trans- bodies in/of war(s): cisprivilege and contemporary security strategy

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abstract
This article explores a gendered dimension of war and conflict analysis that has up until now received little attention at the intersection of gender studies and studies of global politics: queer bodies in, and genderqueer significations of, war and conflict. In doing so, the article introduces the concept of cisprivilege to International Relations as a discipline and security studies as a core sub-field. Cisprivilege is an important, but under-explored, element of the constitution of gender and conflict. Whether it be in controversial reactions to the suggestion of United Nations Special Rapporteur Martin Scheinin that airport screenings for terrorists not discriminate against transgendered people, or in structural violence that is ever-present in the daily lives of many individuals seeking to navigate the heterosexist and cissexist power structures of social and political life, war and conflict is embodied and reifies cissexism. This article makes two inter-related arguments: first, that both the invisibility of genderqueer bodies in historical accounts of warfare and the visibility of genderqueer bodies in contemporary security strategy are forms of discursive violence; and second, that these violences have specific performative functions that can and should be interrogated. After constructing these core arguments, the article explores some of the potential benefits of an interdisciplinary research agenda that moves towards the theorisation of cisprivilege in security theory and practice.

keywords

gender; queer; war; cisprivilege; violence; security
introduction: words ‘like thunder’ and a note on punctuation

I can’t hear my own voice say the words out loud. I’ve got no language … I’ve got no words for feelings that are tearing me apart. What would our words sound like? … Like thunder, maybe.

Leslie Feinburg, Stone Butch Blues (1993: 275)

An increasingly broad and sophisticated literature addresses the relationships between gender, war and militarism, both historically and in the twenty-first century. This work addresses war and militarism as both gendered and productive of gender, at the individual, state and international level, detecting the presence, and skillfully interrogating the concept, of masculine privilege in the realm of security theory and practice. This article seeks to examine a form of invisible privilege that is becoming known as ‘cispriilege’ (a neologism we discuss further below; briefly, ‘cispriilege’ is the privilege enjoyed by people who identify wholly with, feel comfortable in, are seen to belong to or ‘are’ the gender/sex they are assigned at birth and/or raised to believe that they ‘are’). The idea that certain individuals or collectives are afforded or denied certain social, cultural and/or political privileges by virtue of the presence/absence of visible physical characteristics is both well established and widely accepted; we will not rehearse these arguments here. Instead, we focus on cispriilege as a form of gender privilege, which often combines with the valorisation of masculinity and heterosexual norms in global and local social and political life to constitute the boundaries of appropriate (gendered) behaviour. We offer this contribution to contemporary debate in an effort to better understand not only how assumptions about gender stability are often unexamined but also how certain contemporary security strategies that purport to make human subjects more secure actually render them less secure by reifying and reproducing gender differences and the concept of gender difference.

According to conventional Western discourse, if you are not female you are male; if you are not transgender, transsexual or genderqueer, you are … normal? By following this logic, ‘queer’ and ‘trans-’ are framed as (sexed) ‘Others’ in need of explanation; as people are assumed just to have or to be a ‘gender’, we only need prefixes to describe genderqueer people who appear not to be contained within one of the two gender/sex categories we rely on to make sense of bodies. In an effort to bring recognition to this disparity and normalise queer bodies, a number of theorists have promoted the use of terms identifying non-genderqueer people as well. In this vocabulary, ‘cis’ is used as a prefix to designate the constitutive other of ‘trans-’. Any attempt at providing definitions of these terms (including gender, trans-, tran, genderqueer, cis-) is fraught with the danger of misrepresentation, so here we will provide an account of the ways in which we deploy these terms in this specific contribution.
We use 'Western' here as indicative of a historically and socially contingent package of ideas and ideals rather than as a geographically specific location. As Stuart Hall reminds us, 'what we call "the West" ... did first emerge in Western Europe. But "the West" is no longer only in Europe, and not all of Europe is in "the West"' (1996: 185). Our analysis is limited to interrogating cisprivilege in 'the West' (and to paraphrase Chandra Mohanty (1988: 83, note 3), even when we do not bracket the term with quotation marks, we intend to deploy it critically), in part because we are unsure of the widespread use of the term beyond Anglophone linguistic communities and in part because the security strategies we discuss have been implemented with most vehemence in the Anglophone West. Our analysis of gender is similarly situated; we see gender as simultaneously a social identity (a noun), an effect (a verb) and a logic that organises how we make sense of and engage with our social world(s). Gender is indivisible from sex, and thus can also be written 'gender/sex', to draw attention to the imbrication of gendered logics in the attribution of that which society prefers to call 'biological sex'. In short, we espouse a poststructural concept of gender that recognises gender as performatively constituted, always in the process of 'being' rather than something that 'is' (see inter alia Butler, 1993, 1999).

Although we only engage with trans- insofar as to contextualise the theoretical discussion of cis-, we feel it important to acknowledge the multiple different ways in which the word can be written (as trans-, trans, trans*, 'trans' and so on) and its multiple uses as a modifier, an identity, a referent and modality of being. We use the written forms 'trans-' when discussing self-identified trans- bodies and/or concepts and issues raised by those individuals, for the same reasons as those eloquently expressed by Susan Stryker: 'we think the hyphen matters a great deal, precisely because it marks the difference between the implied nominalism of "trans" and the explicit relationality of "trans-", which remains open-ended and resists premature foreclosure by attachment to any single suffix' (2008: 11). We do, however, use trans- as a prefix without hyphenation, resisting the implication of separation and/or otherness suggested by its inclusion. Following the same logic, we write cis- and cis in the same way. In order to avoid reproducing an unhelpful and problematic binary structure through juxtaposing cis- with trans- in our writing, we also employ the term genderqueer to refer to those performances of gender that are not socially validated. This term owes an obvious debt to queer theory, which 'opposes those who would regulate identities or establish epistemological claims of priority for those who seek to make claims to certain kinds of identities' (Butler, 2004: 7, emphasis added).

In unpicking the 'claims of priority' that frequently, if silently, regulate social behaviour, we have been reminded of the various forms of privilege that accrue to different social groups at different times and in different locations. Spike
Peterson and Anne Runyan’s overview of heterosexual privilege, which itself draws on Peggy McIntosh’s work on maleness and white privilege, proceeds from the premise that ‘[p]rivilege constitutes an “invisible package of unearned assets” that can be counted on and about which the privileged are encouraged to remain oblivious’ (1999: 46-47). One unearned asset that many count on is a link between their ‘biological sex’ and the sex that they are assigned at birth and/or that their body appears to signify. (It is important, however, to recognise these privileges as contingent on context: just as what it means to ‘be’ a woman is different in the boardroom, bathroom and bedroom, the benefits of being perceived as part of a majority are specific to the location of that majority.) Many count on not being confronted with gender check-boxes that do not resonate with their lived experiences. Many take for granted being allowed through airport security checkpoints because the scan of their body reveals the genitalia that the designation on their identification signals. Many also rely on cultural and cognitive short-cuts in interpersonal and sexual relationships between ‘women’ and ‘men’, between ‘women’, or between ‘men’ and the assumed authenticity of ‘straightness’ or ‘gayness’ or even ‘bisexuality’ that makes membership in those classes easily delineable because of their map to a dichotomous notion of gender/sex. Anything outside of that becomes ‘gender deviance’, legally and socially (see Beauchamp, 2009: 357). The invisibility of cisprivilege is such that only recently has there been an attempt to name it. There is relatively little formal published discussion of cisprivilege, apart from a recent article by Evin Taylor (2010), but ideas and discussions about cisgender identity and cisprivilege have been circulating in the realm of virtual publishing since the mid-1990s (see Wallace, 2010). As Shotwell and Sangray explain, ‘this neologism helps us recognise normative gender privilege—or, at least … it is a useful, short term for the experience of feeling at home in one’s assigned gender’ (Shotwell and Sangray, 2009: 67).

Crucially, as with McIntosh’s original formulation, the privilege to which we refer when invoking the term ‘cisprivilege’ does not accrue, necessarily, to individuals. Rather, the privilege is systemic, related to being part of a majority group within a collective and thus in part definitive of the dominant cultural norms of the collective. In the Anglophone West, those norms include whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, conforming to certain standards of ‘beauty’ and body image/ability and the ascription of a stable gender identity. Cisprivilege means never being asked if you are sure you’re in the right rest-room, never fearing that you’ll spend a night in a jail-cell after a routine traffic stop because your gender performance does not match your ID.

By applying the word cis to cisgendered people’s descriptors when discussing a comparison of trans- and cis folk … we succeeded in reducing the othering effect of the terminology we use for discourse on trans- oppression and cis privilege. It also, as you can see, offered up a term that can be used to describe that privilege that cis folk have. I mean … what
did we even call it before then? 'Normal privilege'? 'Non-Trans- privilege'? That's terrible for discourse and othering as hell. (Recursive Paradox, 2009)

The examples we have given above of instances of cisprivilege relate in a fundamental way to security, the security of conforming to binary, dimorphic gender norms (di meaning two, morphism meaning shape or form, see Shepherd, 2010a: 5). (This is not to suggest that there are not any number of other, different ways in which cisgender people who are seen to deviate from similarly powerful norms in society are oppressed, marginalised and punished for their 'deviance', but that is beyond the scope of this article.) Cisprivilege is still not overtly theorised in security studies, however, despite recent analytical attention turning to the concept of 'human security' (see, for example, Thomas, 2000; McDonald, 2002; Hudson, 2005) and despite the fact that certain contemporary security strategies (for example, the introduction of full-body scanners at airports, which is the analytical vehicle we use below) are both produced by and productive of this form of privilege. That is to say, the efficacy of these measures—Whole Body Imaging (WBI) scanning, surveillance technologies, ID cards and so on—in achieving security is premised on the stability of gender identity and gender difference. The formulation and implementation of these measures is (re)productive of a world in which the existence and immutability of gender differences is taken as given and in which gender 'variance' is overtly represented as a transgression potentially threatening not only to the dominant social order but more immediately to the specific communities that these measures purport to protect.

We therefore, wish to make our intervention at this juncture: contributing a theoretical account of cisprivilege and a move towards queer security theory through engaging with contemporary security strategy. Following a brief overview of the literature on gender and security that has informed our engagement with this topic, we make a series of interrelated arguments. First, we argue that the invisibility of transpeople in history is a function of representational practice not empirical absence: these bodies have been absented and this is a form of discursive violence. Second, we argue that the visibility of trans- bodies in contemporary debates about security is also a form of discursive violence. We proceed to argue that these violences have three performative effects: to reinforce gender/sex and security orthodoxies and hierarchies; to render trans- bodies simultaneously different/deviant/dangerous and vulnerable/in need of protection; and to demonstrate the need to queer security/IR and theorise cisprivilege as rigorously as we have theorised masculine privilege in security/IR.

(sub)versions of gender in security theory

In this section, we explore the existing literature relating to gender and security in an attempt to begin the conceptualisation of cisprivilege in security theory. We
recognise an increasingly sophisticated body of literature that traverses the
disciplinary boundaries of International Relations (of which we consider security
studies to be a component part), Sociology, Women's Studies and Anthropology,
among others, documenting efforts to understand the ways in which security and
self are mutually constituted. Feminist scholars have asked what assumptions
about gender (and other markers of identity, including but not limited to race,
class, nationality and sexuality) are necessary to make particular statements,
policies and actions meaningful in security discourses (see, inter alia, classic
interventions by Tickner, 1992; Peterson, 1992a, b; Zalewski, 1995; and more
recent overviews provided by Blanchard, 2003; Sjoberg and Martin, 2010;
Shepherd, 2010b). Looking at global politics, feminists see that 'gender is
necessary, conceptually, for understanding international security, it is important
in analysing causes and predicting outcomes, and it is essential to thinking about
solutions and promoting positive change in the security realm' (Sjoberg, 2009:
200). They have therefore argued that 'the performance of gender is immanent in
the performance of security and vice versa', and looking at security without
gender or gender without security necessarily renders both concepts partial and
analytically inadequate (Shepherd, 2008: 172).

However, even these nuanced accounts of the immanence of gender in global
politics as a noun, a verb and an organisational logic do not explicitly interrogate
transgender and genderqueer logics of security. In fact, frequently they focus on
a dichotomous or binary understanding of sex/gender to read gendered logics of
security. This is not to deride or dismiss the important and varied contributions of
these scholars, but rather to suggest a way in which we might contribute in this
article to the literature on which we draw, and in relation to which we wish to
situate ourselves. Feminist scholars of security have emphasised the analytical
salience of gender and, in doing so, raised questions about the possibility of
security/ies of the self, particularly in reference both to (corpo)realities of
gendered violence (see, for example, Bracewell, 2000; Hansen, 2001; Alison,
2007) and to the ontological security of gender identity itself (see, for example,
Browne, 2004; Shepherd, 2008; MacKenzie, 2010). Opening to critical scrutiny,
however, the practices through which gender uncertainty is erased and gender
certainty inscribed—the practices through which the ontological presumption of
gender difference is maintained and gender fluidity denied—allows scholars to
develop different understandings of the ways in which in/security is not only
written on the body but is performative of corporeality.

We coin the neologism 'genderinsecurity' to emphasise the multiple dynamics of
gendering security, understanding gender in security and interrogating gender
insecurity, all of which animate in various ways the scholarship we discuss here.
In different ways, these accounts of gender insecurity engage a politics of
corporeality, asking under what circumstances, in what ways and with what
effects subjects embody different gendered ideas and ideals. On this view, the
body is "not ... an object but ... an "event"' (Budgeon, 2003: 36; see also Wilton, 2000: 251), an ongoing event that is culturally produced, mediated and disciplined (Grosz, 1994: 23). Bodies are disciplined in part through security practices: those practices that speak to and of the physical security of the state or individual subject (such as immigration policies); and those practices that aim to order physical beings in the world (such as surveillance techniques, or the WBI scanning we discuss below). In both cases, the gendered logics that (re)produce regulatory and disciplinary techniques are firmly grounded in the idea and ideal of gender/sex as a binary construct. Queer bodies upset this binary logic in mundane ways (detention facilities, for example, holding those pending immigration review are divided into 'male' and 'female' accommodations, which led in the USA to 'a blanket policy of placing transgender immigrant detainees in restrictive segregation', according to a complaint filed against the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on behalf of thirteen immigrants by Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights on 13 April 2014) and in ways that are less immediately apparent and less frequently considered, at least in the realm of security studies (such as the trauma experienced when travelling with identity papers that do not 'fit' the assumed gender of the bearer, see Coyote, 2010; TransGriot, 2011).

Trans- and genderqueer bodies have historically been rendered invisible in academic security narratives, despite the fact that gender fluidity has been a feature of most wars in history (Feinburg, 1996). Four hundred 'male' soldiers in the United States Civil War were 'discovered' to have been 'female' after their death (Feinburg, 1996: 14). The first Colonial Governor of New York, Edward Hyde, 'frequently appeared in public wearing women's clothing' (Krafft-Ebing, cited in MacKenzie, 1994: 33). Captain John Robbins, a military officer of the British Army in colonial Maine, 'had both a brilliant war record and a desire to dress in fine dresses and gowns' (MacKenzie, 1994: 34). Arlene Istar Lev (2004: 66–67) identifies genderqueer bodies both in war and in political leadership, including Cornbury, French diplomat Chevalier d'Eon, Hannah Snell/James Grey (who joined the British Army to find her/his husband), Flora Sandes (a major in the Siberian Army), American Civil War hero Emma Edmunds/Franklin Thompson, pirates Mary Read and Anne Bony, and Queen Christina/Count Dohna (a Swedish monarch who abdicated his/her throne for the right to dress in 'men's' clothes).

We suggest that the invisibility of genderqueer bodies in security studies is a function of cisprivilege, but queer and feminist accounts of (how) gender matters in and to security studies enable us to begin thinking about how we might move towards a theory of cisprivilege in this disciplinary sub-field. First, we return to the claim that '[d]iscrete genders are part of what "humanizes" individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right' (Butler, 1999: 178). The essential separation of bodies into two categories ('M' and 'F') informs the ways in which we think about the body.
and also the ways in which we think about a host of social and political events and relationships that we conceive of as being ‘to do’ with the body; for this ordering to occur, we must first commit to the categories of ‘F’ and ‘M’, just as we commit to other organisational categories that help us make sense of, and feel secure in, our worlds (day/night, inside/outside, friend/foe). In this way, idea(l)s about gender/sex are ontopolitical claims, ‘as making a statement about what is is always already to find oneself within an understanding of the is, as such’ (Dillon, 1999: 112). This results in the rendering invisible of queer bodies in representational practices as it discomforts us to think differently about gender/sex and to question the categories that structure our conceptual frameworks. While to conceive of the body as an event is to recognise its incompleteness—to recognise the body as always in the process of becoming—and therefore to recognise the impossibility of gender security whatever one’s gender performance, there is, we think, a degree of cisprivilege inherent in the notion that the categories of ‘M’ and ‘F’ can be assumed stable.

Second, and related to the above, we suggest that trans-/queer bodies are also rendered invisible, and cisprivilege reproduced, through the implicit or explicit historical treatment of those bodies as incidental, or, in the alternative, as trickery. Just as orthodoxies of security insisted on the peripheral relevance of gender to security (see, for example, Adam Jones (1996: 427), who once described certain feminist scholarship ‘as marginal, if that word still retains its pejorative connotations’), even in feminist scholarship on security, as discussed above, trans- and genderqueer bodies are assumed to be chimerical to central concerns about the realities of suffering, deprivation and violence that security studies seeks to illuminate. Due to the dominance of the dimorphic structuring of gender/sex in Western discourse, it is assumed that genderqueer bodies are of marginal importance and can therefore legitimately be written out of war stories and high politics. When genderqueer bodies are recognised, it is often as fakes, as games and as pretensions—a woman ‘pretended to be a man’ to get involved in a battle, or some such story that focuses on the genderqueer person’s dishonesty. Gender ambiguity, insomuch as it ‘actually’ exists, is assumed to reside in, or be inscribed on, a minority of bodies, and security theories and practices have historically, traditionally, taken as their referent object the ‘majority’, usually the state; this is a dual move, then, in representations of genderqueer bodies, where they are at once made invisible and, if they exist, defined as an (abnormal) minority (see discussion of such moves in Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry’s (2007: 17) work on representations of women’s violence). However, a more nuanced and sophisticated theory of gender/sex and corporeality that incorporates trans- and genderqueer bodies and takes seriously the concept of cisprivilege can offer useful insights into the ambiguity of all gendered bodies and draw attention to the practices that are performative of the boundaries between bodies. On this view, it is a form of
discursive violence that delegitimises and marginalises queer concerns to render invisible trans-/queer bodies in narrative and historical accounts of war. Mapping the hypervisibility of trans- bodies in one aspect of contemporary security strategy, as we do below, explores the ways in which security practices attempt to arrest gender ambiguity and delimit the intelligibility of gendered subjects in a similarly violent way.

the visibility of trans- bodies in contemporary security strategies

Having provided above an account of the ways in which trans- and genderqueer bodies have been rendered invisible in narratives and representations of violent conflict and the associated realm of high security, here we turn to the contemporary era and explore an arena in which trans- bodies specifically have become highly visible, or ‘hypervisible’ (Lamble, 2009): the arena of counter-terrorism strategy, in particular the deployment of full-body scanners at airports throughout the world. We suggest that this is a site at which the visibility of trans- bodies has become both pronounced and contested, arguing that this is in itself a form of discursive violence and, further, that such strategies are produced by and productive of cisprivilege, which functions to position trans-bodies as different, deviant and dangerous and simultaneously as vulnerable and in need of protection. Both of these subject-positions deny transpeople agency and the rights afforded to cispeople and are therefore illustrative of cisprivilege in contemporary security strategy. Sarah Lamble argues that the capacity to “not see” or “not know” queer bodies and sexualities is not simply a matter of inadvertent omission, but involves wilful acts of ignorance’ (2009: 112); such acts of ignorance are also implicated in the rendering hypervisible of trans- bodies in particular contexts. Here, we focus on the context of security sector discourses that pair danger/terrorism and queer bodies/sexualities. Toby Beauchamp (2009: 357) has argued that ‘transgender and gender non-conforming bodies are bound up in surveillance practices that are intimately tied to state security, nationalism, and the “us/them,” “either/or” rhetoric that underpins US military and government constructions of safety’. We argue that it is not just the United States that has tied (cis)gender identity to safety and trans- gender identity to danger, and that the implications often spill over outside the security sector. According to a report produced by the European Commission in 2010, ‘the US plans to have procured and deployed 1,800 Security Scanners’ in airports across the country by 2014 (European Commission, 2010: 97). These scanners have been deployed already in many major US airports. Canada, Russia and the UK are currently also using full-body scanners as a security measure, with Japan, Nigeria, India, South Africa, Kenya, China and South Korea actively exploring the technology with plans to operationalise

scanners in the near future (ibid.). These 'Whole Body Imaging' (WBI) scanners produce a detailed image of the passenger's body, including breasts, genitalia, buttocks, prosthetics, binding materials and any objects on the person's body' (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2009: 18). Those that defend the WBI scanners, such as the Director of the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Lee Kair, argue that, in the USA at least, '[p]assengers retain the right to opt out of a body scanning for a more intense but traditional screening' (cited in Homeland Security Newswire, 2010a). The 'more traditional screening' includes a pat-down by a TSA agent and the use of a handheld metal detector. This in itself is problematic, see Anderson and the comment thread attached to Anderson's article. Many transpeople have had troubling experiences in the US with both WBI scanners and 'traditional screenings' as it is assumed to be acceptable to enquire into the configuration of their genitalia, something to which cis- travellers do not usually have to submit (Beauchamp, 2009: 357). Moreover, some states do not allow passengers to opt out of WBI scanning. For example, in the UK, the Secretary of State for Transport provided a written parliamentary statement on 1 February 2010, in which he stated: 'If a passenger is selected for scanning, and declines, they will not be permitted to fly' (Daily Hansard, 2010).

Many different concerns have been articulated regarding the introduction and implementation of WBI scanning as a counter-terrorism measure. The Fiqh Council of North America issued a fatwa (religious opinion) regarding WBI scanners in February 2010, arguing that WBI scanning violates Islamic commitments to modesty. "It is a violation of clear Islamic teachings that men or women be seen naked by other men and women", reads the fatwa "... Islam highly emphasises haya (modesty) and considers it to be part of faith" (cited in Homeland Security Network, 2010b). The possible ramifications of WBI technology being used on children have also caused concern, with particular civil rights organisations arguing 'that the resulting images would breach child pornography laws' (BBC News, 2010; see also Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), 2010; Homeland Security Network, 2010).

Of particular interest to us here, however, is the argument, voiced by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (hereafter UNSR), Martin Scheinin, that certain contemporary counter-terrorism measures, including 'enhanced immigration controls' and 'increased travel document security' disproportionately affect women and transpeople (UNSR, 2009). The UNSR expressed particular concern that counter-terrorism measures were serving to provide an excuse and justification for discrimination against transpersons, and that such discrimination is often disproportionately targeted towards Muslim transpersons. In his report to the UN General Assembly, the UNSR cites a specific US DHS Advisory to Security Personnel that claims "[t]errorists will employ novel..."
methods to artfully conceal suicide devices. Male bombers may dress as females in order to discourage scrutiny (DHS, 2003). The implications for trans-people are of critical importance, as these counter-terrorism strategies 'make transgender persons susceptible to increased harassment and suspicion' (UNSR, 2009: Art. 48, as above) and equate gender irregularity and threat or at least a propensity for violence. We argue here that both the introduction of WB Ke-scanners in airports and the ways in which this technology has been linked to trans- bodies are forms of discursive violence.

In short, while historically transpeople may have been rendered invisible, and while security theories have not had much to say about genderqueer bodies at all, we argue that trans- bodies are now highly visible in the realm of security strategy, but as objects submitting to the gaze of counter-terrorism rather than as active subjects of security. The UK's EQHR, for example, expresses concern that the proposals to introduce body scanners are likely to have a negative impact on individual's rights to privacy, especially members of particular groups including disabled people, older people, children, transgendered people, women and religious groups (EQHR, 2010, as above).

Trans- bodies are securitised and made hypervisible by counter-terrorism discourses, and then essentialised and reinscribed in some human rights discourses objecting to cissexist counter-terrorism measures. For example, the EQHR locates 'transgendered people' between 'children' and 'women', a move that feminist theorising about security leads us to question. Following decades of feminist theorists who have interrogated the discursive shorthand so frequently used in media representations of violent conflict of 'women and children' (see Enloe (1990), who conflates these words to produce 'womenandchildren', the eternal victims—never the agents—of war), we argue that this functions both to infantilise and feminise trans- individuals. It also reifies trans- as a discernible and discrete category (presumably dichotomous with its opposite).

This double move, in turn, denies those individuals agency and circumscribes the agency of transpeople as a collective. The EQHR's short and arguably well-meaning articulation functions to position able-bodied, young, adult males of immediately discernable gender who perform no specific religious identity as the appropriate subjects, as agents of security, literally and conceptually, who are defined by this list of constitutive otherness.

Another assumption that the EQHR's list makes is that there is something more private about female and trans- bodies than male bodies. Though it is critical of the sexism and cissexism in strategies of counter-terrorism, the statement focuses on the privacy rights of feminine and genderqueer bodies to express those concerns. Feminists have noted and been critical of the frequent use in Western philosophy of the body as uniquely or peculiarly feminine as compared to the masculinity of the mind in Western metaphysical thought (e.g., Grosz, 1994: 4). Alongside feminist critiques of the gendered nature of the body/mind dichotomy,
feminists have expressed concern about how the public/private dichotomy is mapped onto gendered bodies. Particularly, privacy, modesty and demureness have been associated with femininity. The EQHR feminises trans- bodies when it compares the privacy concerns that transpersons experience with the privacy concerns experienced by women when it comes to showing or hiding their bodies (particularly genitalia) and sees those bodies as subject to greater concern for (sexual) privacy.

A related site of contestation produced by the current visibility of trans- bodies is the construction of transpeople as dangerous and/or deviant. Popular opinion (collected by the authors in the form of online comments left on news articles about WBI scanning) seems to exemplify what Julia Serano (2007) terms trans-facsimilation (viewing or portraying transsexuals as merely imitating, emulating, or impersonating cissexual male or female genders), trans-exclusion (refusing to acknowledge and respect a transsexual's identified gender, or denying them, access to spaces, organizations, or events designed for that gender) ... [and] ... trans-objectification (when people reduce transpeople to their body parts, the medical procedures they've undertaken, or get hung up on, disturbed by, or obsessed over supposed discrepancies that exist between a transsexual's physical sex and identified gender).

We are not claiming that the opinions we have gathered constitute a representative sample, nor are we willing to reproduce many of those opinions here; to give voice, and thereby offer a veil of legitimacy, to the kinds of hate speech we have found in the course of our investigation is ethically indefensible. However, the opinion of Frank Gaffney, founder and president of the Center for Security Policy in the USA, is representative of the commentary. Gaffney states that the UNSR's report discussed above is 'a parody of UN political correctness and sexual universality' (cited in Brickley, 2009) and that he finds the report 'absurd and appalling' (ibid.).

The UNSR's recommendations are referred to, in comments on Adam Brickley's (2009, as above) article, as 'one more example of the absolute foolishness of modern Western liberalism' (comment by thebaron, 20 October 2009), as 'asinine' (comment by jabberwocky, 20 October 2009) and 'insane' (comment by chaya, 20 October 2009). The Obama administration is characterised as 'insanely evil' (comment by rivenburg on 20 October 2009). The references to trans- bodies in this thread of commentary epitomise cisprivilege, through the representation of trans- bodies as 'abhorrent' things' (comment by givemefreedom and comment by swish, both 20 October 2009) and of transpeople as 'weirdos' (comment by monkround, 20 October 2009). The differences, deviances and dangers of trans- bodies are constituted through the inscription of a discursive link between WBI scanners and trans- bodies, the representation of trans- bodies as deceptive, and the articulation of a security agenda that must counter the proclivity of terrorists who 'would be only too delighted to take advantage ... of burqas and
other subterfuges to disguise their malign intents' (Gaffney cited in Brickley, 2009, as above, emphasis added).

As Bettcher laments, 'why do only some people have to describe themselves in detail while others do not?' (2007: 53). The answer to Bettcher’s question can be found in the combination of the uncertainty of the observer (what is that person?), the assumption that clarity can come from understanding what parts a person has (oh, that person has a penis: therefore, that person is a man), and an association of refusal to identify as or 'be' one gender with deception and liminality (and therefore danger). A transperson is said to have 'passed' when the people around them in a given social or professional situation believe that they are of the biological sex that they see themselves as/understand themselves to be/have changed their physical appearance to resemble. Outside of trans communities, passing is often talked about as deception, where a person who has passed has led the person they have passed with to believe that they are something they are not ('she led me to believe she was a man, and she is not' or 'she claims to be a man and she is not'). These significations manifest themselves in transphobic discourses that frame non-cisgender performances as necessarily 'terrorist' and efforts to protect transpeople from discrimination as making 'sure terrorists' human rights ... are being protected', which is characterised as 'absurd and appalling' (Brickley, 2009). These discourses unreflectively link genderqueer performances and the violences of terrorism.

There are, thankfully, competing discourses in circulation. In a thread of commentary attached to an article by Jessica Geen (2010) that discusses WBI scanning, one respondent states:

As a trans woman myself, these scanners terrify me. I'm post op now, and all my documents are in accordance with how I present, so I'm one of the lucky ones. I remember being pre-op, and getting patted down by a security guard while leaving Venezuela. She briefly put her hand on the piece of anatomy that she probably didn't expect to be there, before moving on. My heart missed a beat as I had visions of seriously unpleasant things happening to me when she realised what was going on. She didn't, thankfully. Presumably she was too bored to work out that she'd just felt something that 'shouldn't' have been there. These scanners make it more likely that transpeople will be picked out of line and subjected to abuse from hostile officials. I fear we have not heard the last of this (comment by Sarah Brown, 18 January 2010).

The idea that the commenter is 'lucky' to have documents in accordance with how she presents, and therefore at less risk of being identified in security scans as genderqueer and/or trans- (and, by extension, dangerous). Brown has experienced both sides of the relationship between cisprivilege and security with airport screening: the insecurity of having her 'gender presentation' and 'biological sex' not 'match' (and the cissexism in the requirement), and then the
comparative advantage afforded by cisprivilege when her 'gender presentation' and 'biological sex' 'matched' and her security experience was smoother.

In a blog post titled 'On Trans Rights and Full-Body Scanners', the author recounts a discussion with Jackson Brown, a 'tran about town', who admitted that 'he’s afraid that someone will accuse him of being “inauthentic”, or “hiding the truth” … if the TSA [Transportation Security Administration] accuses him of being inauthentic or hiding something, then they may search further' (Omniphilia n.d.21). Bettcher notes that the construction of 'really an X', to which the above comment regarding authenticity refers, 'reinscribes the position that genitalia are the essential determinants of sex' (2007: 50). At the same time, 'fundamental to transphobic representations of transpeople as deceivers is an appearance-reality contrast between gender presentation and the sexed body' (Bettcher, 2007: 48). In other words, transpeople are often labelled as dishonest if they are not 'out' as trans-, because they are 'really an X' but presenting as the 'other' sex. This, in Bettcher's understanding, presents a double bind for transpeople: 'disclose "who one is" and come out as a pretender or masquerader, or refuse to disclose (be a deceiver) and run the risk of forced disclosure, the effect of which is exposure as a liar' (Bettcher, 2007: 50). In this construction, both being 'in' and being 'out' render the trans- person dishonest—the 'out' trans person is pretending while the 'in' trans person is lying. In these terms, 'visibility yields a position in which what one is doing is represented as make-believe, pretending, or playing dress up', while 'to opt for invisibility is to remove one's life from the domain of masquerade into actual reality ... [which] generates the effect of revelation, exposure, or hidden truth' (Bettcher, 2007: 50). Whether a transperson is read as inadvertently deceptive or explicitly described as a liar, the implication for security discourses seems to be the same: someone who would misrepresent themselves (to security personnel) is a risk for (committing terrorist) violence.

This question of authenticity relates directly to the existence of cisprivilege. The assumption that the gender read off the social body maps to the 'authentic' or biological sex of the person in question is indicative of a set of gender discourses that both demand fidelity to a regulative ideal of gender as binary and derived from 'sex' and reinforce the conceptual — and ontological — primacy of materiality. That is, we persist in imagining that bodies derive their meaning from their inherent materiality and the only acceptable bodies are those that 'in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice and desire' (Butler, 1999: 23). Bodies that transgress the boundaries of 'coherence and continuity' are, by definition according to this schema, deviant, inappropriate and threatening. Trans theorists have explained this in terms of the violent enforcement of gender certainty; the punishments for the 'deceptions' of 'in-ness' and 'out-ness' are actually punishments for non-conformity with settled ideas of what ought to be, phrased and understood in terms of dishonesty to hide
that it is not honesty, but in reality, being policed. That policing takes place not only by silencing, but also by drawing attention to, difference.

These idea(l)s about gender/sex have profound implications for the (in)security of transpeople and for the perpetuation of cisprivilege. In the final section of this article, we move to a discussion of the ways in which the discursive violences mapped out above perform specific ordering functions in security theory and practice.

towards a theory of cisprivilege in security theory and practice

Taking cisprivilege seriously draws attention to the fact that even the most inclusive interpretations of security exclude the ambiguous (Munoz, 1999: 2), the cross (McCloskey, 2000: xii; Roen, 2002), the invisible (Bettcher, 2007: 52), the disidentified (Heyes, 2003: 1096) and the ‘in’ (Shotwell and Sangray, 2009: 59). We argue here that this is neither incidental nor accidental, even if it is not a conscious practice of exclusion, and that these exclusionary practices are forms of violence. Foucault suggested that ‘[a] relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys or it closes off all possibilities’ (1983: 340). Violence perverts, inverts or renders unintelligible certain ways of being in the world while endorsing others; in this, violence is perhaps best conceptualised as a specific relation of power that is not necessarily repressive but productive. A conceptualisation of violence inspired by Foucault can allow for the admission of ‘the exclusionary presuppositions and foundations that shore up discursive practices insofar as those foreclose the heterogeneity, gender, class or race of the subject’ (Hanssen, 2000: 215) as acts of violence that are simultaneously practices of power. On this view, violence is not reducible to (physical) constraint or repression but rather encompasses regulative idea(l)s and performs ordering functions in our collective cognitive frameworks.

If we accept that representing transpeople and queer bodies specifically as in- and hypervisible in war stories and security strategy is a form of violence, and that this violence has its foundation in unexamined and often unconscious privilege enjoyed by cispeople, then we can begin to understand how a nuanced and sophisticated gendered theory of security needs to incorporate corporeality, including trans-corporeality. We can note parallels between transphobic violence (policing and actively (re)producing the boundaries of gender) and transnational violence (policing and actively (re)producing the boundaries of religions, states, ethnicities and/or alliances. Laura Shepherd (2008: 78; see also Shepherd, 2010c) terms these processes ‘the violent reproduction of gender’ and ‘the violent reproduction of the international’). The borders of gender are policed as a part of
an active policing of the borders between states, the borders between states and
non-states, and the borders between the (safe) self-state and the (dangerous,
terrorist) other. Narratives of the international fetishise and Orientalise the
exotic ‘Other’ (be it a colonial other, a trans- other or a terrorist other) to
associate Otherness with violence and inspire violence towards the Other.
‘Non-violent’ resisters of existing (cisgendered) social orders are often addressed
by the dominant (gendered) social order violently, much like non-violent
transpeople are often attacked for the very presentation of trans-ness in the
face of a social order that excludes their existence both de jure and de facto.

We suggest that these are ontopolitical practices; as Michael Dillon explains,
‘all political interpretation is simultaneously ontopolitical because it cannot but
disclose the ontology sequestered within it’ (1999: 112). The ontopolitical
(representational) practices of security have thus far been founded on embedded
cisprivilege. The ontology of security, even of gendered security theory, has
conventionally relied on gender/sex certainty and gender/sex hierarchy. If it is
analytically and conceptually productive to see transphobic violence as the
violent reproduction of a stable sex/gender system that ‘naturally’ privileges
cisgender performances because such performances are associated with
normality and safety and trans- performances are associated with danger and
discomfort, it then becomes possible to ask questions about the ways that
trans-in/(hyper)visibility, cisprivilege and a regulative, exclusionary ontopolitical
social order are violently reproduced in inter/transnational relations. In tentative
conclusion, we suggest that this might be a creative and constructive way
forward that resists the dominant ontopolitical practices of security-as-matter
and gender-as-binary, both of which bring into being a disguised and disfigured
(corpo)reality of genderqueer and trans- bodies in/of war.

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**references**


