

From digital fingerprinting to iris and retina recognition, biometric identification systems are a multibillion dollar industry and an integral part of post-9/11 national security strategy. Yet these technologies often fail to work. The scientific literature on their accuracy and reliability documents widespread and frequent technical malfunction. Shoshana Amielle Magnet argues that these systems fail so often because rendering bodies in biometric code falsely assumes that people's bodies are the same and that individual bodies are stable, or unchanging, over time. By focusing on the moments when biometrics fail, Magnet shows that the technologies work differently, and fail to function more often, on women, people of color, and people with disabilities. Her assessment emphasizes the state's use of biometrics to control and classify vulnerable and marginalized populations—including prisoners, welfare recipients, immigrants, and refugees—and to track individuals beyond the nation's territorial boundaries. *When Biometrics Fail* is a timely, important contribution to thinking about the security state, surveillance, identity, technology, and human rights.

"*When Biometrics Fail* is overwhelmingly persuasive, exhaustively researched, eloquently written, and full of mordant humor and bitter truth. Shoshana Amielle Magnet explains the history, science, and ideology of our contemporary biometric moment with great skill and insight. Everyone needs to read this book. An outstanding study of the informationalization of race, gender, and immigration."
—LISA NAKAMURA, author of *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*

"Impassioned, critical, and readable, *When Biometrics Fail* explores the underside of technologies that have been touted as a panacea for many of the discontents of post-9/11 society. Shoshana Amielle Magnet reveals the seldom-discussed impacts of these new technologies on people marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and disability, and she challenges the commonplace assumption that human bodies can be reduced to a string of numbers."
—SIMON A. COLE, author of *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification*

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