

DANGEROUS JOKES AND THE POWER OF TOLERANCE

Humor and Identity in Turkey and the United States

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ABSTRACT

A fieldwork study of Duke University aims to show how identity functions in an environment whose ideal is perfect tolerance and the experience of students who want to practice their religion as a college student, touching on issues of gender and sexuality as well. College students and their use of humor are analyzed to reflect on how tolerance can create tension between groups, and how people deal with these tensions through their jokes. American colleges utilize a policy of tolerance in order to decrease tension between different groups which are reflected in the jokes that students make, whereas in Turkey similar tensions are the subject of current public and legal discussions. A discussion of the definition and attitudes about tolerance in Turkey and the United States reflects on how the different societies have come to accept different definitions of tolerance. The citizens of modern nation states are expected to be liberal subjects who make rational decisions, free from the effects of things like religion. However, this expectation is not always true. Tolerance is one of the ways used to deal with this contradiction, but instead of promoting understanding, it can perpetuate a cycle where communities of people grow more distant from each other. Tolerance is a policy existent around the world, and religious tolerance has become an important part of modern, national identity, as it is expected that citizens will have rational, free choice, not acted on by religion. Colleges aim to create a certain type of citizen that will be a model of what a modern, liberal subject should be.

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WARNING!

The humor on the next page and in the rest of this thesis may be offensive.

Continue at your own risk.

PREFACE



The above comic, along with eleven others, was published in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten on September 30th, 2005. It caused an international crisis, as well as violent protests across the Muslim world.

In 2010, one Muslim Duke student joked to another Duke student from a Muslim country that he was Muslim only for the sake of the virgins he would be rewarded in Heaven. And it was funny.

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to faith-based humor, I can enjoy a lot of jokes that others would consider offensive. Friend joking he's only Muslim for the virgins in Heaven? Hilarious. A law firm in Turkey supposedly providing consultation for Judgment Day? Good one. A Danish newspaper drawing Mohammad with a bomb on his head? Stop right there... Is that even a joke? Realizing that even I, someone who thought myself numb to being offended after reading hundreds of different types of provoking comics online and in humor magazines, had a limit, I wanted to know why this was so. Why is it that when my Muslim friend joked to me about having faith only for the sake of the virgins he would be rewarded in Heaven, I found it funny, but when a comic with the same concept was published in a Danish magazine, neither I nor most of the Muslim world found it funny?

I struggled a lot in the beginning and wondered if this question had an answer at all. I tried comparing Turkish humor to American humor to see if this was a matter of national flavors of humor, and what different cultures found funny. I found a few patterns but they were not fully satisfying to me, so I changed my focus to analyzing tolerance towards religious groups on campus and how tolerant or intolerant attitudes were reflected in people's jokes. Eventually, this gave me the insight I had been looking for in the first place. I started to see how both humor and tolerance were really about the power relationships between the joker and the joke's subject, the tolerant and the tolerated. Just as certain jokes offended and alienated, so did tolerance. Instead of helping people reach the modern ideal of multiculturalism, tolerance creates multiple cultures disassociated

with each other. I drew my examples from humor as well as fieldwork on Duke's campus and my experiences living in Turkey.

When I first arrived as a first-year student, the numerous religious groups on Duke's campus that seem to belong there so naturally were quite alien concepts to me; I know of no real equivalent to them in Turkish universities where campus organizations are only recently becoming active and popular. Even then, I think such religious communities would be hard to come across due to the assumed Sunni Muslim identity of Turkish people in general, as well as a different tradition of community when it comes to religion. I will draw comparisons with Turkish universities and college students whenever possible, in order to put certain concepts such as identity and tolerance into a more global perspective. I think the comparison between Turkey and the US will be interesting not simply because of my personal experiences but also because of the major importance both the countries play in the world or in their geographical and religious communities. Turkey has always been, or tried, to be the poster child for a secular Muslim country, and the power the US holds in world politics, as well as the importance of religion in both countries, is also undeniable and important reasons to look at them. Although I draw most of my examples from religious groups and humor about religion, gender and sexuality have been important issues for me as well. As identity does not happen in a bubble, I wanted to give voice to other issues than religion as well, and being a woman and someone involved a lot with the LGBT community, gender and sexuality have been the ones that interested me most after religion. If I had more time, I would have aimed to explore those better, as well as questions of race and ethnicity.

The citizens of modern nation states are expected to be liberal subjects who make rational decisions, free from the effects of influences like religion. However, this expectation is not always realized. Tolerance is one of the ways used to deal with this contradiction, but instead of promoting understanding, it can perpetuate a cycle where communities of people grow more distant from each other. Tolerance, I argue, is a temporary tool, as most ideologies can be argued to be. If one part of the society wants to keep up with the tolerant ideology, than the other comes out to be even more intolerant and it can be difficult for healthy discussions and progress to be made. It can also push groups of people further away from each other, defeating the purpose of the society living together peacefully, as in reality they are not living as one society but as strictly distinct groups under one name they are not successfully able to unite under. I incorporated Turkey in my argument to show that when there is no conscious effort to perpetuate the ideology of tolerance, better and healthier arguments can be made over time, although it takes time and practice to get to that point and which Turkey is struggling to learn how to do as well, and this also does not mean that there is no practice of tolerance in Turkey either.

Even though tolerance was my main focus in this thesis, and I do my analysis through the perspective of tolerance, it is not necessarily the main problem at heart. Tolerance, just like humor, is a reflection of the power relations between people. As I criticize tolerance, and talk about its ineffectiveness or the problems it causes, I am also aware that some of these issues cannot be resolved until the power dynamics between every group is erased – an unrealistic goal for a thesis. Therefore I limited myself to talking about tolerance, concentrating solely on how tolerance fits into these power

dynamics and how it can create problems of its own. When talking about groups who have power, it's also important to keep in mind the assumption of normativity that comes with assigning power to a group of people. In abstract speech, it might be easy to make broad claims like "White people have power in the US" or "Muslim people have power in Turkey", on an individual level it's difficult to find any member of these groups that feel like they completely fit the ideal of what is normal in their community. This idea of being same yet different with your community or nation is writ small clearly at Duke.

The first chapter will be a study of tolerance and humor. Using Wendy Brown's *Regulating Aversion* as my main text, I want to ask the question, what is tolerance? Since my fieldwork was on humor and college students, I will be analyzing jokes to try to understand the power relations between the joker, the audience and the subject. Similar power relationships are present in the idea of tolerance as well. One of my arguments is that tolerance is rooted in not knowing how to deal with the Other, and choosing to "endure" them for the time being, without changing people's feelings about each other. In the tolerant ideal, common assumption and knowledge about other groups is still in the public conscious, but usually kept silent and are only brought out and shared using humor as a tool. Making a joke gives the joker the freedom of communicating without explaining as well as representing their status as the one with power in the dynamics of the joke, and the inner functionings of humor will be discussed in detail, using Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. Examples of jokes between my friends and I collected during my fieldwork will be the source that provides me with the humor to analyze; hopefully they won't become too uninteresting after being analyzed.

The second chapter continues with the humor theme, but uses it as an example of talking about national characteristics and ideology, and differences between Turkey and the US. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* was my guide for this chapter, as I try to unravel the inner workings of nations, religions and colleges, and the ways in which they are resemble or differ from each other. Even though in the first chapter I talk about a "non-existence of tolerance" in Turkey, I try to analyze the deeper history and attitudes behind how tolerance is understood there, and why religion has not been a welcomed identity in Turkish colleges, specifically since the foundation of the Republic, as most of them were established after that. Tolerance is like a mild flavor; you might be tricked into believing that it is not there if there is another strong sauce competing with its taste. In Turkey, there is a lack of awareness of the tolerant ideology, which may trick one into thinking that there is no tolerance in the first place. In fact, similar ideas are used to different ends under the name of modernity and secularism.

The third and final narrative chapter focuses its attention on culture writ small in Duke, looking at what it means to be a religious person in an elite, private institution. As Wendy Brown points out colleges as an example of the institutions that have embraced tolerance as an ideal, I wanted to talk about how people experience religion in their daily lives in one of these tolerant places. The focus of this chapter is on narrative, understanding the expectations from a Duke student, and how these affect religious life at Duke. I also included a section on overlapping identities, as identities don't come one at a time, neither at Duke nor anywhere else. A lot of times it's these people who identify with more than one identity that needs to be tolerated who feel the negative effects of tolerance most strongly. Although this chapter concentrates on a much smaller scale than

the previous two, it will be helpful in looking at how tolerance really functions, or fails to do so. I know that when talking about such broad topics like religion, Turkey and the US, it's impossible for me to cover everything out there and there will be a number of things I've missed or have not been able to include. Regardless, I hope that it will be successful in conveying my arguments as well as causing a few giggles and laughs.

TOLERANCE: DEFINITIONS, JOKES, TENSIONS

“Do you agree with Helen Keller that “the highest result of education is tolerance?”” asks a user that’s tagged as a “top contributor” on Yahoo! Answers. “Would we live in a world with less bigotry, tension & apathy if more people took the time to truly learn about faiths and beliefs other than their own, or simply developed the maturity to tolerate them?” she adds. All the answerers¹ have agreed, and the answer chosen as the best starts with the enthusiastic declaration “YES!” The asker then replied to this declaration with another Helen Keller quote, “Toleration is the greatest gift of the mind; it requires the same effort of the brain that it takes to balance oneself on a bicycle,” and she adds “I hope you all keep riding your bikes. :)”.

I originally meant to write about Helen Keller’s quote by itself, but this was the result I clicked on for my Google search on “Helen Keller tolerance” and I couldn’t help but share it. The world would be a great place if everyone could learn from this peaceful little corner of the Internet; still, the cynical anthropologist in me can’t help but analyze the question to bits. The second question starts off by asking whether things would be better if people took the time to *truly* learn about other faiths and religions. I emphasized the word “truly” because I like how it stands there almost as a preemptive defense to someone that might reply, “Oh I heard plenty about those Muslims. All they do is blow shit up” (and I’ve seen plenty of such comments online). The second part is however more interesting, “or simply developed the maturity to tolerate them”. You could say it’s the ambiguity of language, but I can’t help thinking there is something deeper there. In

¹Last checked on 2/18/2011, but the question and all the answers are from three years ago, so unlikely to change drastically after this.

my imagination the author is saying to me, “yes, I know, it’s not easy or realistic for everyone to become well-educated on other religions and beliefs when it’s likely they are content not investigating beyond the ideas their family and maybe a pastor (insert equivalent religious authority as necessary) gave them about their own religion. So if they can’t learn about other religions, it would be nice if they could at least *tolerate* them enough to give the impression of real understanding.”

What is tolerance anyways, this magical thing that is supposed to get rid of “bigotry, tension & apathy” in the world? This highest result of education, and the greatest gift of the mind? It’s the grown-up version of the “golden rule” that is taught to kids about doing unto others as they would do unto you; tolerating them as they would tolerate you – except that there is more power play in tolerance. Some of the synonyms dictionary.com gives for tolerance are “patience, sufferance, forbearance”. It also defines these words, in order, as “the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like”; “passive permission resulting from lack of interference; tolerance, especially of something wrong or illegal; capacity to endure pain, hardship, etc.; endurance”; and “the act of forbearing; a refraining from something; forbearing conduct or quality; patient endurance; self-control”. There are a surprising number of negative words in these definitions considering how great tolerance is supposed to be. “Capacity to endure pain” “without complaint” and “self-control”? These qualities truly sound idealized and Saint-like, after all, tolerance was first used in Europe for Jews and other religious minorities before it entered the anti-discrimination policy statement of every college application website in the US (a list that seems to grow

longer with every passing academic year with all these things to tolerate out there, from race to disabilities).

Tolerance is really an ideology we are indoctrinated with, and it's not surprising Keller calls it the "result of education". It's something that especially educated, elite class citizens are expected to abide by, as they are the ones that set the example for today's ideal, modern citizen who is devoted to its nation-state but is a rational being that is not affected by ideologies such as religion in their decisions. We can define tolerance as an ideology that teaches us to accept identities, without asking us to question or understand them, causing people to form groups around these identities that don't seem to change or interact and that drift away from each other in order to tolerate each other better. A cycle is created, where people tolerate each other, pushing people into certain categories that are tolerated, and then promoting these categories by staying away from them in order to tolerate the people belonging to them from afar, rejecting conversation or anything that might bring them closer. By tolerating, the modern rational citizen assumes a role of superiority over the tolerated. They are like an adult, patting a child on the head after the child tells them about Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy. They, of course, do not believe in such irrational things, but feeling it inappropriate to tell the truth, they give a dismissive, paternalistic pat on the head, assuring themselves of their own superiority. They let the child go on its way, to play with other children, so they can be tolerated as children away from the real, adult world. Only when the child starts screaming and crying for Santa's or the Tooth Fairy's gifts the adults give their attention to the child, stop tolerating its nonsense and punish it. Once a group of people crosses the line, like the 9/11 attacks, that you stop tolerating them and punish them, in this case by starting a war.

I wanted to define tolerance before I jump into Wendy Brown's *Regulating Aversion* where she has more negative words for tolerance than even the definitions of its synonyms. Brown's goal is to analyze the discourse on tolerance to reflect on the ways it creates "liberal and non-liberal subjects, cultures and regimes... and how its normativity is rendered oblique almost to the point of invisibility" (2006:4). She points out that certain cultures and, especially in the post-9/11 era, certain religions have come to be understood as *the* American identity, creating a divide between what is civilized and what is barbaric, and what is tolerable and intolerable. With this discussion, she describes tolerance very differently than Helen Keller: "a conceit of neutrality that is actually thick with bourgeois Protestant norms" (2006:7). She further explains this idea by referring to Mahmood Mamdani and what he calls the "'culturalization' of political conflict: 'It is no longer the market (capitalism), nor the state (democracy), but culture (modernity) that is said to be the dividing line between those in favor of a peaceful, civic existence and those inclined to terror.'" (2006:150). Using this idea, Brown argues that the prevalent idea in Western cultures is that "unless culture is itself subordinated by liberalism", it "vanquishes" individual moral autonomy (2006:151). This idea shapes the discourse on culture as the West *having* culture, whereas the Other in question *are* a culture. This idea of liberalism over culture is prevalent in the US, as well as in Turkey, for it is at the core of being a modern nation-state. This state demands citizens that are unbound by religion, or any other influences that might affect their rational decision-making, and requires them to put their liberal and modern nation before a traditional or cultural identity. These are the "normal" liberal subjects, who do not form a whole to be tolerated, but rather are

the ones that tolerate the people who cannot rise to the needs and demands of the modern state.

Brown doesn't see tolerance as a peaceful force, but as one that aligns liberalism with harboring norms for culture, religion, race and everything else that is tolerated. It depoliticizes instead of creating real discussion. Tolerance assumes the identity of the powerful, which is why Brown refers to it as bourgeois and Protestant, and we could add to this others like white and heterosexual. We could even say that the tolerant people are the ones whose ancestors came to the United States to live out their manifest destiny. They are not a culture as mentioned above, instead they are "normal", free from any irrational chains, and there isn't anything cultural about it. If you look at departments in American colleges, you are not likely to find "White Studies". But there are all sorts of other departments ranging from "Queer Studies" and "African-American Studies" to "Jewish Studies". Those Others can be studied and learned about so the normal ones who are not burdened with an inescapable cultural identity can understand them and tolerate them easier.

Maybe I'm more critical of tolerance because I grew up without learning it as an ideal to live by, even if the idea was present. I'm not going to pretend that Turkey is a perfect country because there is no ideology of tolerance, as in the next chapter on history I will try to explain why there is none and what it is replaced by. I want to use my experiences in Turkey and as a Turkish person as examples of what can be learned not from intolerance, but from the non-existence of such an ideology. As Slavoj Žižek argues in "Tolerance as an Ideological Category," political differences, inequalities and injustices have been neutralized under the name of cultural difference as things to be

tolerated. Instead of struggle, people look for the solution in tolerating and being tolerated. But political struggle is still alive and ongoing in Turkey, maybe because our tolerance substitutes such as secularism are not as neutralizing as tolerance. A little change in flavor can make a world of difference (or a country!).

Slipping through the cracks of tolerance

A discussion of jokes might seem out of place to some people in a thesis about religious culture and tolerance on college campuses. However, humor is an inevitable part of our lives as human beings, even if not all of us share the same sense of humor. Most college students don't like to get into serious arguments about heavy topics like religion or politics on a daily basis, those seem to be reserved for the academic part of their life, without carrying onto their daily life, at least at Duke. It's most likely because they feel need time off from these serious considerations, and are spread out to a number of different activities and commitments on campus. This means that unless you are taking a religion class or are involved in a religious campus organization, you are not likely to have long, coherent conversations about religion. Still, this does not mean that religion isn't on your mind, and that there is an opinion you want to express. These opinions may not be suitable for such serious discussion either, but may simply be an observation or impression you want to share, and even if you are in the mood for a serious argument, it may be difficult to find someone that will actually listen to you.

Maybe you have been reading a lot about Christian groups lobbying against same-sex marriages or abortion clinics. Maybe you are really intrigued by the "Everybody Draw Muhammad Day" and the ongoing conversation about the issue. Let's say during

dinner time or when we are on our way to a party, a friend started talking to me about these topics, I admit I would give a sigh inside and try to change the topic. This is not to say there are not times when I am the person who wants to be talking about these boring, serious issues. Here humor runs to our help, ready to make everything more interesting both for the speaker and the audience. There is no need when joking to explain things in minute detail, the success of jokes isn't about eloquent explanations, but being able to tell which knowledge your audience has in common with you.

Pretty much every single person I interviewed told me that they preferred joking about religion with people who shared similar beliefs as they did, and about their own beliefs. In fancier terms, this is part of the idea of cultural intimacy that Michael Herzfeld describes in his book with the same name; it's "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality" (1997:3). Knowing that I come from a Muslim background, my informant Zain jokes with me, "You know that I'm only a Muslim because I want to get all those virgins in Heaven." It's a ridiculous-sounding remark that anyone who hears it might laugh or at least grin at. But it's especially meaningful to us because there are certain things that he knows that I know and will understand when he says that. I know his long struggle of questioning and trying to understand his faith better, and that the problems he had with faith stem from the fact that he wasn't comfortable taking concepts like Heaven for granted but wanted to keep digging at *something more* even if he didn't always know what. It's funny because his relationship with faith would probably be easier if he could believe in something like

the promise of virgins or beautiful women in the afterlife, even though it's arguable whether there really is a promise like that made in the Qu'ran.

In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud says that jokes “may be described as a psychical process between three persons”. According to him, the joker “demands another person to whom it can communicate” the joke to, as Freud claims one cannot laugh at their own joke, therefore needing a second person to share the joke with. (1960:144) He also identifies another, third person, that is the object of the joke². In the joke I related above, Zain was the joker or the first person, I was the person communicated to, and there was an implied third person (or people). The fact that the third person is not explicitly stated yet I could understand it without explanation is what made the joke funny. Trying to explain that there's cliché knowledge out there about Islam and the promises it makes about the afterlife, that certain people might actually believe this and/or use it to criticize Islam suddenly makes the phrase sound serious. Putting into words as I tried to do just now feels insufficient in explaining the true core of the joke. This three-person relationship can be found in all jokes (although people do laugh at their own jokes, but I suppose it would be argued that this is with the intention or imagining of relating it to someone else), and identifying that third person who is the object of the joke can help us understand things that people don't put into words but think or feel about each other.

Freud points out a difference between the tendentious joke and smut. In the smutty joke, the subject is exposed before the audience of the joke. Freud uses the example of two men joking about a woman to explain how smut works: it's only when the woman is present to display inflexibility towards the sexually aggressive nature of the

²If the second person is the object of the joke, then Freud labels this as “comic” instead of joke.

joke that it becomes smut. The presence of the audience is necessary to ensure that the subject, in Freud's example the woman, will not surrender to the joke but protest. The defensive reaction in the part of the subject causes the sexual aggressiveness to alter itself to become "hostile and cruel, and it thus summons to its help against the obstacle the sadistic components of the sexual instinct" (1960:99). This can be applied to the joke about virgins in Heaven. When the joke is between two Muslims, it's not smut because there is no defensive subject exposed to the listener. When it's drawn as a cartoon by a Danish man and published in a Danish magazine, it exposes the Muslim subject for the pleasure of the non-Muslim. The power relationship translates directly: the Christian and the European are the powerful ones that assume the role of the men in Freud's smut, and the Muslim is the defensive woman. Just as it is necessary for the woman to protest for the joke to turn into smut, so it played out in this case by the Muslims protesting against the cartoons as well as Denmark, the way the woman might protest against men in general after hearing the smutty joke.

The smut is a prime example of when our jokes become dangerous and offensive, like the time when Zain's hallmate related a joke his mom made about Zain upon hearing he was Muslim. "So are you living with a terrorist?" she apparently asked her son humorously. The first and obvious object of the joke here is Zain, but it's also Muslims in general. Even though Zain is an American citizen and was born here, he is originally from a predominantly Muslim country and he went to high school there. His country and religion are also the object of the joke, as they are the ones and not Zain himself that form the connection necessary for the joke to happen. Taking Zain as an individual does not provide the context for the joke, but previous knowledge about the current negative

attitudes regarding the Muslim world in the West, especially the increasing stigma against Muslim citizens after the 9/11 attacks and the paranoia (or the belief) that the people who originate from certain countries are likely to be members of terrorist organizations all feed into this little seven-word joke. Being aware of these ideas and stereotypes, Zain could understand the joke, and didn't express immediate protest to the joke that was related to him. Still, the same things that create this simple joke have effects on Zain's life in ways that neither he nor the mom would have imagined at the time the joke was made. When he applied for a government job and had to get a background check done, Zain felt uncomfortable with all the questions asked about his relatives back home in the military, as well as his international friends at Duke. In the end, he decided not to pursue that career path and the background check was one of the main reasons for that. Another similar joke was actually made in Zain's presence after a fire drill in his dorm late at night. "We know it's because of the uranium in your closet," some of his friends joked. Here Zain was the audience and the object, and similar assumptions came into play as the previous joke.

When do these things stop becoming jokes and when do they need to be taken seriously? Zain was okay with, or at least knew how to tolerate, the jokes when he was "the" Muslim that was their object, but not everyone is as open to being put in that position as he is, and it's really not an easy position to be in. Freud always concentrates on jokes made to a small, live audience, and does not consider written or drawn humor that are available to a wider audience, especially nowadays with the increasing use of internet for such purposes, from web-comics to social networking sites like facebook, twitter, tumblr and so on. This is why when the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten

published its infamous “Muhammad cartoons”, it didn’t stay simply as a local or national issue, but caused protests across the Muslim world. Freud talks about smut as being commonly performed among lower-society, but its publication in a newspaper and online makes the whole world its audience. Unlike the woman that is the object of Freud’s smut, the defensive Muslim world holds the power to protest against all of Denmark and Christianity with more than just words.

The Danish jokes are not amusing to the broad Muslim community, because they don’t share the stereotypes about themselves that the Danish or Westerners in general have about them. Patterns of behavior that the Westerners can stereotype, or issues they can find ridiculous about Muslim communities obviously have a different affect on the Muslims themselves. The fact that terrorist groups organize in their country or under the name of their religion is not amusing to Muslims who might feel they are living under constant threat of war against their country, or to approach it small-scale, that a family member might join such an organization. Someone who comes from a Christian background and culture can roll their eyes at the idea of not being allowed to draw a prophet when there are paintings and all sorts of depictions of Jesus left and right, but it’s a serious prohibition for a Muslim who has been raised to think it sinful. I personally think that the prohibition has a logical explanation in history, as Muhammad didn’t want to be idolized like the traditional polytheistic Arab deities, and hoped that this prohibition would deter such behavior. Having heard this explanation and internalized at a young age, it’s not humorous to see drawing of Muhammad, instead it simply seems disrespectful and done to spite Muslims to me. It’s also an issue of power, as the audience

of the smut rises up to the power display of the joker, showing that they will not tolerate to be taken so lightly, not when they are present to observe the joke.

This doesn't mean that people never find jokes about their own religion funny, as one of the first examples I showed was Zain joking about his own beliefs. A lot of people I talked to said that they liked joking about their own religion with people of their own religious community. This again gets back to the idea of shared knowledge, just not in the form of stereotypes and preconceptions about the Other. As mentioned earlier, jokes are successful if the audience can understand what the joker is referring to without any explanation, and this is done easier if both of the people have a similar background. Zain also noted to me that he would feel less comfortable joking with the girls who wore headscarves, signifying that one can judge better who in their community will react in what way to certain jokes. Another informant, Mila, brought up the same idea as well, saying that she could imagine who in her fellowship would be okay with watching a South Park episode about Jesus, who would find it funny, and who would choose to leave the room. This doesn't mean that girls who wear headscarves have no sense of humor, which would be a ridiculous thing to suggest, but Zain gave that example as there's a more tangible signifier in this case that he could point to, as he explained that in his mind those girls were more likely to not take certain things as lightly as he might when it came to Islam.

As I mentioned earlier, laughing at your own culture or religion is part of Herzfeld's idea of cultural intimacy. A lot of things that you find funny in a harmless way when someone of your own culture, faith, gender and so on jokes about them may easily become smutty jokes when told by an outsider. The context of a joke, who it's made by,

who is present when it's told, where it's told are a few of the number of factors that affect the success of a joke. An example I want to give to this is a joke I observed during a Turkish Student Association (TSA) meeting during my junior year. Its current president was talking about how they had decided on the positions the previous year in a humorous way, explaining that since there were only a handful of Turkish students and most of them were close friends with each other, everyone that was present in the meeting had sort of picked whatever position they wanted or their friends suggested to them. He continued to list who held what position and concluded with the statement "Isaac became the treasurer because he's Jewish".

Everyone in the room laughed or giggled at this, including me. A friend expressed how Turkish such a statement was and how offensive those Americans would consider it if this joke was made during the meeting of any other campus organization. It was a perfect moment of cultural intimacy, because we were Turks away from Turkey holding a meeting specifically under the name of Turkish students. We were stripped from all our other identities, even religious ones, despite the fact that we were laughing at a joke targeting stereotypes about a certain religious community. I cannot know what exactly Isaac was thinking or feeling when he heard that joke, and he might not remember it or share it with me a whole year after it. All I know is that at that moment, according to my observation as someone who does not closely associate with any religion, everyone including him found the joke funny. I don't think this joke would produce the same result if it was made in Turkey where identifying as Turkish wouldn't necessarily have such an overpowering effect on us as it does when we are in the US, feeling like we are in a bubble of purely Turkish identity untainted by all our other identities. Over there, the

joker would be more aware of the increasingly hostile feelings towards Jews due to Turkey's recent conflicts with Israel, and in turn this would make Isaac more conscious of the fact that he is not part of the dominant Turkish identity, which can be highly Muslim. So even cultural intimacy is not unbound by location, as the cultural identities that people identify with are shaped by the environment they are in. The same goes for jokes and the power relationships behind them; a Jewish and a Muslim Turk don't always feel on the same position of power wherever they go. As this example shows, power really is the underlying factor that shapes our jokes and our relationships with others in general as well.

Connecting it back to tolerance

As the previous section shows, there are certain rules involved in making a successful joke, and they are primarily related to knowing your audience well. The third person who is the object of the joke either needs to be not present or be able to relate to the position of the second person, the audience of the joke. This is because as explained above, the jokes rely heavily on the assumed knowledge between the audience and the joker, and a similar perspective on this knowledge. It's not enough to know that there are terrorist organizations in certain Muslim countries, but have a certain distant relationship to this fact in order to find a joke about someone living with a "terrorist" funny. What is the relationship of tolerance to all this? I believe that these assumptions that make a joke funny say something about people's real opinions and feelings about certain issues, that they are unable or unwilling to put into words in a non-humor context due to the expectations brought upon them with the idea of tolerance.

Tolerance might become a restriction in that people feel obliged to be tolerant or feel that society expects them to be so. The culture that is, or considers itself to be, dominant and privileged feels obliged to be tolerant of the Others, causing tolerance to become an idea “thick with bourgeois Protestant norms” (2006:7) to refer back to Wendy Brown. So people like Duke students, who are expected to be the embodiment of all the good Western values would not want to represent themselves as intolerant, or even consciously acknowledge that they might have intolerant views. Instead, such views bring themselves out often in the form of jokes, but also in the form of a swastika graffiti on a bench and hate crimes that are considered shocking. This is not to say that there are no hate crimes in Turkey just because people don’t feel restricted in their daily actions by the need to be tolerant, or to say that Americans or Westerners are always perfectly tolerant in every other aspect. It may be more appropriate to call this a matter of ratios, and what my experiences of living in Turkey and the US have shown me so far.

Tolerance to me is the acceptance that people do have an aversion for other groups of people, but have decided to find a quiet way to regulate it. This is why I like the title of Wendy Brown’s book, “Regulating Aversion,” because I think it gives the definition of tolerance in two simple words. I was never one of those people who followed our national politics closely, and I didn’t spend much time thinking how differently things may play out in another country. The first two and a half years of college, I learnt the American way. Every time I went back home after that, I noticed how different the Turkish way of handling problems could be. In the United States, there’s a stronger sense of freedom of speech and for people to be able to say whatever they want. In return, any idea that doesn’t fit the norm of how the United States wants to represent

itself gets labeled as intolerant and as the views of a small minority. At least being confined to the Duke culture, this is how I used to see things. The more carefully I started to observe, the more I realized that intolerance isn't the exception, but in a lot of places and situations, it's the norm.

I heard a lot of my LGBT friends who complain about their problems at Duke change their opinion once they went back home. Here, we are all used to expecting the highest level of acceptance for our differences, and we forget that there is a different world outside. At Duke, we are educated enough to be tolerant and reflect our intolerances only through our jokes, but this isn't true for the whole country. We hang up rainbow flags all over campus to show our acceptance of LGBT people, and boast about all the different cultural centers on campus from the Center for Muslim Life to the International House. In our efforts to look as tolerant as possible, we don't realize the fact that it's the Jewish students or the LGBT students themselves who run off to paint over the swastika on the bridge or the "faggot" graffiti on a bench the moment they find out about it. Half the time, the issue is forgotten or already covered up before the general student body has the chance to find out about it. We don't tell the prospective students who come to visit campus on the Blue Devil Days that all sorts of discrimination are as real an issue on campus as they are off campus, regardless of how tolerant we all are (or pretend to be so).

The more I think about tolerance, the more I feel that it is not the solution to our problems. But like all ideas, before we write it off completely, we need to look at its background and how it came to be what it is today. In theory, it does not sound so bad to learn to tolerate the Other if we can not learn to accept it. My next chapter on the history

of the United States and Turkey, and their college systems, will attempt to tackle how these countries and institutions chose to deal with religion and why they chose the paths they did. By doing so, hopefully it will become more clear why tolerance has become the epitome of one culture and disregarded by the other (which is coincidentally the Other as well!). It's true that every culture needs to find its own solution to its specific problems, but this doesn't mean that we can't learn from those ideas like intolerance that we have come to consider barbaric. It's easy for me to argue for the non-existence of tolerance as that is what I've grown up with, so even if you don't agree with me, keep reading this thesis as a test of your own tolerance level.

THE NATIONAL FLAVORS OF TOLERANCE AND HUMOR

When I first started writing this chapter with the intention of a history chapter, I put a lot of emphasis on Duke's history as an institution, trying to chronicle how certain events led it to evolve from a local school for Methodist kids to the internationally acclaimed university it is today. I had planned to show through its development through time how and why colleges had decided to adopt tolerance as an unofficial motto. After writing up a draft like this, I realized this plan wasn't adequate in getting to the core of the issue, and it treated Duke too much like it was in a vacuum. So instead of making history my first chapter after introduction, I placed it as the second chapter, so that it would come after a discussion of tolerance today before trying to understand its history. I also broadened my scope from the local to the international (just like Duke!) because some things are better understood when placed in the larger context of the world. As this thesis is also a part of my own struggle with the concept of tolerance, I want to give some background to the history of the culture that I come from. Understanding the national characters of Turkey and the United States I think is essential to understanding what tolerance and religion mean to them and how this affects the role of these ideas in their colleges.

Imagined communities, from nations to religions

Before I dive into the specifics, I want to talk about Benedict Anderson and his idea of imagined communities to provide a theoretical framework for talking about nations. He starts his introduction to "Imagined Communities" by identifying a change in

Marxist movements around the world, and how they have increasingly become nationalist. He then writes that this isn't only limited to the socialist world, but that even "many 'old nations,' who once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by 'sub'-nationalisms within their borders" and that "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (1989:12). Anderson suggests that nationalism should be treated in the same category as kinship and religion, instead of liberalism and fascism, and proposes its definition as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1989:15).

Although Anderson puts them in the same category, an important difference should be noted in the definitions of religion and nation. Religion is an imagined community similar to a nation, but it is not limited. They are both imagined in that the members of any community larger than "primordial villages of face-to-face contact (perhaps even these)" (1989:15) will not know or recognize all its other members. By this definition, we can classify colleges as imagined communities as well; I might be able to recognize everyone in my freshman dorm, but probably not all in my major, and way less than a half or even quarter of my graduating class - recognizing the whole undergraduate body would be an impossible task, even at a smaller private institution like Duke!

Colleges and nations differ from religions in one very important aspect that they are both limited. A lot of religions, at least in a certain era in their history, are likely to dream of a day when all of humanity will convert to their belief system, but we would be hard pressed to find even a single nation that dreams of having the whole world become its citizens. It's important to remember that we are not just talking about countries here, because then one could argue that the imperialistic empires of the previous centuries

might have dreamt of such a thing; we are talking about nations. Being limited is part of the charm of the nation-state, although foreigners can migrate and either themselves or their children may be adopted into a nation, in the imagination of a patriot, the borders are closed to outsiders (and immigration is always a hot topic of debate). The ideas promoted by a nation may become universal, but the nation itself will be limited.

Inside the borders, there is Herzfeld's cultural intimacy, those "assurances of common sociality" (1997:3) that makes the citizens able to imagine a connection to all the members of their nation they have not met before. When I meet a Turkish person, I have certain expectations from them, which become even more important when abroad. It's so much easier to indulge in small talk for me with a Turk than an American, as I feel that only this stranger can understand what I'm really going through in this foreign country, and every minor complaint they make reminds me of one I'd made before. The possibilities for these are endless, and I don't even think about most of them until I see a Turkish person: it could be anything from the food to Americans asking the capital of Turkey. Other than these not-too-surprising annoyances, there are also little things that are the product of a more indescribable and intangible Turkish national character that one can not easily explain the way you can complain about someone not knowing what language is spoken in your country.

Humor is one of these national characteristics. It's not to say that a joke can be successful only in its country of origin, there are a lot of comedy films or TV shows that do well abroad, as well as comedians or cartoonists that are appreciated internationally. There are some assumptions about life and people that can be found all over the world, and techniques that make these funny for people of different cultures. Especially with the

globalization of media, it's possible for someone like me to grow up in Turkey and be able to relate to American humor perfectly fine. Seinfeld was one of the first non-cartoon TV shows I watched regularly, and a lot of people in my school were fans of Friends; although both shows have progressive storylines, they are also very humor-driven and not likely to be interesting for an audience who can't appreciate that aspect of them. Still, there is a lot of humor that has a national flavor to it, even if the object of the joke is not specifically about that country (but in a subtle way, it really is, and that's why they are so national). There are certain attitudes and assumptions people of different nations employ in their humor that is sometimes just not relatable to another.

Humor magazines with all sorts of drawings, writings and caricatures in them are quite a phenomenon in Turkey among college students. Unfortunately I don't have regular access to them anymore as I go back home once or twice a year, but there are two popular websites that I like to check regularly for Turkish humor. One of them has been around for a while now, and its name can be translated as "sour dictionary". It features definitions by countless, mostly anonymous writers about all sorts of phrases and situations that I feel can only be known and related to by Turkish people. There are entries ranging from titles like "Microsoft Turkish" that lists examples of confusing and unnatural-sounding translations from English to Turkish in Microsoft products, to "questions that shouldn't be asked an imam". There are so many entries under that title that I feel are untranslatable to English and wouldn't make sense to anyone else, Muslim or not, unless they are Turkish. If there was a similar American site, I don't know if there would be an entry called "questions that shouldn't be asked a priest", let alone have any similar descriptions listed under it. Some of my favorites from that entry are:

“Hodja master, where will you be performing this evening?”

“If we take some water in our mouth and swirl it around without swallowing, does that break our fast? Or let’s say we have some water in our mouth. We are gently swirling it around. It’s barely touching our tonsils. All of a sudden, a drop gets stuck on our tonsils. It’s going in and out with every breath,” and the hypothetical imam replies “think of hell right at that moment.”

“Hodja what’s going to happen to this country?”

The first quote refers to the fact that the imams are supposed to do the call to prayer five times a day during the appropriate hours, and the questioner is treating the imam like a celebrity asking which mosque they will be performing at (although I’m pretty sure each mosque has their own imam that doesn’t change very often). The second question sounds like the variation of something one of my classmates might have asked during one of our religion classes in high schools, both teasing the teacher (or the imam), as well as mocking the tendency of Turkish people to ask overly detailed questions about things like fasting and ablution on TV programs and such where there is a religious authority taking questions from the public on issues they are concerned with. In fact, there is a Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey, and their website features a “frequently asked questions” section, where you can find answers to everything from family life to the prophet’s life, and even send in your own question if you can’t find what you are looking for. The way I found out about this feature was through the second humor website I wanted to talk about, and I found out about that one through links my high school friends religiously (!) post on their Facebook. Zaytung is like the Turkish version of The Onion, publishing mock articles and videos online. Under all their articles, right next to the popular “share on facebook” or “post on twitter” buttons is “delegate it to God” which sends you to the aforementioned questions page. This phrase is actually something that is used in Turkish, in the context of not wanting to or knowing how to

deal with a situation or person, and saying that you are delegating them to God's will and power.

Zaytung is similar to the Onion in terms of concept and style of writing, but the content is difficult to relate for non-Turkish people and I feel that a lot of the subtlety of the language is untranslatable (this is true for sour times as well). One of my favorite articles from there caused the most confusion among interviewees I showed Zaytung articles to. That experience really showed me how important common experiences are to making humor successful, and that some things are not funny to outsiders even after explanations. The most essential point to the article is the fact that in Turkish national ID cards, right next to your blood type and where you live, is your religion (there is *a lot of* information on our ID cards). I'm not sure if there has been any talk of removing this section, but the article is about a pilot program in a village where these sections were removed, causing everyone to lose their faith in less than a week, and leading people who had never been interested in reading before to start reading Darwin and discussing Marx and Trotsky. Unlike the previous jokes I talked about, I don't know even how to explain why this is funny; it's not like ID cards are something I think about regularly. I feel like it's just such a Turkish thing to want so much information when it comes to official documents. As an example, you can't just use a letter from your bank as proof of address as I've seen it done in the US; you need an official document from the city hall (that is the best equivalent I can think of in English), and probably more than one copy of it, just because. That's how I feel about having the religion written down in our ID cards. As claimed in Zaytung, if taken to the European Human Rights Court (maybe it already has been), they would ask us to remove it. But I don't know if an average Turkish would

understand their viewpoint. I remember complaining to my high school friend years ago about how I didn't like my ID card declared me Muslim when I wasn't sure how I really felt about religion, and she didn't get what the big deal was. It was just some statement no one ever looked at anyway; nothing intolerant or infringing on someone's privacy and religious freedom. Maybe this experience is part of the reason I find that article so amusing. Just like humor, tolerance is one of those national characteristics as well. You can find words to list as its translation in an English to Turkish dictionary, or even use the turkicized form of the word, "tolerans", but it doesn't mean that your ideas of tolerance are mutually intelligible to each other.

So what does tolerance mean in Turkey

In my opinion Turkey is a country where the word tolerant is more likely to be used to describe someone that is patient with rowdy kids rather than a religious minority. When I look up in an English to Turkish dictionary, the translations for tolerance do not seem to have the right connotation, there is no entry for political correctness, and affirmative action is translated as positive discrimination, and sounds like an incredibly unnatural and forced translation (at least to me). These concepts fall in the category of American things my parents don't really understand along with some other things like "awkward", "sketchy" and "creepy". I remember when I tried giving them examples of awkward situations, they did not find anything strange or uncomfortable about them and gave me confused stares; I imagine they would give a similar reaction to the Western notion of tolerance as well.

Although I've written in the previous chapter that there is a non-existence of the idea of tolerance in Turkey, this is an oversimplification of the issue. It's important to analyze such concepts in the context of each culture. I have generalized the American notion of tolerance as Western at times, since that's where American tolerance finds its roots. This is not to say that French ideas of tolerance are the same as British or American, but that they have derived from similar sources, even if not developed in the same way. As I looked at the definition of tolerance in English before, I now want to look at the meaning of its translation in Turkish, "hoşgörü", since language can give us clues about the culture itself. Hoşgörü is a compound word, where "hoş" translates to nice, and "görü" to view or seeing. When used as a verb, it would mean in literal terms to "view something as nice". When I look it up in a Turkish to English dictionary, the synonyms come up as leniency, clemency, allowance and so on. This is why my first instinct was to describe tolerance in a Turkish context as something that would be used with kids and not religion.

If we compare Turkey and the US, I think the difference between their demographics and histories is an important factor in terms of the way they view the concept of tolerance. Both of the countries have gone through radical changes in terms of their ideas of what their "nation" is in the past century. For Turkey, it was assumed that the borders we defined after our War of Independence ended in 1922 covered only the areas where people who identified as Turkish lived, especially since the people on those regions really came together as one, at least in the national memory, to fight for the Turkish independence. Looking at it from that historical point of view, it would be difficult to understand why certain minorities today are unhappy with the independence

they have within the borders we all fought for. I don't want to go into current problems of Turkey, but note down that every nation building activity after war has its detrimental affects. Amy Mills writes in her book "Streets of Memory: Landscape, Tolerance, and National Identity in Istanbul" how after the murder of Hrant Dink in 2007, an Armenian newspaper editor, in Istanbul "by a young man linked to an extremist, secularist, Turkish ethnonationalistic group, thousands of Turks gathered in public spaces to chant, 'We are all Hrant! We are all Armenian!' in a passionate gesture of support" (2010:7). Even though she considers such "gestures to recognize minority cultures, histories, and political perspectives express a hope for a tolerant, multicultural Turkey" (2010:7), I would analyze this demonstration a bit differently than her. Increasingly in Turkey, there is forming an "us" versus "them" identity, especially since the rise of more conservative religious Justice and Development Party to power in 2002. In this increasingly hostile public and political environment, there are a lot of people who are unhappy with the system, and although subconsciously most of the time, wish for the "older days". Even though tolerance was not thought of as an important ideal during the Ottoman Empire, it was a natural melting pot for different religious and ethnic groups. During the formation and most of the history of the Turkish Republic, being a modern, secular, liberal nation-state was our goal, as well as pushing religion out of the spotlight. Today, however, it has become an important issue again, with people identifying more and more strongly as "democratic", "western", "liberal", "fundamentalist", as well as ethnic identities regaining their importance after being neglected during the construction of the Republic. That's why issues such as the history of mutual violence with the Armenians, as well as

the desire by the Kurdish people for a sovereign region within Turkey have been brought to the spotlight.

I'll be the first to admit this is my own analysis, and issues like nationalism are such hot topics in Turkey that it would be difficult to call anyone out there its expert, and as a Turkish citizen I think my opinions are appropriate to share in this context. I wanted to bring the subject to my self-named pre-Turkish nationalist era of Turkey, because our long history as the Ottoman Empire has affected our national character deeply, and it is really the only place to turn to when we want to look at a time free of strong Arabic-Islam or Turkish-nationalist influence. Although Mills talks about it only in Istanbul-specific terms, I agree with her analysis that “notions of the proper Istanbul Turkish accent or reactions to behaviors... inherent in a cultural memory of the manners, languages, and ways of life the Christian and Jewish minorities who once dominated the city’s culture but who are today almost completely diminished in number” (2010: 2) due to a number of Turkification policies. What we now, or at least one of the “us” in the us versus them, think of as “pure Turkish” is a very cosmopolitan mixture. Minorities were the heart and soul of the Ottoman Empire, even if the popular imagination today it might seem to be an oriental, Muslim empire. The infantry unit that formed the Ottoman sultan’s household troops and bodyguards, called the Janissaries, were entirely composed of non-Muslim boys adopted by the Empire, and the intelligent would be selected for the Enderun school, the highest form of education available in the country, to become the future viziers (sultan’s counselors), architects, scientists and so on. This method was also employed for the women of the sultan’s harem, in fact, I remember discussing in my high school history class that only one sultan had ever married a Turkish woman (except maybe the

first one or two as well). So really, all the important figures in the palace were ones adopted into the Muslim faith and to being “Turkish”, whatever that word really means. My favorite quote on the idea of being Turkish is by the founder of the Republic himself, and it’s written all over schools in Turkey, “Ne mutlu Türküm diyene” or “Happy is the one who calls themselves Turkish”. I think this short phrase demonstrate that “we are all fighting for our independence together” feeling of nationalism and flexibility of the nation, that anyone who calls themselves so is Turkish, similar to the way we were all Armenian the day Hrant Dink was murdered.

All of this is quite different than the American and the Western experience. The Jews were being tolerated in Europe when the Ottoman Empire was selecting its intelligentsia from among its ethnic and religious minorities; when the Europeans were Christianizing the world, none of the areas outside of Turkey’s borders today that were under the control of the Ottoman Empire neither learned to speak Turkish nor converted to Islam. Today, the US struggles to tolerate people its history forced or encouraged to immigrate, as well as the ones that were always there but they could never really resolve their issues with, such as the Native and African Americans. Turkey’s only struggle is realizing that people who felt Turkish while fighting for their independence do not always feel so Turkish when that independence is achieved. There wasn’t anything to tolerate before declaring itself a homogeneous nation-state, and 88 years as a Republic hasn’t been a long enough experience for us to discover or need the Western notions of tolerance. In turn, today people discuss both in the political and public stage about the Kurdish problem, what they want and what should be done, and no one is offended by it - instead, everyone declares their honest opinion as loud as they can. Call it the Turkish in

me, but I would rather people expressed their opinions so freely, instead of forcing a smile to hide their true feelings that are too inappropriate and intolerant to declare. I don't think this method will necessarily help us solve our problems with light speed, but I can assure you that we won't be the ones banishing any of our minorities to reservations or sending them to boarding schools to forget their native language (okay I admit it, I have lived in the Navajo reservation and I am bitter!). Those solutions would be too complicated and delicate for us. Sure, the Western world loves to criticize us for our breaches on human rights, and there are plenty of cases where they are right to do so. I don't think it was correct for us to delay allowing a Kurdish-language channel to be opened as long as we did, but at the same time my parents have hired plenty of people whose first language was Kurdish, and struggled with Turkish as their foreign language. We would be hard pressed to find any Native Americans under the age of sixty or seventy who are in a similar position with their English and tribal language. You could view my parents as tolerant, but they would tell you they hire whoever is an honest driver – sometimes it becomes a delicate issue of viewpoints.

Although this chapter might seem to be diverging from my arguments about tolerance and religion, I believe it's important for this thesis for me to establish the background that I come from, as well as show how and why other countries differ from the American and Western notions of certain ideas that seem so obvious to someone who has grown up in those countries. I was surprised to hear from my Korean (not Korean-American) friend that she was recently realizing how racist people in Korea were, because they didn't agree with her on things like interracial dating. This is not an exact comparison with Turkey at all, but I wanted to share it because such attitudes that are

considered racist or intolerant are a lot more understandable and normal, at least to me, in countries who have a recent history of establishing a homogeneous national identity, especially after a civil or independence war. Not only do these countries historically developed the European ideas of tolerance, whether because they always tended to live as homogeneous communities or had other ways of understanding their identities, their recent nation-building efforts were counteractive to the idea of tolerance. After all, tolerance wasn't as prevalent or broad an idea fifty or eighty years ago as it is today; the Civil Rights Movement might have had a different history if minorities in the US had been well-tolerated up until then. For the next section, I want to look at colleges as places of culture writ small, to see how their historical developments has come to differ American and Turkish colleges from each other in their understandings of religion and religious tolerance.

Colleges writ small

As I mentioned in the introduction chapter, I did not have any expectations in terms of religious life when I arrived at Duke. I remember seeing some flyers by the Muslim Student Association and thinking to myself, “why would I join *that*?” Apparently I am not the only Turkish student that felt this way either, because in my four years here none of the Turkish students have been involved in the MSA, even after the arrival of the Turkish Muslim chaplain. I've encountered two main identities among Turkish students at Duke so far; the first is “us” (which I refer to in this way because I have been a part of it since my arrival here and know it far better) which is liberal even if religious, and includes Christian and Jewish Turks alongside atheists and Muslims. The second one is

“them”, which in my time at Duke has only existed among graduate students, and are or assumed to be identifying with the more conservative ideas increasingly prevalent in Turkey. It’s common among my undergraduate friends to try to understand what kind of Turk a graduate student is if we happen to meet one, based on things like their appearance, area of study and our intuition. You can call it the equivalent of racial profiling for people who are of the same race and nation.

One of the clearest examples I remember of this was told to me by an MBA student I know from work. We were in the JFK airport waiting for our connection flight to Turkey for winter break, when we started talking about my thesis. “Oh, I have a friend in the MSA,” she said, “he is an international student too (but not from Turkey), and took me to one of their events once to introduce me to the chaplain since he’s Turkish too. It was a really hot day and I was wearing these short shorts and a tank top, I wanted to pretend I wasn’t Turkish but my friend wouldn’t let me... It was such an uncomfortable situation.” She felt that the chaplain would inwardly criticize her for calling herself Muslim and Turkish when she wore such skin-baring, or “American” clothing. I don’t think this is a concern to any non-Turkish students, Muslim or non-Muslim, would feel with him. In fact, I’m sure that if I related this story to another interviewee, Zain, who is active in the MSA, he would be surprised and find her reaction unnecessary, and argue that the chaplain wouldn’t make such judgements. But Zain is not aware of the relationship between gender and religion, as he has not grown up with the same pressures of modesty as a guy. I personally avoided interviewing him for this thesis despite a lot of people’s recommendations, because I was afraid I might have personal biases or expectations about him, and think that he might have some about me too. What if we start

talking about me, my faith or why Turkish students don't participate in the MSA? I didn't feel ready at the time due to ideas that might seem irrational as I look back on it, but felt very serious when I was making my list of people to interview. After all, isn't it true that I separate my wardrobe into two as clothing I will feel comfortable wearing in Turkey and my abroad-only items? Or that my parents expressed concerns when I took a class at Duke with a Turkish professor, theorizing about his religious identity and whether or not it would affect the way he viewed me as a student? The religious tensions back home in Turkey have a direct and specific influence on the way Turkish people view each other abroad in the US, dividing themselves into the familiar categories of us and them, maybe even more strongly than people back home do. Despite the strong ideological tensions, most people in Turkey don't divide themselves into clear-cut categories as liberal, religious, moderate, conservative and so on. I have second-cousins who wear headscarves, am I going to label my own family as the Other? And if I make an exception for them, why not for my friend's friends either? The distinctions that seem so clear when discussing politics or speaking generally become difficult to adhere to when applied to real life.

Turkish college identity, and success without tolerance

At Duke, different people have their own convictions about the place of religion on campus. Non-religious people look at the Chapel, all the different religious fellowships and organizations, and say that religious identity is very important here. Religious people on the other hand complain about the challenges of fulfilling their religious duties while at the same time trying to be a successful Duke student. In Turkey,

however, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK or Yükseköğretim Kurulu in Turkish) as well as the state law try to define a student's religious identity. Similar to the way France banned religious symbols in schools in 2004, Turkey banned traditional Muslim clothing such as the hijab, headscarves³ and turban in 1934 under what roughly translates as the "Hat and Clothing Revolutions". Today, headscarves and veils covering the face are not allowed to be worn in schools or by women working in public service. In 2008, the ban on headscarves were attempted to be lifted by the government, but in the end stayed in place due to the ruling of the Constitutional Court. Urban legends claim that girls who usually wear headscarves go to school wearing wigs, although to this day I can't understand the logic behind having someone else's hair seen as if your own is better than showing your own hair.

There are certain assumptions in Turkey about why a woman might wear headscarves. It's either because they are conservatively religious, therefore not secular or modern as the ideal Turkish citizen should be, or because they are under pressure from their family and community to wear them. The phrase "neighborhood pressure" is used a lot to describe such a situation, and it's a reality for a lot of women. The local community and what they will think of you plays a stronger role in Turkey than it does in the US, and the meaning behind this phrase is that the community you live in, whether it be your neighborhood or village, may dictate you to undertake certain actions against your free will. The fact that such a concept still exists, and that the people around you can interfere with your decisions in life is directly in conflict with the idea of the modern citizen.

³The headscarves mentioned here are different than the more common traditional Turkish headscarves that are tied in the back of the head instead of the front, and function more like a bandanna in terms of the amount of hair and skin they cover. Like I said, the distinctions are never as easy as they seem.

Therefore the ban dictates that any women who are not able to rise above their religion or the concerns of pressure from community are banned from entering the space of education which is meant to produce the kind of citizens that supposedly these women fail to be.

My main problem with this ban is the strong gender bias it has, as headscarves have singlehandedly been declared a symbol of all these things, which finds no direct equivalent when it comes to men. If there are conservatively religious women, or women that act a certain way because of societal pressures, surely there are men who are in the same position as well. One must also ask, who creates these pressures on women? Some will argue that a lot of women perpetuate them, but even then, they are done under the principle of a certain gender bias that dictates modesty and adherence to religious morals in terms of outward appearance that is not present for men. A lot of women have taken issue with this as well, and they have subverted the idea of headscarf into something considered previously opposite to it: political power. Over the years, there has been a movement of women attempting to enter the parliament and college campuses with their headscarves, and as of the 2010-2011 academic year, colleges have stopped taking action against students wearing headscarves.

I chose this example, because I think it's important to notice the gender bias when we talk about what a modern, secular or liberal subject in Turkey should be. It's skewed against women because of the choice of their clothing the way it is not against men. In the case of these women, if anything, there was a strong intolerance against them both from the school administrations as well as among people who believe they do fit the modern, secular image. The fact that the government's attempt to lift the ban also shows

that an action from the top would not be enough to break the prejudice against these women. Instead, it was the women who were considered oppressed that were able to fight this image by repeatedly challenging the ban and eventually making themselves accepted. They showed that they can be the modern citizen that makes rational choices by fighting for their right to make that choice. I think in this case, people's intolerance worked towards their advantage by giving them the opportunity to realize their power as equal citizens of the modern state. I hope that with this success, more and more women are able to realize their potential, whether in education or in their community, and wear their headscarves freely not because they feel that they have to do so due to "neighborhood pressure", but only because they choose to do so.

DUKE WRIT SMALL

Before starting to talk about Duke, we need to keep in mind that the dynamics of religion are bound to be different in a country that has a majority Muslim population and identity compared to more mixed populations. Majority of Turkish students don't expect to find a religious community in college; the common Muslim identity of the country means that religious practices are familiar to everyone, even the most liberal people, and therefore people don't feel the need to search for a community in college in order to experience their religion more comfortably. A Muslim student at Duke might feel lonely trying to figure out how to find food at 5am in the morning to break one's fast during Ramadan, or where to pray when their roommate needs to use the room for studying. Even if you do these things alone in Turkey, you know that there are millions of other people in the country doing it at the same time as well. I think this is as important a factor as the historical policies of the government to keep religious, and in fact all types of ideological groups, out of colleges. In Turkey, schools are seen as a place where you go to study, not where you find your identity or represent your individuality, and that's why my example with the women fighting against the headscarf ban is an important and unique case. American colleges on the other hand are assumed to be the exact opposite, as places where individuality and personal expression are especially welcome. A deeper examination of Duke in this chapter aims to show whether it lives up to this hype.

Even though I've used Duke as an example to analyze American attitudes, a few things should be kept in mind before I start talking about it. It would not be realistic to say that Duke is reflective of the US, or even a majority of Americans. It is culture writ

small, but only of a specific portion of Americans that can be difficult to define in precise terms. Schools like Duke appeal to and aim to create citizens that fit into a certain class shaped by their elite, most likely private, college education from schools that identify themselves with terms like liberal arts or research institution. Even though Duke has historical ties to the United Methodist Church and its official motto translated from Latin is “Knowledge and Faith”, it still does not fall in the same category as other private universities such as Brigham Young, to give an example. Duke has disassociated itself from the Methodist Church and identifies itself as a research university unlike Brigham Young that labels themselves as religious universities and have a strong emphasis on religion, which can be observed even on their mission statement which reads: “the university must provide an environment enlightened by living prophets and sustained by those moral virtues which characterize the life and teachings of the Son of God”. This is quite different from Duke’s, which talks about providing a “superior liberal education”. I chose to study this certain class as I’ve concentrated my attention on how tolerance relates to the idea of a modern, liberal citizen which is a goal of the class that colleges like Duke would aim to create, as well as for the two practical factors that this is the class I am most familiar with, and I was a Duke student living on campus at the time of my thesis.

There is one point where Duke can be clearly identified as a nation writ small, and that is the idea of normativity present in both. We all have ideas of what the ideal or a normal member of our communities should be like, even if at times we may find it difficult to put down in words, find proof for why they are so, and describe it in different words than others do. An example to this from Duke would be the idea of “effortless

perfection” which has almost become a cliché to describe women at Duke. To put simply, it’s a phrase that draws attention to the idea of women at Duke feeling like they need to fit the model of what a Duke women should be without showing any signs of weakness or difficulty. It also implies that however perfect you may look from the outside, you will never feel adequate because, well, perfection is rather an impossible goal, especially an effortless one. Can one be skinny, fit, beautiful, funny, smart, successful and confident enough, all at the same time, without even trying, feeling tired or weak, ever? Members of every community feel these pressures to varying degrees, whether it’s about fitting the norms of a good American or good Duke student; they may feel like they belong to that community while at the same time not feeling just good enough to be considered an ideal or normal member of it.

What should a Duke student be?

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Duke can be compared to a nation-state with its common values and finite yet imagined boundaries. I remember learning and being tested in elementary school in Turkey about the rights and duties of citizens: participating in the elections, obeying the law, paying your taxes, and for men, going to the army once they turn 20. The specifics of the army duty might change for each country, but still none of the ideas are strangers to citizens of any nation. More can be added in as well: respecting the flag, knowing and singing the national anthem on certain occasions, celebrating the Day of Independence or whatever is appropriate for the country in question, and so on. These expectations are engraved in citizens from a young age; such as in elementary school social science classes which I still remember clearly

after over ten years. Such large communities can only be imagined due to their size, “yet in their minds of each [member] lives the image of their communion”, as Benedict Anderson states in *Imagined Communities* (1989:15). The practices I described help this imagination to exist and persist, by instilling a sense of common identity through ideas of tradition, history and responsibility for each other and the government. They also create roles and purpose for each member, whether these are gender-defined such as participation in the army or age-defined like voting, and so on. Institutions have similar expectations from their members, some that are implied and some more explicitly stated. Before beginning to talk about the role of religion in the life of a Duke student, it’s important to figure out the general expectations from them in order to better understand life on campus. For this purpose, the first section of this chapter will sidetrack to a discussion of some non-religious aspects of Duke.

Institutions have created mission statements that will ensure their alumni will bring them the prestige necessary to draw prospective applicants. Duke’s mission statement can be quickly found on their website through the “About Duke” link on the main page. It talks about James B. Duke’s founding indenture, and the final statement that was approved in 1994 and revised in 2001 by the Board of Trustees. The statement talks about Duke’s commitment to not only attending to the intellectual growth of its students, but also to ensure they become “leaders in their communities”, “advance the frontiers of knowledge and contribute boldly to the international community of scholarship”, “help those who suffer, cure disease, and promote health” and a number of other things. Stating what they aim to help their students become is at the same time stating their expectations from the future lives of their graduates. None of them are

surprising coming from a prestigious university, and can be considered cliché at times: a university with a medical program will of course expect some of its graduates to help cure disease and promote health. These are no different than the goals of any nation; what country doesn't seek international recognition? A flag or a national anthem have no meaning if other countries don't even recognize your existence as legitimate. This fight for legitimacy is one reason that the 20th century has been filled with so many wars of independence, and institutions fight their own wars for prestige and respect.

This Fall semester (that is, Fall 2010), Duke's current president, Richard Brodhead sent a mass email for the first time to the whole student body. It's not uncommon for Vice President for Student Affairs, Larry Moneta, to send mass emails to students informing them about things such as crimes around campus, but as President Brodhead states in his email, a commentary on campus culture by the president to the whole undergraduate student body is a rare occurrence. He writes:

"Twenty-five years ago, President Terry Sanford sent a famous letter. At that time, Duke students were receiving heavy television coverage for shouting obscenities at basketball games. Writing with warm appreciation of students and their enthusiasms, 'Uncle Terry' asked if Dukies really wanted to allow themselves to appear so lacking in class. He challenged them to create a picture of Duke that did them better justice, by joining their intelligence to their exercise of high spirits. It occurs to me that this might be time for a new letter from your uncle in the Allen Building. This fall we've had a series of incidents that, at least to a distant public, made the most boorish student conduct seem typical of Duke. Tailgate, a community celebration that regularly veered into excess and even danger, had to be canceled last week."

Although President Brodhead addressed more than one issue in his rather paternalistic (a tone that might also be assumed by the presidents of our fatherlands) email, I only copied the first part as I want to talk about Tailgate, an issue that divided the campus both with its existence and its cancellation. Its fate may be in jeopardy now, but during my four years, Duke had a very active Tailgate tradition, despite the bad seasons the football team has been having since 1994. Students would gather in the parking lot of the West campus, which is the main academic and residential campus for upper classes, dressed up in creatively nonsensical costumes and party before the football games via food, alcohol and music, elements whose existence (or at times their restrictions) are the soul of any tradition that brings together a community. The popularity of Tailgate versus the meager attendance to football games made it common for people to joke about why whenever there was Tailgate schedule, there seemed to be a game that day as well. It was a common sight during football season to see students walking around on campus as early as 8 on a Saturday morning, wearing colorful fairy wings paired with long, non-matching socks and self-designed t-shirts. Bathrobes, Halloween costumes, leotards and face paint were nothing unusual either. Music would be blasted in the parking lot from students' vehicles, as beer wasn't just drunk, but poured over everyone's heads like rain. It was impossible to leave the lot without being infected by the stench of beer, which managed to carry itself all the way over to the main campus plaza. It was always a struggle between the administration and the students to keep Tailgate on campus and the way it is, with every mass email about the event warning people to be responsible and not jeopardize its future. The final straw that caused the cancellation of the last Tailgate of the 2010-11 academic year was when a student's minor sibling was discovered

unconscious in a Porta Potty. VP Moneta stated that this incident was the main factor in the cancellation of the last Tailgate of the year.

The article published in the student newspaper, The Chronicle's, website on November 9th titled "Tailgate canceled after incident with minor" garnered over 140 comments which is quite a feat considering most articles rarely receive over two comments, if any. Tailgate has brought up questions about the Duke social scene and what it means to be a Duke student over and over again, some which can be observed through the comments on the Chronicle website. We can talk about two sides to the argument, Tailgate supporters and its opponents. A major claim of the supporters is that this is one place on campus where everyone can come together to enjoy a good time and create one of those Durkheimian social bodies that "have minds of their own" (Douglas 1986:8); a comment by the user trinity13 provides a good summary: "Tailgate is one of the few events we have where the entire student body unites as one to celebrate their youth together. There are no cliques present and students wander from group to group, socializing with all friends from various student organizations". User Jamie wrote that "the Blue Zone [where Tailgate took place] fostered school unity more than any other place on campus". The opponents on the other hand argue that Tailgate was an embarrassing tradition for Duke; as an example, user bluedevilgrl wrote "Smelling the stench of beer for hours in the midst of a bunch of a crowd of obnoxious drunks taking facebook photos, and having a completely unproductive morning/afternoon, was not my idea of a meaningful bonding experience. I couldn't believe a pre game party encouraging this type of behavior was school-sponsored". This wasn't a direct monetary support, but it was school-regulated by the Duke the Student Government and Larry Moneta, and was

provided a space in the one of the largest parking zones on campus through the mandatory removal of cars parked there (regulated by the Duke University Police Department).

The disappointments the opponents talk about in their comments reflect people's expectations from a proper Duke student the best, by contradicting the supporters' claims about Tailgate being a bonding experience for the whole school. They believe that a Duke student should find better ways to create a sense of community than getting drunk on a Saturday morning, dressing up in Halloween-like costumes and spending their day in an unproductive manner in general. Most of these points are criticisms of behavior that are considered weird, not normal, obnoxious or embarrassing: basically a collection of negative adjectives. There is a standard of normal that Duke students are expected to fit into, and this expectation comes both from the outsiders and the administration, as well as the students themselves. The ones that come up with the discussion on Tailgate are the ones easiest to guess; working hard, doing valuable things for yourself and your community, being responsible by not participating in activities such as underage drinking, at least not during daylight hours. Still, these practices that are so condoned by some are religious in their own right, a la Durkheim who defines religion as stemming from the emotional security achieved through a community. Creating community is exactly what Tailgate does, bringing together all the groups and cliques on campus, the way an Independence Day might bring together conservatives with liberals, Muslims and Christians, immigrants and indigenous groups, celebrating the country or the campus they all share regardless of all the other identities they might be tolerated for any other day. When you are at Tailgate, none of your other identities that you can't normally break out

of mattered – no one cared about your Greek affiliations, your sexuality, your religion. The alcohol that was literally in and on everyone, being sprayed over people's heads, and the costumes ensured that there was no sense of normalcy anyone needed to fit into; therefore, there could be no outcasts or minorities.

What is faith to a Duke student?

The identity of a Duke student varies widely not just by their race, gender, sexuality, major or socioeconomic background, but also very much by what social groups they identify with on campus, similar to the way the individual citizens of a nation vary widely. Religious fellowships and associations are simply one category of a number of such groups. The main group for Muslim students is the Muslim Student Association (MSA) and it is connected to Muslim Life at Duke, which is a part of the Student Affairs department of the University which also coordinates the Center for LGBT Life, International House and so on. For Christian students, there are a number of non-denominational fellowships and communities, usually aimed towards Protestant students, as well as a Center for Catholic students and fellowships aimed towards Orthodox students or certain Protestant denominations. Due to time constraint and my familiarity with them, I limited my examples Islam and Christianity, but there are also campus groups out there for Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist students.

Although it's possible to find official numbers regarding how many students identify with which religion on campus, these do not necessarily correspond with the number of students that are actively involved with religious activities on campus; checking box on your application or joining group's email listserv is not enough to be

considered as part of that faith on campus. As I mentioned before, most groups have weekly activities they feel are essential for their members to attend in order to be really seen as one of them. With these criteria in mind, I turned to my informants as sources of information for these numbers. Zain estimated that the number of students active in MSA was around 30 to 40, and the trip they organized for Eid prayer had about 50 participants. The two largest Christian fellowships on campus, IV and CRU, both have about 100 active participants according to their past participant Bertha. The others rarely have more than ten or twenty members at a time, despite some groups such as Agape drawing members from UNC Chapel Hill as well. Considering there are around 6,400 undergraduates at Duke, students of faith may be justified in feeling like a minority on campus.

James is an interviewee that I met through one of my other informants, and he is a Protestant Christian student who is involved with fellowships but not strongly attached to any one of them. He goes to church every Sunday, and is an intern there, but thinks that it's unusual for a Duke student to be as involved with religion as he is. This is one of those dilemmas where people that are in the community believe that they represent a small percentage of the larger picture, whereas people outside of it perceive that community as having more members than it does. Of course, it's possible for a strong atheist to consider it a high number even if only five percent of the student body attends church - it's all about one's own biases. James declares that "there's almost a discounting of faith" on campus, without making it clear who it is discounted by, but presumably the student body and not the administration. He goes on to state that the general assumption is "that a rational Duke student will not have faith" and because of

this there's almost a sense of commonality between students who are religious or involved with their faith.

Considering the number of students active in religious groups and how most of them have low numbers of membership, it's not too surprising that these students will feel this way. The Interfaith Dialogs Project is one solid example of this interaction, although its main participants are typically the MSA, Hillel and the Catholic Center. James considers himself as having had a lot of exposure to Muslims, as he spent the first six years of his life in Turkey, is an Arabic major, and spent two months in Cairo, Egypt one summer. This type of non-Christian and non-Protestant exposure is not as common among other Protestant students in his opinion as he states that a lot of people where he comes from in Pennsylvania would not have met a Muslim person in their lives, and this is likely to be true for a number of Duke students that come from communities that are not very diverse. This, added with the fact that Protestants form a majority among the religions on campus, and that at least some fellowships have members who are actively seeking to convert people to Christianity can explain why these groups would be more reluctant to participate in interfaith events. Mila, another Protestant student, talked about the time when a priest in Florida was burning copies of the Quran and said that they had talked about how wrong this was in her fellowship, but they did not take any proactive action about it such as contacting the MSA. Instead, they established that they were tolerant unlike the Church in Florida, and were satisfied with ending the conversation there - a choice of action that will be analyzed in the next chapter about tolerance. This is probably more than what James would expect from people in his hometown as he recalls

“trying to convince someone that one, Obama was not Muslim and two, if he was, it would not matter”.

James argued that he “never had a conversation where there’s been a marked differences” between the Muslim and Christian experiences at Duke, at least in terms of people’s reactions towards those students. His argument it’s more likely for American students to have had bad experiences with Christians “who haven’t displayed Christ love as they should”, rather than other religious groups, and are therefore more combative towards them. He added that he thinks that the attitudes of Christians contribute to this combativeness as well, but of course this is a country-specific situation, as the prominent American identity is white Protestant. The politics of religion that are highly Christianized in the day-to-day life of Americans trickles down to mean that for less religious people, it’s actually easier to be tolerant of other religions compared to Christianity.

How does Duke respond to religion?: The story of one student

“Hahahaha, write something nice! Or I’ll go all Saddam on you” - Zain when I told him I was about to start writing a section about him

As I mentioned before, the MSA and Hillel are directly connected to the University administration through their respective departments at the Student Affairs. In a previous chapter, I also talked about the history of the University with the Methodist Church. For this section, I want to focus on the University’s relationship with its Muslim students. Zain has been an incredible source of information, tirelessly talking to me hours

on end since the day I met him, and I can't think of anything more appropriate than sharing his story for this section.

Zain and I met sometime during the first week of our freshman year. When he heard I was from Turkey, he was interested to meet another Muslim student and somewhat surprised. I did not look like the typical Muslim girl he was used to; in fact, I was not very Muslim at all. We had several conversations through the years about religion, and since I did not see him very often, it was interesting for me to see the changes he went through over the years. His experience may not necessarily represent the experience of all Duke Muslim students, but the fact that he questioned and observed a lot made him a great informant for an anthropologist like me with limited time to do research. He is Pakistani-American, attended high school in Pakistan and was a devout Muslim when I first met him. After long dilemmas about choosing a major that he felt would help him get a job or religion, he picked religion because he felt it was a pressing issue for him to study the faith he believed in so strongly in more detail. Zain and James both think that a lot of religious students don't feel the need to study religion in an academic context because they feel they already know everything they need to know about it, or take one or two of the popular classes in the department and turn to other sources for their information. Zain informed me that most of his classmates would be Christian and Jewish, and that MSA students rarely ever took religion classes. James commented on this trend as well, stating that most students did not feel the need to question and study their faith to the level that he did, finding it satisfactory enough to participate in the activities of their groups or fellowships on campus. Similarly, Zain said that very few undergraduates participated in religious discussions on campus, but this is a

more difficult criteria to comment on since participation on a lot of campus discussions are fairly low⁴.

Zain shared a few interesting anecdotes about his experience in his freshman dorm as one of the handful of Muslim students. A dormmate's mom joked with his son asking if he was "living with a terrorist", implying Zain. The same dormmate stepped on Zain's prayer mat, and although he apologized immediately, Zain said he was surprised and a bit upset that his friend did not even know that Muslims used prayer mats for daily prayer. He also talked about how when a fire alarm rang in the middle of the night, his friends jokingly blamed it on Zain being a terrorist, hiding uranium in his room. At the same time, he admits he jokes with his Muslim friends about how they could shout random words in Arabic to scare off people if they felt in danger when they were out late at night. These were all light-hearted jokes with friends for him, and the one time he was seriously upset was when his agnostic Muslim roommate joked about him while praying, making comments like "show me your butt". Zain said he had roomed with a Muslim hoping that he would understand and respect certain things better than other people, such as his need for peace during prayer, but he was disappointed at his roommate's crude jokes. He says that he only found his roommate's comments funny only after he became more agnostic.

Although another chapter will focus more deeply on analyzing jokes, I want to note here that a lot of Zain's casual conversations with his friends regarding religion involve back-and-forth joking, that at times serves as a coping mechanism for certain tensions between them. This is especially apparent in his roommate's comments about

⁴This is a broad generalization, and therefore not true for a lot of situations, but there is also a phenomenon of undergraduates being less interested in or less willing to make time for intellectual events on campus that I can only attest to from my and my friends' experiences.

praying, and that's why they bothered Zain so much. Even though all my interviewees said that they felt more comfortable joking about religion with someone of their own faith and about their own faith, there is also an expectation of a certain level of respect and understanding. Zain wanted a Muslim roommate so that he could experience certain aspects of his faith without feeling uncomfortable in his own room; he told me how he felt the need to pray in peace one time but did not want to do it in his own room due to his roommate's presence, and had to ask another Muslim hallmate to use his room. This brings us to the question of finding space on campus to practice religion, not just an abstract one of tolerance and community, but an actual physical space. The first time I heard this question brought up was my sophomore year, and it was actually about a Native American girl who was unable to perform a fire ceremony due to the Fire Department's restrictions on campus. I never realized until I talked to Zain that members of more populous religions could face similar problems as well. The Muslim students had no place of their own until the Muslim Life house opened after Duke recruited their first Muslim chaplain, Abdullah Antepi, in 2008. Unless you are one of the few lucky ones to live in a single-person room, it's difficult to find privacy in a dorm, where roommates, hallmates or passers-by are inevitable whether you are in your own room, in a common room or a study room. If even one person has trouble finding space to pray, imagine the difficulty faced by 30 or 40 students trying to get together for Friday prayer (which is the one more traditionally done with a group), finding a place every week large enough to accommodate them, that is also private and clean enough to pray in peace.

Duke is almost surprisingly accommodating towards its religious minorities, especially at a time when the University's budget deficit has been affecting all areas of

campus life. Zain said that Marketplace, the freshman eatery, opened early during Ramadan to accommodate Muslim students that fasted and had to get up earlier than the regular hours of the dining hall. In March 2007, the Chronicle published a story about the concern of Muslim students in finding a prayer space large and comfortable enough to accommodate them. At the time, their only available location had been a small office room in the basement of the Bryan Center. This was followed by the hiring of a Muslim chaplain in July 2008, who has been noted for successfully bringing together the Duke Muslim community, and the opening of the Muslim Center on Central Campus in December 2008. Zain himself has stated that Duke as an institution has been extremely obliging to its Muslim students during his three and a half years here so far.

It seems that enough students lobbying on campus is the key to the administrator's hearts, as the Hindu and Buddhist students on campus were finally given a prayer space in the Bryan Center after lobbying separately for about a year and a half. When I come back for Homecoming Weekend in another ten years or so, will I see Hindu and Buddhist Centers on campus? When Duke finally builds its long-rumored New Campus, will it come with buildings planned for the use of different religious groups on campus? Maybe even the LGBT Center will finally get to move out of its basement space into a real building - there is no end to raising the bar higher for the limits of tolerance. As I approach the end of the chapter, I want to remind ourselves that Duke is indeed a culture writ-small, and identities are not limited to perfectly defined categories as "gay", "Muslim" or "Asian". The interaction of categories like race, sexuality and religion can be overlooked a lot of times, and those who identify with more than one category that needs to be tolerated are usually the ones who suffer most. When I read the Blue Devils

United Blog, a website dedicated to the experiences of LGBT life at Duke, almost every other entry is about this idea of being in-between. When the media portrays a minority, that identity is usually their main one: if there is a gay character then it's safe to assume they will be white, if they are Muslim, they will come from a country well-associated with the religion in American culture, and so on. Therefore, I would like to dedicate the next section to my friends stuck in-between.

Overlapping identities, culture writ small

When abroad, a citizen of a nation may be perceived only as American, French, Turkish, and so on, but back home there is always more to the story than the simple national identity. People argue about who is more American, what values are truly French or traditions truly Turkish. Similarly, the Duke students that unite so passionately in a basketball game against UNC continuously question campus culture and where they belong in it: it's a mini-nation, specifically (and for the purposes of this thesis), a mini-United States of certain classes, the ones that have received an elite education and are expected to be middle or higher class. Despite the recent recession, the United States is a rich and powerful country, draws a lot of immigrants, takes pride in being a representative of democracy, tolerance, science and technology, holds tight to its Christian roots, and is home to countless racial, religious, ideological, and all sorts of interest groups (excuse my using such a blanket term). Similarly, Duke is among the elite institutions of the country and the world, with a rich endowment (and yet struggling financially in the past two years as well), boasts of a diverse demographic both among its domestic and international students, is a center for scientific research and scholarship,

with a Chapel in the center of the most photographed and lively part of the campus. Duke boasts of being as diverse the United States, proudly talking about accepting students from all fifty-one states and an increasing number of countries every year. It's truly an American college, and not just because of its location, something that's important to remember when discussing identity in college, as it is inseparably entwined with the nation that created it. This is helpful when extrapolating arguments from the campus to the nation, but also means that it's not realistic to apply them to institutions such as Turkish colleges that reflect completely different historical and national conditions.

While discussing religion on Duke's campus so far, there have been implicit assumptions about the other identities of these people, and that those identities are in harmony with what is expected of the members of that religion, in terms of things like race, sexuality and gender (or gender representation). The way that religious people come together as communities, other groups and minorities do the same with a range of student organizations on campus that include Asian and Black Student Associations as well as national ones such as the Turkish Student Association; Blue Devils United for LGBT students and their allies; and a number of groups that have recently been established for women such as WHO (Women's Housing Option). As distinct as these groups may seem when talked about individually, overlap between them is inevitable and frequent.

Nathan and I are watching a play on campus together and halfway through he tells me he needs to leave early. He wants to be on time for the weekly meeting of his Christian fellowship, as he feels he has been neglecting his religious side. There is already a lot of built-up emotions inside me from having seen his struggles lately in accepting that he is gay.

“I don’t understand why,” I say and my eyes start to tear up immediately. “Why do you want to be part of a group of people that would condemn you and fight against your rights? I just can’t understand why...” I can’t keep myself from sobbing and I’m glad that no one in the audience is sitting close to us. He tries to explain that this is what he believes in, it’s how he grew up and it’s important to him, but it still doesn’t make sense to me. There is no community I feel such a close relationship with that I would want to be a part of them even if they hated me for things beyond my control and I can’t help my tears as I keep mumbling, “But you are such an amazing person and it’s so stupid...”

When identities overlap with religion, it’s not uncommon for problems to arise. Being an actively devoted person can be time-consuming, and its expectations are demanding. Before (and while) I worked on religion in campus culture, I studied the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community both as an ally and as an anthropologist; and they are unique in being one of those few communities that every major religion I’m familiar with has very strong feelings about (and unfortunately not very positive ones). I watched my friend Nathan struggle since freshman year with his clashing identities as the Southern Baptist he was raised to be and as a gay man wanting to come out. Like plenty of other people in similar situations, he constantly felt the need to make a decision between his two selves, since it was difficult to reconcile one with the other.

I remember Nathan attended the events of a Christian fellowship that some of his other friends were a member of, albeit irregularly, while at the same time he begged me to accompany him to LGBT events on campus. We always used the entrance to the LGBT Life Center that he felt was less likely to get him caught by someone he knew,

especially his brother who also attends Duke. Since the topic of LGBT issues were not widely discussed in Turkey or by my parents, I had formed my own opinions of them and it was that the natural thing to do was to be an ally for a friend. Not being familiar with the strong opinions of his church at the time and not coming from a strongly religious family, I was very confused as to why it was so difficult for him to be happy as who he was; the anecdote from earlier is from the height of my confusion and frustration. He even took a boyfriend at Duke to church once, and it happened to be the day that the priest decided to preach against homosexuality, therefore adding another person to the list of those confused by his identity struggles. After spending most of his time at Duke trying to find where he fit in, Nathan has finally come out to his immediate family, and is finally a lot more comfortable in his own skin - I didn't need to accompany him to a single LGBT event this year (yes, he even uses the scary front door now). At the same time, this has meant for him that he has lost his previous commitment to his church's beliefs. He still declares on Facebook that his religious beliefs are "Christian - Southern Baptist", but he has become a lot more cynical over the years, losing a lot of his previous convictions about what a good Christian is, and doesn't even attend church, let alone be a member of a fellowship. Considering that the major religions tend to take a stand against LGBT people, and that Christianity versus gay people are one of the hot debates in the United States right now (with different propositions on LGBT rights constantly being proposed and voted on by states, causing constant protests and campaigns), Nathan's struggles as a gay man might not seem very surprising, especially as he was raised in the Bible Belt of the South. For him, connecting with one part of his identity meant moving away from another.

It's interesting to compare how the power relationships of groups that have been oppressed, discriminated or tolerated in different ways play out on campus. As an example, we can do a little comparison between hateful or offensive language displayed to three groups (women, LGBT and Jewish students), all in rather similar ways. I'm more familiar with the cases against women and the LGBT students, but I will give a short summary. During the last academic year, there was a swastika drawn on the bridge by the East Campus where people normally paint advertisements for campus events; this was covered up within the next day by Jewish students themselves, without any publicity. The previous academic year, "fa" was painted over an East Campus bench that read "G-Spot", referring to the Giles dorm, so that it read "FAG-Spot". It caused a great stir among the LGBT community, and a reproachful email from the administration to the student body. The offensive language that created the largest stir was the one against women, although it happened only after the second incident that caught my attention. You could read this as repeated offences accumulating a larger response, different offences being taken more seriously or simply some sort of timing issue. The first one I noticed was large penis figure and "make me a sandwich" being painted over a slogan on the East Campus bridge that read "Women leave Duke with less self-esteem than they came in with. Do you accept the Status Quo? – Women's Initiative". I saw a photo of this pasted above a photo of the "FAG-Spot" one, with the words "If you're not outraged... you're not paying attention" added to it and used as the Facebook profile picture of a bunch of people, mainly from the LGBT community. Maybe Duke students just don't take graffiti serious, because I was almost surprised by the attention that the circulation of some fraternity email invitations to their Halloween parties received. They were circulated with the

previous slogan hand-written on them, as well as another one: “Is this why you came to Duke?” These emails featured language such as “Dear Bitches, I mean witches” and “Whether your dressing up as a slutty nurse, a slutty doctor, a slutty schoolgirl, or just a total slut, we invite you...” This led to a series of discussion, that eventually resulted in DSG (Duke Student Government) organizing a series of panels over three days to discuss women’s problems on campus. Whether it’s because of the simple power of numbers, or the fact that it was emails rather than just graffiti that can be covered up, it’s clear that women managed to draw more attention. The sad thing is that when an article was published about this on the Chronicle, the women that were interviewed said that they were either not surprised by this sort of language in emails anymore or defended fraternities by saying that this was doing of select individuals. The problem isn’t always that these groups are powerless, but they are unable to realize or claim their power because the desire to fit in with the ideal and not stand up against what is normal is more tempting or seems an easier path to take.

Before I end this chapter, I want to go back to my point about Tailgate, and why its cancellation caused such uproar on campus. Nathan found the solution to their problems by rejecting religion from their life. The fact that a student is tolerated for being Muslim or Jewish or conservative Christian means that they become restricted within this one identity, which neither of them felt comfortable with. Tailgate, regardless of whether the two of them were big fans of it or not, was an important space on campus because it was the one place that was free from all the identities within Duke. It was not sponsored exclusively either by any fraternity, selective living group, or student organization; something that would be impossible for any other party on campus, as Tailgate was

coordinated by the student government itself. Since its cancellation, there has been no alternative found to replace it on campus. Why is it that we are not able to find a space that can unite us as Duke students? Even Tailgate had its flaws due to the strong presence of alcohol, which is especially significant when talking about religion, as religious students are the ones most likely to feel excluded by its presence. The college identity that is enforced through the discouragement of individuality in Turkey seems to be achieved in the US only through the influence of alcohol. Who would have imagined that we would turn to drinking in order to cross the barriers brought on by tolerance?

CONCLUSION

Looking back at 21st century so far, we can observe that certain words have become its catchphrases, from tolerance and multiculturalism to democracy and freedom of expression. Although some of these were more commonly used in this thesis than others, their frequent and simultaneous usage in the world today is due to the fact that they all stem from similar roots. I looked at their specific relationship to two countries, Turkey and the US. They are important for both countries for both similar and different reasons. Both are nation-states that expect its citizens to fit into the criteria of what a modern, liberal citizen should be: someone that can think for themselves, without being tied down to other influences like religion. This is where religious tolerance comes into play as well, it's reserved for those people who don't quite understand or are able to fulfill these expectations their nation-state has of them. They are tolerated until they can learn to become a modern subject, or until they are deemed too dangerous to be tolerated. The latter is the case with Muslims in the US since the attacks on 9/11.

Ever since those attacks, the American nation with its dominant Christian identity has felt itself in danger because of the Other that was both in and outside of it, and that could not be tolerated anymore. They felt afraid even though they were the ones waging wars and continuously killing Muslims around the world. This brings me to why the US and Turkey differ in their usage of the previously mentioned words. In addition to the expectations it has of its citizens, the US also aims (and considers) itself to be the model for what a modern citizen should be, and the defender of these values. Whether the world found it convincing or not when George Bush talked about bringing freedom and

democracy to Iraq through the war, the fact is that these *were* shown as one of the reasons to go into war at the time. Even though I approached the issue of religious tolerance and modern citizenship through more light-hearted things like humor, the violence that is caused by it is crucial in our world today. Considering that twelve comics in a Danish magazine can cause bloody protests over the world, it shouldn't be surprising to any of us that that a terrorist attack ended up in a war that no one knows when it will end, against a country people are not sure anymore was the correct target. The current wars and violence in the world today and the increasing paranoia in our lives from tightened airport security to new immigration laws all relate back to tolerance and humor, and really, to power. We are tolerant of those that do not fit our modern citizen criteria as long as we feel that we have power over them, that we can suppress their differences by tolerating them and joke about them to psychologically secure our position of power over them.

For Turkey, those same catchphrases have a somewhat different meaning than for the US. Ever since Ataturk established the republic, our motto has been to reach Western standards of modernity through democracy and secularism. The fact that we label ourselves as still trying to reach these goals after 88 years of the founding of the republic instead of defenders of these values makes us differ from the US. As we haven't tried to suppress our minorities but through reforms and active policies, whether by trying to expel the religious minorities or deny non-Turkish language channels, has in fact led to certain positive accomplishments today. While the US is waging wars, we are trying to move away from establishing power through violence by welcoming discussion on what were currently controversial issues. Despite having suppressed freedom of speech more than the Western world because we denied our dissidents as much tolerance as they did,

we are now learning to embrace speaking out about people's problems more actively especially because we haven't been used to displaying power through tolerance although we have displayed intolerance many times.

As I tried to show in the Duke example, even when tolerance is working well, there are problems with it. People feel limited by their identities, unable to be just a Duke student or by extrapolation, just American, because their tolerated identity is always with them. The way tolerance separates people into social groups on campus, so it creates increased tension between countries, its extreme results being wars. Instead of hiding behind our catchphrases of tolerance and multiculturalism, we need to learn to truly embrace our problems and talk about them beyond publishing offensive cartoons under the name of freedom of speech. It's a long process, and one that is yet to be mastered by anyone, but we need to try our best. We won't truly be modern, liberal subjects until we learn to live with each other without having to display and reassure ourselves of our power through jokes and tolerance.

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