"Not White/Not Quite": Racial/Ethnic Hybridity and the Rhetoric of the "Muslim Ban"

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During the turmoil surrounding Executive Orders 13769 and 13780, colloquially known as President Donald Trump's "Muslim bans," discourse turned to who "counted" as someone allowed in the U.S. In this essay, I conduct a critical rhetorical analysis of tweets about the Muslim ban, using a theoretical framework of hybridity, in order to examine how hybridity was, and is, used to rhetorically position people as "acceptable" or "unacceptable" within the rubric of the law and the Muslim ban more specifically. I argue that hybridity is rhetorically articulated as malleable in order to suit the goals of white supremacy; race/ethnicity, religion, and nationality are both conflated and separated depending upon the specific goals and arguments put forth. Thus, racial/ethnic/religious/national identity is seen as both fluid and fixed, but all in service of shoring up discourses of whiteness and white supremacy.

Keywords: white supremacy, Muslim ban, Trump, whiteness, racial/ethnic hybridity

On January 27, 2017, a mere week into his presidency, President Donald Trump issued Executive Order 13769, known colloquially as the "Muslim ban" because it suspended the entry of Syrian refugees indefinitely and delayed entry by citizens of Muslim-majority countries, including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.[1] Despite widespread criticism of the travel ban, and the general consensus that this was, indeed, a Muslim ban, the administration insisted that this was not a ban on Muslims and was instead necessary for national security. Then, on March 6, 2017, this Executive Order was superseded by Executive Order 13780, a "Muslim ban 2.0" that did not significantly improve matters.[2] Again denying the notion that this second Executive Order was a Muslim ban, Trump referred to it as a "watered down, politically correct" version of his first Executive Order.[3] Despite a number of legal challenges, Executive Order 13780 was partially upheld by the Supreme Court, and, as of the time of this writing, the Supreme Court has planned on hearing oral arguments in the case in the fall of 2017.[4] Most recently, Trump signed a Presidential Proclamation on September 24, 2017 that further expanded and defined Executive Order 13780.[5]

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[1] While critiques of this Executive Order primarily focused on the indefinite suspension of entry for Syrian refugees and the delayed entry for citizens of seven countries, the Executive Order also lowered the number of refugees allowed to be admitted to the U.S. in 2017 and suspended the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for 120 days.

[2] This Executive order maintained the suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for 120 days and also lowered the number of refugees allowed to be admitted. The only substantive change is that it removed Iraq from the list of banned countries.

[3] Eugene Scott and Ariane de Vogue, "Trump says that he's calling it a 'travel ban,'" *CNN Politics*, last modified June 5, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/05/politics/trump-travel-ban-courts/index.html

[4] Ariane de Vogue, "Supreme Court allows parts of travel ban to take effect," *CNN Politics*, last modified June 26, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/26/politics/travel-ban-supreme-court/index.html

[5] The White House, "Presidential Proclamation Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry into the United States by Terrorists or Other Public-Safety Threats," September 24, 2017,

In the wake of the first Executive Order 13769, people swarmed to airports to protest the unlawful detention of people who appeared to be on the banned list, even those who had green cards, suggesting that there was widespread confusion about who was to be allowed into the U.S., given the implementation of the travel ban. Even after the second Executive Order, confusion reigned among not only the officials tasked with implementing the ban, but also the many people affected by the ban. Indeed, during the turmoil surrounding both of these Executive Orders, popular discourse turned to who "counted" as someone allowed in the country, as race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality are notoriously slippery identity markers. In a time of political turmoil marked by tensions surrounding racial, ethnic, religious, and national "others" and their alleged threat to U.S. national security, it is imperative to interrogate the discourse surrounding the travel ban to further understand the ways that racial/ethnic,[6] and religious "others" are rhetorically articulated. Moreover, in the age of Trumpism, widely marked by a resurgence of open white supremacy, an analysis of the ways that this discourse is related to whiteness is warranted.

Thus, in this essay, I conduct a critical rhetorical analysis of tweets about Executive Order 13780 and Proclamation 9645 in order to further understand how hybridity is rhetorically articulated vis-à-vis white supremacy. I argue that racial, ethnic, religious, and national identity are depicted as both malleable and fixed, suggesting that hybridity, in this case, is continually drafted into the service of shoring up whiteness. This seemingly paradoxical understanding of hybridity works to reify a white supremacist perspective toward immigration and a concomitant support of Trump despite the logical contradictions inherent in the arguments made in support of the travel ban, suggesting that in an age of Trumpism, "othered" bodies are being used in ways that uphold their oppression. In order to further explicate this argument, the following sections of this essay discuss racial and ethnic hybridity, detail the artifacts under study, and provide an analysis of the discourse surrounding the travel ban.

Crossing Lines: Borders and Racial/Ethnic Hybridity

In this essay, I use the concept of hybridity from the perspective of postcolonial studies, specifically Homi Bhabha and Marwan Kraidy.[7] There is some overlap between hybridity and multiraciality, which is why many scholars use the terms interchangeably. However, the ways in which scholars talk about and use the concept of multiraciality is slightly different from the ways in which hybridity is generally taken up in cultural studies and Communication research. More specifically, multiraciality typically refers to the confluence of two or more distinct and marked races/ethnicities, whereas hybridity is a more ambiguous concept in terms of both which and/or how many

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https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/09/24/enhancing-vetting-capabilities-and-processes-detecting-attempted-entry

[6] Although I recognize that race and ethnicity are two separate constructs, they are often conflated in work about hybridity. For instance, there has been much debate about whether or not Latina/o is a racial or ethnic category. See Mary C. Beltrán, "The New Hollywood Racelessness: Only the Fast, Furious, (and Multiracial) Will Survive," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 2 (2015). Beltran argues that while Latina/os are more properly considered an ethnic, rather than racial, group, Latina/o people in the U.S. have become a "racialized ethnic group," and Latina/o is often treated as a race.

[7] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Marwan M. Kraidy, "Hybridity in cultural globalization," *Communication Theory* 12, no. 3 (2002).

races and ethnicities are merged. Multiraciality is often implicated in hybridity, but hybridity typically does not rely on static and distinct conventional markers of race and/or ethnicity.[8] Moreover, culture is more often a key factor in hybridity than it is in multiraciality—perhaps because conventionally defined races and ethnicities are less salient.[9] For instance, hybrid individuals—actual or depicted—may identify with certain races and/or ethnicities, but feel connected to another culture entirely, or they may connect to a particular race and/or ethnicity via culture, rather than the other way around, given the ambiguity that characterizes their race and/or ethnicity.[10] While a contested term among some postcolonial scholars, hybridity nonetheless can be a useful way of understanding tensions surrounding race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion in a current sociocultural context.[11] I use hybridity in this essay because I am interested in the ways that racial, ethnic, national, and religious ambiguity are navigated in discourse surrounding the travel bans. In the following section, I detail hybridity more thoroughly and explain the ways that it has been understood in historical and contemporary contexts before explaining how hybridity can be understood in a current context and the ways that I am employing it in this essay.

Rather than a concept that has remained stable over time, hybridity has been defined and understood differently depending on sociopolitical and historical contexts. Thus, in order to understand how I am using hybridity in this essay, it is important to first discuss the differing ways that hybridity has been understood. For instance, earlier instantiations of hybridity were centered on the fear of miscegenation, or racial mixing, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[12] These fears of racial mixing primarily hinged upon slavery-era conceptualizations of race, including the perception of whiteness as equivalent with humanness, and people of color as dangerous, primitive savages. However, what was perhaps most telling about anti-miscegenation beliefs, and subsequent legislation, is which racial/ethnic groups were included; racial mixing was prohibited between white people and people of all other races, but legal between anyone of non-white descent. That is, the threat of miscegenation was less about racial mixing in a general sense, but rather represented the threat toward whiteness and white supremacy.

One example of the threat of hybridity/miscegenation is the trope of the "tragic mulatto/a."[13] First instantiated within the media in the film *Birth of a Nation,* the tragic mulatto/a figure represents the terrible consequences of multiraciality and the threat that mixed-race people posed. The figure of the tragic mulatto/a underscores the tensions surrounding the threat of miscegenation in that it represents the supposed social and moral catastrophe that results from racial mixing and the ways in which miscegenation threatens whiteness.[14]

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[8] Shane T. Moreman, "Memoir as Performance: Strategies of Hybrid Ethnic Identity," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2009).

[9] Shane T. Moreman and Dawn M. McIntosh, "Brown Scriptings and Rescriptings: A Critical Performance Ethnography of Latina Drag Queens," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2010)

[10] Leilani Nishime, "The Case for Cablinasian: Multiracial naming from Plessy to Tiger Woods," *Communication Theory* 22, no. 1 (2012); Richard D. Pineda, "Will They See Me Coming? Do They Know I'm Running? Los Lobos and the Performance of *Mestizaje* Identity Through Journey," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2009).

[11] Kraidy, "Hybridity in cultural globalization."

[12] Beltrán, "The New Hollywood Racelessness."

[13] Ibid.

[14] Lisa Z. Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016).

Also stemming from the context of miscegenation is the concept of hybridity as "passing," which is ultimately based on anxieties surrounding the notion of racial purity and white supremacy.[15] Passing, essentially, is the act of concealing one's "true" identity, while simultaneously performing another, more socially acceptable identity.[16] While this notion of an essential identity might be considered antithetical to hybridity, hybridity has, at various times, been understood as assuming both fixed and fluid identities, and when hybridity was defined as passing, the focus was on the former. As a type of hybridity, passing was, similar to miscegenation, prompted by the end of slavery: attempting to draw clear lines around race/ethnicity once slavery no longer provided that function.

While earlier definitions of hybridity were focused on its assumption of essential identities that were being negotiated or masked in specific ways, later understandings of hybridity assumed that identity was far more fluid. For instance, Gloria Anzaldúa defined hybridity as *mestizaje*, which functions as a type of resistance to colonizers. [17] People who identify as *mestizaje* recognize their own autonomy in understanding and framing their identities, particularly as drawn against the infiltration of their geographical and physical locations from white colonizers.

The blurring of clearly delineated racial/ethnic categories within a context of colonization, as suggested in my discussion of *mestizaje*, features particular tensions. However, the extreme racial difference of the colonial era eventually shifted due to a number of factors, including racial mixing between the colonizers and the colonized and the desire for some of the colonized people to identify with the colonizers.[18] This desire for identification led to hybrid people who, to borrow Bhabha's phrase, are "not white/not quite," people who are still marked as racially different, through skin color, but culturally similar to the colonizers. This type of hybridity, predicated on the mimicry of Western culture, can, and did, reaffirm the primacy of whiteness through the impulse to assimilate as a survival strategy. Characterized by both mimicry and agency, postcolonial hybridity also allows for liberatory potential, in that it unhinges and destabilizes whiteness; however, hybridity simultaneously acknowledges and retains whiteness.

As opposed to previous instantiations of hybridity, the current historical moment is marked by globalization and transnationalism, which has led to the decline of the traditional structure of the nation-state. Stuart Hall warns that this can have serious repercussions; "when the era of nation-states in globalization begins to decline, one can see a regression to a very defensive and highly dangerous form of national identity which is driven by a very aggressive form of racism."[19] Even with a greater array of diverse bodies crossing borders, and nation-states becoming more permeable, the U.S. still fosters a culture of white supremacy that works to marginalize perceived "others." This typically happens around raced, ethnic, and national "otherness," suggesting the degree to which racial and ethnic continence are built into the integrity of the nation-state, in abstract as well as concrete terms. Moreover, transnationalism, globalization, and diaspora cultures, particularly

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[15] Floyd J. Davis, *Who is Black: One Nation's Definition* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

[16] Corinne E. Blackmer, "The Veils of the Law: Race and Sexuality in Nella Larson's *Passing*," *College Literature* 22, no. 3 (1995).

[17] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*; Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).

[18] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

[19] Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 26.

within the U.S., often invoke anxieties surrounding the weakening of nationalism and the threat of infiltration from racially, ethnically, and nationally marked "othered" bodies.

For instance, immigration is, and has long been, part of the understanding of transnationalism. Given the increasing fluidity and permeability of people and borders, and the dissolution of discrete nation-states, immigration remains salient, even if transnationalism and immigration are not interchangeable. In recent years, tensions surrounding the threat of immigration have mounted within the U.S., particularly in regards to the highly contested U.S./Mexico border. Additionally, the threat of terrorism, often imagined to be perpetuated only by racially/ethnically marked "others," and inextricably informed by and informative of said fears around immigration, has become a salient concern to many U.S. citizens, evident, for instance, in increased security measures in public places, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the signing into law of the P.A.T.R.I.O.T. Act, increased surveillance of marginalized populations, and, more recently, Trump's travel bans.

Hybridity is unavoidable in a contemporary age of global capitalism and transnationalism, and is always occurring and present.[20] Given that hybridity is everywhere, Kraidy argues that we should not focus on what hybridity *is*, but what hybridity *does*, and "understanding hybridity as a practice marks the recognition that transcultural relations are complex, processual, and dynamic."[21] Ultimately, what this means is that while hybridity can be an amorphous, ambiguous concept, Kraidy argues that Communication research should work to understand *how* it is working in different contexts and use that as a way of further defining the concept. Thus, in this essay, I explore how contemporary incarnations of hybridity, via Trump's travel bans and the discourse surrounding them, can shed light on broader concurrent cultural tensions, anxieties, and negotiations of race/ethnicity, religion, and nationality in order to more clearly understand what hybridity is and how it works in this contemporary moment.

Trump's Travel Bans and Twitter

It is no secret that Trump regularly uses Twitter to communicate his thoughts, ideas, and even policies and that his supporters also use Twitter to respond to Trump as well as to bolster his ideas and show their support. Moreover, Twitter was one of the most-used channels for information about the 2016 presidential election, and continues to be a primary source of news for a large number of people.[22] Indeed, "Twitter increasingly performs the agenda-setting function in politics once dominated by television. Television or, at least, televised news now follows the lead of Twitter."[23] Because of the importance of Twitter in modern politics, and the inextricable connection that Trump and his policies, including his travel bans, have with Twitter, I analyze a collection of tweets about the travel bans in order to further understand how racial, ethnic, religious, and national hybridity is being called upon, particularly in the service of white supremacy.

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[20] Kraidy, "Hybridity in Cultural Globalization."

[21] Ibid, 317.

[22] Victor M. Pérez-Martínez, Maria D. Rodríguez González, and Maria Tobajas Gracia, "Mobilization and Political Participation on Twitter: Case Study of the Hashtag #SuperTuesday in the Primaries of the Presidential Elections of the United States 2016," *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 72 (2017).

[23] Brian L. Ott, "The Age of Twitter: Donald Trump and the Politics of Debasement," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no. 1 (2017).

In order to analyze tweets about Trump's travel bans, I defined a set[24] by using Twitter's Advanced Search feature in order to narrow tweets down to a date range and key words. More specifically, I searched for "Muslim ban" instead of "travel ban" because I was interested in understanding how race, ethnicity, nationality, and religious identity were articulated vis-à-vis white supremacy. I also chose to use the search terms without the hashtag, as I wanted to include a broader range of material and, indeed, some tweets did not use the hashtag "#MuslimBan" but were still about the bans. Once I had this large dataset, I defined a sample[25] by narrowing the date range to July 19, 2017-September 24, 2017. These dates are significant because first, the Supreme Court chose to temporarily uphold the majority of the second version of the travel ban, EO 13780, on July 19, 2017, thus legitimizing the travel ban and those who supported it.[26] Second, on September 24, 2017, Trump signed Proclamation 9645, a third instantiation of the travel ban; although this third version was temporarily blocked by a federal judge on October 17, 2017 it is still the most recent version of the ban as of the time of this writing.[27]

Once I had this sample, I chose a unit to code; in this essay, a unit is defined as a single tweet, which is similar to Cheryl Geisler's definition of a T-unit, which consists of emotions, relationships, and reactions between the different parts of the sentence, or in this case, tweet.[28] In order to code these tweets, I read every tweet that contained the words "Muslim Ban" between July 19, 2017-September 24, 2017. Necessarily, the sample was very large and not every tweet would be useful for my analysis, so as I read the tweets I used an *a priori* approach,[29] in that I specifically looked for tweets that mentioned race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and other identity markers because I was guided by a theoretical lens of hybridity and was interested in understanding how hybridity was rhetorically articulated in the tweets. At the same time, however, I also looked for repetition, or moments when ideas seemed to occur and reoccur throughout the tweets.[30] I did not include tweets that were in a language other than English (as that is my primary language), tweets that included "#MuslimBan" that were not actually related to the travel bans, tweets that used the phrase "Muslim Ban" as one of the reasons the tweeter thought Trump was racist/xenophobic (as the travel bans were only tangentially related in those tweets), and tweets that simply stated, "it's not a Muslim ban" without providing additional information as to why the users disagreed with that label. Ultimately, my dataset was comprised of 556 individual tweets.

Once I collected all 556 tweets, I read through them in order to identify themes.[31] I did not begin with preconceived ideas about themes, but I did look to see if there were any major similarities and differences regarding how the tweets rhetorically articulated identity in relation to the travel bans.[32] Using a critical rhetorical perspective, I attended to the ways that power is rhetorically mobilized and instantiated in the tweets, particularly in regard to how racial, ethnic, religious, and national identity was articulated in relation to white supremacy. My goal was not to simply

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[24] Cheryl A. Geisler, *Analyzing Streams of Language: Twelve Steps to the Systematic Coding of Text, Talk, and Other Verbal Data* (London: Longman, 2003).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Kaitlyn Schallhorn, "Trump Travel Ban: Timeline of a Legal Journey," *CNN*, last modified October 18, 2017, http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/10/18/trump-travel-ban-timeline-legal-journey.html

[27] Ibid.

[28] Geisler, *Analyzing Streams of Language.*

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ryan and Bernard colloquially refer to this process as "cutting and sorting" and liken it to constant comparison research.

report the surface meaning of identity within the tweets, but to also interpret that meaning along-side contextual and historical consideration. I started out with four major themes, then realized that two of the themes could, and should, be collapsed into one; ultimately, I discovered three salient themes in the tweets regarding identity and the travel bans: (a) all Muslims are potential—and likely—terrorists (234 tweets), (b) all racial and ethnic minorities are the same (49 tweets), and (c) Muslims as a religion are separate from country of origin/nationality (273 tweets). Although the second theme had markedly fewer tweets, it still seemed to be a salient theme.

Hybridity in Service of White Supremacy

My analysis of tweets about Trump's travel ban uncovered the complicated ways that racial, eth-nic, religious, and national hybridity is both upheld and disputed in the service of white supremacy; that is, hybridity is ultimately malleable and flexible, as we know identity to be, but in ways that underscore a rather fixed understanding of identity categories. Ultimately, when wielded by white supremacy, hybridity is rendered as *changeable* depending upon the given purpose of white su-premacist ideals. In the following analysis, I discuss the three ways that hybridity, through the rubric of white supremacy, is rhetorically articulated in tweets about Trump's travel bans: hybrid-ity as *shifting*, hybridity as *conflation*, and hybridity as *compartmentalized.*

"Now We Just Need to Deport Them All": Hybridity and the Shifting Goalposts of Identity

Hybridity is articulated in such a way that *anyone* can be apprehended as a potential terrorist, regardless of one's actual racial, ethnic, and most importantly, national identity. There is a heark-ening back to the fluidity of identity and hybridity that could be considered progressive and posi-tive, such that identity is not understood here in terms of fixed categories. Unfortunately, however, this seed of potential progressiveness is subverted by the lens of white supremacy, which uses this understanding of fluid identity to label all Muslims as terrorists regardless of their actual relation-ship with terror groups or their other identities.

For instance, one Twitter user wrote, "I don't want these savages coming here to the USA ever... #MuslimBan,"[33] while another similarly noted, "We need a muslim ban in all non muslim countries. Those subhuman creatures can wallow in caves for all I care." Replying to President Trump, one user tweeted, "@realDonaldTrump Muslims are worst people they are shameless, you took correct decision on #MuslimBan." Essentially these tweets are expressing the notion that one's identification with a religion negates the humanity of a person, regardless of their actual identification with terrorists. Here, hybridity is articulated as allowing such extreme goalpost shift-ing that not only should people not be terrorists in order to be allowed into the U.S., but they should also not be associated with a particular religion. Curiously, this fluidity of religious identity is also

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[33] Important debates about the ethics of online research have focused on social media users' rights to anonymity in academic scholarship. While I take the perspective that direct quotations are important for understanding the dis-course surrounding the travel bans, I have chosen the "moderate disguise" approach discussed by Bruckman, in that I use direct quotations but do not provide citation information for individual tweets. For more, see: Amy Bruckman, "Opportunities and Challenges in Methodology and Ethics," in *Online Social Research: Methods, Issues, and Eth-ics,* eds. Mark D. Johns, Shing-Ling S. Chen, and G. Jon Hall (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Heidi McKee and James E. Porter, *The Ethics of Internet Research: A Rhetorical Case-Based Process* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009); Helena Kantanen and Jyri Manninen, "Hazy Boundaries: Virtual Communities and Research Ethics," *Media and Communication* 4, no. 4 (2016).

an intense fixity of identity, such that the fact that some Muslim people *are* terrorists automatically becomes *all* Muslim people are terrorists. Rather than allowing for a Muslim identity that is nuanced, complex, and sometimes individualized, these tweets suggest that not only are all Muslims the same, but that they are also all terrorists.

Perhaps even more startling, this theme of hybridity as shifting—in ways that benefit white supremacy—is also apparent in a number of tweets that collapse national identity and make religion the primary identity signifier. Again, the understanding of national identity and religion as not inherently tied together could be viewed as positive, and could even serve to disrupt the association between Middle Eastern countries and Islam that is being used as a warrant for the travel bans. However, in the hands of white supremacy, this potential is twisted in ways that suggest that Islam, untethered from nationality, is seen as threatening regardless of where it is geographically located. For example, in response to a news story about a Minnesota mosque being blown up by a homemade bomb, one tweet read, "That's what the Muslim ban is for. Now we just need to deport them all and we're good." Aside from the fact that at that time, authorities had not determined who had caused the explosion, this tweet also suggests that, somehow, U.S. Muslims were responsible for blowing up their own house of worship and should be deported. Instead of considering the complex intersections of race, religion, national identity, and citizenship, this tweet reduces religious identity as the defining characteristic of people who should be targeted by such a ban, contradicting the statements provided by the Trump administration that the travel bans were focused on countries, not religions. Hybridity is at work in that, as noted, it does untether Islam from the Middle East and recognize that Muslims also live in the U.S., but then its progressive potential is subverted by a staunch insistence that U.S. Muslims are not really U.S. citizens. Essentially, this is a double move: religion is both unrelated to nationality, yet simultaneously tied to it, in that U.S. Muslims are articulated as not *really* U.S. citizens precisely because their religious identity ties them to countries outside of the U.S.

This theme of "not white/not quite" continues with another tweet stating, "Deport ALL MUSLIM, BAN THAT FILTHY SECT , BURN ALL MOSQUES." Aside from the stunning assertion that violence should be enacted against people while simultaneously advocating deportation for people who have allegedly committed violence, there is yet again a double move happening here: This tweet recognizes that Muslims do, indeed, live in the U.S., but simultaneously claims they should be deported simply because of their religious beliefs. Similarly, another tweet stated, "You folks better get a handle on this immagration deal ban to go into effect. In Houston there's an overwelming amount of'em. #muslimBan," again suggesting that current U.S. citizens should be removed from their country of origin and/or citizenship because somehow they live here under false pretenses. Another user stated, "I'd love the 'muslim ban' to include all muslims and removal of muslims from the U.S. Muslims hate us…why keep them among us??????" Another tweet stated, "Get these terrorists out of our country…WTH is wrong with ppl?? #MuslimBan." Once again, we can see this tweet articulating Muslims as U.S. citizens, but simultaneously U.S. citizens who do not belong in the U.S. because of their religious identity. Salient is the use of "our country"—while Muslims do live in the U.S., they do not have claim on the U.S., which is articulated as the province of non-Muslim (ostensibly white) people.

In this articulation of hybridity, identity is seen as a bit slippery, but this slipperiness also allows it to be used in a way that benefits white supremacy. Essentially, the goalposts keep shifting in the warrants for the travel bans – Trump and his supporters insist that the ban is about keeping people from specific countries out of the U.S., but in this case, hybridity gives the lie to that warrant, as it is clear that living in the "right" country—in this case, the U.S.—is simply not enough.

Simultaneously, the travel bans are allegedly targeting violent extremists, so in order to justify white supremacist ideals and an attendant hatred of Muslims, these Twitter users draft hybridity into the service of claiming that all Muslims can be associated with terrorists, as there is no fixed or stable Muslim identity.

"Just Ban Everyone Who Doesn't Speak English": Hybridity and the Conflation of Brownness

A second way that hybridity is used to further white supremacist ideals is through the conflation of Muslim people with all other "ethnic" people.[34] As Mary Beltrán argues, within the U.S., multiraciality—or what I would argue is more properly understood as hybridity because of its more fluid nature—has become more visible, such that we often understand people as "vaguely ethnic" without being able to completely identify their precise racial/ethnic/national mélange.[35] While this can, as is always the case with hybridity, work to unmoor seemingly stable identity signifiers and allow for more freedom and "play" among identities, Beltrán notes that this type of hybridity can also work to conflate all brownness as essentially the same. This conflation is at the heart of many tweets about Trump's travel bans.

For example, one tweet argued, "Skip the Muslim Ban Just Ban everyone who doesnt speak english who happen to be from another country Other countries learn multiple langages." The travel bans are seen as less important than completely eradicating difference, particularly in instances where people do not speak English (regardless of the fact that many Muslim people do speak English). Hybridity is used, through a white supremacist perspective, to dismiss everyone who is not white, or who does not appear to fit within the rubric of whiteness.[36] Similarly, another tweet pleaded, "enforce the Muslim ban no immigrants from anywhere until we get this situation under control islamist please self-deport." There is much to unpack here: This tweet suggests that all immigrants should be banned from the U.S., but more insidious is the implicit assumption that these immigrants would not be considered white. Thus, all immigrants are categorized together as "brown" without attending to the incredible diversity that characterizes immigration into the U.S. Additionally, this tweet urges "Islamists" to deport themselves, suggesting that Muslim people are interchangeable with every other (brown) immigrant, regardless of their citizenship status. Another tweet similarly read, "Notice Muslims and illegal Aliens are Always attacking women and children. Smart women oppose Muslim and Illegal immigration." Yet again, there is a lot of conflation happening in this tweet, as immigrants more generally are being articulated as the real problem, but Muslims are included in that problem. While there is progressive potential in recognizing that identity categories are fluid, a white supremacist understanding of hybridity flattens this nuance by conflating all brownness as essentially the same and in binary opposition to the ostensibly stable category of whiteness.[37]

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[34] I hesitate to use the term "non-white" because it centers whiteness, so for the sake of brevity, use "ethnic" here instead to denote people who are not white.

[35] Beltrán, "The New Hollywood Racelessness."

[36] White, here, refers not to skin color, but to a rhetorical-social construct of whiteness that designates some people as white and others as non-white. Of course, whiteness has been a notoriously slippery concept, as those who are "counted" as being part of whiteness have changed based on socio-political-historical context; for instance, while Italian people are largely seen as white in the U.S., this was not always the case. For more, see: Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (1995).

[37] As noted, whiteness is far from a stable category, but it is being articulated as such in these tweets.

In other cases, tweets appeared to use the hashtag #MuslimBan" to air their grievances about difference and race more generally. One user wrote, "Kaepernick turned down $14,000,000 contract last week. Kaepernicks girlfriend is one of the co-founders of BLACK LIVES MATTERS. #MuslimBan." Despite the fact that Kaepernick, a football player who became famous for taking a knee during the national anthem in 2016, is not Muslim, this tweet uses the hashtag to disparage Kaepernick and state that his girlfriend is involved with the Black Lives Matter Movement, suggesting that this association is negative and should somehow cast Kaepernick as a villain. In this instance, hybridity is rather out of control, in that it is drafted in the service of white supremacy to not only somehow conflate football, football players, the Black Lives Matter movement, and Muslims, but also to cast equal aspersions on all of those identities and call for a "Muslim ban."

Another way that conflation of brownness occurs is through a supposed association between Muslim people, Mexican people, and people from South America more generally. For instance, in reply to Congressman Paul Ryan's video arguing for a border wall, one user tweeted, "a muslim ban would have kept [9/11 hijackers] out besides we dont need south American gangs or their drugs." This tweet elides the fact that most of the 9/11 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, a country not included in either of the travel bans, but beyond that, it also handily pivots from advocating for the travel bans to demonizing people from South America as gang members and drug smugglers (a trope, it must be noted, also encouraged by President Trump). Another user similarly addressed building a wall in relation to the travel bans, stating, "First off not a Muslim ban, finish getting rid of illegals, build the wall, and keep them out to come back properly." This user situates Mexican immigrants in the same way as Muslim people as part of a larger understanding of all brown people as similarly "bad." Another user retweeted an article by the *Washington Examiner*, captioning it, "#BorderPatrol: 23 #Chinese nationals caught crossing underground tunnel from #Mexico to #California #MuslimBan." In this tweet, Chinese nationals are being conflated with Mexican immigrants, and both are being conflated with a Muslim ban, regardless of the fact that no one in this situation is Muslim. Here, a white supremacist perspective is being used to take the idea that race, nationality, and religion are fluid and conflating them as all being essentially interchangeable and equally demonized. The rhetorical and material potential of hybridity to disrupt binaries and fixed identities is instead being used to conflate brownness as exactly the same and all undesirable.

"It Wasn't a Muslim Ban, You Dope": Hybridity as Compartmentalized

While in some cases, racial, ethnic, national, and religious hybridity were completely embraced by supporters of the travel bans, in others, discourse strictly affirmed the compartmentalizing of racial, ethnic, national, and religious identity. In these tweets, hybridity was denied and fixed identity categories were upheld in an attempt to justify the travel ban as a national security necessity. Thus, supporters of the travel bans were able to use the concept of hybridity for their own ends, in the process upholding white supremacist politics. For instance, one user tweeted, "There is no Muslim Ban, there's a ban on citizens from particular countries deemed a direct threat to Americans, who happen to be Muslim." Another user wrote, "It is not a Muslim ban, it is a ban on countries with high terrorism. [Trump] hates free trade that screws us." In both these tweets, religious identity is viewed as incidental to national identity, which is allegedly the real threat being mitigated by the travel bans. Ignoring that religious and national identity sometimes do blend together, these tweets compartmentalize identity and refuse to recognize any sense of hybridity at

play. In contrast to the more fluid senses of identity expressed by some Twitter users, these artic- ulations draw on notions of ethnocentrism and white supremacy to demonize entire nations, alt- hough they do so by disingenuously separating those nations from religious identity.

In other cases, national security was used as a warrant for the travel bans, but additionally, while Muslim identity was unmoored from nationality, it was connected to ISIS specifically. For example, one tweet read, "It's not a Muslim ban, if it was then different countries would be banned. It was intended to keep us safer because ISIS and other groups." Similarly, another user tweeted, "There was no Muslim ban…there was a ban on travel from several Arab countries American intelligence knew for years was funding ISIS." There is an interesting use of hybridity in these tweets, as Muslim identity is seen as completely synonymous with terrorists, as in the tweets dis- cussed earlier in this essay, but also a compartmentalization of nationality and religious identity in the avowal that countries were targeted because of terrorism—which is being associated with re- ligion—but not because of religion. A complex set of rhetorical gymnastics thus configures iden- tity as both fluid and fixed depending upon which understanding best supports white supremacy and the travel bans.

Other tweets recognized that Muslim identity was, perhaps, a facet of the travel bans, yet sim- ultaneously denied that religious identity was the catalyst. For instance, one user stated, "The ban was never in muslims, if it was a Muslim ban, [Trump] would have banned the 40 muslims major- ity countries not 6." Another user argued, "not a Muslim ban it was just a few the majority of Muslim countries were not affected – how many countries r Israel banned?dont hear moaning." The argument here is that because not all Muslim-majority countries were targeted, the travel bans do not discriminate against Muslims more generally. Although this understanding ignores the fact that many of the Muslim-majority countries not included in the ban are countries that Trump did or does business with,[38] it more saliently seems to simultaneously separate religion from national- ity while also conflating it. There is a curious double move happening with these tweets, as they rely on a compartmentalized sense of identity that separates Muslim people from the countries that are banned, while also calling upon the notion of Muslim-majority countries as a warrant for their claim that Muslims were not discriminated against.

Overall, these types of tweets served to repudiate earlier tweets about hybridity, in that they compartmentalized identities and used that separation as a warrant for justifying the travel bans and supporting Trump himself. While hybridity is predicated on an understanding of identity as malleable rather than essential and fixed, in the cases where this belief did not serve white suprem- acist ideals, it was quickly abandoned for a different understanding of racial, ethnic, religious, and national identity. The insistence that the travel bans are not motivated by religious or even racial animus is predicated on a rhetorical move that denies any intersectionality or sense of fluid iden- tity, and is animated by white supremacist and ethnocentric appeals to national security.

White Supremacy at Any Cost: Conclusions on Twitter and Trump's Travel Bans

In this essay, I conducted a critical rhetorical analysis of tweets about Trump's travel bans in order to understand the ways that racial/ethnic, religious, and national hybridity were used in ways that justify not only the travel bans, but white supremacy itself. Ultimately, hybridity was rhetorically

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[38] Rosalind S. Helderman, "Countries Where Trump Does Business Are Not Hit by New Travel Restrictions," *The Washington Post,* January 28, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/countries-where-trump-does-busi- ness-are-not-hit-by-new-travel-restrictions/2017/01/28/dd40535a-e56b-11e6-a453- 19ec4b3d09ba_story.html?utm_term=.01a3218397cd

articulated as highly *changeable* depending upon the goals of white supremacy in any case. More specifically, hybridity was represented through tweets that shifted the goalposts of identity, making identity a slippery concept that was twisted in the service of white supremacist ideals. Hybridity was also depicted through tweets that positioned identity as interchangeable, conflating race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality in ways that drew on white supremacist attitudes toward "othered" bodies more generally. Finally, hybridity was articulated as strangely unimportant, with identity being compartmentalized into discrete and fixed categories that elided notions of intersectionality in favor of a rigid, ethnocentric position toward everyone who is not apprehended as white.

Thus, this essay has two important implications. First, my analysis of discourse surrounding the travel bans suggests that hybridity in an age of white supremacy and Trumpism can be understood as a way of co-opting progressive ideals about racial/ethnic, religious, and national identity in a way that serves whiteness. While hybridity on its own has both progressive and regressive potential, the current socio-political-cultural context provides space for the regressive potential to be foregrounded by people with an interest in expanding and supporting the power of whiteness within the U.S. This is not to say that the theorizing of hybridity should be abandoned, but rather that the potential for hybridity and its approach toward identity is inextricably tied to socio-political-cultural context such that in order to more fully understand hybridity, we must attend to context. Moreover, it is important to note that hybridity provides an important heuristic for more fully understanding a socio-political-cultural context, in this case, that of Trumpism and white supremacy.

Second, this essay provides an understanding of the ways that white supremacy, itself, can be rather slippery. Rather than only rely on outright racism, in many cases white supremacy appears to utilize concepts that are often thought of as progressive to further the power of whiteness. For instance, understandings of identities as fluid, intersectional, and changeable is arguably a primary goal of liberal politics and policies, yet in this case, those notions of identity are warped in important ways through the rubric of white supremacy. While co-optation is certainly not a new strategy of whiteness, it is interesting to see how a white supremacist understanding of identity, in regard to the travel bans particularly, so openly embraces hybridity as a warrant for fairly blatant racism, nationalism, and discrimination. In an age of Trumpism marked by a rise in white supremacy (and in many cases, initiated by Trump himself), it is important to understand the strategies and techniques used to bolster white supremacy, and it appears that in this case, hybridity might be one of those strategies. White supremacy, it seems, will always find a way.

Of course, this study has several limitations. First, it focuses only on Twitter; although Twitter is a primary means of disseminating political information, it is certainly not the only way, so future research might want to consider how other forms of media circulate discourses about the travel ban, hybridity, and white supremacy. Additionally, this study only analyzes tweets from the date range of July 19, 2017 to September 24, 2017, a fairly limited (although recent) sample. Thus, other research might use a different method of analysis in order to analyze a larger amount of data. With that being said, this essay provides a timely intervention in understanding the rhetoric surrounding the travel bans and the ways in which racial/ethnic, religious, and national hybridity have been used to ultimately uphold white supremacist ideals. In a current political climate that is sharply divided by policies and also by racial politics, further understandings of how white supremacy functions through popular discourse is not only vital, but is also a potential first step for reclaiming a politics that vehemently denies white supremacy and upholds democratic ideals and justice for all marginalized identities.