

## Liminality, Accountability, Airports, Immigration, Mobility, International students

This paper studies the lived experience of Iranian students upon arrival at American airports. By using two concepts of liminality and accountability, I examine how Iranian students walk the gauntlet of U.S. airports, and study the influences of the treatment they receive at airport on their perceptions of the US. Empirically, I draw on fifteen in-depth qualitative interviews with eight Iranian students at a Southern university in the US. The paper posits that multiple layers of liminality surface and intensify in airports as a threshold where international travelers can see both ways, behind and before them, while belonging to neither one. The requirement to be an “accountable other” adds up to the contingencies of the situation. Theoretically, this paper puts the politics of mobility in the colonial contexts and claims that legal recognition will not result in integration when negative discourses around the civilizational other regards their mobility as threat and challenges their social recognition.