Using (Visual) Humor to Demarcate Social and Symbolic Boundaries

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Abstract

While humor has a long résumé as a "window into the unconscious," the boundaries it strikes against are understudied. Are people offended in particular, predictable ways? This online survey (N=1,178) that gathers demographic, biographic, and psychological data in combination with responses to 22 wordless cartoons, reveals distinct social patterns in offend ability. With reference to anthropological, psychological, philosophical and neuroscientific traditions, "offend ability" is conceptualized in cultural sociological terms, by which "offense" is read as the "striking against" of a symbolic boundary (separating profane from the too-sacred-to-play-with). As such, offense is proposed as a supremely meaningful metric in defining groups in terms of what they believe most deeply. With attention both to marginal groups and to liminal identities, analysis crystalizes an intriguing trend, namely: the significance of micro (individual) level factors (e.g. age, gender, psychological characteristics) and macro (social) factors (e.g. ethnicity, nationality) in predicting sensitivity to offense, in comparison to the seeming irrelevance of the mesa (interactional). This builds on major sociological work that cites the increasing solitariness of modern life; here, "sacred" boundaries are seen to be individually determined, in combination less with lived experience than with membership in abstract, often innate groups. Regression models explore meaningful variables in greater detail [1, 2]. Of particular note: sexual preferences were the greatest predictor of sensitivity to offense, with women attracted to women reporting the highest sensitivity. Across the board, those who were uncomfortable before disclosing particular information (e.g. sexual, political preferences) were disproportionately members of groups who were more sensitive to offense (e.g. "queer", right-leaning): identity discomfort manifests as symbolic discomfort.

Keywords: offense, taboo, humor, symbolic boundaries, demography, "PC culture"

When people do not respect us we are sharply offended; yet deep down in his private heart no man much respects himself. — Mark Twain, Following the Equator Let what offends God offend me, and what God pardons, I pardon. — Criss Jami, Killosophy it's now very common to hear people say… 'I find that offensive.' It has no meaning; it has no purpose; it has no reason to be respected as a phrase. — Stephen Fry, 2005 On an April Saturday during this second year of Donald Trump's presidency, comedian Michelle Wolf stepped into a now-prestigious position as host of the White House Correspondents' Association dinner. To the assembled journalists, pundits and politicians, Wolf made a roast of Democrats, Republicans, news channels of every ilk, peppered with jokes about abortion, a recent death on an airplane, and pudendal grooming. The media reaction was swift and pronounced: offense, taken heavily, across boundaries of ideology and group membership.

For all intents and purposes, the jokes were offensive by nature — designed to shame most everyone in the room, to discomfit, to shock. ("Yeah, shoulda done more research before you got me to do this," said Wolf early on.) But in the punditry aftermath it was hard to separate sincere offense from agendas supported — hard to distinguish a sentiment like you shouldn't mock a woman's eye makeup from you shouldn't mock a woman in my party's eye makeup. "You make the very people you're lampooning sympathetic figures," worried Joe Scarborough on the editorially liberal network MSNBC. On the other side, the chairman of the American Conservative Union had this interaction with CNN host Alisyn Camerota: Camerota: I've just pointed out to you that she wasn't just going after 'known conservatives.' ACU Chairman: Her monologue was dead focused on mocking people like [Trump administration senior staffers]. Camerota: Maybe you're being overly sensitive.

These debates about the media's offend ability were so extensive that they even drowned out coverage of severe journalist fatalities after a bombing in Kabul on the same day. "Offense" has meaning, and sensitivity to offense is intertwined with identity and ideology. Now, with the rise of what has been deemed "outrage culture" or "victimhood culture", a sociological idea has

entered mainstream discourse: that people may declare their distinctions (here: in terms of what injures them symbolically) for instrumental reasons. Whether or not the "offense" is interpreted as genuine, these declarations are clear assertions of identity: this is what I stand for, because this what I stand against.

And still, true offense is hard to measure when it is already connected to an agenda. If we want to understand identity and group boundaries in a meaningful way, a question remains: when jokes have no particular target and no intent to offend, what are people's default proclivities for offense? Are certain groups simply more sensitive than others?

1. Introduction

The following study is the first phase of analysis on a survey project that presented 1,178 respondents with 22 wordless, culturally agnostic cartoons, and registered their reactions on two axes: funny, and offensive. Because humor is a space where "the social, the physical, the emotional, snap into alignment", it is a perfect arena for the "study of the interplay of symbolic and social boundaries [3]. To highlight the similar analytical concerns of a vast body of research" [4]. And while humor taps into the unconscious, it is offense that indicates its most basic allergies, its rejections, the boundaries it defends. Humor invokes entire webs of meaning — offense takes place at its borders, where the meanings made on either side are categorically different enough to affect the shape of society. This study uses the comic to access the offensive — a Trojan horse into the market square before a mapping of the city walls In contemporary sociological terms, senses of humor and of offense reflect symbolic boundaries, outlining group memberships and the intricate sociolinguistic meaning systems that define them [5]. In a world of "imagined communities", of fluid "national" identities as real as citizens believe them to be, a shared joke is like a common passport flashed [6].

But "communities have been defined by their internal segmentation as much as by their external perimeter" and "offense" marks this perimeter. Etymology may help: offendere, Latin for "to strike against" [5, 7]. Here, offense is analyzed as a striking against — delineating a boundary between okay and too far, between the profane and the too-sacred-to-play-with. Putting biographical, demographic, and psychological factors in conversation with respondents' symbolic reactions, one major focus is "the porousness of boundaries" and their rigidity [5, 8]. The framing, most simply: offense represents a boundary that is rigid, not porous.

This is essentially a new space: understanding offense in a cross-cultural context. The objects of that offense are selected with the aim of cultural non specificity. By asking who is offended? Who recognizes the offensive? We allow ourselves a unique window into the formation (and potential dissolution) of groups at their most meaningful level. We are not merely asking of certain groups are more sensitive to offense, we are using that data to question whether or not common group demarcations are salient in the first place.

Distinctions in reactions to humor have typically been studied along particular axes, and "offense" has typically been within the psychologists' purview. Here, we are able to examine demographic distinctions across diverse axes, exploring sensitivity to offense on demographic, biographic, and psychological levels [9].

Theory

The Joke: Rosetta stone: "It has often been alleged that one is 'truly' a member of a group when one is able to joke easily with other members and able to understand and share the jokes that these others tell," writes Michaela De Soucey with career humor scholar [10]. The range of humor scholarship is interdisciplinary and historic: linguists and neuroscientists, have seized on the unparalleled importance of humor in organizing — and creating — social life [11,-13]. The central takeaway from this sparse and omnivorous history: that a solid understanding of what's funny and why is a kind of fMRI for [14, 15]. "The decoding of the humorous metaphor is a decoding of the meaning structure of the social system in which it is embedded" [16].

To fully understand a joke is to understand every symbol and interpretation the joke touches — but to react as another does is to take up a similar position and orientation in that tangled meaning web. "Some of what the social entity laughs at, and most of what it laughs against [17]. Indicates what is not acceptable to it, what is not in conformity with its principles and standards of social order and well-being."

Of course, "society" is an array of fractures, and exploring humor is an exquisite way to understand those salient group boundaries, i.e. divisions that matter. If humor is a window into the entire meaning structure — a web of meaning — an analysis of the off-limits is needed first to explore where those webs end. Couching this analysis in a study of humor allows for the deepest possible understanding; as Douglas paraphrases Freud, when a joke hits: "For a moment the unconscious is allowed to bubble up without restraint," [18]. Letting the metaphors out again: we might trade Durkheim's collective conscience for Carl Jung's "collective unconscious" (also known, all too fittingly, as the "cultural unconscious").

Methodologically, this relaxing of "restraint" may give unfiltered responses a greater chance of coming to the surface. More importantly, in aggregating "unconscious" trends, we enter an ideal domain for investigating fundamental social distinctions at the level where they are most individually embedded, most engrained (and perhaps most susceptible to change once brought to light).

The Joke: Anti-Rite: Here, our focus is not on humor as a tool for winning face, or money, or sex. The survey seeks to identify deep, individually felt responses to the potentially funny, and to suss out larger-scale trends. Before turning to the central focus of this phase — registered offense to cartoons — it's important to recognize the unsettling, threatening power of a joke. A joke, as Douglas wrote both poetically and with precision. Linguistically, the simplest takeaway from the seminal General Verbal Theory of Humor is that a joke reconciles for a moment two opposing scripts — a moment the philosopher Arthur defined

"bisociation" [14, 15]. A pun is the smallest-scale example: the best time for a dentist appointment is two-thirty/tooth-hurty. The result? "The joke merely affords opportunity for realising that an accepted pattern has no necessity" [16]. In the case of a pun, the opportunity is small and Saussurian: to realize that the relationships between words and their signifying sounds are arbitrary. But a joke may play with forms far more fundamental than phonetics, too. Often (or always), a joke may seem to indict even something sacred as "unnecessary".

Mary Douglas speaks of joking in the language of religious rites: both connect widely differing concepts. But the kind of connexion of pattern A with pattern B in a joke is such that B disparages or supplants A, while the connexion made in a rite is such that A and B support each other in a unified system. The rite imposes order and harmony, while the joke disorganises. From the physical to the personal, to the social, to the cosmic, great rituals create unity in experience. But jokes have the opposite effect. They connect widely differing fields, but the connexion destroys hierarchy and order. They do not affirm the dominant values, but denigrate and devalue. [17].

An example from the survey at hand (Appendix A: 20): a joke about the (absurdly) law-abiding execution of disabled people, say, works by jamming several spheres of social experience into conversation. First: the issue of legality; next, the issue of sensibility. In America, capital punishment is protected by law, as are universal access rights for the disabled. Ramps, then, even to the gallows. Douglas is only fully right that jokes "denigrate and devalue" if questioning dominance is considered a de facto attack. Still, the mere "combination of previously familiar elements into a novel form", of gallows and the International Access Symbol into a handicap-friendly-death-device —threatens the status quo [18].

This bisociation what Donald Hebb calls joking's "creative production," and it puts common sense here at odds with the way things are simply by conflating two truths. This affords readers an opportunity to see that this patterning of social life is unnecessary — that something, anything might be changed. But: the joke "is frivolous in that it produces no real alternative, only an exhilarating sense of freedom from form in general". And to be jokingly freed from "an accepted pattern" without an alternative — where "the understanding can of itself find no delight"— this can be both psychically liberating and frightening, a short-lived relief of the kind jumping from a plane might be for someone suffering from airsickness [19]. This is why physical, economic, emotional measures of embeddedness are all exceedingly relevant to the statistical models below; sensitivity across "areas of experience" may interact.

When the unconscious is allowed to bubble up (if the laws of gasses apply, to freely fill the space it's given) the man with a cartoon in his hand may blame the cartoon for the new discomfort. The most sensitive objects of offense, perhaps, are those symbols so fixed in a respondent's pattern of social life and self-identification — so totemic as fundamental form — that to shake them even for a moment is too unsettling [20]. It offers a chance for an outside perspective of the otherwise deeply inter-

nalized — a version of the double consciousness that wasn't, to Dubois, a delight.

Investigating Offense: forcefully argues that self-conceptions depend on reactions to "disgust" [21]. Our internal boundaries are policed by our reactions to external stimuli, and our disgust for the external is affected by how we conceptualize ourselves. This study continues in that vein: offense should be interpreted as a close member of the disgust family — symbolic disgust, perhaps, or intellectual disgust.

If we subscribe in the slightest to Durkheim's framework that a group's boundaries "coincide with those delimitating the sacred from the profane", we should pay close attention to the act of transgressing, of crossing from one side to the other [12]. Operated by a similar premise, that we can better (or, only) understand norms by breaking them [22]. In fact, the social sciences have taken a long interest in the restrictions against such transgression — "taboos" — as powerful cultural insight [23, 24]. Here, the focus is on respondents' sensitivity to taboos : do they register the presence of a taboo or not? That is to say: has a boundary been struck against?

Visual cartoons are especially useful here because they are interpretable largely outside of context, providing an opportunity for a wide survey pool to express comparable reactions. This is true of taboo symbols in many forms, down to the basic building blocks of language: as speech-act theorist J.L. Austin outlined in How to Do Things with Words, communication requires certain conditions to be "felicitous." But, as linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated: "these expressions seem to have their context coiled tight inside… Taboo utterances (e.g., saying the F-word on FCC-regulated broad-casts or uttering the Tahitian king's name) rest on few, if any, such conditions." (Fleming and Lempert: 1). In the case of "verbal taboos," they "may become so essential zed that their performativity comes to rest on few if any felicity conditions" (ibid: 7). Words are complex, but dirty (or sacred) words are simpler, reduced to an essence.

Or, as Justice Potter Stewart famously opined in the 1964 pornography case Jacobellis v. Ohio, "I know it when I see it," [25]. To interpret taboo confidently, the viewer needs only the material and his own visceral reaction. The reaction is felt, in the way Jack Katz describes criminals' most transcendent emotions, [26]. As something deeply embodied and yet imminently identifiable, this is material that both offers insight into the "cultural unconscious" and remains able to be consciously unpacked.

One last interpretively meaningful characteristic of the taboo, noted by scholar of cursing "Curse words like common words come to an infant from the culture's past" [27]. If senses of humor act as a cultural fMRI, senses of offense may do all that plus sequence the DNA, bearing information about cultural differences that span longer than a single lifetime. That is, if cultural taboos share the "temporal arc" of cultural icons (and why not, as parallel "carriers of collective emotions and meanings" [ibid]) — this study is one way to analyze a wider chunk of the parabola [28].

Offense Awareness: Because of this study's two-pronged measure of "offense" — "offensive to me personally" and "offensive to the general public" (subsequently personal and general offense) — it is important to carefully frame the interpretation possible here, as distinct from interpretation that will require a second phase. Across the 22 cartoons, the number of participants who registered personal offense ranged from 4.9 to 17.6% (among those who understood); general offense followed a similar pattern at a higher rate, ranging from 3.5 to 51.1%. (Aggregated scores: from 8.9 to 68.6%).

	General	Personal
	Disabled-friendly gallows	Noise-conscious suicide
	Noise-conscious suicide°	Sensitive torturer
1	Sensitive torturer	Work-play-sex cycle
2	Work-play-sex cycle	Disabled-friendly gallows
3	Burka sunbather (7)	Misaligned marriage (8)
4		
5	...	
...	Cats' movie: shoelace thriller	Pyramid (mis)instructions (11)
18	Selfies with the (chess) King	Surreal skiing
19	Ocean as a bathtub (15)	Materialistic camping
20	Materialistic camping	Superman texting-while-flying
21		
22	Surreal skiing	Cats' movie: shoelace thriller

Ranking in alternate category, if not already shown.

° *Most offensive cartoon overall; "totals" largely mimic the* General *category.*

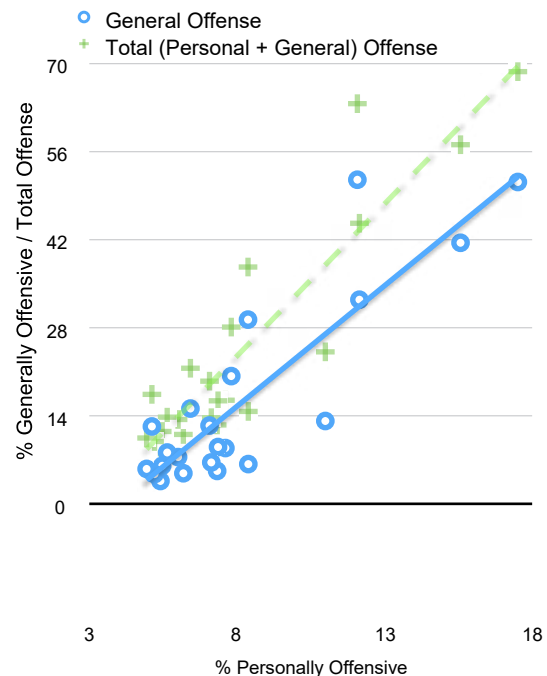**Figure 1:** Most/Least Offensive Cartoons*

Figure 2: Offense Type Relationships

% Personally Offensive to note (as a first finding): general and personal metrics yielded very similar rankings — offensive in one dimension was offensive in the other. Greater variation in rankings at the "least offensive" end is partly explicable by a low volume of positive responses; regardless, low in one category trends low in the other, high trends high (r=0.87).

As cursing expert "we internalize taboos at a personal level" [29]. The socially sacred is embodied in the individual. "It is not the word that is offensive per se; it is the concept that has been defined by the culture that is marked as offensive. Words referring to offensive concepts become offensive words." This is a distinction between denotation and connotation: where a denotation is not intrinsically offensive (e.g. sexual intercourse), connotations may tell a different story (e.g. aggression, abuse, intent to offend). The emphasis on the conceptual is key, because concepts (as opposed to strict definitions) are far more entangled with webs of meaning, with interpretive differences, with culture.

The same can be true of symbolic imagery: an image is not marked offensive because the image itself is taboo, but because it refers to taboo concepts. The subject may "matter" more than its delivery (e.g. any abortion joke vs. a "good" abortion joke), and the social meaning may take precedence over individual interpretation. This reflects George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism, a pragmatist theoretical tradition through which personal and collective interpretations of actions and objects are examined in constant dialog [30, 31]. Even the self itself is socially constituted, a "looking-glass self" formed as a reflection of others' assumed visions [32].

In an unstructured "comments section" at the end of the survey, some respondents offered their take on the relationship between personal and social: I was a little confused about qualifying whether I was personally offended, or if I thought a cartoon would offend the general public. I guess I want to make it clear that if I thought one was generally offensive, it was to me as well. (American gardener, 59, female, married) This provides a first explanation for the vastly higher rates of general offense, as survey takers positioned the locus of their offense at the social level. But the opposite interpretation was also possible: In regards to the couple that I said were offensive to the general public, I didn't mean it to be that I thought that actually WERE offensive, but that I could imagine people having issues with them. (American working odd-jobs, 38, male, in an old relationship) Perhaps most interestingly, the forced-choice offense questions illuminated the central symbolic interactionist conflict: i found myself wrestling over whether some of the cartoons actually offended me personally or whether they were politically incorrect in some way, and i should be offended by them because of that (American editor, 62, female, married, living abroad).

The self/social relationship is complicated, and while the forced-choice offense questions demonstrated the tight-knit relationship of what we might call external and fully internal taboos, a survey

iteration allowing multiple responses will be required to explore the gap between them. (Of special interest: the gap between what is both assumed generally offensive and found to be personally innocuous. At the place where offense is assumed but not felt, boundaries are especially porous.) But first, we should examine where boundaries are even felt, and along what axes that feeling varies.

For this reason, the study will measure "offensiveness" in the aggregate, both offense responses summed for each cartoon. As such, the primary outcome variable is taken to indicate a sensitivity to offense.

2. Methods
The lion's share of data for this survey was gathered through the, using small payments (0.1 to 0.3 USD) to recruit voluntary respondents [33, 34]. Soon after its inception in 2005 as a platform largely for machine learning and data entry, mTurk was adopted by social scientists as a fruitful method for convenience. Of the total response pool (N=1,178), 93.5% (1,101) were recruited through this platform [35, - 37].

While American samples of mTurk are considered more diverse than other crowdsourced samples, they still suffer unrepresentativeness along multiple axes , all of which are included in the survey, and will serve as predictors in the model [38, 39]. More importantly, since it is not the aggregate attitudes of the entire sample we are interested in but variation along just these axes, over/ under-representation should not be particularly relevant at this stage.

An additional sample (N=77, 6.54%) was recruited through word-of-mouth, snowball sampling. And while there always exists a risk for participants in online methods of "self-selecting into studies that interest them" respondents' "interest" was mitigated in part by the blinded description of the experiment: as one centered around cartoon "funniness", as opposed to "offensiveness [40, 41]."

In short, across the social sciences, mTurk has been accepted as an incredibly generative resource We don't have to agree fully with the economists who wrote that online experiments "can be just as valid—both internally and externally—as laboratory and field experiments"; it is simply enough to take from the fields of political science, psychology sociology , inter alia, to use this data as a fruitful stepping stone out into the largely uncharted waters of humor and offense research [35,36,42,43].

As a preliminary measure to explore interpretations in greater depth, a small number (N=10) of long (2-3 hr.) interviews were conducted with participants in China, Israel, and the United States, either solo or in groups of three. Examples from interviewees commentary will function below to illuminate ways in "the offensive" is both culturally relative and relatively universal. (Eighteen-yearold high schooler from Shanghai focus group: "I have friends that call each other [slur removed] because it's funny.") In large part, these interviews served to illustrate the wide range of interpretations, and the even wider range of reactions; not always cited directly, they acted as primer on a canvas, part of the necessary backdrop for the interpretive dimensions here.

Surveyed Information: Possible responses to cartoons: not funny and I don't like it, not funny but I like it, funny, very funny, extremely funny – or I don't understand. On the next screen, respondents were given the option to mark offense: "offensive to me" or "offensive to the general public". These options were given as a forced choice, prompting a respondent to identify the pressure point of his or her offense, but making it impossible to select both. (The ramifications of this forced choice are discussed in greater detail in the Theory section below.)

With cartoons selected primarily to cover a range of topics more than specific topics, an index was created, aggregating total levels of offense for each respondent. Completion rates were extremely high: 1155 of 1178 respondents (98.0%). This is largely due to the incentivized nature of the platform, although high rates of response to an optional, openended "comments" space also indicate solid engagement [39].

Personal Information
Three primary categories of personal information were gathered: 1) Demographic, 2) Biographical, 3) Psychological. Revisiting Mary Douglas' contention: "when one area of experience figured upon another is rendered intelligible, [44]. (In fact, these are alternate names for the survey categories that fit nearly as well.) Laughter was her example here, a moment of multi-domain harmony, when seemingly disparate elements of human life can be understood and analyzed on a single plane. She wrote "that in communication the conveyor of information seeks to achieve some harmony between all possible sources of information". Cartoons are just that kind of information, and to understand their reception it is necessary to engage with factors on these multiple levels.

1. The demographic variables are the initial targets: controlling for patterns in life course and psychological factors, are there trends in sensitivity to offense along basic social axes? The survey gathered information about age, gender, ethnicity (freely described by the respondent), and income, in addition to information about citizenship, native language, sexual preferences, and occupation. Educational data was not gathered; for these purposes income and occupation can serve as a preliminary, if imperfect, proxy. Additionally: we capture information about alternative sources of income (e.g. government support, or inheritance), to examine financial interactions in greater detail.

2. Biographical data consists of potentially significant details from respondents' lives after birth. Of course, this category is not purely distinct from the above; but where the maternally bilingual might be considered demographically separate, a respondent fluent in 2+ languages was likely responsible for a choices throughout his or her life. Moreover, it is less important to categorize "sexual preference" as a demographic or biographical variable than to acknowledge the scope of gathered data: seeking to encapsulate objective distinctions equally visible to individual and public, and meaningful variations in life course. Survey questions gathered information about relationship status, and relocation status; that is, whether the respondent had moved from the country or city where they grew up, and if so, the length of

time in their new hometown/home country. "Immigrants are also likely to transport symbolic boundaries from one cultural context to another," Along with questions about multilingualness and sexual preferences, this data is geared towards a greater understanding of "outsiders", elaborated below [22].

3.Self-reported psychological data is gathered as an important anchor, to allow further distinction between micro and macro factors. Since the scope here is extremely broad, basic standard measures at the psychological level are sufficient. Building on more than half a century of factor analysis, psychologists have developed a taxonomy of traits known as the [45, 29, 46]. The goal was not to account for all human variation in five traits, but to develop a simple set of umbrella-like traits with predictive power. Only later christened the , the traits were originally enumerated as follows:
- Extraversion or Surgency (talkative, assertive, energetic)
- Agreeableness (good-natured, cooperative, trustful)
- Conscientiousness (orderly, responsible, dependable)
- Emotional Stability versus Neuroticism (calm, not neurotic, not easily upset)
- Culture (intellectual, polished, independent-minded)

In later iterations including the TIPI, "Culture" has been rebranded as "Openness to Experiences." No matter what: the effects of culture are linked to one's own experiences, and openness in processing them. In this cultural sociological study, "openness" (and exposure) to multiple frames of experience is of special concern; the biographical and psychological data aim to capture this at separate, connected levels [47]. If experience is not so simply organized into simple frames — a version of what Goffman calls— are there any notable differences in reactions to taboo? Can personal frame ambiguity affect the rigidity of sacred social frames?

Big Five survey variants may include 100-item and 40-item tests; for this study, ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), a self-reported, seven-point Likert test [48]. Each of the five traits is measured by a pair of oppositely oriented questions; e.g. "Extraversion" is measured by adding "Extraverted, enthusiastic" to the reverse-coded response for "Reserved, quiet". At first blush, this will allow claims-making about demographic differences controlling for basic differences in individual personalities.

Finally, the survey also included four measures of "discomfort", along axes considered central to this study: sexual preferences, ethnicity, income, and political preferences. Before the detailed question in each domain, the survey asked will it make you uncomfortable to answer a question about [that domain]. If "no," an open-ended question followed immediately. If they clicked yes, the next screen acknowledged the discomfort but offered an extra prompt; for example: We understand entirely — this question is not required. All information provided, of course, is greatly appreciated for research purposes. Measuring discomfort in this way allows for a further link to be drawn between identity and offense, between the personally sensitive and abstract "allergies" to comic content.

Concern with the Outside and The In Between: A study of offense is a study of the inappropriate; at its most basic, it is a way to gain an analytical grip on distinctions between sacred and profane, [49]. Becker writes: "Social rules define situations and the kinds of behavior appropriate to them, specifying some actions as 'right' and forbidding others as 'wrong.'" But, he says, "The person who is thus labeled an outsider may have a different view of the matter". For that reason, this survey pays special attention to potential markers of outsiderness.

Worth mentioning, lest the neck-hairs-of-potential-offense are already prickling, this is not to equate those who identify as something other than sexually "straight" with the drug users and criminals at the heart of Becker's research. "Outsiderness" is taken here in general, to refer to facets of identity that are objectively in the minority of a larger population. The hypothesis being: if someone is aware of their label as an outsider, do they react in any significantly different way to material that is symbolically outside? We're following up on Becker's first page question: do outsiders, conceived generally, have a different view?

This concern with "outsiderness" can be connected to a further interest in liminality [50, 51]. That is to say, how could we explore the meaning of outside and inside, without paying some attention to the in between? One may be "outside" of the plurality — in terms of sexual orientation, say, or non-binary gender identity, or by being unemployed. But it is possible also to exist in states that are by nature in flux or unsettled: "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" [51]. The biographical questions — relationship, citizenship, and relocation status — serve to capture this phenomenon: taking note of those who have moved within the last ten years, for example, are there meaningful distinctions between embedded and unembedded populations? Ethnicity and sexual preference are certainly relevant to this discussion, but so are measures of language ability, which hint at a respondent's life in between, or across linguistic contexts. Financial support may reflect a kind of countervailing force: if relocation reduces one kind of stability, an inheritance, for example, could increase it.

To recap briefly: the survey questions (and resulting coefficients) are designed to capture demographic, biographical, and psychological factors relevant to offend ability. These factors also indicate frames — marking not only how a person exists in social space, but how she may see herself in that space. Special attention is given to liminal categories, because frames are not all equally rigid; that flexibility may also be key to understanding offense.

The Visual and the Cartoon: With the inauguration of the journal Visual Studies in 1986 (né Visual Sociology), social scientists took a major step in codifying non-verbal methods and objects of inquiry. Later decoupled investigations of "Seeing," issues involving the role of physical sight itself, and "Iconic Communication" — the spontaneous meaning-making power of images — from what

he called Doing Sociology Visually: "how techniques of producing and decoding images can be used to empirically investigate social organization, cultural meaning and psychological processes" [52]. While the spontaneous nature of "reading" a cartoon is useful in isolating unfiltered reactions, this study is less concerned with images' specific "iconic" value. Here, we're integrating psychological and sociocultural investigation, joining a fresh tradition of studying the social by using the visual and doing sociology visually.

Argued for the use of "photo elicitation" in sociological studies, which "evokes information, feelings, and memories that are due to the photograph's particular form of representation" [53]. Photo-elicitation is not a term exclusive to "photography," but includes cartoons and other visual forms that circumvent certain neighborhoods in the brain. In kind, our survey uses the visual as a special key to evoke a particularly social feeling: offense.

Cartoons specifically, "seize upon and reinforce common sense and thus enable the public to actively classify, organize and interpret in meaningful ways what they see or experience about the world at a given moment" [54]. This positions them as works of dramatic scripting, "strips of depicted personal experience made available for various participation to an audience or readership" that provide "a "mock-up of everyday life, a put-together script of unscripted social doings" The "primary frame" of a cartoon — and it is a sturdy one, boxed off and presented with no introduction beyond the form itself — allows both for a large audience to experience something personally, and for an individual to experience something recognizably general.

Across the social sciences and beyond them, cartoons have been put to some use [55, 56]. A neuroscientific study demonstrated that understanding a cartoon requires an appreciation of the main character's mental state, at very least a kind of proto-empathy [57]. Contends that "sociologists have tended to focus almost exclusively on the humor aspect of cartoons, at the expense of production and consumption" [58].

Here, while paying close attention to the funniness of cartoons individually and in the aggregate, there is no assumption that there even is humor, and its production is not the particular focus: 18 of 22 cartoons are produced in essentially the same manner, by an outfit known for its cultural consistency (with precious few editors throughout this time period [59, 60]. The concern with offense is instead a concern with the final link in the chain: consumption. Measures of offense indicate a kind of allergy to consumption: whether or not the content was consumable or not. In this way, exploration of "offense" is a kind of epidemiology, searching for trends in particular ill reactions.

Cartoon Selection: The images selected here are all "gag cartoons," i.e. cartoons with a joke premise, as opposed to purely stylistic caricatures. Cartoons or "comics" can have multiple panels; here, all are single-panel . This focuses the moment surveyed on a single act of framing, a single visual joke. It also allows the survey to travel more widely, to places where the comic strip is perhaps less familiar or carries additional connotations; at its most basic, the cartoon is a picture for which all have the tools of interpretation.

More importantly, cartoons are often captioned. (For a study of trends in the New Yorker's famous caption contest, [61].All cartoons selected here are wordless , for the reasons above, and to further limit variation on linguistic and cultural grounds. (See Appx. A for all cartoons). This includes cartoons with captions and cartoons with any writing or lettering as part of the drawing . Confronting the potentially endless possibilities for understanding, wordless images help keep the lid on — here misunderstanding will be purely visual, and not the result of some interaction of the visual and linguistic.

As a scholar of Assyrian jokes put it: "Humor often relies upon specific contemporary references, word meanings, contrasts or social understandings which are easily missed by outsiders" [62]. Well warned, I parsed the entirety of The New Yorker cartoon for wordless cartoons with the fewest cultural referents; that is, with little to no popular/historical/linguistic knowledge needed to decode the joke. The New Yorker itself, with slow-changing editorial positions through which the cartoons are filtered, provides a concise pool to draw from despite the half-century gap between this survey's oldest and youngest cartoon prompts.

Ex. A – Not selected; may require familiarity with largely urban practice of shoe-tossing (and its American connotations).

Ex. C – Not selected; even if caption removed, the (largely blunted) visual joke makes a specific symbolic reference.
Ex. B – Selected (*17*); assuming Superman's more diverse, global recognition.

Ex. D – Selected (*14*); Syrian cartoon with universal referents, and an extreme version of a familiar incongruity.

This quickly narrows down the extensive catalog. In total, 18 cartoons were selected from The New Yorker. Also added: four images by the Syrian artist Ali Farzat, who chaired the most celebrated outlet for cartoons before it buckled under censorship from Bashar al-Asad's regime [63]. As examples from both sources:Farzat's cartoons serve as a point of comparison, to investigate the possibility that the New Yorker "brand" was contributing any particular bias. After the present analysis, there is no evidence to indicate any particular trends in meaning coming from the (internally diverse) American collection. (The most "offensive" cartoons both from Syria and from America confront identical subject matter; see "Findings" below).

The scholar of social boundaries and of lives at their margins, subtitled an essay on visual sociology: "It's (almost) all a matter of context [64]." Here, the goal of the selection process was for context to matter little for the decoding of the cartoon's meaning, and even less for the feelings evoked. Reducing contextual relevance at the level of the cartoon should allow for variations at the individual and social levels to shine.

Findings

Incomprehension Correlation: Before dissecting variations in offense, first: a quick analysis of incomprehension. When people don't understand the cartoons — ranging globally from 2.8% (Cartoon 11; see Appx. A) To 31.3% (22, 18) — are they not understanding the same thing? To analyze this broadly, we look at averages in "do not understand" answers across all 22 cartoons, and look for patterns/non-patterns across groups. In very short, correlation coefficients (r values) indicate common patterns of understanding and non-understanding ("misunderstanding" is not measurable here at the quantitative level) across groups in different domains. The strength of correlations varies in non-shocking ways.

	Gender/Sexual		Political			Linguistic		National
	Female / NonFemale	Queer / Non-Queer	Left / Center	Right / Center	Left / Right	Native / Non-native English Speakers		American Citizens / [...]
USA	0.904	0.946	0.941	0.948	0.886	0.772	**[Indian]**	0.533
Outside USA	0.798	0.805	0.859	0.846	0.755	0.758	**[Other]**	0.907

Figure 3: Incomprehension Correlations, by Cleavage Type

Women and men (the latter category, officially "non-female", includes the single non-binary respondent) are extremely highly correlated: in America, what is incomprehensible is proportionally so across genders (r= 0.90) although average incomprehension is two percentage points higher for women (16.3 v. 14.1). This gap disappears outside of America, although rates of incomprehension are slightly less correlated (r = 0.80). Outside of America, women and men incomprehend specific cartoons with greater variation, but there is no constant difference in the reporting of nonunderstanding. Further study needs a forking hypothesis: does that gendered gap refer to actual non-understanding, or to the self-perception and self-reporting of non-understanding?

Average group rates of incomprehension vary: Indian citizens had a far lower average (9.8%) than Americans (14.6%) or respondents from other nations (12.6%). Between American and Indian citizens, actual non-understanding at the level of individual cartoons is moderately correlated. A conceptually difficult cartoon (18), showing a figure throwing "thought bubbles" into a trashcan, links abstract and concrete understandings and ranks among the top two most incomprehensible cartoons for both nationalities. But Americans also had a hard time understanding a figure sunbathing in a burka (7), and a man waiting for a train by a disconnected yard of track (22). While this last was also relatively poorly understood among Indian citizens, the top of the non-understood list included cats in a movie theater, rapt by a shoelace (6) and a rather existential cartoon from 1958, in which a scuba diver finds a tub-stopper at the bottom of the ocean (15). To repeat, relative non-understanding and "absolute" rates of non-understanding tell different stories: these last two most incomprehensible cartoons were in comprehended by approximately 14-17% of each national group; Americans simply had an additional set of cartoons with rates even higher.

Variation exists at the other end of the comprehension spectrum. While a cartoon (17) showing Superman texting-while-flying ranks in the top three most understood for both Indians and Americans — a clear visual joke with the globally recognized superhero smashing through skyscraper windows — national differences persist. For Americans, a snowman threatening to melt himself (11) was the most understood, followed by a cartoon mocking the endless life-cycle of work-home-play dissatisfaction (12). For Indians, two cartoons mocking law and order round out the top three: one shows a captive on a lever whose execution will execute the executioner (8); the other (13) shows an autocratic leader (modeled on Bashar al-Asad) styling himself a giant with the help of a big mirror.

For Americans, these were 10th and 16th most understood. To note, these were two of Ali Farzat's Syrian cartoons; and while his other two in this study were understood almost identically across the national boundary, the variation here — and for American cartoons that involve golf and snowmen — may reflect the cultural knowledge required to fully decode a cartoon. Even if these are details unnecessary just to "get" the joke, there is proof that they can never be fully, truly read out of context. Subsequent iterations of this survey could alter the selections accordingly, or work to identify what is referentially relevant in greater detail. The high correlation between native and non-native English speakers' understandings, nearly identical inside and outside the US, suggests that native language knowledge, specifically, is not the skeleton key to decoding this non-verbal communication.

There is an extremely weak relationship between rates of comprehension and offensiveness (r = 0.25; see Fig. 4, below). Even though understandings of particular cartoons vary across groups, there is no connection that suggests a systematic connection to those groups' offend ability. Men and women may incomprehend slightly different images, say, but their overall sensitivity to offense is unaffected by these differences. All this to say: there is no evidence to support reinterpreting our aggregated outcome variable — of total offense — because of these cartoon-level differences.

The relationship between incomprehension rates and funniness is equally weak (r=-0.28).

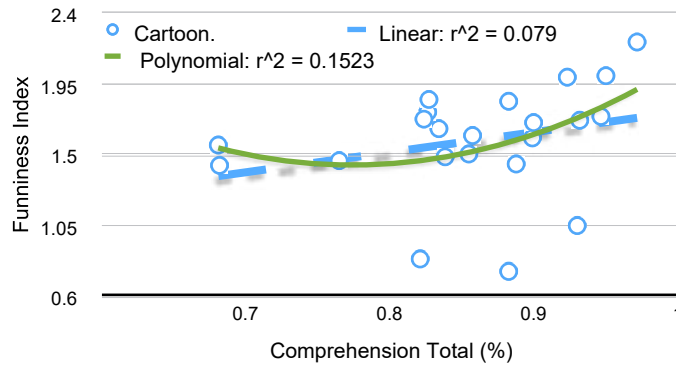(Correlations between funny and offensive are discussed in more detail below.) But there is a small

Figure 4: Comprehension/Funniness Trend

Quirk in this small bit of data:

The comprehension-funniness correlation is better suited by a polynomial trendline (r=0.39). That is, the relationship is better described as a curve: less generally comprehensible is less funny on average, but the effect reverses at the bottom end. Toward the incomprehensible end of the spectrum, cartoons become slightly funnier again. We could coin this a niche effect — where respondents are recognizing that their understanding takes special knowledge, and are thereby extra tickled by "getting it". It's a kind of collective effervescence with an imagined community — and one that perhaps taps into the fundamental "superiority theory" [65, -68]. A broader study with a greater range of cartoons, both funnier and more incomprehensible, might shed a little more light down that dark hole. At first, though, we can understand how being a part of a specific group could alter a sense of humor and its boundaries. This study's central multivariate regression examines how rigid these group boundaries may be.

Offense Coefficients: Regression Analysis: This analysis is rooted in the assumptions and conclusions of phenomenological sociology – Primarily that "social processes," out most simply, "produce the self in its particular, [69, 70]. Reading "sensitivity to offense," then, as an indication of meaningful interaction (qua boundary-making) between self and society, the following statistical models can first be interpreted as an exploration of what matters in the social construction of self.

The outcome coefficient represents the predicted percentage that offense would be taken for a given cartoon. The calculation averages the total count of "offensive" responses ("personal" and "general") over the total number understood (i.e. "did not understand" answers do not count towards the average), graduated to a 100-point scale. Even a 3-point increase or decrease, if statistically significant, is interpretively very significant. Coefficients with a magnitude near 10 or higher deserve special attention.

	Simple		Expanded	+ Psychology	+ Funny Index	
age	-0.284***	**<24**	-0.0896	-0.412	-0.362	*Base category: 24-34*
		35-44	-1.059	-0.632	-0.726	
		45-54	-6.091**	-5.223*	-5.251*	
		55-64	-7.599**	-5.879*	-5.974*	
		65+	-15.44***	-13.40***	-13.89***	
Non-female	-5.906***		-6.707***	-6.826***	-6.443***	
Citizenship						*Base category: USA*
Canada	-4.305		-6.022	-4.853	-5.164	
India	11.37***		6.492***	5.556**	6.071**	
Other	3.406		1.355	0.0675	0.366	
Dual Citizen	11.12***		7.260***	6.102**	5.953**	
Relocated	-0.863	**Different city**	-1.487	-1.012	-0.950	*Moved from city/town*
		Different country	1.746	0.433	0.512	*where grew up. Base category: has not moved.*

	Simple		Expanded	+ Psychology	+ Funny Index	
Relative Income						*Ratio as compared to*
<0.1	1.104		0.839	2.001	1.746	
0.1 - 0.5	0.482		-2.523	-2.094	-1.938	*average in nation of*
>1.5	-1.174		-2.657	-1.701	-1.502	*residence. Base category:*
Missing	-0.864		-3.136	-2.459	-2.442	*ratio between 0.5-1.5.*
Employed	3.956*	*Employed*	5.942**	6.751**	6.499**	
		Self / Student / "Homemaker"	2.539	3.062	3.066	
Other Financial Support	7.153***	**Employer pension**	8.892**	8.570**	9.011**	
		Government	11.09***	10.25***	10.30***	
		Family	6.357**	5.517**	5.566**	
		Inheritance	8.802*	7.483*	7.400*	
		Spouse	-0.575	-0.104	0.0717	
		Savings	-4.296*	-3.369+	-3.212+	
		Other	-0.115	-0.0379	-0.0394	
		None	-4.600**	-4.117**	-3.931*	
Non-majority ethnicity	3.497*	*Non-Majority*	3.272*	3.816*	3.982*	
		Mixed/Multiple	-3.028	-1.336	-1.301	
Single	1.449	*Single*	0.992	0.940	0.859	*Base category in*
		In a new relationship	5.392+	5.942+	5.770+	*Model 1:* not single;
		In an old relationship	1.071	1.208	1.132	*others:* married.
		Not sure	-5.620	-2.554	-2.657	
		Engaged	-5.604	-4.784	-4.850	
Queer	**9.054*****	**Gay**	13.40***	11.37***	11.34***	
		Lesbian	17.25***	15.02***	14.87***	
		Bisexual	1.382	0.606	0.712	
		Other	0.498	-2.324	-2.476	
(cont. below)		**No answer**	9.624**	8.229*	8.243*	
Political Spectrum	1.687**	**Left**	-0.417	-0.534	-0.692	*L to R, 1-10 scale.*
		Right	6.421***	6.363***	6.268***	*Base category: Center*
		Didn't Answer	3.924	3.802	3.588	*(4-7)*

	Simple		Expanded	+ Psychology	+ Funny Index
"The Big Five"		**"Extraversion"**		0.362	0.388
		"Agreeableness"		-0.0713	-0.0890
		"Conscientiousness"		-1.209***	-1.183***
		"Emotional Stability"		-0.182	-0.205

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	
	"Openness"			-1.353***	-1.317***	
Funny Index	*Favorable - Funny*				-4.013*	*Average funniness of*
	Funny-Very Funny				-5.651*	*understood cartoons,*
Constant		27.83***	28.49***	53.18***	56.03***	*tiered. Base: less than favorable.*
Observations		1155	1155	1155	1155	
R-squared		0.203	0.285	0.321	0.325	
Adjusted R-		0.191	0.259	0.293	0.296	

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Figure 5: Sensitivity to Offense (OLS Models)

Age has a negative association with sensitivity, significant from middle-age category onwards. The oldest cohort (65+) is extremely desensitized to offense, with the second largest coefficient across all categories. Coefficients suggest that sensitivity continues to decrease through life, but without a longitudinal element to this study, we have yet to answer: does sensitivity decrease over the course of a single life, or/and do generational cohorts possess distinct characteristics in their own right?

Gender matters. Female respondents demonstrate approximately 6 points higher sensitivity, ceteris paribus, than non-female respondents. This follows the basic findings of "objectification theory", that women are more likely to see themselves as objects, as an "other" through others' eyes [71, -73]. A recent genome-wide association study (GWAS) of more than 46,000 participants also supported a "significant female advantage on the EQ [Empathy Quotient]," without finding a specific genetic link [74]. The gendered difference exists in this domain, but its roots so far are social ones. And empathy could certainly be a key factor affecting sensitivity to general (if not personal) offense.

The present models of offend ability suggest an expansion of theories of objectification and empathy to include seemingly disparate factors: dual citizenship claims a similar effect to gender (minimized mildly by the addition of more detailed variables). Perhaps these could be both considered contributors to a Duboisian double consciousness, a practice in seeing the self through the eyes of something other, and thereby remaining sensitive to the potential transgressions of others' sacred boundaries. And following Dubois, a non-majority ethnicity is a predictably good predictor of sensitivity — one that actually grows slightly more meaningful when controlling for psychological variables and distinctions in senses of humor; even with more in the mix, ethnicity matters. (While largely consistent, the effects are not identical across ethnicities; while "black" and "Latino" categories demonstrated higher rates of offense, "Jewish" respondents registered significantly lower than average. While a broad minority/majority, outsider/insider framework is helpful at first, a finer comb is needed to pull out exactly how specific identities are realized in the context of offense).

This sensitivity is evidenced again, amplified, in sexual orientation coefficients: non-straight respondents were powerfully more sensitive on average, although differences emerge examining groups in greater detail. While women attracted to women and men attracted to men demonstrated high rates of sensitivity to offense, respondents of any gender with more complicated patterns of attraction showed no greater sensitivity than the majority "straight" population. Considering the LGBTQ identity crudely, this data suggests the rigidity of the LG identities, but the flexibility, perhaps, of the B and Q. Socially confirmed outsider status may increase sensitivity, but the liminal/ cross-category space of bisexuality — if it can be interpreted as such — does not. Thinking about meaningful group boundaries, then, identities under this acronym may be more distinct than similar. Regardless, in this global model, the "lesbian" identity is the most powerful predictor of sensitivity to offense. The indication is that this identity is especially salient in the construction of symbolic boundaries.

We should also note the salience of citizenship distinctions, especially for those respondents from India. While there is no particular reason the word "offensive" (Hindi: apmaan) in a survey taken in English would be especially offensive to Indian nationals, there is a possibility that the cartoon form has a special priming power from its national history: in recent years, politically charged controversies have erupted in India over the use in textbooks of (half-century old) cartoons, thought unflattering to particular leaders [75, 76]. This initial framing could be a major cause in raising the expectations for offense in the otherwise inoffensive. In this exploration of imagined community-type "nationalities", this reinforces the continued meaningfulness of concrete political nationalities.

Physical liminal spaces do not appear significantly meaningful, as in the cases of intra- or international relocation. But categories that capture kinds of emotional liminality — in which potentially meaningful factors in social life are defined by "ambiguous and indeterminate attributes— do [77]. The clearest example is the surprising significance of being in a new relationship, a factor which predicts increased sensitivity unlike any other relationship status, and supports a claim that the unsettled are sensitive. By the opposite token, the stabilizing effects of income — if not directly meaningful according to this data — are indirectly visible through the variables that explain financial standing: employment and outside sources of financial support. In short:

access to money predicts greater sensitivity. From a socio-psychological perspective, provides a first, simple hypothesis: Human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies of prepotency [78]. That is to say, the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need. Man is a perpetually wanting animal.

Also no need or drive can be treated as if it were isolated or discrete; every drive is related to the state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of other drives. Argues that desires like those for physical survival and physiological safety will take precedence over "higher," psychological needs, like those for group belonging and personal fulfillment. The "pre-potency" of desires more easily satisfiable with money — for food, water, shelter, say — sidelines concerns about identity. Basically: money buys time for reflection, and that time is necessary to grow sensitive to symbolic offenses.

Breaking apart the forms of outside financial support, we can see evidence of exactly this. Recipients of employer and government pensions are expected to have higher rates of offense, as are those with more nuclear assistance: indicators for family or inheritance support reveal the powerful value of local social relief, and suggest ways in which attitudes towards offense may remain constant over time, transmitted across generations. Pensions provide long-term stability looking forward; inheritance indicates a kind of support that may have long freed respondent's from the lower tiers of Maslow's pyramid.

This framework is supported by the insignificance of spousal assistance, and the countervailing effects of drawing on one's own personal savings: while pensions and inheritance are lifelines to something large and stable, connections from within one's own closest relationships add no further flexibility. Those who have satisfied the "lower" wants with the benefits of employment have time to consider their ideal position in social space; unemployed with no outside financial support, there is less time to be symbolically offended.

Beyond Demographics: Political preferences are also extremely meaningful, but only in one direction: participants registered much higher offense rates, as compared to center, if they identified on the "right" end of the political spectrum. This provides a symbolic (abstract) counterpart to the more physical studies of "disgust sensitivity"— with very sympathetic conclusions [79, 80]. In one such study, measuring changes in skin conductivity and heart rate, the political scientist authors "demonstrate that individuals with marked involuntary physiological responses to disgusting images, such as of a man eating a large mouthful of writhing worms, are more likely to self-identify as conservative" [81]. And while also argues that conservatives are more sensitive to physical threats, he finds that political identity does not affect responses to what he calls "meaning threats". The data here suggests otherwise [82].

As such, the present study may be read as an abstraction of the neuroscientific claim (repeated by Smith et al.) that "disgust is often considered the most visceral of all basic emotions" [83]. Offense is symbolically analogous to disgust; here, the neurosci-

entific ally visceral is transposed here into a sociological context. Then, just as "physiological responses to the experience of disgust are more carefully studied" (ibid) than any other emotion, examination of the experience of symbolic offense should claim similar status in the eyes of social scientists.

A small tangent for one application: this data helps unpack the success of "internet supervillain" and orchestrator of the "Dangerous Faggot" college speaking tour, Milo Yiannapoulos. Queer, conservative (and rich), Milo is statistically predicted based on these findings to have high sensitivity to offense. All that is needed to explain his "villainous" potency is a desire to channel that sensitivity to transgression into transgressive action. (He has also called himself an "agent provocateur".) And that much seems easily Occham's razable: in the golden age of social media capital and "outrage culture," offense delivered properly can be worth as much as gold.

Conscientiousness, among the two pillars of the psychological Big Five salient here, predicts desensitivity to offense. This also suggests that the offense registered by participants is felt, at least in part, personally — that it is not simply a projection of potential offense. (Otherwise, the conscientious respondent's simple recognition-of-others'-offense should raise the count.) Interpreting this variable on the 14-point TIPI scale, the difference between 5th and 95th percentile conscientious would predict a difference in sensitivity equivalent to the gap between "gay" and "straight" (appx. 10 points). Here, the gap may indicate either that potential offense has not registered, or: that it has registered, but is found inoffensive. Briefly, because "conscientiousness" is an unlikely marker of identification (e.g. "I am from the conscientious group"), the latter interpretation appears more likely in line with traditions of social construction. Most important here is the impact of this variable, and its undeniable salience, in the construction of boundaries.

The significance of experiential openness maps easily onto symbolic boundary imagery: those with more open boundaries are less likely to feel that a boundary, crossed at a point, has been broken. Or: a flexible boundary is less likely to snap. Remembering the twentieth-century taxonomy of the Big Five, where "Openness" was styled "Culture," we see further evidence that more culture may indicate a porousness of symbolic boundaries.

The "Funny Index," in which categories reflect aggregated responses to the cartoons, reflects boundary dynamics in a similar way: the funnier a person finds jokes on average, the less offended they are in general. If psychological factors represent "pores" in a kind of cultural cell membrane, through which potentially transgressive material can enter discourse without being rejected outright, perhaps a sense of humor might be viewed as a kind of change in the very thickness of that boundary. In social symbolic terminology, psychology affects boundary porousness; humor affects boundary rigidity.

In one of the encadrés that breaks up the chapter in Distinction titled "The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles," Bourdieu writes: The joke. is the art of making fun without raising anger, by means of ritual mockery or insults which are neutralized by

their very excess and which, presupposing a great familiarity, both in the knowledge they use and the freedom with which they use it, are in fact tokens of attention of affection, ways of building up while seemings to run down, of accepting while seeming to condemn — although they may also be used to test out those who show signs of stand-offishness.

To find jokes where others may not find them, then, could be seen as a redefinition of transgression. To a pure comic, perhaps, Milo's transgressive behavior might be seen merely as an enumeration of society's boundaries (and thus, a familiarity with them). At the very least, it appears that a predisposition to find funny suggests a lifestyle with more space for the (otherwise) transgressive. And although this study does not share Bourdieu's full fondness for material explanations, there is a key point of common commitment: to see jokes and joking as artful tests, of "stand-offishness" at the boundaries that have been struck against. The claim here: that the choice of where to stand, in this way, is perhaps the most meaningful distinction of identity in social space.

Hazarding a bold summary: the data here points to a pattern that social identities are constructed both at the nuclear, extremely local level, and at the most diffuse layers of social interaction. Psychological and demographic variables emerged as terrifically powerful, but biographical variables hardly at all. The micro, personal, proves its importance in social boundary making — sexual preferences, age, gender, psychology; the macro does as well, invoking the largest scale (sub "species") of social groupings — nationality, ethnicity (political leanings might also be in this category). The most concrete and most abstract facets of identity are relevant in demarcating what is too sacred to play with. That is to say: in the building of boundaries, the micro and macro matter, but the meso — all that happens in between, in the course of a life (where interaction with others is most relevant) — is weak.

This echoes the solitude-highlighting work in which previously communal arenas of social life (bowling, living) are revealed as acceleratingly solitary. The connection may not be immediately transparent, but the joint salience here of the demographic and the pyschological, against the seeming irrelevance of the biographical, seems to suggest a kindred conclusion at a technological moment where connections are fastest increasing direct from the individual to the collective. Old middles are cut out, and the self is constructed alone and in conversation with something very large.

Personal Sensitivity Manifests as Symbolic Sensitivity: Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that survival is not an academic skill…. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths, [84].

Across national categories, a robust trend in categories of discomfort emerges (see Fig. 6, below). In order, people are increasingly uncomfortable revealing information about their sexual orientation, ethnicity, income, and political preferences. (In India, ethnicity and income gently trade places.) Noticing growing political polarization in America, for example, it follows that political identities would be a leading source of discomfort; an identity that once signaled milder "otherness" now signifies greater distinction, to a larger segment of the population [85, - 87]. In Polarized America, further emphasize the feedback loop between political and income inequalities. The high rates of income-identity discomfort are a testament to this connection, and to the continuing value of "income" as material for constructing symbolic boundaries. And while "politics" is the most uncomfortable at first, "income" is the most rigid, the least susceptible to prompting.

Citizenship	Sexual Orientation		Ethnicity		Income		Politics		Total
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	%
Canada	25	1	26	0	22	4	16	10	26
	96.15	3.85	100.00	0.00	84.62	15.38	61.54	38.46	100.00
India	188	109	166	131	176	121	139	153	292
	63.30	36.70	55.89	44.11	59.26	40.74	47.60	52.40	100.00
Other	87	33	80	40	70	50	66	51	117
	72.50	27.50	66.67	33.33	58.33	41.67	56.41	43.59	100.00
USA	670	65	654	81	594	141	531	189	720
	91.16	8.84	88.98	11.02	80.82	19.18	73.75	26.25	100.00
Total	970	208	926	252	862	316	752	403	1,155
	82.34	17.66	78.61	21.39	73.17	26.83	65.11	34.89	100.00

	AFTER "YES" (Responses after prompting)								
	Sexual Orientation		Race		Income		Politics		Total
	Answer	Skip	Answer	Skip	Answer	Skip	Answer	Skip	1+ "discomforts"
Canada	1	0	0	0	0	4	8	2	10
	100.00	-	-	-	-	100.00	80.00	20.00	38.46
India	79	30	99	32	64	57	113	40	220
	72.48	27.52	75.57	24.43	52.89	47.11	73.86	26.14	75.34
Other	29	4	35	5	23	27	34	17	79
	87.88	12.12	87.50	12.50	46.00	54.00	66.67	33.33	67.52
USA	51	15	57	24	39	102	148	41	316
	77.27	22.73	70.37	29.63	27.66	72.34	78.31	21.69	43.89
Total	160	49	191	61	126	190	303	100	625
	76.56	23.44	**75.79**	24.21	**39.87**	60.13	**75.19**	24.81	53.06

Figure 6: Discomfort Disclosing Personal Information, by Citizenship

Prompting respondents had a powerful effect — a sort of *three-quarters rule*, by which three quarters of a population answered an "uncomfortable" question after a simple additional request to answer. In all domains but one, exactly three-quarters (73-75%) of all participants who registered discomfort answered the question after the prompt. Resistance to this "rule" — as with income, where only 40% of the uncomfortable chose to answer — suggests a source of discomfort on a different order, perhaps an element of identity not so easily rebranded to suit a constructive purpose. That is: an outsider identity may be repurposed against its stigma— the segregating label "black" turned into Black Power, "queer" turned Queer turned "Dangerous Faggot" — but poverty, perhaps, is harder to transform with counter narratives of any kind. If nearly all concepts are categorized by, resistance to the three-quarters-rule may indicate the socially and symbolically thickest among them, differences that are hardest to turn into strengths [88, -90].

By examining the respondent pools among those who answered despite registered discomfort, we can examine whether or not the "sensitive" identities are overrepresented among the uncomfortable. In very short, the answer is definitive. In less short:

salient factors in sensitivity to offense are reflected by a sensitivity regarding the disclosure of those factors themselves (see Fig. 7, below). Those who were uncomfortable were disproportionately from the groups who were more sensitive to offense: discomfort with identity manifests as sensitivity to discomfort at symbolic boundaries. Politically right-leaning respondents were more uncomfortable disclosing their political preferences. "Lesbian" and "Gay" respondents were strongly uncomfortable disclosing sexual preferences, as were the "bisexual" to a lesser degree. Perhaps surprisingly (if we follow the pattern of Lorde's outsider categories), those very overrepresented among the income-uncomfortable were wealthier, with incomes of 1.5 times and upwards more than their compatriots.

This suggests thinking about discomfort and social outsiderness in a way that reflects "horseshoe theory"— as a spectrum in which seemingly "opposite" ends bend toward one another (if not touch) [91]. It's a rather cutesy metaphor, one that political scientists are loath to instrumentalize , but which offers a useful way to reconsider symbolic interactions. If outsiders' (social) survival requires learning "how to make common cause with those others identified [92].

	NO	YES	Total*		NO	YES	Total
POLITICAL SPECTRUM				**ETHNICITY**			
Center	288	110	398				
		36.42		*Non-India**			
	38.55		37.94	Asian	69		89
		93			9.20		10.55
Left	268	30.79	361		52		59
	35.88	99	34.41	Black			
		32.78			6.93		6.99
Right	191		290				
		302					

	25.57	100.0	27.65	Jewish	22	24
			1,049		2.93	2.84
Total	747					20
	100.0		100.0		51	21.28	60

RELATIVE INCOME

				Latino		
					6.80	7.11
						7.45
<0.1	49	3	52	Mixed	22	25
	5.86	2.46	5.43		2.93	2.13	2.96
		15				9
		12.30	161		14	18
0.1-0.5	146	45		Other	9.57	
	17.46	36.89	16.81		1.87	3	2.13
≈1	368	59	413	White	520	3.19	569
	44.02	48.36	43.11		69.33	4	67.42
		122				4.26
>1.5	273	100.0	332	Totals	750	49	844
	32.66		34.66		100	52.13	100
						94
Total	836		958	India		100	
	100.0		100.0				20

				Non-Hindu	9	11	8.00

SEXUAL PREFERENCES

Bisexual	59		74	Hindu	150	80	230
	6.22		6.70		94.34	87.91	92.00
		15				91
	33	9.68	48			100.0	250
Gay		15		Totals	150		
	3.48	9.68	4.35		100.0		100.0
Lesbian	36	19	55				

* Small discrepancies exist between these and *Fig. 6* "yes" totals, as: 1)

	3.79	12.26	4.98
		1	
	30	0.65	31
Other			
	3.16	105	2.81
Straight	791	67.74	896
		155	
	83.35	100.0	81.16
		949	
Total			1,104
	100.0		100.0

some who clicked "Answer" ultimately chose not to provide a response, and 2) some who did not register discomfort also left blanks.

**This table conflates non-Indian ethnic categories with the small non-

White, non-Hindu pool in regions of majority (N=30); more data is needed to unpack native/diaspora distinctions, and the effects of "ethnicity" itself.

Figure 7: Disclosure Discomfort, by Subgroup

As outside the structures", the argument here is that "outsider-ness" be considered, at least in part, in terms of discomfort [84]. The discomfort becomes sensitivity, and the sensitivity — especially if felt "as soul," and not merely recognized — may help actualize the boundaries outsiders seek to dissolve.

Maslow's approach would say that a need for survival, as Lorde puts it, would preempt the "higher" psychological struggles for symbolic understanding and boundary work. Survival is pre-potent. But without even reframing this kind of "survival" as a metaphor, we could understand that the outsider's attempts to survive would be inseparable from symbolic interaction: abstract processes are part and parcel of the pre-potent ones. To rebrand an isolating difference as something functionally oppo-site requires tangling in webs of meaning in order to rebrand them. Survival depends on symbolic boundary work. The question remains: does this survivalism cultivate a mere sensitivity to offense, or does it correlate with visceral offense felt personally?

Simple Trends Among the (In) sensitive: People who are sensitive to offense are offend able in simple patterns; among the more sensitive groups, rates of offense are proportional to the average. There is little randomness in interpretation — the sensitive are simply more offended overall (Fig. 8). And while the baseline is raised (or alternatively: the threshold for offense is lower), ratios of offense between the sensitive and insensitive vary in size: by ratio, offense among the sensitive appears the most out of proportion when overall offense is lowest.
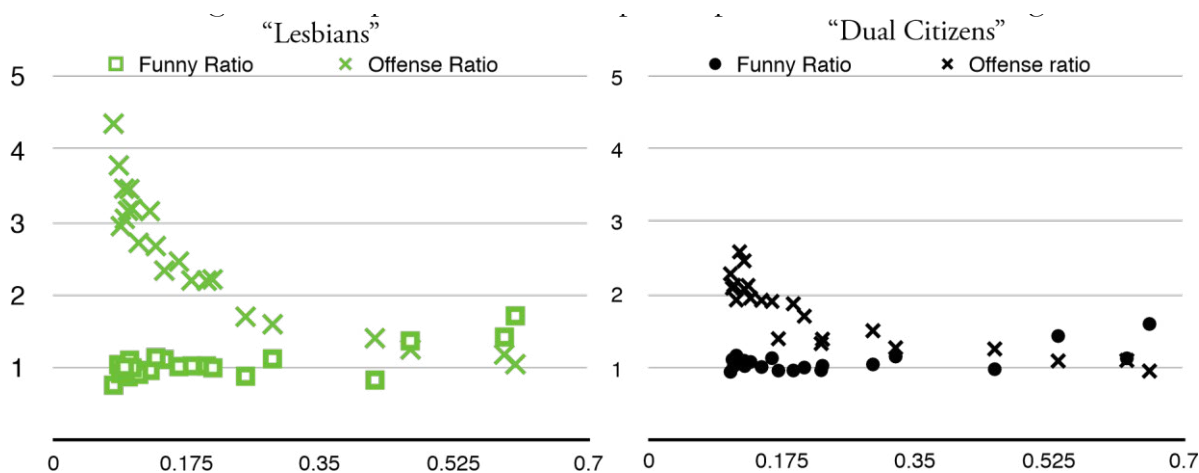

Figure 8: Example Sensitive Groups: Responses v. Global Average

Ratios of funniness are nearly constant, hovering around 1, and signifying that there is no particular pattern in the way the sensitive find individual cartoons funny. Examining this relationship between funny and offense further, we see that the sensitive show higher rates of enjoyment at the very top end of the offensive spectrum: for those who are sensitive and unoffended, the most taboo cartoons may carry extra comic weight.

Of course, there is less "room" to play with in scoring the offensive; even if unanimously offended by the most offensive cartoon offensive (65.6% total), dual citizens would show a ratio of only 1.45. Still, it is meaningful that along an axis of increasing total offense, the offense ratios of both example sensitive groups descend to even. In symbolic terms, this seems not to suggest that a boundary exists where it otherwise wasn't, a taboo unique to the group — but instead that the same boundaries, more rigid or less porous, have a stronger visceral reaction when struck against. And at the most reactive end of the spectrum, there is evidence that even that difference dissolves entirely. As such, "boundaries are conditions not only for separation and exclusion, but also for communication, exchange, bridging, and inclusion".

In fact, the superlative cartoons (most offensive; funniest) reveal trends that suggest the potency of the universal, of what is equally relevant across cleavages: As Bataille claimed, "it is clear from the outset that the two primary taboos affect, firstly, death, and secondly, sexual functions". Empirically, our data bolsters this theoretical history: of the four most offensive, three (20, 16, and 14) involve or refer to the death of human beings. The fourth centers on sex — the sole cartoon to reveal a naked torso. Only three other cartoons involved sex or death, sixth, eighth and ninth in these rankings respectively: in Cartoon 8 (28.0%), an executioner prepares to shoot a man off a mountaintop plank that he himself is balanced on, too — the butt of the joke is the killer and not the killed, perhaps muddling visceral reactions to death by treating the endangered body as more prop than human; in Cartoon 11 (21.4%), a snowman threatens to melt himself with a hairdryer; in Cartoon 2 (19.4%), a corkscrew and wine bottle are relaxing together in bed.

With the easy conceptual conflation, it might follow that the act of sex has equally gendered interpretations; and yet, detailed responses to this last sexual cartoon (2) again seem to highlight the universal [93, 94]. In one focus group of three young survey respondents in Beijing, the two women read the wine bottle as male, citing in part its phallic resemblance (and the yonic triangles of the corkscrew). There are potential national/linguistic explanations for incomprehension— that the arms-over-head gesture resonates with perhaps distinctly Western imagery of a man in bed, or that knowing the vocabulary "corkscrew" is helpful in decoding roles. But assuming this fluidity in interpretation is present at all across groups, and adducing Cartoon 2's parallel offensiveness to women (21.1%) and men (19.6%), it would appear that sex in general is the taboo, and not the "uncorking" of any particular gender.

Clearly, "there does remain a connection between death and sexual excitement", but the data reveals some distinction in empathetic/visceral/disgusted responses to these two primary taboos along one major axis: human/non-human. Sex between metal and glass still trips the taboo wire — behind only death, human sex, marriage, and a sunbathing figure in a burka. The rate of offense, however, is less than half (44.5 v. 19.4%). Equivalently, there are two cartoons we could categorize as incongruous suicide jokes: in Cartoon 16, a man plugs his ear with a finger, unenthusiastic about the noise from shooting himself in the head; in Cartoon 11, a snowman lurches to stop a desperate snowman friend from melting himself with a gun-to-the-head hairdryer. The jokes operate differently, but suicide is still equally at play. Still, the man's impending death registers as three times more offensive than the snowman's (63.8% v. 20.7%; personal and general statistics are proportional). A man's suicide made for the single most offensive cartoon; a snowman's suicide made for the single funniest.

This may seem a small claim, that taboos are not inseparable from human context, but it suggests that taboos can be pulled apart and treated in various ways, addressed through mitigating metaphors. The human/non-human gap also reinforces the claim that the boundaries demarcated by offense are not disconnected from self-conceptions: the self is continuously invoked to forge symbolic boundaries.

Humor and Offense: To note: what is in play for offense is in play for humor. Both kinds of reactions are attuned to human-ness, and entangled with conceptions of the self. In a recent computational study co-authored by a now-retired New Yorker cartoon editor, researchers took a first stab beyond classifying cartoons or Tweets as funny or not-funny or taxonomizing types of cartoons [95, 96, 97, and 98]. Analyzing 298,224 captions over 50 cartoons, this study (which also used mTurk) sought to rank — less to understand what is and isn't funny, but to understand what is more funny. Their preliminary findings: the funniest captions reflected negative sentiment, and "humancenteredness". Previous findings in the world of verbal humor also had stressed this [99]. The present study now supports extending these conclusions to the visual, into supralinguistic exploration valid in global context.

With the self so central to humor and to offense, it is clear that powerfully divergent responses will pull groups apart at the individual level. There is already the preliminarily suggestions that sensitive groups found the most taboo material funnier relative to the average; perhaps these groups are relatively "oversensitive" to uncommon concerns, but are more equanimous in the face of universal issues. As Turner put it: If sacred boundaries are rooted in the self, people used to ambiguous social positions may be be less offended by engaging the sacred in an ambiguous moment (playful, serious). Recognition is the key here: "one area of experience figured upon another is rendered intelligible" and "snap[s] into alignment": a joke turns to laughter and signals "the subjective recognition of truth" [100].

Zooming out to the collective: the more offensive a cartoon was taken to be on average, the larger the gap between those who found it funny and those who did not (see Fig. 9, below). This was true even in comparison to those who were unoffended: if it was more offensive in general, those who found it funny were further distanced from those who did not. This conclusion is a twist on Bataille, that: the forbidden action takes on a significance it lacks before fear widens the gap between us and it and invests it with an aura of excitement.
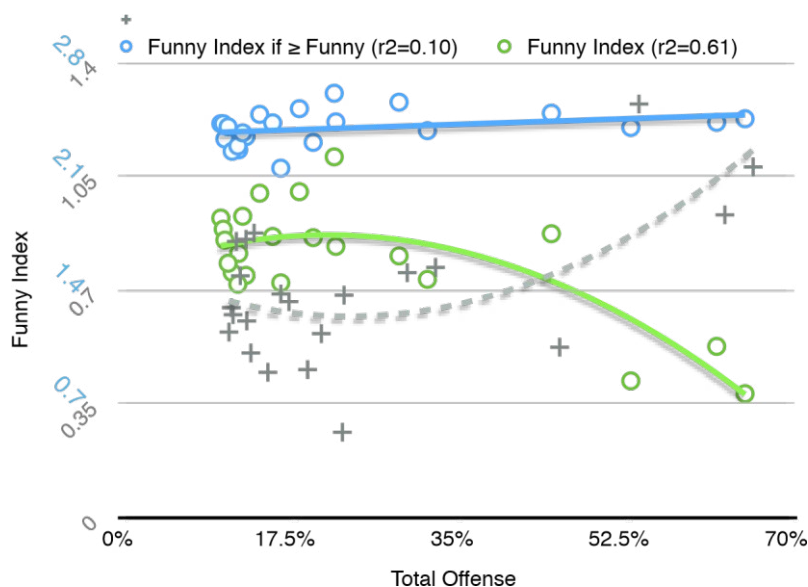

Figure 9: Tickled/Unoffended Gap, by Cartoon

Have a moment of transgressive play, a forbidden joke — a toying with the maximally sacred. The forbidden action here is the reaction to the joke. It will take more to understand whether the aura of taboo excitement translates into extra funniness on an absolute scale, for single respondents; at first, though, we can see the relative impact. Distinct reactions to the forbidden widen the gap between us and each other, between one group and the next.

3. Conclusion

"When someone offends me, I think it's a gift from Allah."

Apocryphal, attributed to Ibn Taymiyyah, c. 1300 Offense matters. Stephen Fry is wrong to think "I find that offensive" is a meaningless phrase. The meaning is subjective, but patterns of common feeling manifest as concrete, objective groupings in social life. For social scientists, I find that offensive is a gift — a way to measure the meaning making that structures society at its roots.

The central findings of this study are the magnitude of individual coefficients, indicators of patterns of offense sensitivity along demographic and psychological boundaries. Grouping the significant coefficients, there is evidence for individual-centric findings à la Putnam and Klinenberg: symbolic boundaries appear to be forged less by social interactions than by personal history, psychology, and by membership in group's at the most abstract level (e.g. ethnicity, nationality). And even these abstract, diffuse group memberships that predict offend ability are identities that must be mediated by the individual. Bowling alone meant there was no one to share your strikes and spares with, no community to collectively effervesce around the trivial things. Bowling alone may also mean that there is no one to spare you from offense, from interpreting any symbol as a strike against an unmediated self .

Strengthening this argument, this survey also reveals a powerful connection between two kinds of sensitivity: to offense in general (our central outcome variable here), and to elements of one's own identity. Politically right-leaning respondents, sexually non-"straight" respondents, ethnically nonmajority respondents — members of each of these categories were more uncomfortable than average in disclosing this facet of their identity. And each of these categories demonstrates significantly higher levels of sensitivity to offense. Wealthier respondents also registered greater discomfort in disclosing their incomes; and while the income coefficient was not significant, related factors — employment and outside financial support — also covaried with sensitivity to offense. A small explanation via Maslow: people may be more offended when they can afford to be.

The other attempted contribution of this study is an elevation of "offense" (and humor) to, call it sacred status, among sociologists interested in the boundaries of social groups at their most meaningful level. This is an approach that allows for collaboration across religious, political, sociological fields. A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden. To find offense — the struck against — is to identify where there is even a boundary to strike. And while sensitivity to offense is not the same as being offended, this investigation is a first step in acknowledging "religious" boundaries in their plainest form.

If we entertain Brubaker in the slightest, accepting "religion and nationalism, along with ethnicity and race, as analogous phenomena", we can use this conceptual interchangeability to great advantage. "Humour is not faith but is prior to faith," as Kierkegaard contended; socially then, a shared sense of humor imitates religious bonds, just as sociologists of humor have painted it, and compatriot bonds by analogy [102]. We should incorporate the language of nationalism and the sociology of religions into

humor scholarship, and vice versa, to revitalize the study of group membership and the organization of everyday life.

Humor indicates a toying with the meaningful, a willingness to free the sacred from its form (if only for a moment) – offense indicates a choice, a firming. If humor is prior to faith, a declaration of offense is a credo. At risk of dead-horse-beating: the specific pure or dangerous label matters less than the mere existence of a label — an incorporation of something into the religious system. (Apathy being, as fortune cookies are right to notice, the opposite of either extreme.) A sacred cow may be protected for one reason, pigs and pork marginalized for another; the argument here is that if meat matters, something fundamental is shared. A step further: a pro-pork luau on Oahu and a pork-free block party in Jerusalem are similarly connected. While actions are opposite, meaning is made at the same spot.

By this approach, the sacred/profane split is captured under the umbrella of "meaning," pitted against meaningless in the prime binary. This allows us to continue in the humorous tradition of Mary Douglas that fused Freud and Durkheim, while acknowledging critiques of Western orthodoxy: "from its earliest reception the duality of the sacred and profane in Elementary Forms has been seriously questioned" [103]. As celebrated scholar of Australian religions W.E.H. Stanner wrote, after studying in the footsteps Durkheim never actually took: "I have found it impossible to make sense of Aboriginal life in terms of Durkheim's well-known dichotomy 'the sacred' and 'the profane". Levied the critique that the Academy has used this largely Christian binary in a systematic misclassification of religions that don't revolve around it [104]. But: if we acknowledge offense as a boundary that indicates meaning first and foremost, we remain open to engagement with any culture that makes it. "Jokes are usually categorized according to the boundary they touch upon," perhaps the world's most active sociologist of humor. And every boundary, from all sides, has a meaning.

More work is pressing in several directions:
• Multilevel models that would allow for the nation and other concrete groupings to be treated separately, taking into account their distinct and relevant features, including measures of wealth, religious and expressive freedom, etc.
• Comparing identities across local and relocated groups: Americans in and outside of America,
• e.g., or the Tamil population in Tamil Nadu and in the diaspora.
• Psychology-focused analysis investigated whether uncommon tensions in Big Five responses — say, a person who self-reports as barely extraverted and barely reserved, or extremely extraverted and extremely reserved — is predictive of attitudes associated with liminal positions. Such conflicts in personality types are far from impossible, and undoubtedly meaningful in certain contexts, but are not captured by the Big Five models as typically coded. The opposite orientations of the trait-pairs are never truly opposite.
• Most importantly: a reiteration of the present study without forced choice, allowing respondents to choose either or both categories of offense. A key focus: dissecting the gaps (mismatches) where offensive is assumed generally without being felt personally. (In those cases, boundaries may even be malleable in the

face of the very data research like this can provide). The current project has demonstrated that high levels of offense may impact funniness, especially among sensitive groups, as may high levels of general incomprehension among those who do understand. The data points to the salience of the individual (micro) and diffuse social (macro), and the relative weakness of the meso, in constructing symbolic boundaries. Perhaps most conclusively, the data identifies the extreme relevance of personal sensitivity to abstract sensitivity – a connection between the discomfort in revealing some facet of personal identity and the heightened overall sensitivity of the group marked with that label.

All in all, this makes a case for rebranding the contemporary discussions of intersectionality as "interactionality". This would marry the meanings in quantitative and qualitative and theoretical work; interaction not only because not only because these are identities that are meaningful in conversation with other people, but because they are components of identity that are — as a statistician would have it — predictive in different degrees when combined or alone. (It's only when two roads meet and a course is changed that an intersection matters at all.) This implies, as per the statistical definition, that if the effects of that interaction are not significant, then it is not an intersection that matters. And it implies, by that token: not all intersections matter equally — and mixed methodological rigor is necessary to argue for their significance.

The empirical and theoretical tools developed here are offered as an example of the interactional approach, applicable across fields of inquiry, in which an attempt is made to prioritize what is meaningful. To investigate the offensive is to take something felt subconsciously, but named consciously. That makes it a perfect access point for work on the collective (UN) conscious. There is a connection between the emotional and the rational — and by extension both emotional and rational participation in social life — that we can access just by exploring visceral reactions to a preoccupied superhero, or a suicidal snowman.

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Appendix A: Cartoons

Displayed as shown to participants (slightly smaller), signatures removed. Offensive and funniness statistics listed below: funniness index (FI); % found funny if understood (FF); understood (U); offensive personally (OP); offensive generally (OG); offensive total (OT).

1. 2011 — *Drew Dernavich*
FI: 1.442 / **FA**: 49.22% / **U:** 88.75
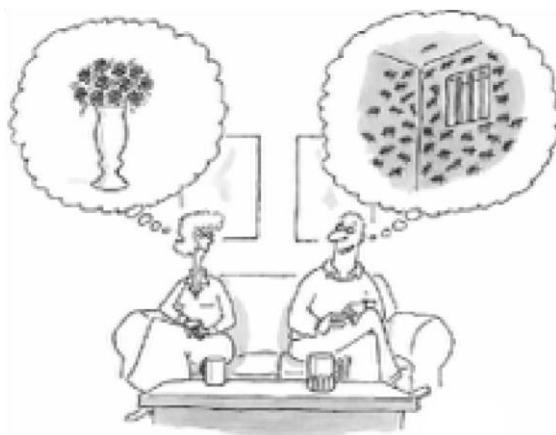**OP**: 7.60% / **OG**: 8.77% / **OT**: 16.37%

2. 2015 — *Shannon Wheeler*
FI: 1.721 / **FA**: 65.27% / **U:** 93.17
OP: 7.06% / **OG**: 12.35% / **OT**: 19.41%

3. 2010 — *Gahan Wilson*
FI: 1.624 / **FA**: 59.84% / **U:** 85.73
OP: 5.45% / **OG**: 5.95% / **OT**: 11.40%

4. 1940 — *Charles Addams*
FI: 1.841 / **FA**: 65.20% / **U:** 88.24%
OP: 5.39% / **OG**: 3.53% / **OT**: 8.92%

5. 2004 — *Jack Ziegler*
FI: 1.667 / **FA**: 61.51% / **U:** 83.39%

6. 2016 — *Tom Toro*
FI: 1.773 / **FA**: 61.78% / **U:** 82.61%
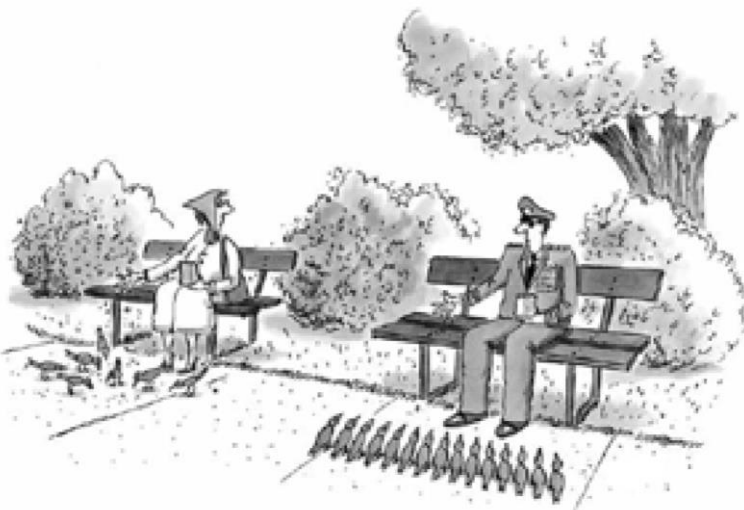
OP: 11.00% / OG: 13.07% / OT: 24.07%

OP: 4.92% / OG: 5.45% / OT: 10.37%

7. 2010 — *Christopher Weyant*
FI: 1.464 / FA: 51.58% / U: 76.47%

8. [ ] — *Ali Farzat*
FI: 1.608 / FA: 52.55% / U: 89.88%

OP: 8.37% / OG: 29.19% / OT: 37.56%

OP: 7.80% / OG: 20.21% / OT: 28.01%

9. 2005 — *Tom Cheney*
FI: 1.994 / FA: 71.7% / U: 92.30%

10. 2004 — *Harry Bliss*
FI: 1.706 / FA: 61.54% / U: 89.97%

OP: 5.62% / **OG**: 8.06% / **OT**: 13.68%

11. 2005 — *Pat Byrnes*
FI: 2.218 / **FA**: 80.59% / **U:** 97.15%
OP: 6.41% / **OG**: 15.05% / **OT**: 21.46%

12. 2005 — *Alex Gregory*
FI: 1.745 / **FA**: 63.25% / **U:** 94.64%
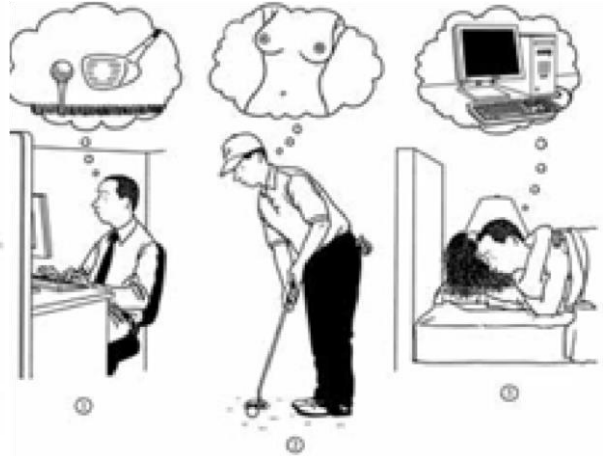**OP**: 12.16% / **OG**: 32.36% / **OT**: 44.52%

13. [

] — *Ali Farzat*
FI: 1.488 / **FA**: 49.12% / **U:** 83.82%
OP: 5.99% / **OG**: 7.33% / **OT**: 13.31%

OP: 5.19% / **OG**: 4.62% / **OT**: 9.81%
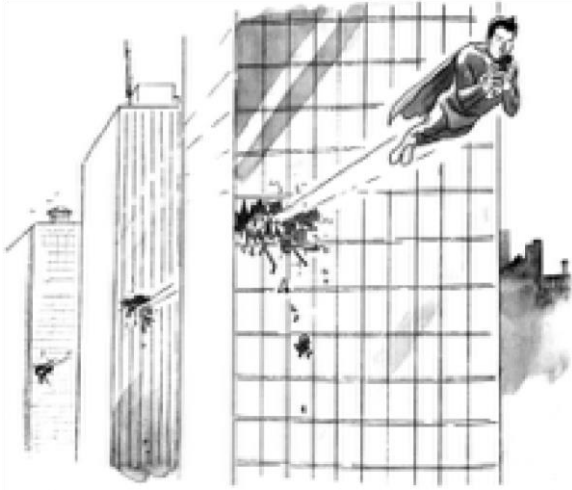

14. [ ] — *Ali Farzat*
FI: 0.839 / **FA**: 27.19% / **U:** 82.09%
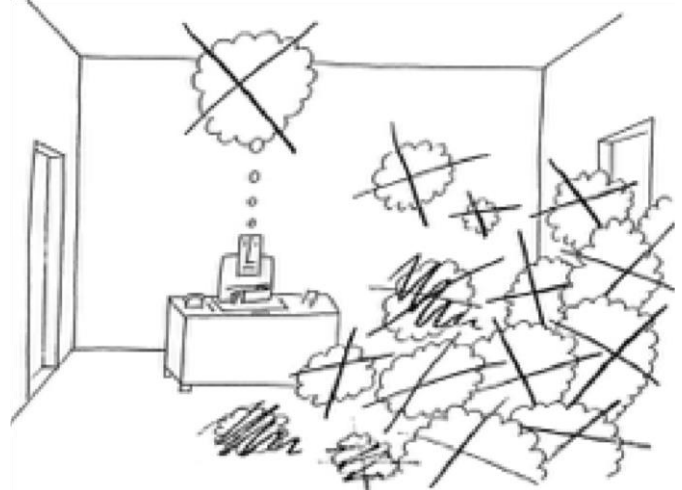**OP**: 15.60% / **OG**: 41.41% / **OT**: 57.01%

17. 2016 — *Liam Walsh*
FI: 2.004 / **FA**: 73.04% / **U**: 94.98%
OP: 5.10% / **OG**: 12.20% / **OT**: 17.30%

18. 1969 — *Saul Steinberg*
FI: 1.434 / **FA**: 48.1% / **U:** 68.17%
OP: 8.38% / **OG**: 6.22% / **OT**: 14.59%
OP: 17.55% / **OG**: 51.08% / **OT**: 68.63%

19. 2014 — Edward Steed
FI: 1.853 / **FA**: 69.77% / **U:** 82.70%
OP: 7.32% / **OG**: 5.13% / **OT**: 12.45%

20. 1998 — Jack Ziegler
FI: 1.051 / **FA**: 36.28% / **U:** 92.99%
OP: 12.09% / **OG**: 51.44% / **OT**: 63.53%

21. 2005 — *Tom Cheney*
FI: 1.728 / **FA** 62.39% / **U:** 82.35%
OP: 7.35% / **OG**: 8.93% / **OT**: 16.28 %

22. [ ] — *Ali Farzat*
FI: 1.563 / **FA**: 53.24% / **U:** 68.08%
OP: 7.12% / **OG**: 6.48% / **OT**: 13.60%

OFFENSE INDICES (N=1155): <mark>General significance</mark> | <mark>Personal significance</mark> | <mark>Joint significance</mark>

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

	TOTAL	PERSONAL	GENERAL	Notes
<24	-0.362	-0.038	-0.325	
35-44	-0.726	-0.070	-0.656	
45-54	-5.251*	-0.724	-4.527**	Exclusively general. Age says nothing about personal sensitivity.
55-64	-5.974*	-1.316	-4.659*	
65+	-13.89***	-3.318	-10.57***	
Non-Female	-6.443***	-2.544*	-3.899***	Both, tilting general.
<0.1	4.188	0.947	3.241	
0.1 - 0.5	0.504	-1.403	1.906	
>1.5	0.940	0.545	0.395	
Missing	2.442	0.684	1.758	
Employed	6.499**	3.647*	2.851+	Both, tilting personal. Employment has a wide-ranging effect
Self/Student/Home	3.066	0.495	2.572	
support_none	-3.931*	-1.360	-2.572*	Exclusively general.
support_emp-	9.011**	4.229*	4.781*	Nearly even split. Pension funds offer personal space but require outward-looking awareness.
support_govt	10.30***	5.660***	4.636**	Nearly even split: as above.
support_family	5.566**	4.117**	1.449	Exclusively personal. Family money is far more localized than above sources; sensitivity is correspondingly local
support_inher-	7.400*	5.713*	1.686	Exclusively personal. As above.
support_spouse	0.072	-0.419	0.491	
support_saving	-3.212+	-1.960	-1.252	
support_other	-0.039	-0.016	-0.024	
Canada	-5.164	-2.305	-2.859	
India	**-	6.083***	0.012	Exclusively personal. Entirety of the nationality sensitivity gap 6.071 located at the individual level.
Other	0.366	1.312	-0.946	

	TOTAL	PERSONAL	GENERAL	Notes
Mixed Ethnicity	-1.301	1.534	-2.835	
Non-Majority Ethnicity	3.982*	1.255	2.727*	Exclusively general. Ethnicity is a "macro" identity; self-society dialectic influences sensitivity at that level.
dualcitizen	5.953**	5.088***	0.865	Exclusively personal. Even though determined to be more relevant than language, this may contain factors related to language (i.e. more personal factors). Perhaps the national identity is more concrete and thus more conscious, influencing personal sensitivity. Or, see "Engaged" below.

	TOTAL	PERSONAL	GENERAL	Notes
Relocate: city	-0.950	-0.426	-0.525	
Relocate: country	0.512	-1.699	2.212	
Engaged	-4.850	*-4.905*+	0.056	** Not significant by total, but entirely personal (minimal) significance here. Desensitized to personal offense by (new) outward connection. Potentially opposite to dual-citizenry; whereby a person is never fully rooted in (both) homes at once.*
In a new relationship	5.770+	-1.790	7.560***	All significance: *general.* New, meaningful interaction —> outward-facing sensitivity. Even more significant than total, as if ceding self-reflective bandwidth to general concerns.
Old relationship	1.132	0.944	0.188	
Not sure	-2.657	-1.683	-0.974	
Single	0.859	-0.083	0.942	
Bisexual	0.712	-0.791	1.503	
Gay	11.34***	10.31***	1.035	Exclusively personal.
Lesbian	14.87***	13.91***	0.957	Exclusively personal: as above.
No answer	8.243*	4.373*	3.870+	Both: unlike others in this category, perhaps because the extreme discomfort increases outward-facing-ness.
Other	-2.476	-0.378	-2.098	
Left	-0.692	-0.656	-0.036	
Right	6.268***	2.771**	3.497**	Nearly even split. Political offense may reflect sensitivity in multiple directions.
Didn't Answer	3.588	-7.475	11.06*	Massive sensitivity uptick among those too uncomfortable to disclose political preferences.
extraversion	0.388	*0.291*+	0.097	** Not significant by total, but displays of personal offense might be considered extraverted expressions. Relation of self and social performance (think: Milo).*
agreeableness	-0.089	-0.234	0.145	

conscientious-	-1.183***	-1.051***	-0.133	Only personal. As expected, conscientious are not less sensitive generally, but take less personal offense. Also forecasted: psychological ("micro") differences manifest at the micro level.
emo_stability	-0.205	0.062	-0.267	
openness	-1.317***	-0.841***	-0.476*	Both, tilting personal: openness (aka "culture") might reduce personal sensitivity while also offering alternative "general" understandings of taboo
funny_level=2	-4.013*	1.168	-5.181***	Exclusively general. Humor in this context reflects only general attitudes.
funny_level=3	-5.651*	1.085	-6.736***	As above.
Constant	53.59***	23.03***	30.56***	
R2	0.325	0.327	0.161	Model captures much more variance (double) at the level of "personal" offense. Survey variables reflect that; more information about life course and cultural exposure needed to examine offense projected/assumed beyond the personal.
Adjusted R2	0.296	0.298	0.125	