the screens; however, the effects of this placement are holding bodies in the terminal space for long periods of time. “The spatial positioning of the television screens works to position passengers who do not want to wander too far from them, thereby risking missing a call to their gate. The screens are considered within airport terminology to ‘hold’ people: they have an invisible tether to passengers. For the airport architect: ‘there is no doubt that this is a means to hold people where you want them.’” What’s more, Airport architects explicitly state that there is an expectation that passengers are anxious about receiving information about their flight so that they do not miss their flight; so it is instead what the screens do not say that keep people centered around them.

Figure 2 below demonstrates the immobilization of Flight Information Displays (FIDs) at John F. Kennedy Airport. The gaze of every passenger in the photo is directed towards the larger than life FID. The passengers are so entranced and engaged with the FID that they don’t realize that their photo is being taken. The screen is static until there

86 Peter Adey, “‘May I Have Your Attention’: Airport Geographies of Spectatorship, Position, and (Im)mobility,” Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, vol. 25, 528.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
is information to be displayed on it, however, the passenger gaze does not pivot from the screen. They must continue to watch it, and thus remain immobilized, until their information appears.

![Figure 2: Flight Information Display at John F. Kennedy International Airport Terminal 4](https://www.nanolumens.com/press-releases/jfk-airport-unveils-state-of-the-art-flight-information-video-board)

Finally, windows in the airport terminal, similar to the FIDs, immobilize passengers by capturing their attention and engaging them in an act of spectatorship. More specifically, the windows that look out onto the runway, apron, and landscape. “Passengers are drawn to watch the spectacle of planes landing, unloading, and loading, and the complex movements and actions of airport personnel, baggage handlers, and engineers as well.”90 The windows of the airport are meant to attract the passenger to engage with a “cinematic” experience of watching airplanes take off and land on the tarmac. Airport architects intentionally draw the passenger to the window and

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90 Peter Adey, “May I Have Your Attention’: Airport Geographies of Spectatorship, Position, and (Im)mobility,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 25, 527.
immobilize them. They remain in the terminal area surrounded by retail spending opportunities.91 Along with the seating at the airport terminal, the passenger remains immobilized and entranced in the spectacle of activity outside of the windows. Not only do windows help to increase spectatorship and immobilize the passenger at the terminal gate, the natural light that comes in from the windows “give greater definition to the images on security screens and, in particular, allow facial features to be discerned.”92 This especially helps police officers and officials view the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) screen when they are monitoring passenger activity in the terminal. What’s more, it allows the facial recognition technology in CCTV cameras better discern faces in the waiting area. In short, both the FIDs and the windows immobilize passengers at the gate.

When the passenger is immobilized at this juncture, the windows at the gate aid in shining light on passengers in order to see their faces more clearly, and more effectively surveil them. The remainder of this chapter will continue to explore the use of CCTV technology throughout the airport terminal, however, it is important to note that terminal windows enhance the means by which passengers are surveilled in the airport by authorities. So, not only do windows attract individuals to them to engage in spectatorship, they also enhance surveillance procedures that disproportionately target minority populations, including, undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

91 Ibid., 528.
Airports in the United States do not have bathrooms that are accessible to people who identify along or outside of the gender spectrum. Having access to bathrooms is essential for long-distance travel. It is essential for an individual with any gender identity to access designated safe spaces to use the bathroom. At John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) in New York, one of the busiest and largest airports in the country and the world, there is one “family restroom” at Terminal 5/6 near gates 4, 5, and 6, and another in the hallway from the arrival gates to the checked baggage area. These bathrooms are not explicitly gender-neutral bathrooms but are listed as “family restroom.” There are two other bathrooms in JFK Terminal 4 between the security checkpoint and gate B20,

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however they are both labeled, “women’s disabled” and “men’s disabled.” There are currently no single stall bathrooms that are explicitly labeled “gender neutral” at JFK airport. These bathrooms should continue to be accessible for people with disabilities; however, they should also be accessible for everyone who is moving through the airport. Considering that gender neutral bathrooms and access to bathrooms for transgender people is an especially topical issue, it is important that airports as sites of critical movement for nearly everyone in the country, remain a site that is accessible for differently embodied individuals. This has become a pertinent topic for the National Center for Transgender Equality in North Carolina. The North Carolina General Assembly recently passed House Bill 2. House Bill 2 would require bathrooms in government facilities to be used by the gender that people have listed on their birth certificate. For airports in North Carolina to do this would be in violation of federal discrimination laws. The bill was repealed, however it is important to consider these serious questions of access because they are constantly being debated and rights are constantly being infringed upon in seemingly public spaces in the United States.

The architecture of the terminal is designed to keep the traveler alert with no moment for rest. Considering the erect design of the chairs, the position of the flight information displays to foster spectatorship, as well as the spectatorship encouraged by windows in the terminal area, it is clear that the airport wants the traveler to remain immobile in this space. By rendering the traveler immobile in the airport, it is easier for

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the traveler to be watched and surveilled. Flight Information Displays as well as windows greatly increase spectatorship at airports, while seating design and the anxiety to see information regarding one’s flight, immobilize the passenger at the gate. Windows also help shine light on the traveller to allow for a clearer image of the traveler’s face to surveil them more effectively. Architects have transformed the site of the airport into a panopticon, where each traveler is being watched at any moment and are immobilized by the design of the site they are in. The design of the airport works in tandem with the techniques and technologies that target and deter differently embodied travelers. One cannot conceptualize the airport, and the agency within it, without thinking about its intentional design and architecture.

“Micro-Expressions” as Terrorist Intent

In 2013, two Behavior Detection Officers (BDOs) at Los Angeles International airport stopped a man named Jason Louder. Jason Louder, a Black man, was flying in to Los Angeles from Atlanta, Georgia. The BDOs were wearing “ordinary clothes” and grabbed Jason’s arm in the terminal area before he could leave the airport to ask him questions and refused to let him leave. They asked Jason for his name, his date of birth so that they could “run him,” as well as asked him what he was doing in Los Angeles and how much money he was carrying. Jason told the BDOs that he has never gotten in trouble a day in his life and refused to answer the BDOs questions. Jason questioned why they were asking him questions and not anyone else that was at the airport that day. The BDOs attempted to bring Jason to a separate location to question him, however, Jason

97 Foucault writes on the panopticon in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975). The panopticon is a site where the disciplinary surveillance society is at work. In the panopticon not only are individuals surveilled by the state, through the constant fear of being surveilled, individuals begin to surveil themselves.
refused to leave his place in the middle of the airport. Jason then requested, several times, that a uniformed officer from the Los Angeles police department come to the airport. The BDOs brought TSA agents to speak to Jason, but Jason refused to leave his place until a uniformed police officer came to the airport. The SPOT program and the BDOs function as a stand in for racial profiling and are able to continue operating under the guise of a “neutral and scientific” gaze when in fact, they are discriminating against individuals moving through the airport.

Behavior Detection Officers render certain bodies moving through the airport as “suspect” through practices of surveillance. However, Behavior Detection Officers do something more for the policy of deterrence at the airport—they incite fear and render travelers uncomfortable in the space of the airport. In 2006, The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) developed a program called the “Behavior Detection and Analysis” (BDA) program. The Behavior Detection Officers are a part of the TSA’s Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) program. Behavior Detection Officers are officers who look for travelers who exhibit involuntary facial expressions that supposedly indicate suspicious activity. Today, the TSA has more than three thousand Behavior Detection Officers (BDOs) employed through the program and stationed in United States airports. In 2009, the TSA expanded the program and stationed BDOs throughout the airport, not just at security checkpoints. Also in 2009, the TSA deployed

BDOs dressed in “ordinary clothing” so that they could surveil passengers covertly.\textsuperscript{100} When the BDO identifies an individual who they feel may be exhibiting any “suspicious behavior,” they will approach them and engage in a “casual conversation,” or a “voluntary informal interview.”\textsuperscript{101} On their website, the TSA writes, “The BDA program identifies potentially high risk individuals exhibiting behavior indicative of excessive fear or stress and re-routes them for additional screening by looking for a combination of individual indicators that warrant follow-up…BDOs are trained to identify behavior cues that have been shown through research, science, and decades of domestic and international law enforcement experience to be reliable indicators and predictors of anomalous or suspicious behavior.”\textsuperscript{102}

The “science” that the BDOs rely on originates from Ekman’s Facial Action Coding System (FACS), which was developed in the late 1970s. Paul Ekman, a psychologist, developed this system because he identified the possibility of information behind individual’s “gestural slips.” Ekman’s FACS focuses on “micro-expressions,” expressions that unintentionally express intentions, and occur when someone tries to hide emotions. Ekman’s research sought to provide strong evidence that facial expressions are universal. The TSA sought out this system in order to universalize passenger expressions to see if anyone could be considered a threat at the airport based on how they emote. Paul Ekman and his colleague psychologist Mark Frank have been

\textsuperscript{100} ACLU, “BAD TRIP: Debunking the TSA’s ‘Behavior Detection’ Program,” \textit{The American Civil Liberties Union}, February 2017, https://www.aclu.org/cases/aclu-v-tsa.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.

consulting the TSA on their SPOT program and advised the TSA to train their officers to look for instantaneous gestures that show emotions that people are trying to conceal while at the airport.  

The BDOs use a checklist of “suspicious behavior” to identify passengers who could be “potential terrorist threats.” The TSA does not specify the criteria they use to identify “potential terrorists.” The “criteria” mentioned in the TSA’s online statement that BDOs rely on was privately disclosed to The Intercept, an online news organization that focuses on national security, politics, and civil liberties. Some of the behaviors that BDOs target as signs of potential terrorist activity include: “exaggerated yawning, excessive complaints about the screening process, excessive throat clearing, widely open staring eyes, wearing improper attire for location, whistling as the individual approaches the screening process, gazing down, exaggerated or repetitive grooming gestures, face pale from recent shaving of beard, [and] rubbing or wringing of hands.” These are only a few criteria that the BDOs look for in a list of nearly one hundred indicators of potential terrorist behavior. The TSA states that they have a zero-tolerance policy for racial profiling of passengers: “The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and training for TSA’s BDA program, in coordinator with the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Liberties (CRCL), provide clear instructions to ensure that referrals for additional screening are

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made based on specific observed behavioral criteria without regard to nationality, race, color, ethnicity, or religious affiliation.”

Based on the criteria that the BDOs utilize, it is clear that anyone moving through the airport could be a “potential terrorist.” These criteria target how nearly every passenger moves through the airport, yet even more so, minority populations who are already afraid of being targeted at the airport. However, it is also clear that the SPOT program that the TSA has been using could potentially be discriminatory and could profile individuals under the guise of general and objective, “science-based” criteria. In fact, the Behavior Detection Analysis Program has given rise to a great deal of passenger profiling with a cloak of objectivity.

In light of the release of this information to *The Intercept* as well as the fear of discriminatory conduct, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit in March of 2015 demanding the release of the documents relating to the TSA’s SPOT program. The TSA was required to turn over hundreds of documents and the ACLU released a report of the findings in February of 2017. The ACLU concluded that, “[t]he SPOT program lacks a scientific basis, is wholly ineffective, and has given rise to allegations of racial profiling. A scientific advisory group that reviewed the program found that ‘no scientific basis exists to support the detection or inference of future behavior, including intent.’ The Government Accountability Office also found that it lacked a scientific basis and

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recommended that Congress curtail funding for the program.”

When the GAO conducted their review in 2013, they interviewed numerous BDOs who said that some behavior detection indicators are subjective: “Twenty-One of the 25 behavior detection officers (BDO) GAO interviewed at four airports said that some behavioral indicators are subjective.”

With BDOs personal confirmation, it is clear that this “scientific” identification program is not objective, in fact, the opposite.

The Behavior Detection and Analysis Program is discriminatory and disproportionately targets undocumented immigrants more so than “supposed terrorists.” The SPOT program has been heavily criticized for not engaging in “casual conversations,” but more so engaging in “stealth interrogation.” The BDO enters into a conversation with the passenger; however, they also look for deception in the passenger’s behavior and initially suspect the passenger of harboring mal-intent. If one does not cooperate and give the officer information, one may also be subject to secondary screening or referred to law enforcement officials. “During a five-week period in 2007, Behavior Detection Officers at this airport identified 429 passengers for secondary screening based on their behavior, after which 47 were referred to law enforcement. Thirty-four of those referrals were suspected undocumented immigrants or those traveling with expired visas…Many of the referrals included statements like, ‘passenger

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was nervous due to his illegal status."

What’s more, most of the undocumented people who were targeted at the airport were targeted by virtue of not being able to speak English. Since 2007, the SPOT program has been criticized for not relying on “scientific technology,” and having yet to identify any supposed terrorists. An aviation security official even stated that, “If you are looking for people who exhibit multiple criteria on the checklist to reach the point of secondary screening or law enforcement referral, you’re just looking for illegal immigrants.”

The program’s yearly budget is two hundred and fifty million dollars. From 2007 to 2015 taxpayers have had to pay one and a half billion dollars to the program. In 2013, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted a review of the BDA program and found that the TSA had spent nearly nine hundred million dollars on funding for the program. The GAO recommended that the TSA should limit future funding of the program due to subjective detection of “potential terrorists,” no scientifically proven methods, as well as ineffectiveness in identifying a single “potential terrorist.” So, why is the TSA still funding the SPOT program even though they have yet to apprehend a single “suspected terrorist,” and have been openly criticized for discrimination as well as condemned for not actually relying on any “scientific evidence” for their program? The airport exists as a border site that effectively utilizes human and

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110 Ibid.
non-human actants to deter, immobilize, and render “suspect” precarious bodies. At the waiting area this is accomplished through practices of surveillance.

*Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV)*

In order for deterrence to be effective, the technology employed to deter people must also render certain bodies as “suspect.” Closed-Circuit Television technology does just this. Closed-Circuit Television technology or CCTV technology is both a video surveillance system and a sociotechnical device since it relies on science and technology as well as cultural and legal conditions and social representations. CCTV cameras allow for selected areas to be recorded and archived for long sustained periods of time. Thus, an archive of surveillance footage may be created, controlled, and manipulated. CCTV cameras are placed in points at the airport that are considered especially “high risk.” These areas include, airport lounges, shopping areas, toilets and entrance points. When there is more physical enclosure, additional surveillance is required, which entails more cameras in certain areas of the airport.  

The use of CCTV technology nearly function in the same way as Behavior Detection Officers (BDOs) in the SPOT program. However, CCTV technology lacks face-to-face interactions, rather it observes activity in the terminal from a remote location. CCTV cameras do not have the ability to “stop and search” an individual that the officer behind the camera deems as “suspicious.” When asked why the TSA uses CCTV technology at over one-hundred airports across the country, they said on their website: “Closed circuit television (CCTV) systems are sophisticated and integrated security networks which increase the safety and security of

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airport facilities, employees and passengers. The systems are an integral part of TSA and airport security operations, providing a high level of threat detection and enhancing emergency response.”

To date, the TSA has spent tens of millions of dollars to install CCTV cameras in airports across the United States. Just at Dallas Love Field Airport, the TSA was granted three point six million dollars to install CCTV cameras to “resolve” and “improve” security threats at the airport. Similarly at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, the TSA announced a six million dollar award to add additional CCTV cameras and upgrade cameras already in place.

Companies that attempt to sell CCTV technology to airports as well as to urban planning committees, sell the product as an “equalizing surveillance gaze.” They believe this in the sense that CCTV takes out individual biases in profiling, explicitly present in the Behavior Detection Officer Program, and that CCTV examines everyone moving through the airport, not specific individuals. In practice however, CCTV technology intensifies discrimination and exclusion. The video archive compiled from CCTV cameras amounts to large unmanageable sums of information—hundreds of hours of video surveillance—for the officer monitoring the video. Thus, the officer is granted the discretion to signal out people in the surveillance footage that they want to hone in on and target. Typically, this leads to profiling of who the officer thinks looks suspicious. CCTV cameras are equipped with pan, tilt, and zoom functions so that the officer can hone in on someone who they are targeting. Clive Norris, a sociology professor who

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115 Ibid.
focuses on and writes about CCTV technology, says, “[t]he result is an over-reliance on stereotypical categorization as the basis for determining whom to target, and a set of simplistic and rather unproductive working rules as to what behaviors are indicative of criminal intent. The surveillance gaze is still partial and is still discretionary and discriminatory.”

What’s more, because of the lack of face-to-face interactions with CCTV cameras, and thus the lack of information from the individual targeted by the officer, the officer behind the camera relies on subjective, normative, and often socialized, racist beliefs of what a “terrorist” and/or a “suspicious person” looks like. In fact, data from the police surveilling the general population show that, “Two-thirds (65 percent) of teenagers were surveilled for no obvious reason compared with only one in five (21 percent) of those aged over thirty. Similarly black people were twice as likely (68 percent) to be surveilled for ‘no obvious reason’ than white people (35 percent), and men three times (47 percent) more likely than women (16 percent).”

In the 1990s Visionics Corporation, a corporation that sells CCTV technology began developing “FaceIt” facial recognition technology. Visionics installed facial recognition technology in their cameras so as to solve the dual problem of prejudiced officials behind the camera, as well as the overload of video recordings in the system and the passive-ness of CCTV technology. Visionics also introduced “FaceIt Multiface,”

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117 Ibid., 266.
which can read multiple faces in an image continuously.\textsuperscript{119} “In the digital enclosure, individuals could be appropriately scanned, identified, and classified according to automatic determinations of whether or not they belonged, and excluded from the space if deemed a threat.”\textsuperscript{120} Facial recognition technologies in CCTV cameras determine who should be considered a threat through the government watchlist database. Often these watchlist databases for CCTV cameras on city streets crosscheck faces on the street with faces of known or wanted people with criminal convictions. However, “…the construction of a watchlist database involves forms of social classification, where particular assumptions about dangerous identities, including long-standing race- and class-based assumptions, unavoidably get designed into automated surveillance and identification systems.”\textsuperscript{121} It is clear that airport CCTV cameras are utilizing facial recognition technology to crosscheck their watchlist of “potential terrorist suspects.” It is also evident that the CCTV technology throughout the waiting area of the airport specifically target individuals who identify along varying axes of difference. Chapter Three will explore facial recognition technology’s fraught history and how it is always already imbued with racial and gendered biases. For now, it is still clear that if CCTV cameras are crosschecking potential suspects at the airport with an already racially charged and discriminatory watchlist, then the technology itself is always already racist in the same way. In fact, CCTV cameras are being installed specifically at Customs and Border Protection checkpoints in order to identify suspected terrorists and undocumented

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
immigrants or asylum seekers without identification papers.\textsuperscript{122} Chapter Three will also touch on CCTV cameras at immigration desks, however, it is important to note that again this technology is always already encoded with racial and gendered stereotypes that specifically target and deter minority populations at the airport.

\textit{If You See Something, Profile Someone}

In November of 2015, two Palestinian-Americans were stopped from boarding a plane because a passenger had told officials that the two were making her uncomfortable because they were speaking with each other in Arabic.\textsuperscript{123} A Sikh American activist and MSNBC contributor, Valerie Kaur was waiting on line to board a Delta flight to Los Angeles and was profiled by a white man on the line behind her: “…I [Valerie Kaur] removed the luggage tag on my carry-on. It carried my breast pump, and I needed to make milk on the flight. The passenger behind me raised his voice. Turned around. He was a white man and his face was angry, He asked why I removed the tag. I offered to explain but he said he didn’t want to know. Instead he told the other passengers in line. A gate agent arrived, alarmed and angered. I explained that I was a nursing mother, but she still didn’t let me board with my bag. Her face was just as angry. I had to pull out the breast pump to show her. Only then was I allowed to take my seat.”\textsuperscript{124} Another story shows that four men, two Bangladeshi Muslims, one Arab Muslim, and one Indian Sikh were removed from a flight from Toronto to New York City in December of 2015 for


“looking too Muslim.” These are only a few of the hundreds of reported examples of racial profiling at United States airports. It is clear that fear, racism, and Islamaphobia has been instilled in whom the airport considers as “subject.” All of these acts are a product of the “If You See Something, Say Something” campaign. The campaign exists as a vehicle for state sponsored racist bigotry in order to deter certain embodied individuals from moving or coming into this country, and also for it to go unchecked and unmonitored.

Not only do BDOs incite fear in travelers moving through the airport for projects of deterrence, the Department of Homeland Security incites fear in people who are considered “subject” by the airport. Generally, people who are cis-gendered, white, and American citizens are considered “subject,” and are kept safe at the United States airport. The campaign, “If You See Something, Say Something,” a nation-wide campaign originally created by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, encourages civilians to report any “terrorist or suspicious behavior.” The campaign was licensed to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as a nationwide campaign. “If You See Something, Say Something” Awareness Day was created and falls on September 25th. The campaign produces passengers who are active participants in the state’s surveillance practices. The government displaces responsibility for “catching terrorists” to everyday civilians—people who will not necessarily be held accountable in the same way as a government official would be, and people who have preconceived, racist ideas about

what a “terrorist” looks like. The campaign, “If You See Something, Say Something,” disproportionately targets minority populations and gives legitimacy to racist stereotyping by everyday white civilians.

What is the Waiting Area Doing?

This chapter exhibits actant-network theory in action in the hybrid collectif of human (Behavior Detection Officers and everyday civilians complicit with the “If You See Something, Say Something” campaign) and non-human actants (the design of the airport and the Closed Circuit Television cameras) in the airport waiting area. These actants work simultaneously to deter differently embodied individuals from moving within the United States and moving into the United States through techniques of surveillance. All of these human and non-human actants are marketed by companies and dismissed as “neutral,” meaning these actants act objectively on every individual moving through the airport. However, they are constantly differentiating who is a subject of the United States and who is a suspect and thus, a potential terrorist. If an individual is not affected by the hybrid collectif, then they have a lapse in knowledge concerning the discriminatory practices that are occurring at the airport. However, by adapting to the techniques and technologies and neglecting to question their utility, one is not only allowing the agenda of discrimination and deterrence to continue, one is also giving authority and legitimacy to the security apparatus that is in place. These technologies work in tandem with each other to accomplish the same goal: deterrence.

This chapter has demonstrated the use of the surveillance as a deterrence strategy in the waiting area of the airport. Now, one must turn to the ways in which a border is
constituted at the airport through the use of biometric technologies at Customs and Border Protection.
CHAPTER III: DECTECT/DETAIN/DETER

Customs and Border Protection at the airport is the clearest demarcation of the airport as a border site. It is also the site where “gray movement” is especially apparent and at work. This chapter will follow the same structure as the previous chapter with particular emphasis on the present technological threats that constitute the border at the airport. It will highlight the aspects of the deterrence state that should cause travellers alarm because they are constituted as “scientific authoritative knowledge,” and thus rendered as “objective.” In reality, though, they target and deter minority populations from moving within and coming into the United States.

At this point, it is imperative to define the term “biometrics.” “Biometrics” is when physical or psychological traits are measured, recorded, and quantified for the purposes of identification. In short, biometrics is a form of evidence gathering that relies heavily on the body and apparent features on the body.\(^{127}\) It is often marketed as answering two questions: the first, who is this person? “Often described as a I:N matching process, the presentation of a biometric template created in real time (called a live biometric) is checked against a database of stored biometric templates.”\(^{128}\) At the airport, the database that the Customs and Border Protection agent checks against is the government watchlist database. The second question that biometric technology is marketed to answer is: Is this person who they say they are? “Referred to as I:I matching process, verification checks the presentation of the live biometric with the person’s

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\(^{128}\) Ibid.
template stored in the database to determine if they match.”129 However, “it is useful to reduce the size of the database against which a particular individual is matched, especially when performing a one-to-many (I:N) search, and they rely upon gender, racial, and other categories of identity to reduce the population size (the N) against which the individual is screened.”130 By attempting to categorize individuals by race and gender though, how does this affect people who are mixed race and/or gender non-conforming? Those who are transgender? Not only do these biometric technologies work to exclude those who do not neatly fit into a constructed binary, they also exclude and deter immigrants and refugees from coming in the United States.

_Architecture Constituting Border_

The physical placement of Customs and Border Protection in the space after passengers disembark from a flight is both a functional and a strategic move by architects and airport planning committees. “Unlike checkpoints at the outer geographical border of each nation-state, security measures for ‘virtual borders’ within airports do not have to deal with large borderlines that need to be monitored and safeguarded but are instead concentrated on specific checkpoints, where passengers ‘naturally’ arrive through corridors and moving walkways from their planes.”131 A passenger cannot physically leave the airport without going through Customs and Border Protection after debarking from an international flight into the United States.

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129 Ibid.
130 Ibid., 33.
This space heavily relies on a degree of self-discipline, meaning, travellers will self-sort into lines according to their citizenship status. “There is a common structure to passport controls (facilitated by design companies and architects) in which an entry hall is divided into lines (often drawn on the floor) that lead to inspection booths. Although there is often an armed presence, the degree to which passport control relies on the assumption of self-discipline is remarkable. There is no evidence that any passport control space physically restrains illegal entry—there are no gates, no doors, and no barriers other than those that authority presents.” The anxiety around self-sorting and performing citizenship well is prolific at this juncture. The power that the physical space exerts on precarious passengers produces docile bodies who are then subject to state power and violence. This is the border at the airport today.

However, it is important to note that while there are no physical restraints and the space relies heavily on self-discipline, this does not mean that the physical space is not threatening nor completely accessible. In fact, the space relies on its threatening nature and inaccessibility to deter people from moving within or into the United States. “The authority of the passport officer as the gatekeeper of the nation is embedded in the structure of the space of interrogation. The officer protected by a booth and a uniform, takes each traveller individually and compares the individual to the document presented. This examination generally lasts between two and three minutes. The language of examination is often the national language or English.” It is important to note that the authority of the state lies with the passport inspection officer, who is further protected by

133 Ibid.
the physical space that they exist in (i.e. a booth, and sometimes a podium). This
intentional architectural choice, signals to the traveller a degree of protectionism by the
state. The state chooses to protect its values while simultaneously acting authoritatively
on precarious bodies and inciting fear in the traveller. Simultaneously, the idea of an
inspection officer sitting in a booth plays on the xenophobic trope of immigrants and
people not from the United States acting as “contaminants” and “bringing in disease.”
This is a xenophobic trope especially prevalent at the US-Mexico border, and now, has
been transposed onto the border at the airport.134 At the same time, a U.S. Immigration
and Naturalization Service (INS) agent “hold significantly unchecked rights to detain,
search, and interrogate all persons, citizens or not, who must surrender themselves for
inspection before they acquire permission to enter the country—and more complete
rights there.”135 The rights of any traveller moving through Customs and Border
Protection are held in this gray territory—“gray movement.” In gray movement, the
sovereign power is diffused to authorities at the border, where these agents have
unchecked power within the law on the bodies that move through this space. The lack of
knowledge about the laws of the country of individuals coming into the United States,
only further exacerbates the uninhibited authority that the state maintains at this
juncture.

134 Julia Belluz, “Fox News says the migrant caravan will bring disease outbreaks. That’s xenophobic
nonsense: Smallpox was eradicated in the 20th century,” Vox, updated November 1, 2018,
smallpox-outbreaks-vaccines-xenophobia.
135 Mark B. Salter, Rights of Passage: The Passport in International Relations, (London: Lynne Rienner
Publishers, 2003), 127.
What’s more, there is a line for individuals who hold a “Global Entry Card.” If a passenger possesses a Global Entry Card, they are able to skip all of the lines at Customs and Border Protection and just scan their passport. To be eligible for a Global Entry Card, one has to pay a fee upfront of one hundred dollars, as well as be a citizen or lawful resident of the United States. One must also provide a host of biometric information to the state when one applies for a card, which they then keep on file. In order to be immediately constituted as subject at the airport as well as have expedited entry into the United States, one must sacrifice one’s biometric information to a government database. This presents a host of problems, including possible continued surveillance by the state. To summarize, lines are divided at Customs and Border Protection into who belongs in the United States and who does not belong. It is made increasingly more apparent by those who can afford to pay for the “Global Entry” program, and those who are citizens. Although those who get Global Entry Cards, and those who are citizens, get expedited entry into the United States at the airport, those individuals are not exempt from random screening at the airport. Often, minority groups that do have a Global Entry Card are still considered “suspect” when moving through the airport and are signaled out for further screening.

Another aspect of Customs and Border Protection is the problem of language. Language is not necessarily, but implicitly, inaccessible at this border site. The individual is subject to overt policing without any knowledge of the laws of the country that they

136 Part of what inspired this project was when I witnessed two Albanian women, who did not speak English, attempting to move through Customs and Border Protection. The Customs and Border Protection agent was yelling at the two women and said, “Why would you come to this country if you can’t speak English?”
are entering, which becomes increasingly difficult when English is not a first language. This ambiguity of language, place, and power puts travelers who do not speak English seriously at risk when moving through an airport in the United States. What’s more, by refusing to make the airport more accessible to people who speak a language other than English, the modern day United States airport is consciously reasserting a national identity that is predicated on homogeneity, whiteness, and exclusion.

Both the passenger attempting to move through the airport and the Customs and Border Protection agent is performing for the state in separate and directly oppositional ways. The state must perform security in their fight against the “War on Terror” through the Customs and Border Protection agent at the airport. They must also act as a quasi-border site by checking visas, citizenship status, and the like. Simultaneously, the traveler must comply with the state and its power by acting “non-suspect.” Figure 1 below depicts the long lines at Customs and Border Protection at John F. Kennedy Airport in Jamaica, New York. The image shows passengers self-disciplining themselves into lines of “U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents,” and “Visitors.” Everyone who is not a “U.S. Citizen” or a “Permanent Resident” is considered a “Visitor.” These signs do not address individuals who are seeking asylum, have a work or student visa, or are applying for citizenship. This image was taken by Customs and Border Protection, which indicates that they are part of the few who has access to photography in this space and

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137 When I did an externship at the Legal Aid Society of New York under the supervision of an immigration attorney, she explained to me that most undocumented people in the United States, asylum seekers, and people residing in the US, who don’t have proper paperwork, get stopped, detained, and arrested at the airport when they return from abroad. The airport clearly aids in this project of targeting and deterrence through their techniques and technologies whether intentionally or not.
can construct a narrative concerning what’s happening at the airport; whether that be one of protectionism, exclusion, or both.

Figure 1: The above photo depicts the long lines and the division between “US. Citizens” and “Visitors” at Customs and Border Protection at JFK Airport (Source: https://travelskills.com/2016/03/08/arrivals-face-longest-customs-waits-at-jfk-sfo/)

Travellers who are U.S. Citizens, U.S. legal permanent residents, Canadian citizens, travelers using ESTA (Visa Waiver Program), and travellers entering with a B1/B2 or D visa, are allowed to use Automated Passport Control kiosks, which expedite the entry process at Customs and Border Protection. These kiosks are used to respond to CBP inspection questions and to submit biographic information. To use the kiosk, the passenger first scans their passport; then they take a photo at the kiosk; finally they answer a series of questions. Once the passenger has done this, they will be issued a

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receipt, which they will bring to a CBP officer to finalize their inspection for entry into the United States.¹³⁹ It is clear that the U.S. born traveller is prioritized over other travellers moving through the U.S. airport. The expedited wait time for travellers who are already citizens of the United States not only assumes that citizens of the United States do not commit acts of terror within U.S. territory, it also assumes that everyone who is not a citizen of the United States has the potential to commit terrorist acts and therefore should be screened more intensely and for a longer amount of time.¹⁴⁰ This is true for most other countries in the world and further proves that nation-states take priority over those they accept as their subjects. These kiosks compare the photo scanned from a traveller’s passport to a live photo taken at the kiosk of the traveller. It then uses facial recognition to verify to user’s identity, which poses problems that will be discussed in later sections of this chapter. Figure 2 below illustrates the Automated Passport Control kiosk. This image was taken from the official website of the Department of Homeland Security demonstrating the propaganda efforts by the government in an attempt to show that they are not discriminatory by showing white men being screened at these kiosks. Simultaneously the image un-does itself by showing that those that are prioritized and given expedited screening at Customs and Border Protection are indeed white men.

¹⁴⁰ It is important to recall white nationalist movements and pre-meditated shootings by white nationalists as terrorist groups and acts of terror in the United States. There is no clear indication that these individuals are being stopped, detained, and arrested at the airport or are on any government watchlist database.
The “Biometric Border”

The Passport:

There has been a shift to reading the body that is, reading biometric information when individuals are travelling. The passport is a simple technology at the airport that relies heavily on biometrics. “Biometric technology is at the core of the passport document: it certifies some physical connection of the documented identity to the body possessing it. Before the widespread use of photography, applicants were obliged to describe their facial features, hair color, eye color, height, and ‘any distinguishing marks or peculiarities.”  


142 Mark B. Salter, Rights of Passage: The Passport in International Relations, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 94.
reinforces the notion that the border that is constituted at the airport is neither natural nor neutral. In order to elaborate on this point, the fraught history of the passport and biometric information gathering must be examined.

Passports began in the 19th century with the formation of the nation-state and the desire of the state to control movement and determine who belonged within the state. This also entailed the exclusion, surveillance, and detainment of those who the state felt did not belong, whether that is based on ethnic, national, racial, economic, religious, or ideological attributes. However, the passport was not the first state documentation of individuals. State documentation of individuals may be traced back to branding, scarification, tattooing, and dress codes. These explicit forms of state-sponsored violence and documentation have taken a new form in the passport. While the birth of the nation-state entailed a shift to photography, fingerprinting, and retina scans as a form of documenting individual travellers, it is imperative to remember that their uses are primarily the same as their fraught history: accepting and excluding individuals as state subjects.

The modern international passport can be traced back to the period following World War I. This was prompted by the League of Nations’ control of refugees by the Nansen passport regime as well as the British Passport Office’s institutional innovations. In short, the birth of the modern passport came from both a “liberal desire” for travel and trade, as well as “postwar skepticism towards foreigners and

144 Ibid., 14.
spies.”146 “The first modern reintroduction of biometric information was the use of fingerprints to identify ‘illiterates,’ as opposed to the ‘ordinary Britisher.’ This particular anxiety of reading the written identity, understood as the unique signature, is linked to those applicants of Indo-Pakistani origin who ‘can only print his signature labouriously, or can only sign in oriental script.’ The Indo-Pakistani immigrant group was treated differently for its supposed propensity for passport fraud as well as for writing in a different language.”147 The origin of the modern day passport came about from the discrimination of “Indo-Pakistani migrants” by the British. The passport was created and predicated upon the exclusion of people who were not citizens of the country they were traveling to, or seeking asylum in.

One year following the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the U.S. National Security Entry-Exit Registration program was put in place. “It attempts to supplement the passport system through registration of certain suspect nationals (e.g. from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia and ‘certain nationals of other countries whom the State Department and the Immigration Naturalization Service determine to be an elevated national security risk’). Plainly, then, national, racial, and religious stereotypes inform the profiling and inspection system.”148 This database that corresponds to the Entry/Exit Registration program, is always already encoded with racial, national, and religious biases and stereotypes of the people that are encoding it. Today, the passport particularly regulates the movement of folks who are immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. This is not dissimilar from the history of the

146 Ibid.
147 Ibid., 94.
148 Ibid., 132.
passport following the end of World War I. Today, the passport displays the photo of the bearer as well as a number. It also indicates the bearer’s country of origin, and thus, the state to which the bearer may be deported. At Customs and Border Protection, the passport photo, along with a live photo of the passport bearer, is checked against the government watchlist database. Passports have been used and are still being used to categorize individuals into “subject” and “suspect,” and the identifying document often leads to misidentifications, discrimination, and deportation. Ironically, the document that is purposed to verify a traveler’s identity simultaneously renders the traveler as suspect and subject to deportation, even to a country they are potentially fleeing.

“When the ‘nationality of the passport does not seem to follow the line of the name’ or picture, or lips…then the 'body is suspect.'” This is especially pertinent for those who identify as transgender or gender non-binary. When a traveller’s name does not match the name on their passport, they are subject to more regulation on their movement. The National Center for Transgender Equality suggests that the name that the traveller is booking their flight under should match the name on their passport. They say that it does not matter whether the traveller’s gender representation matches the gender marker on one’s ID or one’s presentation in one’s ID photo and that the agent should not comment on this. Even though agents are not supposed to comment on this they often do in the name of “safety and security.” What’s more, transgender and

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gender non-binary passengers are still signaled out if they are going through Automated Passport Control kiosks because of gendered facial recognition technology.

Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV):

“Unidentifiable enemies’ provided justification for a set of policy proposals after 9/11, including arguments in favor of stepped-up funding for the development and widespread deployment of facial recognition and other biometric identification systems.”\(^{152}\) The remainder of this chapter will cover these various technologies that were employed and heightened following 9/11. These include, but are not limited to, Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras as well as facial recognition, which is also incorporated in CCTV cameras. It is just these “unidentifiable enemies” that the airport is consistently producing and which this thesis refers to as “suspects.” The ambiguous language around this term, which allows for loose and discriminatory interpretations, has been codified not only in law and policy, but also is encoded in the technologies that are at the airport. Because CCTV cameras are encoded with discriminatory facial recognition technology, these cameras are not neutral agents at the airport—they act subjectively based on the will and power of the state that has encoded them.

It is no accident that CCTV cameras are installed here. There are many ways in which the face may be obscured and not recognized from the footage in the waiting area of the airport. In order to avoid this, airports place cameras in more secure locations like

immigration desks.\textsuperscript{153} Airports position cameras here because they know that passengers are “naturally arriving” at these sites from their planes.\textsuperscript{154} “…Biometrical face recognition through CCTV constitutes one of the purest examples of camera-based access control. While this technology is used in other border zones, airports commonly figure among the privileged places for its use…the scan of a passenger’s face is intended for computer-based identification of asylum seekers without identification papers.”\textsuperscript{155} The strategic placement of these cameras primarily immobilizes asylum seekers as well as immigrants and refugees who are not carrying proper paperwork. The CCTV cameras utilize their already embedded facial recognition technology to identify or mis-identify people at immigration desks. As mentioned in Chapter 2, CCTV cameras are a form a surveillance control technology that are operated by individuals who already have biases against differently embodied individuals. This chapter will return to how the facial recognition technology embedded in CCTV cameras also hold their own biases because they are encoded with racist and gendered stereotypes that inevitably target and deter individuals who belong to specific identity groups from coming into or moving within the United States.

\textit{Facial Recognition Technology:}

The ACLU recently reported that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is beginning to launch a “Traveler Verification System” (TVS) that would use facial


\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 110.
recognition technology on all of its passengers, including citizens of the United States. Their plan is to install facial recognition technology at all boarding gates and to use facial recognition cameras on all cross-border passengers. In fact, this technology is already being used at six airports across the United States. These include, Boston Logan Airport, New York John F. Kennedy Airport, Washington, District of Columbia Dulles Airport, Atlanta Hartford-Jackson Airport, Chicago O’Hare Airport, and Houston Bush Airport.\textsuperscript{156} The system operates by obtaining the passenger manifest for each flight, and then goes through sets of databases to assemble photographs for each passenger. The database will then compare these photos from the databases to the live photo taken by the CCTV camera at the boarding gate. This recent technology has been hailed as “neutral” and “objective,” a technique that will come to replace and correct for human failure and racial and gendered profiling. “…In an online discussion on the use of iris scanners at the U.S.-Canada border, one discussant claimed that he would prefer ‘race-neutral’ biometric technologies to racist customs border officials.”\textsuperscript{157} Figure 3 was taken from an online news source. The image shows a Customs and Border Protection officer using a CCTV camera with facial recognition technology and checking the live photo with the photo on the individual’s passport. At the airport the people who primarily have access to photography are either the CBP themselves or news organizations that will promote their new technology. When this image is contextualized, it is clear that the news organization is trying to help advertise CCTV and facial recognition at the airport.


by showing a white man being screened. In doing so, they attempt to show that everyone at the airport will be screened, that the technology is “objective” and does not target minority groups. This myth of the “objective gaze” of technology will be debunked over the course of this section and the harmful effects that this technology has on differently embodied subjects will be illustrated. It will also push against the narrative that these new biometric technologies at the airport are speeding people through processes that would take much longer. One should first ask, who is being sped along? Who is being held back?

Figure 3: The above image demonstrates the use of facial recognition technology at Customs and Border Patrol in JFK Airport (Source: https://www.newsday.com/news/new-york/kennedy-lands-facial-recognition-tool-to-help-id-travelers-1.11342786.)

The US Visitor and Immigration Status Indicator Technology (US VISIT),

system was recently replaced by the Office of Biometric Identity Management (OBIM) in March 2013. However, they both essentially serve, and continue to serve, the same

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function. The OBIM provides technology for collecting and storing biometric data, provides analysis, continuously updates its watchlist, and “ensures the data’s integrity.” The databases that they pull from include, “IDENT, a biometric database that stores and identifies electronic fingerprints on all foreign visitors, immigrants and asylum seekers; ADIS, storing travellers entry and exit data; APIS, containing passenger manifest information; SEVIS, containing data on all foreign and exchange students in the United States; IBIS, a ‘lookout’ watch list interfaced with Interpol and national crime data; CLAIMS3, holding information on foreign nationals claiming benefits; and an array of links to finance and banking, education, and health databases.” The United States government has collected this information from the surveillance of every individual coming into the country. These databases are then used to profile passengers who the system considers “risky;” it accomplishes this by checking hits against passenger visas and manifests. Essentially, the system will use this data compiled from their databases and match them with biometric identifiers of the passenger in real time; such as, electronic fingerprints, facial and gait recognition, and iris scans. “Whereas, the trusted traveller biometrics tend to emphasize membership of (or inclusion in) a group based on prescreening checks such as citizenship and past travel patterns, what I will call immigrant biometrics are based on ongoing surveillance and checks on patterns of behaviour.” A false dichotomy has been created between those who constitute as “trusted,” or who are referred to throughout this project as “subject,” and those who constitute as “risky,” or

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161 Ibid., 343.
who are referred to as “suspect.” Those who are more often than not, treated as “suspect” at the airport, and those identified as needing more biometric screening are immigrants, refugee claimants, and visitors.¹⁶² In the above quote Louise Amoore, a Professor of Political Geography at Durham University, invites one to consider the concept of “immigrant biometrics.” Immigrant biometrics is always already excluded from “trusted traveller biometrics.” Yet, this rendering is not exclusive to this group; individuals who are citizens or permanent residents may be rendered suspect if they belong to one or many minority groups.

Facial recognition technology is always already encoded with racist, gendered, religious, and nationalistic biases. There is an urgent need to critique these biases implicit in facial recognition technology and acknowledge that this technology is not and should not be hailed as “objective.” Following the inception of the US VISIT program and its change into OBIM, various civil liberties agencies mobilized and questioned the possibilities of “false hit” rates. There are many different ways in which facial recognition technology can fail: “One is the false acceptance rate, in which a person who is not you is accepted as you. The false rejection rate occurs when you are not accepted as you. This is usually given as a percentage of chance of somebody else erroneously being identified as you. Another type of error is the failure to enroll, often given as a percentage of the possibility of someone failing to be enrolled in the system at all.”¹⁶³ The Custom and Border Protection’s (CBP’s) Deputy Executive Assistant Commissioner, John Wagner, has disclosed that there is a 4% false negative rate, meaning that one in twenty five

¹⁶³ Ibid., 22.
people will be told that they are not who they claim to be. However, cis-gendered white men are read correctly by facial recognition technology nearly 100% of the time. The darker the traveller’s skin is, the greater the technological failure. In fact, when facial recognition technology is “programmed generally for all ethnicities,” it will be more inclined to classify every African person as male and every Asian person as female.

*Figure 4* shows composite portraits of Black men, Black women, white men, and white women. Three facial recognition technologies were tested on the four composite images and all three came back with the lowest acceptance rates for Black women.

There is also a greater degree of failure with those who are elderly, those who have disabilities, those who have visual impairments, and those who are wheelchair users: “You must be able to stand and have relatively normative vision to use the NEXUS-Air biometric scanners; thus wheelchair users and those with visual disabilities may not participate in the program.” Not to mention, there is a gendered failure for people who identify as trans-gender and people who identify as non-binary. The technology is designed to primarily recognize able-bodied cis-gendered white middle-aged men; that is, it has the highest acceptance rate for blue-eyed males with good eyesight and no

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166 Composite portraiture is the process by which my faces are layered on top of one another to produce one face that represents every individual in an identity group. The process is deeply rooted in the eugenics movement and one of its first uses was by Francis Galton who made a composite portrait of Jewish subjects.
disabilities.\textsuperscript{168} However, it is no accident that this is the case. CBP simultaneously benefits from the failures of their biometric screening practices. To be clear, CBP has knowledge of the failures of their technology and still uses the technology every day. When there is a failure, individuals get signaled out for further screening. This might mean additional bag checks, pat-downs, or detainment.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Gender & Darker & Darker & Lighter & Lighter & Largest \\
Classifier & Male & Female & Male & Female & Gap \\
\hline
Microsoft & 94.0\% & 79.2\% & 100\% & 98.3\% & 20.8\% \\
\hline
FACE+ & 99.3\% & 65.5\% & 99.2\% & 94.0\% & 33.8\% \\
\hline
IBM & 88.0\% & 65.3\% & 99.7\% & 92.9\% & 34.4\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Figure 4}: “A study found that popular face ID systems are more likely to work for white men” (Source: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-5382979/Study-finds-popular-face-ID-systems-racial-bias.html) \textsuperscript{169}


The Officers

Customs and Border Protection describe themselves as, “one of the world’s largest law enforcement agencies that is charged with keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the U.S. while facilitating lawful international travel and trade.” This section will focus on the false dichotomy drawn at the airport border site: those who are lawful and those who are not. It will look into whom CBP constitutes as “suspect”—those who are “un-lawful” and “terrorist” and those who are “subject”—those who “lawfully” engage in travel and trade. CBP particularly prioritizes the time and travel of white cis-gendered able-bodied white men, whereas most others—and more specifically queer people, people of color, and immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers—are targeted, harassed, and detained.

The ACLU has a “Know Your Rights” page for travelers who move through U.S. airports. They give a complete overview of the powers of Customs and Border Protection officers at the airport, which will be summarized here. Generally, a Customs and Border Protection officer may stop, detain, or search any person or item at the border, even if there is nothing “suspicious” about an individual and if an individual is traveling with valid papers. Even though Customs and Border Protection officers may not select individuals for personal searches or secondary inspection based on religion, race, national origin, gender, ethnicity, or political beliefs, officers are given a wide discretion as to who they consider to be “suspicious,” and more often than not minority groups get targeted for secondary screening at the airport. Customs and Border Protection officers often ask

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about travelers’ political beliefs, associations and practices—particularly Brown travelers. If an individual is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident they may refuse to answer these questions and will not be denied entry into the U.S. for declining to answer these questions.\footnote{ACLU, “Know Your Rights: What To Do When Encountering Law Enforcement at Airports and Other Ports of Entry Into the U.S.,” American Civil Liberties Union, accessed March 12, 2019, https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/what-do-when-encountering-law-enforcement-airports-and-other-ports-entry-us.}

However, if an individual is a non-citizen visa holder and an officer asks them these questions, they may decline to answer the questions yet, it will probably lead to delay, additional questioning, or possible denial of entry into the United States. The Customs and Border Protection officer also has the right to ask an individual about their immigration status when they are entering or returning to the United States or leaving the country. Generally speaking, any questions that a Customs and Border Protection officer asks a traveler that they decline to answer, and they are a non-citizen visa holder, they may be subject to delay, additional questioning, or possible denial of entry into the United States. If a traveler fears that if they are sent back to their country of origin they will be persecuted, they may tell the officer about their fears and ask for asylum.\footnote{Ibid.}

Following 9/11, there has been a heightened anxiety about false documentation at the airport. Measures have been put in place that guarantee Customs and Border Protection officers have discretion in asking questions and rendering travellers as “suspect.” One such measure allows an immigration agent to enact “expedited removal.” This allows an officer, with the approval of a supervisor, to bar non-citizens from the United States for five years, if in their judgment, the individual presented false
documentation or misrepresented their self. In short, the discretion of the CBP officer is virtually unlimited in deciding whether or not to admit an individual into the United States, thus constituting that individual as “subject.” However, considering 9/11, Islamaphobia, and the fear mongering and “Muslim Ban” by the Trump administration, many CBP officers are unlawfully stopping, detaining, and deterring differently embodied individuals from coming into the United States due to discriminatory practices that privilege the safety and passage of white cis-gendered able-bodied men.

Sahaj Kohli, a Senior Editor at the Huff Post, documents her traveling experience on Twitter. She once tweeted about the racist practices that specifically target Sikhs who wear turbans, and anyone who wears a hat or a headscarf: “So Customs kiosks won’t take your photo if you’re wearing a hat or scarf, and apparently a turban is a hat and you have to go through a special line if you are wearing one. Shocker. #travelingwhilebrown.” Kohli’s story at the airport proves that both facial recognition technology and their human counterparts are always already racially biased against Brown people moving through the airport. Her story, and the story that follows this one, also show that people who are citizens and live in the United States are similarly being targeted if they are not cis-gendered able-bodied white men. Clearly, this phenomenon is not exclusive to foreign nationals. Many people within the United States are being targeted for not being cis-gendered able-bodied white men at the airport.

One story in particular that came up especially frequently in this research is entitled, “The Case of the Exploding Chocolate.” Qasim Rashad, an attorney, national spokesperson, and author for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA, was travelling from London Heathrow Airport to Virginia Dulles Airport. After being “randomly selected” by a Customs and Border Protection officer, brought into an interrogation room and having his belongings X-Rayed and cleared, was stopped again by another officer. The next officer said that he needed to check Rashad’s bag again. The officer took out a chocolate bar from Rashad’s bag, and asked what it was and where Rashad had bought it. After Rashad had explained where he got the chocolate bar and that it was for his son, the officer decided that they needed to test it for explosives. He was cleared nearly three times by CBP officers; however, another officer stopped Rashad and confiscated his Global Entry card for being “non-compliant” and for laughing at the officers. After Rashad was verbally harassed and berated by the officers and their supervisor, they asked him what he did for a living. Rashad understands that his career as a civil rights lawyer specializing in racial and religious discrimination and profiling affords him knowledge of the law to a greater degree than other individuals moving through the airport. When he tells the officers that he is a lawyer, they let him leave. After he left he thought, “Now imagine I’m an undocumented asylee who doesn’t speak English, after a 2,000 mile trip with a baby—and you have to face CBP? What possible chance do you stand at receiving fair treatment?”175 Frequently, those who are undocumented asylees who do not speak English are berated and harassed in the same

way that Rashad was berated and harassed. They are signaled out for further screening and are deported without warrant or process. Facial recognition technology and CCTV cameras, as well as passports, only further aid this process of deterrence, detainment, and deportation.

What is Customs and Border Protection Doing?

It is important to examine the structures that are in place in the deterrence state that execute deterrence strategies in the United States. Customs exists as a “biometric border,” or even a “smart wall,” that utilizes both human and non-humans to prevent and deter individuals from coming into the United States. Even though these techniques and technologies vary dramatically throughout each space in the airport, it is imperative to remember that regardless of the individual space of the airport, these forms of deterrence are still accomplishing the same goal. These techniques and technologies are all effectively deterring individuals who exist along multiple axes of difference from coming into the United States. They exist in a hybrid collectif that incorporates both humans and non-humans to enact agency on subjects, which may render these subjects as suspect. While it is useful to remember that humans produce most of these technologies, one cannot forget that without these technologies in place at the airport, the space would not function in the same way. That is, deterrence at the airport would be much weaker without these technologies. Technologies at the airport act as silent non-human partners in the deterrence strategies in the United States. It is not enough to attribute all agencies to human actors when in fact technology has been encoded with human biases and perform power and violence on precarious subjects in the same way.
There needs to be a balance of both security at the airport and respect of basic human rights. The hybrid collectif of the airport, as it exists now, is entirely contradictory to this mindset.

While this project primarily focused on the deterrence projects in the United States, these techniques and technologies of deterrence are also prevalent in many other countries. In fact, over the course of this study it became increasingly glaring that the United States was never the proprietor of these deterrence programs—when often they originated in Western European countries that have historically refused entry to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The United States is an interesting case study in itself to look at; yet, it may also be useful to look at deterrence as a global phenomenon and critically engage with the idea that there are many other “hybrid collectifs” at play in other countries that accomplish the same goal.

_Room for Resistance?_

To accept the airport hybrid collectif and all its actants is to give authority and power to the state to target and deter those they wish to exclude. By adapting to the techniques and technologies of the security state, one grants it that authority. However, by refusing to comply with and actively work against this system of power and hierarchy is to render oneself subject to targeting, harassment, and detainment if one hasn’t been rendered so already. So, is there any possible way to resist these techniques and technologies being employed at the airport?

One mode of resistance is that individuals choose a different primary mode of travel. However in doing so, expediency is sacrificed. Driving or taking another mode of
public transportation is slower and, while not as overt as the airport, employ other means of targeting and surveilling individuals. Can an option be found to balance ease of travel, safety, speed, and lack of surveillance by the government?

Artists and activists have created “masks” to avoid facial recognition technology. One such artist includes Zach Blas, who created an amorphous mask, which he calls the “Fag Face Mask.” The mask was generated from the biometric facial data of multiple faces of queer men in response to the notion that facial recognition technology is able to discern sexuality in individual faces. Even though the mask confuses facial recognition technology due to it reading many faces at once, it is an impractical tool for the airport. In trying to hide from the technology that targets, one is instead rendered hyper-visible by wearing the mask. Figure 5 below is an image of the “Fag Face Mask” in use. Similar to Zach Blas’s mask, artist Adam Harvey developed a technique known as “CV Dazzle.” Similarly, CV Dazzle explores how fashion and makeup can be used to hide from facial recognition technology. However, one runs into the same problem with the “Fag Face Mask” in that by trying to hide from facial recognition technology, one stands out. Is there any way to strategically avoid facial recognition technology without inherently drawing attention to oneself?

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176 Here I am primarily thinking about license plate scanners on the highway as a means of police surveillance technology. There are various other techniques and technologies with other modes of transit that are worth exploring in another project.
One may also resist these techniques and technologies by rendering them as “suspect” and visible. This may be done through the recording of these practices in action at the airport, however, not everyone has access to a recording device while in transit. The American Civil Liberties Union, as well as, the Southern Poverty Law Center have made a point to expose these discriminatory techniques and technologies on their website and in their publications. They have also filed various lawsuits against the Department of Homeland Security alleging discriminatory conduct. These acts have done a good deal in exposing the security and deterrence state at the airport, yet, courts have repeatedly ruled in favor of the state’s practices.


180 As mentioned in Chapter One, “sousveillance” has been increasingly restricted and policed at the airport. Most individual’s phones are taken away in attempts to record discriminatory acts and harassment. Individuals must also put their phones in X-Ray machines when they are moving through the security line.
CONCLUSION

While there is little room for resistance to these modes of deterrence, it is vital to engage with the ways in which this system can be spoken about and avoided. The recent rhetoric and rebuttal of a “smart wall,” or a “technological wall,” by Democrats to the Trump administration’s physical border wall must be looked at critically. After months of battle and gridlock between Congress and the President over the Trump administration’s campaign promise of a cement border wall, tentative new deals were reached to build a “smart wall” along the border between the United States and Mexico. Top Democrats said that they would fund $5.7 billion dollars for border security if the funds went to a “smart wall.” Although these plans went awry when Trump declared a national emergency and diverted funds to build his original border wall, it is critical to examine what the Democrats were proposing as an alternative. This “smart wall” would include drones, artificial intelligence, and other “unspecified cutting-edge technology.”

Serious human rights issues, as well as privacy risks, arise from this proposal to implement a “smart wall” at the US-Mexico border. The drones will serve to take photographs of millions of people, both citizen and non-citizen, in this border zone. It will then store these images in large privatized databases. The drones will be equipped with facial recognition technology, already encoded with biases particularly against people of color, and will share this information with law enforcement officials.

Surveillance and policing troubles will ensue from the implementation of this technology.

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182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
at the US-Mexico border. Fight for the Future, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, and the American Civil Liberties Union filed a letter to the House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi (D-California), saying that these technologies the Democrats were pushing to incorporate at the border would infringe on the liberties of immigrants, travelers, and people who live near the border.\textsuperscript{184} “They said such proposals would lead to deployment of facial recognition surveillance at the border; funding for automatic license plate readers that would collect information beyond the scope of cars crossing the border; and the automated immigration enforcement such as ‘predictive policing’ that rely on mathematical analytics to prevent potential crime.”\textsuperscript{185} There is also increasing concern over the expansion of these techniques that would entail increased reliance on drone surveillance, biometric screening, and the collection of immigrants’ DNA.

The Democrats call for a “smart wall” is not innovative nor does it ameliorate the existing inequalities at border-sites. In fact, it exacerbates them. There has been a good deal of opposition to the Democrats call for a smart border among activists and journalists alike. It is clear from examining the airport that biometric identification technologies and the like target and discriminate against minority populations. What would happen if these technologies were to be used to document undocumented migrants attempting to cross the already harsh terrain of the desert at the US-Mexico border? There are already human rights violations at the US-Mexico border today, and a “smart wall” is no solution to these violations. While some Democrats push for a


\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
technological border at the US-Mexico border is alarming, it is crucial to remember that there is already a “smart wall” at the modern day US airport. This thesis posited that US airports are similar to the desert at the US-Mexico border. However, if a “smart wall” ever comes to fruition at the US-Mexico border, it is imperative to continue this analysis but instead compare the desert to the airport.

There is little room for resistance at these border-sites, as well as, a “smart wall” that already exists at United States airports today. One must continue to engage with, bring attention to, and fight against these systemic inequalities and deterrence strategies that continue to harm individuals in transit.

This project began by extending Callon and Law’s theoretical concept of the “hybrid collectif” and assessing its utility in understanding better how the space of the airport exists as a deterrent. Throughout my explorations I have suggested the airport be rendered as a similar site to that of the desert above the US-Mexico border. At first we might not think they are similar since their form physically differs. Yet, as examination has shown, both their functions similarly perform violence on precarious bodies. The end of this project demonstrated those effects on subjects that exist along multiple axes of difference, particularly, migrants and undocumented individuals coming into the United States. Airports are a relevant topic of analysis not only because they exist as a quasi-border site, but also because by looking at these institutions of state power, one views gender, race, religion, disability, and citizenship status differently. As I have argued, the airport is critical to center in feminist, gender, and sexuality studies because it clearly demonstrates the tension and entanglement of intersectional identities and state power.
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