Disempathy and emotional witnessing in passport photography

Catherine Frost
McMaster University (Department of Political Science)

Abstract

Passport photography bans the display of emotion and aims at suppressing what speaks to our individual circumstances. This paper argues that the disempathy that results provides a starting point for moral imagination and a method for preserving political engagement beyond the reach of the state. The sharing of emotion concerns political theorists, however, who worry that judgment can be swamped by sentiment, making empathy an unruly or unreliable political resource. Passports represent an aspiration to regulate complex emotions by making identity and belonging a matter of state prerogative rather than interpersonal exchange. The rise of biometrics provides an opportunity to bring emotion under state supervision, dictating its display in a manner that echoes forms of social and racial performance. Efforts to pacify citizens may boomerang, nonetheless, by setting the conditions for unconventional forms of looking and recognition, methods available to individuals but not the states that govern them.

[1]   Passports are the most important identity documents in the world. Yet they are also relatively banal, since the intent is simply to affirm political identity. But a lot is going on in the production of the passport, making them a location where the encounter between state authority and complex selfhood plays out in visible form. The state's aspiration for control is evident

in the overall design of the document, including nationalist imagery and increased reliance on technology to read it in ways humans cannot. It is also evident in passport photography, which requires the performance of self-discipline and self-neutralization before the camera. The process can feel dehumanizing, and the images that result are generally cold and unappealing. This form of photography may have roots in social and racial performance, but it has been universalized along with the passport as a document.

[2]   The passport serves to affirm trustworthiness and belonging within a state. For that purpose, the face has become a critical object of scrutiny. But while biometrics can map facial structure down to the millimeter, recognition of the kind that passports actually seek is much more difficult. If the rationale for the passport is to ensure the subject is securely embraced by the state, neutralizing any threat to political order, then something more than physical measurement is required. When the concern is motives and disposition, the best methods we have of understanding one other are human not technological.[i] The problem is, human recognition and understanding is an unreliable art, and the modern security state is designed to exclude it. Yet by universalizing an experience of dissonance and disempathy, the coldness of passport photography prompts viewers to restore what has been lost in terms of emotion and humanity. In doing so, it draws on forms of engagement that exceed the capacities of the state.

The embracing state

[3]   To understand the complex dynamics behind passport images, it's helpful to start by considering the development of the document itself. As John Torpey shows in his history of the passport, this is a document born of "suspicion" and its use signals our precarious claim on state recognition (166; see also Robertson 10). Anytime we cross a border we must prove ourselves to the appropriate authority in an act that Mark Salter points out is effectively impossible (Salter 370, 376). For how can your prove your very *self*? The document therefore emerges from a paradoxical aspiration: secure the state while suspecting everyone in it. The solution, as Torpey points out, has been to use the passport regime to bring collective identity under the authority of the state; in his terms, to "embrace" a national population (6). Crucial to that effort is our own readiness to recognize ourselves in the materials and documents a state provides. Carrying the document across an international border requires the bearer to affirm that it does, in fact, represent them, meaning we must identify with it or it cannot serve its purpose. This provides the state with an opportunity to not just document, but direct, how citizens perform shared identity.

[4]   This element was showcased in the recent redesign of the Canadian passport. In 2013 the Canadian government used the introduction of a new digitally enabled 'ePassport' to introduce "iconic" national scenes into the passport design. First showcased in 2012, press reports indicated that the

design included few if any recognisable images of women, minorities or Indigenous peoples (Canadian Press). The passport as finally issued now contains one page featuring a statue and press clipping of a woman parliamentarian, another featuring an inuksuk, one of disabled athlete Terry Fox, and some background figures' faces may have been darkened. In contrast, there are six images of industry, six of military/police themes, and five of political figures or buildings, all of which appear to be exclusively male-populated. Remarkably, given that it suggests a serious lack of live females in the Canadian population, Foreign Minister John Baird, said the new design "tells the world who we are" (Canadian Press).

[5] Baird's comment is revealing. In the new document the representations of women and Indigenous peoples are quite literally reified – rendered silent and impassive. This means that more than half the Canadian population is expected to carry and identify with a document the imagery of which renders them absent from political life or less than fully human. This tells us something about the passport itself. The new Canadian passport's images can be so strikingly one-sided because they are not part of an effort to understand, recognize or represent Canadians, but rather to *tell* them what they should aspire to be (i.e., male, white, healthy, disciplined, productive). The design isn't likely to sway too many Canadians but it does reflect a desire to use the document to govern affect.

[6]   While passports rely on art and design for patriotic effect, they remain primarily administrative documents. Any influence the state has in securing emotion and identity therefore needs to reach beyond illustrations to 'embrace' specific individuals, meaning it's the picture-page that counts. It seems important then that when we turn to that page we won't find an identity that we can warm to either. Instead we find that *all* passport bearers are rendered stone-faced. The biometric imperative that drove the peculiar 2013 redesign was behind even earlier revisions to passport photography rules, rules that while technologically driven, insist that Canadians suppress emotional expression and become as indistinguishable as possible.

[7]   Changes introduced in 2003 specify that Canadians cannot smile, tilt the head, look away, have hair on their forehead, shine on their skin, glare on their glasses, or cast a shadow in their passport photograph. Infant photographs must show no evidence of parents or caregivers. Even if they physically prop up a small child for the photograph, such support must be invisible. An infant can be photographed in a car-seat but only if it is covered in a white blanket against a white background. Similar requirements apply for an individual using assistive devices such as a wheelchair, which must also be draped in white against white to minimize their appearance. Subsequent revisions also banned tinted eyewear, but may make exception for oxygen tubes if a medical letter is provided (Canada). These

requirements become challenging in the case of ill or special needs individuals who may have trouble sitting still, directing their gaze, or maintaining the required expression.

Acceptable and unacceptable expression. From Canada, Citizenship & Immigration, "Passport Photo Specifications."

[8]   For a document intended to capture a true likeness of an individual, it seems peculiar to require so much effort to obscure precisely those features we associate with individual identity. Yet these changes are now in force worldwide, driven by recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which regulates air travel. They in turn based their recommendations on a technical standards body (ISO/IEC), which regulates

practices around facial recognition technology. These technologies work best when individuals adopt the same standardized expression for all documentation, but they do not always work well when it comes to recognizing live humans. Researchers have not solved the problem of what they call "an uncooperative face in [an] uncontrolled environment" (Zhang and Goa 2876) leading some to conclude that because "no face casts the same image twice" photographs are "unsuitable as proof of identity" (Jenkins, et al. 313-4).

[9]   Since the landscape of the face is guaranteed to change not just day to day but substantially over the years, claims about biometric certainty are not as straightforward as they appear. Indeed one study found that the closer an image was to the standard passport requirements, the less likeness it had to the individual represented, meaning "passport compliant photographs captured identity especially poorly" (Jenkins, et al. 318). In contrast, smiling increased recognition for most viewers making the passport requirements oddly counterproductive as a working document (Jenkins, et al. 322).[ii] Yet in the view of passport authorities worldwide, as one official put it, smiling "distorts" the face, making the absence of expression "the most desirable standard" (Vries). When it comes down to it then, for technologically questionable reasons current passport photography requirements see the qualities of an image that can generate engagement –

smile, expression, posture, and even vulnerability – as suspect, and sets out to eliminate them.

Acceptable and unacceptable childpose (note hand in second image). From Canada, Citizenship & Immigration, "Passport Photo Specifications."

[10] The preference for depersonalized photography is even more puzzling given the context for which these documents are intended. When used at borders or boarding a plane any recognition or match between a document and its bearer takes place in a natural setting. If what we most want to know about a person at these moments is whether they are who they say they are, why does the document set out to capture a visage we rarely wear? What emotion threatens to derail the identity process so badly that we feel

safer assigning the task to automated systems that have trouble recognizing live humans? To put it another way, what is the problem that facial recognition technology solves?

[11] At the most basic level, facial recognition technology displaces the task of viewing from humans to machines in the name of accuracy. Any subsequent use of the document requires that individuals demonstrate their likeness to the frozen images this technology requires. Officials who view passports should therefore primarily see, or look for, what are essentially robotic faces. A secondary effect of facial recognition technology, then, is to minimize the witnessing of emotion by individuals securing state borders. Both emotional display and witnessing are components of empathy. Which means that passport photography, wittingly or unwittingly, disrupts the conventional, and often unconscious, forms of engagement that facilitate sympathetic response among humans. While empathy is no more reliable than any other emotion, are we really better off without it?

Going visiting

[12] Considering the place of empathy in political life helps explore the way that passport requirements impact on the individuals subject to these conditions. While it's long been believed in political theory that facile sentiment threatens moral judgment, empathy is also widely regarded as playing an important role in understanding others. The problem is that

sentiment-driven politics can become *too* emotional, resulting in an abdication of judgment that leads to error and excess. As will be outlined below, theories that consider the role of affect in political life find that only when empathy is disciplined through an awareness of distance can it serve as a reliable moral resource. Empathy is not necessarily a threat to recognition, then, but its exercise is more demanding than it might at first appear.

[13] Witnessing another's emotion is in fact the original definition of empathy, derived from *einflühlung,* a German term first coined by Johann Gottfried Herder in the early 1800s. Herder was a theorist of national identity who thought that empathy lay at the root of shared culture. But however much it brought people together, he cautioned that empathy should not be allowed to obscure "the *distinctive individuality of a* human being" (291). The key, he felt, was to remain conscious of situatedness – the idea that everything carries with it a certain measure of contingency that can never be fully merged into a larger descriptive whole. With that in mind, he recommended exploring shared identity by making an effort to "feel yourself into everything" (292). Although he conceived the term as a method to navigate the tension between individual variation and communal identity, *einflühlung* ('feeling into') and its English translation "empathy" subsequently took off in the early twentieth century in connection with aesthetics (Koss 139). What sets Herder's empathy apart from terms like

sympathy or compassion ('feeling with'), however, is that he intends it as an aid to insight and understanding rather than emotional alignment. While it employs sentiment as an investigative technique, Herder's empathy requires us to hold ourselves back just enough to retain the important differences within any unities we admire.

[14] Despite Herder's recommendation to enlist feeling in the service of understanding, affect has often been viewed with wariness when it comes to the political sphere. Hannah Arendt, for instance, singled out compassion as contributing to the terrors of the French Revolution. Because it requires an unsustainable merging of the self, a politics focused on sentiment or suffering threatens to swamp us with feeling and terminates in excessive and ultimately brutal politics (Arendt, *Revolution* 69-78, 99-105). Moreover, the proper language of compassion is not speech, she explains, but "gestures and expressions of countenance," making it ill suited for politics (*Revolution* 76).

[15] While Arendt associated the very worst excesses with compassion, she was equally skeptical in the case of empathy, because she thought it revealed a desire to use others to insulate ourselves from the harsh reality of the world. We value empathy for its "anesthetic qualities," she believed, because we seek "relief from pain" (Nelson 90, 87). She was unimpressed by the idea that coming face-to-face with the 'other' was an opening to politics

because there was in effect too much intimacy in such occasions. Instead we should turn to imagination, which Arendt believed we can train to "go visiting," in order to view the world from another's "class or group" perspective based on their "possible rather than actual" thinking (*Lectures* 43). A politics of sentiment, in contrast, "abolishes the worldly space between men" where healthy politics can emerge (Arendt, *Revolution* 76). Because empathy closes the gap between individuals too easily, or too completely, it provides a vehicle for escapism and misrepresentation. Only cool-headed and self-aware thinking should be deployed in the effort to understand others in the world. Anything that interrupts the anesthetic effects of empathy therefore puts us back in touch with the world and restores our capacity to build and share it.

[16] But empathy cannot be so easily dismissed. The problem is judgment requires real not just imagined others, so the moral engagement Arendt seeks cannot work without encountering actual selves. As Giunia Gatta put it, "absent empathy" and "we would not be visiting *whos* but *whats*" (1004).

> It is a question of allowing those we go visiting to actually be there to tell us their perspectives and attitudes towards circumstances (places) that cannot define them exhaustively… This seems to me to capture what visiting someone means, as

opposed to wandering alone and clueless in their empty homes (Gatta 1004).

[17] Anything that obscures particularity undermines plurality, producing a problem Herder called "the weakness of general characterizing" (291). This means that by omitting the actual other and the strengths that empathy delivers, Arendt's account becomes self-defeating. Gatta believes Karl Jasper's work on empathy can solve Arendt's dilemma because it uses feelings and experiences to close the distance between ourselves and others, without forgetting that these are still *our* feelings, so as to keep open the necessary space for judgment. But it's not clear even in Gatta's account how this critical self-awareness can be sustained in the face of strong emotions.

[18] We are caught then between the fallible effects of empathy and the inadequacy of solitary reflection. Susan Sontag, who shares Arendt's concern around compassion as "an unstable emotion" (101) warns that these problems cannot be resolved by denaturing the subjects of our empathy. To deny them complete identity, she says, "demotes" those whose experience we aim to witness to "representative instances of their occupations, their ethnicities, their plights" (79). Instead, she invites "reflection on how our privileges are located on the same map as their suffering," and even this resolution may require witnessing their unique emotional experience as the

"initial spark" (102-3). In other words, we need to see real others without collapsing into the emotional experience this sets off.

[19] Avoiding empathy won't deliver better recognition then, because without it we stop seeing individuals for who they really are. Empathy can serve political ends, perhaps even deepen understanding, but only if we modulate our emotional engagement so that it informs rather than overwhelms judgment. As with Herder, Sontag's solution suggests that empathy is best practiced by interrupting its tendency to collapse difference into uniformity. We can interrupt that process in two ways, by thinking and by looking. The first involves the faculty Arendt prefers (for whom imagination was a form of thinking), the second involves the process of viewing that can include photography itself. By adding this critical element of awareness, Gatta explains, responsible empathy proves "world-building" not "world-erasing" (1010).

Toothy grins

[20] If thinking and looking are integral to the understanding that empathy makes possible, what's going on when the display-and-witness dynamic is disrupted? Because smiling blurred the image on early long-exposure plates, there is precedent for the frozen features of the modern passport image in the history of photography. But constraints around emotional performance persisted well beyond technological necessity. The performance of safe,

unthreatening composure was mandated for some, while chaotic excess was assigned to others. In this way, strictures around emotional performance carry messages around the distribution of power in society. The history of the smile in photography is one instance where Herder's "generalized characterizing" (291) becomes visible in the form of racial and class stereotyping.

[21] As Tanya Sheehan explains, early photographic portraiture reflected a regime of value. The aim was to capture individuality while "constructing respectable bodies," and central to that was expression (129). She quotes ninetieth century daguerreotypist Marcus Aurelius Root's view that lips are "exceedingly expressive." Root recommended his sitters adopt a "close-shut mouth" on the grounds that it suggested "constance and evenness of temper" (qtd. in Sheehan, 129). Grinning, Sheehan concludes, was "socially transgressive" (129-30). As technology advanced and natural expression became an option in photography, Sheehan notes another pattern – new photography and advertising appeared featuring black individuals for whom a "toothy grin" was seen as fitting (142-3). Sheehan thinks this complex evolution of grinning in portraiture "connects the photographic smile to the raced and gendered anxieties about civilization" (148).

[22] Lily Cho finds a similar dynamic in the Canadian case, where photographs were required as part of the Chinese head-tax system in the

late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In this case Chinese entering Canada sit for their portrait in a manner that directly anticipates the new passport requirements – square to the camera, well-lit head-shots, with neutral expression. While grinning is associated with undisciplined natures in the US, Chinese sitters must demonstrate passivity before the camera to merit admittance (Cho, "Anticipating" 175). In both cases, it is the fact that a natural smile is just that – natural – which determines its desirability. For racial tropes around undisciplined emotions it serves well, for performances of colonial self-discipline it must be suppressed.

Acceptable and unacceptable head tilt. From Canada, Citizenship & Immigration, "Passport Photo Specifications."

[23] These patterns emerged well before facial recognition technology suggesting that the association between rigid neutrality and well-behaved citizenry was in place long before computing was added to the equation. Those whose emotions becomes subject to sanction – those who cannot smile, as well as those who should – find their selfhood eclipsed by concerns around social order. Because unmediated display and witnessing of emotion threatens the norms upon which security and privilege depends, photography becomes an opportunity for its regulation. In the passport process the regulation of emotional display becomes universally enforceable, and anyone who means to exercise the rights of international mobility must be ready to neutralize themselves before the camera. Insofar as the biometric recognition driven by international security concerns has trickled down into other documents from driver's licenses to health cards, the practice has become even more pervasive. Studies of social and racial performance in early photography therefore document a practice that touches nearly everyone in the world today.

After images

[24] The passport photograph contains more than just biometric information, then. It also demonstrates a subject's willingness to self-discipline in the face of regulation. If the intent is to secure systems of authority, however, it's an unstable strategy. Because the emotive impact of a photograph is not as easily contained as might be supposed.

[25] Despite what Roland Barthes calls the "mortiferous layer of the Pose" photography never arrives at complete neutrality because, as he puts it, the "referent adheres" (15, 6) meaning particularity is inexcludable. Still, there is something inhuman and rigid in all photography. Barthes speaks of photography in terms of death, grief and "catastrophe" because it preserves and repeats what is departed (96). If photography invokes such trauma, what does it mean when we not only sit meekly for passport photographs but also present the image and ourselves for simultaneous judgment? When deadened images become more authentic or trustworthy than their living counterpart it invites alienation. To affirm their own living nature, the subject must at some level *dis*empathize with the passport-self, as an inadequate snapshot of who they really are. Because the passport system mandates that subjects worldwide accompany their (mortifying) image on their travels, its use reinforces this dissonance, and ensures it is widely experienced.

[26] Photographs always remain at odds with their living referent, which explains the desire to "tame the Photograph," through efforts to "generalize, gregarize, banalize it" until it's sting is removed (Barthes 117-8). Most photography is "culturally conditioned," or "coded" and reveals a "certain training" in how to look or appear (Barthes 51, 26). But some photography breaks through the numbing effects of convention to deliver what Barthes calls the *punctum*, a kind of psychic "wound" (27, 21) that awakes a

different way of seeing. These images contain a "power of expansion" leading viewers into a "subtle beyond" where some new engagement takes place, although the exercise requires "a painful labor" of looking and thinking (Barthes 45, 59, 66).

[27] While Barthes' *punctum* is an unpredictable quality, even constrained photography can contain this effect. Cho notes that Canadian head-tax photographs were sometimes made in multiple copies, most likely to be shared with family ("Anticipating" 173). As family memorabilia, these photographs communicated far more than well-disciplined subjectivity. Cho believes they follow in the Chinese tradition of honorific portraiture, and points out how the stoic posture functions as an anticipation of feeling ("Anticipating" 170, 176). She detects a similar quality in modern passport photography, where she believes emotion remains "present in its very obscurity" ("Citizenship" 284). There is something special, it seems, about an image where emotion dwells just below the surface, because it primes us to look even harder.
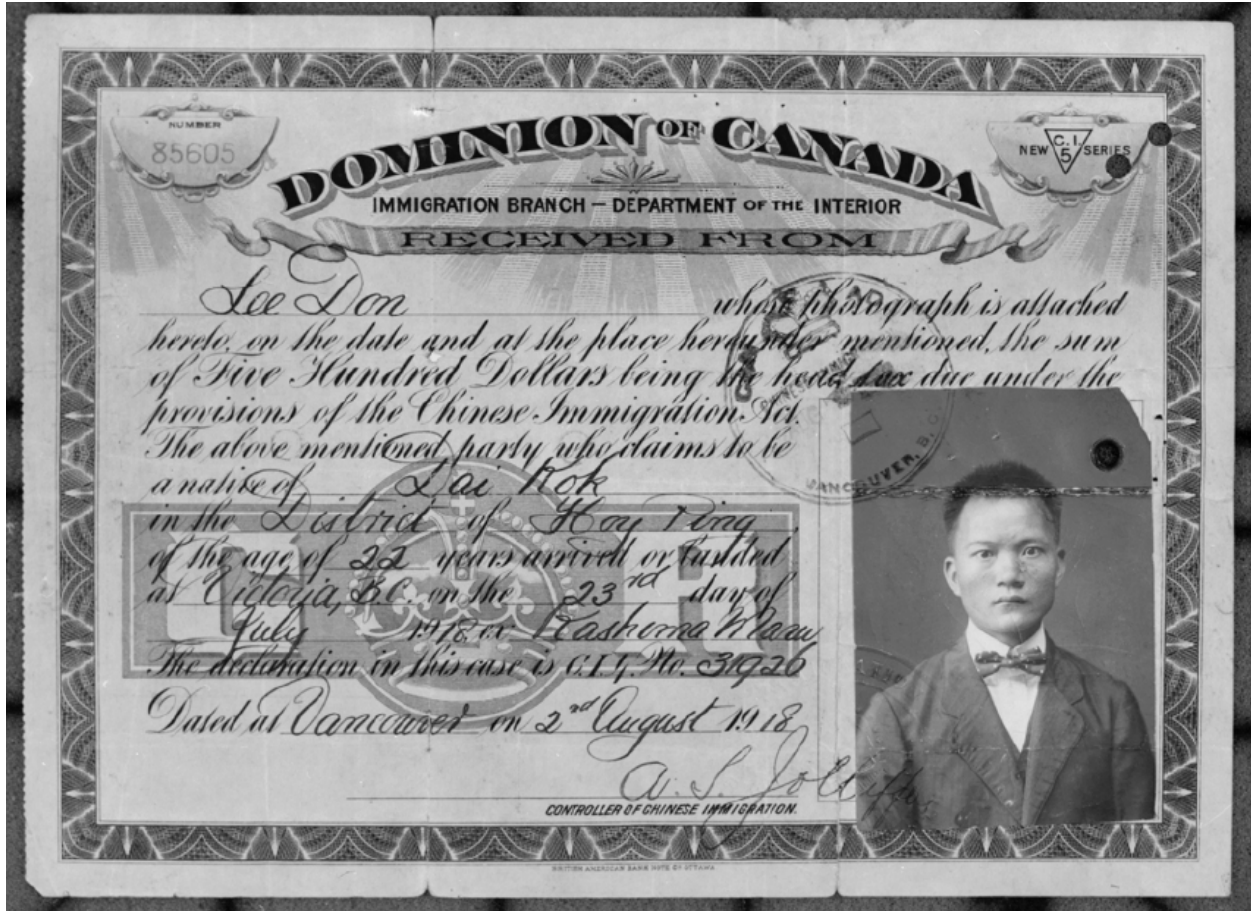
Canadian head tax certificate (Chinese Immigration Act Certificate). Courtesy Vancouver Public Library.

[28] Ariella Azoulay believes that the capacity to expand on the meaning of a still image reveals something that "differentiates" it from "all other forms of documentation" ("Photography" 76). No matter what conditions accompany its creation, she explains, a photograph cannot be "sealed" and brought under official authority ("What is" 10). Instead, because a photograph needs to be "constituted" or framed in some manner it always testifies to the conditions of its creation (*Civil* 127) and not just what gets "positioned in front of the lens" ("Photography" 76). Because it can subsequently be seen in an endless number of contexts by an endless

number of viewers, it is "made up of an infinite series of encounters" meaning the "event of photography is never over" ("Photography" 76-7). In essence, a photograph is fundamentally ungovernable.

[29] By its very nature, photography undermines efforts to control its meaning. The encounter always remains one between individuals who share a world regulated by power and subject to contingency. Azoulay calls it a "skill" to know how to "watch" an image until it unfolds the experience of, or in some cases "injury" to, a unique individual (*Civil* 14). But she rejects the term empathy for this process, because she aligns it with "pity," "shame," "compassion," or even "mercy" (*Civil* 17), all of which collapse politics into sentiment. Yet insofar as the skill she describes is an effort to imaginatively grasp or witness the unique circumstances of another, while remaining mindful of one's own perspective, what she is describing seems to be empathy modified by awareness.

[30] Azoulay's approach seems especially fitting for passport photography. What Azoulay calls the "civil contract of photography" is the idea that the widespread acceptance of photography as an element of modern life entails a reciprocal expectation that photographs will be taken as an opportunity to truly see the circumstances of the other, including the manner in which they experience or are subject to the effects of power or circumstance (*Civil* 104). Photography therefore reminds us that "citizenship is not merely a status, a

good or a piece of property possessed by the citizen but rather a tool of struggle or an obligation to others" (*Civil* 14). This is a far more radical idea of citizenship than the one captured in the passport system. Because it is a space where "no sovereign power exists," she notes that photography "deterritorializes citizenship" and "thwarts" efforts to constrain its effects to a specific nation-state (*Civil* 25-6, 118). If so, then the combination of photography with feeling is indeed a threat to state security. Not only is it inherently undisciplined; it resists efforts to bring it under authority.

[31] From the point of view of sovereign power, then, displacing passport recognition onto machines that lack both emotion and imagination is not misplaced at all. Because the capacity to not only look but feel into a photograph generates a kind of citizenship no state can control. Yet bans on emotion constrain only the sitter, and a passport photograph is still made to be viewed. Prohibitions on emotion notwithstanding, official neutrality cannot strip the unique story from any photograph so long as it can be recovered by what we feel into it. If empathy serves us best when we engage in it consciously, rather than as a flood of sentiment, the disempathy passport images create may prove unexpectedly productive.

The reality behind the ICAO requirements. As Karin Sheets explains: "what did it take to get a passport photo for my special needs child? 2 parents, 1 grandparent, 1 photographer, 30 minutes and 3 options to see which the Passport Agency would accept." She adds: "V [Veronica] can't sit independently, so my husband held V up and would keep her chin up until the photographer was ready, while I kept her legs bent to keep her body from going into high tone from the stress. When the photographer counted to 3, we'd both pull ourselves out of the photo as much as possible, while Grandma chimed in to help remind V to keep her head up" (Sheets). Photograph used with permission of Karin Sheets.

Official disabilities

[32] Modern biometric passports are designed to enfold a population in a

state's secure embrace. But they reflect a fundamental miscalculation. Their

dehumanized subjects are no safer than before, because even a posed

photograph exposes both the experience its subject went through and their agency in doing so. Feelings temporarily suppressed before the camera are still available to skilled viewers, and this quality distances us from the quiescent subject the system is designed to capture. In anticipating a return to feeling once out from under the official gaze, thoughtful viewers restore what has been prohibited. Because we bring to a photograph skills unavailable to administrative machinery, our viewing habits remain undisciplined and our capacity to feel into a photograph proves subversive.

[33] The surprise is that this can lay the groundwork for deeper engagement. By universalizing an alienating process of producing and using the document, the global passport regime establishes a common experience among subjects and viewers worldwide. This experience becomes a resource when viewing other such images, because we already know what the sitter is going through. Moreover, the image is culturally denuded, and the only code it employs concerns compliance. If the effect of cultural coding is to anesthetize viewers, then the chances of an image awakening us to deeper perception should be improved when coding is held to a minimum. Indeed the coldness of these images is almost guaranteed to shock if not wound.

[34] But the moral reach of this effect is not unlimited. As both the history of photography and the Canadian passport redesign show, in a society where some lives are more 'precarious' than others, photography won't serve all

faces equally.[iii] Disempathy can jar the moral imagination without guaranteeing a form of recovery. Any efforts at viewing must also contend with a legacy of suspicion, dehumanization and privilege embedded in the document and conditioning those who use it.

[35] Disempathy is not often associated with moral enrichment. But the empathy/disempathy dyad is not a straightforward one. Because it involves a form of witnessing, empathy is something we can do well or poorly depending on how we attend to the subject of interest. Experiences that interrupt the course of easy empathy therefore have an important part to play in moral imagination, because they require us to take witnessing seriously, and engage in it consciously. Passport images invert the usual aims of photography, mandating uniformity in place of the desire to encounter a unique self. Because these images interrupt conventional sentiment, they set the stage for self-aware engagement, requiring us to take charge of how we look at, and feel with, others. The modern state, which engineers this disempathy, therefore comes up against its own limits in the form of moral witnessing by its citizenry.

"The Last Spike," one of the ePassports' "iconic" images. Passport authorities initially claimed there were Chinese labourers in the background of this image. They subsequently admitted no minorities appear in the image (Beeby).

---

[i] I use "we," "us" and "our" throughout this discussion. It is not intended to suggest a singular, infallible viewpoint. Rather it's intended to reflect the need to think about politics and morality from the point of view of collectivities – humanity, nationality, class or ethnic identity – as well as individuals – scholars, citizens, etc. It is, admittedly, an imagined, projected framing but as the discussion suggests, some of our most important moral thinking involves a readiness to imagine commonalities even where we primarily see, and should remain mindful of, difference.

[ii] Consider, for instance, the case of Toronto mother Suuad Hagi Mohamud who was denied entry to Canada from Kenya for months on the grounds she didn't resemble her passport photograph. Mohamud was eventually re-admitted when DNA tests confirmed her identity, but not before a Canadian High Commission found her guilty of fraud and she was jailed for eight days in Kenya (Cohen).

[iii] The term is from Judith Butler. In her writing on precarious life, she notes that images of suspected terrorists serve to justify acts of aggression, demonstrating how the moral impact of the face can be nullified under certain conditions (141).

Works Cited

Arendt, Hannah. *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Ed. Ronald Beiner. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1982. Print.

Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution.* New York: Penguin Books, 1963. Print.

Azoulay, Ariella. "Photography." *Mafte'akh* 2 (2011): 65-80. Print.

Azoulay, Ariella. "What is a Photograph? What is photography?" *Philosophy of Photography* 1.1 (2010): 9-13. Print.

Azoulay, Ariella. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York: Zone Books, 2008. Print.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso, 2004. Print.

Beebly, Dean. "ePassport Images Under Fire for Lack of Diversity." *Huffington Post* (Canada). 31 October 2012. Web. 25 February 2016. <huffingtonpost.ca/ 2012/10/31/epassport-canada-photos-images_n_2051975.html>.

Canadian Press. "Newly unveiled ePassport images lack women, diversity: focus groups." *CTV News*. 30 October 2012. Web. 24 February 2016. <www.ctvnews.ca/canada/newly-unveiled-epassport-images-lack-women-diversity-focus-groups-1.1017426>.

Chinese Immigration Act Certificate. c.1918. Photograph. Vancouver Public

Library, Vancouver, B.C. Vancouver Public Library Special Collections

Historical Photographs. Web. <vpl.ca/spe/histphotos/>.

Cho, Lily. "Anticipating Citizenship: Chinese Head Tax Photographs." *Feeling*

Photography. Ed. Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu. Durham, NC: Duke UP,

2014. 156-180. Print.

Cho, Lily. "Citizenship, Diaspora and the Bonds of Affect: The Passport

Photograph." *Photography and Culture* 2.3 (2009): 275-287. Print.

Cohen, Tobi. "Government on the hook for $1.5 million in legal costs for

abandoning woman in Kenya," *National Post*. 8 November 2012. Web.

24 February 2016 <news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/government-

on-the-hook-for-1-5-million-in-legal-costs-for-abandoning-woman-in-

kenya>.

Gatta, Giunia. "Visiting or House-swapping? Arendt and Jaspers on Empathy,

Enlarged Mentality and the Space between." *Philosophy and Social*

Criticism 40.10 (2014): 997-1017. Print.

Government of Canada. "Passport Photo Specifications." Rev. ed. 2015.

Web. 24 February 2016. <cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/pass-photo-spec-

eng.pdf>.

Herder, Johann Gottfried. "This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation

of Humanity." *J.G. Herder: Philosophical Writings.* New York, NY:

Cambridge UP, 2002. 272-314. Print.

Jenkins, Rob, et al. "Variability in Photos of the Same Face." *Cognition* 121.3

    (2011): 313-323. Print.

Koss, Juliet. "On the Limits of Empathy." *The Art Bulletin* 88.1 (2006): 139-

    57. Print.

Nelson, Deborah. "The Virtues of Heartlessness: Mary McCarthy, Hannah

    Arendt, and the Anesthetics of Empathy." *American Literary History*

    18.1 (2006): 86-101. Print.

Robertson, Craig. *The Passport in America.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

Salter, Mark. "When the Exception Becomes the Rule: Borders, Sovereignty,

    and Citizenship." *Citizenship Studies* 12.4 (2008): 365-80. Print.

Sheehan, Tanya. "Looking Pleasant, Feeling White: The Social Politics of the

    Photographic Smile." *Feeling Photography*. Ed. Elspeth Brown and Thy

    Phu. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014. 127-57. Print.

Sheets, Karin. "Passport Photos for Children with Special Needs." 13 January

    2014. Web. 25 February 2016 <specialneedstravelmom.com/travel-

    tips/passport-photos-for-children-with-special-needs/>.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and

    Giroux, 2003. Print.

Torpey, John. *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and

    the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

Vries, Lloyd. "New Passport Rule Has No Teeth." *CBS News*. 29 November
    2004. Web. 24 February 2016. <cbsnews.com/news/new-passport-
    rule-has-no-teeth>.

Zhang, Xiaozheng and Youngsheng Goa. "Face Recognition across Pose: A
    Review," *Pattern Recognition* 42.11 (2009): 2876-896. Print.