

# Juridical and Psychological Research of Abusiveness in Political Cartoons and Collages

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## Abstract

The article presents the results of the experimental research of abusiveness in political cartoons and collages published in the world press. The author has determined criteria for evaluating the degree of abusiveness of pictures that can become a basis for a forensic psychological expert opinion on cases of personal insults. It has been found that the criteria of evaluation of abusiveness in political cartoons and collages depicting female politicians are different from the ones depicting male politicians. It has also been determined that in public opinion the higher social status of the insulted person, the more elements of pictures can be considered to be insulting.

**Index terms**— forensic, psychological, expert opinion, insult, cartoon, collage, politics, social status, gender.

## 1 I.

Research Topicality juridical psychologists believe that a reason for committing a crime against an individual rather often can be an insult. According to the opinion of G.S. Volonty (1986), every sixth crime in everyday life is caused by insult. The American researcher David Luckenbill (1977) found out that, as a rule, conflicts ended with a murder had begun with an insult of the future criminal by the victim. Kenneth Polk (1994) came to a similar conclusion. The fact that a person is ready to defend his dignity even in a criminal way proves once more the importance of research devoted to the influence of insults on the human personality.

The number of insulting methods and tricks have begun to increase in the last decades. Therefore, the topicality of psychological research devoted to the influence of different methods of insult on a person's self-respect is becoming more important.

A. N. Baranov (2007) has reason to suppose that the evaluation of abusiveness degree of non-verbal texts (including cartoons and collages) ought to be the subject of juridical psychological expert opinion. However, it can't be carried out without a preliminary psychological analysis, without answering the question about the peculiar ways of different people's reaction to insulting pictures. Some psychologists suppose that most often the most painful sufferings of the insulted victim are caused by the indecency of a picture (Austin, Joseph, 1996). However, since the criteria of decency change with the development of the society, one of the objectives of the present research has become the determination of pictures and their elements which in the consciousness of modern people in particular are considered to be the most insulting ones from the social point of view.

The topicality of psychological research of the abusiveness in cartoons and collages in Russia can be explained by the fact that comparatively recently (starting approximately since 1990) in the Russian press one could often see caricatures of famous people: officials, politicians and others, which are insulting in their form and content.

Considering the history of the matter we can conventionally single out some stages in the development of insulting graphic means used in the Russian official press of the XX-XXI centuries. since 1998) on a regular basis.

Thus, there had been no formal grounds in Russia until almost 1998 to charge somebody with a personal insult in case of insulting by means of political cartoons or collages.

When it became possible to take legal actions to have honor and dignity protected in connection with an insult by means of a cartoon or a collage, it was necessary for Russian court practice to have a criterion of evaluating abusiveness in cartoons and collages.

M.S. Andrianov (2005) points out that a modern legal psychological expert has to use subjective criteria if he has no objective criteria of evaluating the degree of abusiveness in cartoons and collages. It often results in the fact that psychological experts cannot convincingly prove the abusiveness of any given element of the picture.

There have not so far been any research studies devoted to the following: what kind of cartoons, collages and their elements are insulting, what is the degree of their abusiveness for the honor and dignity of different sorts of personalities, what can be considered as an indecent form of insulting, etc. The present psychological research is devoted to the settlement of these and other problems.

As some special terms will be used in the article, it is appropriate to give their definitions and to explain their meaning.

CARTOON is a picture in which a comic effect is created by the unity of some real and imagined facts, hyperbolizing and underlining some peculiar features, unexpected comparison and likening; it is the main pictorial form of satire.

CARICATURE is a humorous picture (usually a portrait) in which a person's peculiar features are emphasized and changed in a funny way though the resemblance is observable.

COLLAGE is a picture drawn by means of combining some fragments of different pictures; it is a sort of creative art work.

The definitions show that cartoons and collages are a kind of creative art work. Therefore, very often when an artist or mass media that publishes the insulting cartoon or collage is called to account, they refer to the freedom of their creative work as an argument in their favor. However, the psychological research studies have proved that while perceiving an art picture, a person not only has some aesthetic feelings but he also 'realizes' the author's point of view on the depicted event or person. He also realizes an insulting emphasis that is placed by the author of the cartoon or collage (Anikina, 2013). It is clear that if the picture is aimed at insulting some personality, the depicted person has a feeling of insult, and not aesthetic feelings. The legal argument against using cartoons and collages with the purpose of insulting a personality is meaningful too. There is a general principle in the law: the freedom of one person (including his freedom of creating art works) comes to an end where the freedom of another person begins.

### 2 a) Research Objectives

? Evaluation of possible degrees of abusiveness in political cartoons and collages and determination of criteria to divide pictures into these degrees.

? Determination of gender aspects of perceiving political cartoons and collages.

? Determination of the dependence of perceiving the abusiveness of a picture from the hierarchic status of the insulted person.

### 3 b) Reasoning for the Research Methods

The Method of Expert Opinion was chosen as the main method. It has been used in psychology for a long time. The additional method, used in this research, was a psychological experiment. The necessity to carry out an experiment can be explained by the peculiarities of the research material. The pilot research has proved that when the participants were to evaluate the degree of the picture abusiveness for the person depicted in the cartoon or collage, they rather often assessed not abusiveness of the form of some concrete picture but also the moral qualities of the person who became the object of the cartoon or collage. For example, if the participant didn't like some politician, the expert all the same found it less insulting even if his picture contained some elements of indecency. To avoid the similar mistakes in perception, the participants were asked either to play the role of the depicted man's solicitors or to imagine themselves in the place of his relatives or friends, or the insulted person, i.e. an element of role play was used. The results after the introduction of the experimental form became much more well-grounded.

### 4 c) Research Hypotheses

it is possible to single out some special elements of pictures that can make a political cartoon or collage insulting in a way;

there are gender differences in perceiving female and male political cartoons and collages based on social stereotypes.

### 5 d) Description of the Research Methods

Description of the Participants. There were 120 participants in the research, 40 people of them taking part in the first series, the rest of them were used in the second and the third ones. Age: 52 people were 20-25 years old, 36 people were 26-40, 32 people were 41-55. Sex: 74 women, 46 men. Social status: 52 students, 16 workers, 5 businessmen, 47 representatives of the intelligentsia, executives of different ranks, 4 people of whom became the objects of the cartoons in mass media themselves.

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Research Material: 210 political cartoons and collages. All cartoons and collages were published in the world press.

Research Methods: the Method of Expert Opinion and Experiment.

The statistical processing of the material was realized with the usage of the nonparametric Binominal Test. Experiment Stages: the experiment was carried out in 3 parts. Part 1 was conventionally called 'the Kukryniksy' 1 i. Instruction for the Participants . The Research Tasks of Part 1: 1) to single out the elements of pictures which make them insulting; 2) to arrange the elements of cartoons and collages due to the degree of their abusiveness.

While doing the research tasks of this part, the initial premise was the culturological data about the fact that in the former USSR the usage of purposeful insults in official papers was considered legal only for political purposes towards the enemies of the Motherland, traitors and state criminals. It helped to choose the experimental material. The participants were offered to assess two groups of pictures. The first group consisted of the political cartoons drawn by the Kukryniksy from the series "The Enemy's Face" and "The Enemies of the World". All these pictures were created purposely to insult somebody. Therefore the material of this series became as if ideal in the process of assessment of modern cartoons. The authors of modern cartoons and collages can deny the accusation of a purposeful insult by means of the picture created by them. However, the usage of some insulting elements of pictures typical of this culture can serve as an acknowledgment of the fact that the purpose was to humiliate the honor and dignity of the depicted person. There were 46 cartoons in this group. (A part of the research of this series was held by Y. Semenova under our guidance.) "What elements of cartoons are insulting for a person who became the object of the cartoon (collage)? Arrange (divide into groups) the cartoons and collages according to the degree of abusiveness of their elements." After this work had been done, the participants were given an additional instruction but it happened only when the assessment of some certain pictures was vividly subjective: "Imagine that you have become a solicitor of the person depicted in the cartoon (collage) or you are his relative. How can you evaluate the degree of abusiveness in the cartoon now from these points of view?" Part 2 was conventionally called "Male Cartoons and Collages". It was necessary to analyze the cartoons and collages where the main characters were male politicians.

Research Tasks: 1) to determine the peculiarities of the modern language of insults by means of cartoons and collages; 2) to compare modern cartoons according to the degrees of abusiveness with the ideal criteria determined in Part 1; 3) to study the fact how the prototypes of cartoons assess them.

ii. Instruction for the Participants The people arranged the elements of modern political cartoons and collages according to the degree of abusiveness: "Will you please determine what elements of these pictures may make the person who became the object of the picture have equally strong emotions?" Besides that the participant was to include each of the cartoons (collages) into one of the groups, singled out in Part I. 2) The second part of the instruction was only given to the participants who became the objects of cartoons themselves: "What elements of the cartoons where you are depicted do you dislike more and what ones less?" Material: the people were shown all the cartoons of Part I divided into the corresponding groups according to the degree of abusiveness and 150 modern political cartoons and collages, the main characters of which were men. Part 3 was conventionally called "Female Cartoons and Collages". It was necessary to study the gender aspect of perceiving cartoons and collages. The participants were shown cartoons and collages in which the main characters were female politicians. Research Task: to find out if there is a difference in the perception of female cartoons by men and women. Instruction for the Participants: the same as in Part I. Material: 14 cartoons and collages where the main characters were female politicians.

## 7 II.

## 8 Results and Discussion

Results of Part I. All elements of the cartoons with a touch of abusiveness were distributed by the most participants into 4 groups (see Table 1).

Year 2015 ( F ) Thus, 95% of the participants considered that the most insulting pictures were those where a certain person is shown as a sadist, a donkey, etc. (e.g. see Fig. 3). Rather insulting images were those where an image of a criminal was used (e.g. a thief) and the authors depicted some negative traits of character allegorically (greed, vanity, etc.) (75% of the participants).

The pictures where an emphasis was made on less attractive individual features of appearance of the insulted person were considered less insulting (e.g. brows, bald patch, etc.) (70% of the participants). As to the fourth group of elements, many participants (25%) did not find them insulting, the rest of the participants (75%) supposed that under these conditions only people with certain individual peculiarities, e.g. those of character, temper, breeding, etc. could consider themselves insulted.

The data received concerning the fourth group of elements are confirmed indirectly by our previous research (Budyakova, 2001). It has shown that there is a special group of verbal insults, which are realized very specifically by a person who is the object of them. For example, when a person is ironically called some lofty names and he has ambivalent feelings: on the one hand, he should take offence at the irony, and on the other hand, he is

compared with the acknowledged positive figures, for example, Cicero, Napoleon and the like. The quasi-victim is proud of the fact that he is placed in the same row with the similar people.

The elements placed into the fourth group in this series are of an ambivalent character. Thus, a picture of a tiger is a positive image of the zoomorphic character. In culturology this is a symbol of courage, strength, dexterity, etc. a touch of irony that can be seen in one of the caricatures (a lean mangy tiger) almost does not make it insulting.

## 9 Results of Part 2 "Male Cartoons and Collages"

Table 2 shows how the elements of modern political cartoons and collages are distributed according to the degree of abusiveness. To the first group (the most insulting elements) besides those ones that have already been determined in Part I, the participants added some more obvious elements of obscenity present in modern political cartoons, depiction of private elements of life (e.g. functions of a human body), comparison with some odious people (Hitler, Himmler), etc. (98% of the participants) (see Fig. ??). The second- Year 2015 ( F ) a)

group (rather insulting elements) contains zoomorphic images of a snake, allegoric images of a buffoon, a gofer, a Fascist, a whore, etc. (79% of the participants). Less insulting elements were considered images of a person's head in the shape of a scalp, a beer mug, a branded sole, zoomorphic images of a monkey, a peacock, a crow, etc. (74% of the participants).

The fourth group contains the elements of an ambivalent character, for example, a person is depicted as a positive image: a lion but it is ill and weak, etc. (see Fig. 6). The results of Part I and Part 2 let us make a conclusion that the number of insulting elements of pictures is not relatively big. It changes in the course of time (though not principally), when the social and political situation changes. Thus, an image of a snake was considered positive at the time of the Russian Emperor Peter I, as it was a symbol of wisdom and immortality. A picture of a snake was stamped on the memorial medal issued on the occasion of Peter's death. At present a visual image of a snake is an analog of the word "bastard", i.e. it has a negative meaning. Insults of the religious content typical of the past have practically disappeared from our everyday speech except comparing with Judas. A range of insulting elements has been enriched due to consideration of some historic personalities or literary characters as odious figures or vice versa. For example, Hitler and Himmler in the cartoons drawn by the Kukryniksy were ??Year 2015

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the objects of insult, it was proved in Part 1 of the present research, but at present the usage of these images in pictures is a way of humiliating the honor and dignity of other people. On the contrary, in modern Mongolia, for example, Mamay and Batu Khan are considered to be national heroes, though quite recently they were regarded as negative historic personalities in the USSR.

People with a different political orientation assess the same picture in a different way and this phenomenon of variable polarity has been revealed vividly in Part 2. In particular, neither of the participants considered it insulting for the leader of the Russian Communist Party G.A. Zyuganov the collage where he was drawn in the image of Lenin though the caption under it said about the author's intention to humiliate him. Apparently there is a factor of subjectivity in the process of forming negative personal figures (e.g. an image of an enemy) that was determined in Holsti's research (Holsti, 1972).

While studying the results of Part 2 it was noted that the main tendency in modern caricature art is the intensification of an emphasis on forbidden intimate sides of a human life which it was obscene to reveal even in cartoons of the enemies before. Some interesting data in Part 2 were found in the process of interviewing the participants who became the caricature objects themselves. In general, their evaluation of their own cartoons approximately coincided with those that were given by other participants. However, there was an essential difference. First of all, these people evaluated not the caricature content but the fact how much attractive their appearance is represented in them. It is amazing that none of the other participants paid attention to this detail. Besides it proves the research results of American psychologists, according to which the factor of attractive appearance is important for both women and men (Aronson, 1995). Results of Part 3 "Female Cartoons and Collages", represented in Tables 3 and 4, allow us to reveal the peculiarities in the evaluation of abusiveness of the cartoon elements concerning female politicians determined by both men and women. While analyzing the pictures they both considered the most insulting elements those in which the only method of abusiveness was depicting a woman in an image of a pig or a monkey. This comparison aroused the associations that the depicted female politician is dirty, untidy, she smells bad, etc. It did not correspond with the cultural standards in perceiving a woman and aroused sharp indignation.

Table ?? : Arrangement of political cartoons and collages elements according to the degree of their abusiveness made by the male participants (based on the material of Part 3 "Female Cartoons and Collages")

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## 11 Group of pictures arranged according to the degree of abusiveness

Approximate alphabet of insulting elements in pictures determined by the male participants. A number of the participants who included the picture into this group (%) According to the psychological literature women are more sensitive to mockery than men ??Radomska, Tomczak, 2010). However, our research has determined more differentiated criteria for women's perception of insults comparing with men. The main difference in the process of analyzing pictures by the participants of different sex was the fact that the main indicator of abusiveness of the picture for women was an insult to their appearance. All cartoons where a woman is drawn ugly were placed in the group of the most insulting ones. Those pictures where a woman looks attractive were evaluated as rather insulting. For example, images of a madwoman and a scarecrow were considered rather insulting concerning a motive because it was "a beautiful mad woman" and "a very nice scarecrow". While evaluating these pictures the men chose a different criterion: a correspondence of an image with the social stereotypes -a picture of an angry and irritated woman is bad not because her face becomes ugly but because she should be kind. The same concerns an image of a madwoman: it is insulting because a woman should be balanced.

The research has revealed some other differences in the perception of female political cartoons and collages. Thus, an image of a housewife was not considered insulting by the men. However, the women placed it in the group of less insulting pictures. It corresponds with the social stereotypes described in different research studies. From the point of view of the tested women the fact that the female politicians who became cartoon objects pointed to their traditional place in the family and social life was an insult but it was considered not very offensive due to the social conditions. However, both groups of the participants found the collage image of Margaret Thatcher ambivalent concerning abusiveness because she was compared with the British national hero Horatio Nelson. The emphasis on the corporal defect of Admiral Nelson was subjectively perceived as a special respect to him. This respect was transferred to the person who was compared with Nelson.

The research has also proved that a female obscene image is perceived not only as the most serious but also as an intolerable insult. Cartoons and collages of female politicians containing some obscene elements were considered practically by all the participants the most insulting ones and some participants even refused to work with these pictures because of the ethical reasons.

## 12 III.

## 13 Conclusions

? All elements of the cartoons were divided into four groups according to the degree of abusiveness which we have called: a) the most insulting picture elements, b) rather insulting ones, c) less insulting ones, d) ambivalent ones in abusiveness. The most insulting elements were considered all images of obscene content and also those ones where the authors compared people with some odious personalities: Judas, Hitler, etc. The rather insulting images were considered those of transvestites, criminals, etc. The less insulting images were caricatures and collages where an emphasis was on some defects of appearance or on age, problems with health, etc. Ambivalent were determined those picture elements which usually are not considered by a person as insulting, but in a number of cases they are regarded as a peculiar compliment. For instance, comparing them with some famous historic personalities (Admiral Nelson, Napoleon and others), positive characters of folk epic literature (matreshka, a bear, Frog-Princess, etc.).

? We have determined the difference in the criteria of evaluation of male and female political cartoons. For female politicians the most insulting images were considered those ones where they are drawn either in obscenity or they are looking ugly. A male character in the same way was not regarded as the most insulting picture. Besides drawing a woman in the image of a monkey or a pig turned out to be the most serious insult for a woman but it wasn't very important for a man on average.

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? The images which were considered by the experts the most insulting ones can be regarded not only obscene concerning the form but also created with the purpose of insulting the depicted person. ? Male politicians may be seriously affected because they are drawn ugly but social principles forbid a man to suffer because of his unattractive appearance. As a result of it, caricaturists drawing a male politician do not feel confused because when a man says that he considers himself insulted in this respect it does his political authority harm. Besides when a certain insulted person has his subjective sufferings, it makes interpersonal relations with the person who was allowed to publish the ugly picture strained and unconstructive.

Captions under the Pictures

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<sup>2</sup>The Kukryniksy is the pseudonym of the creative group of the authors who drew a number of famous political cartoons: M. Kupriyanov, P. Krylov and N. Sokolov. A. Hitler included the Kukryniksy in the list of the enemies of the Third Reich.

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Figure 1: Stage 1 :



Figure 2: Fig. 1



Figure 3: Fig. 1 :



Figure 4: Fig. 2 :



Figure 5: Fig. 3



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Figure 6: Fig. 3 :



Figure 7: Fig. 4 :Fig. 5 Fig. 5 :



Figure 8: Fig. 6 :

Group of pictures	Approximate alphabet of insulting elements in pictures (Part I "The Kukryniksy")	A number of the participants who included the picture into this group (%)	Difference from the uniform distribution (χ <sup>2</sup> )
arranged according to the degree of abusiveness		95	3.35
Group 1 -the most insulting elements of cartoons	-obscene elements; -negative allegoric images: Judas, executioner; -zoomorphic images: a jackal, a pig, a donkey; -a criminal image: a murderer; -an image of a transvestite; -an image of a sadist (elements of violence: blood, an axe, a gibbet)		p<0.05
Group 2 -rather insulting elements of cartoons	-an emphasis on physical defects (short height, figure parameters); -zoomorphic images: a rat; -an allegoric image of negative traits of character -greed, vanity; -an image of a criminal: a thief	75	0.178
Group 3 -less insulting elements of cartoons	-an emphasis on peculiar features of a certain person (moustache, brows, features, bald patch); -an emphasis on an old age; -a person's head in the shape of an object (a pot, a purse); -an image of negative emotions (malice, aggression)	70	0.97
Group 4 -less significant (ambivalent) elements of cartoons	-positive zoomorphic images but with insulting elements, e.g. a tiger but mangy and lean; -positive images but with a touch of irony: a great martyr, an emperor, etc.	75	0.178
			p<0.05

Group of pictures	Approximate alphabet of	A number of the participants who included the picture into this group (%)	Difference from the uniform distribution (p 2 )
arranged according to the degree of abusiveness	insulting elements in pictures (Part 2 "Male Caricatures and Collages")	94	7.83
Group I -the most insulting elements of cartoons	-more obvious elements of obscenity -an emphasis on intimate elements of life (e.g. functions of a human body as an element of a caricature); -insulting images: Hitler, Himmler		p<0.05
Group -rather insulting elements of cartoons	2 -an image of a criminal: a swindler, a perpetrator of war crimes, a traitor; -an image of a drunkard or a drinker; -zoomorphic images: a snake; -allegoric images: a buffoon, a gofer, a Fascist, a whore; -negative traits of character: dissipation; -an image of a transvestite (except caricatures of I. Stalin)	82	1.87
Group 3 -less insulting elements of cartoons	-an emphasis on peculiar features of a certain person (a chin, freckles ); -a person's head in the shape of an object (a beer mug, a scalp, a branded sole); -a person in the shape of an object: a fir tree, a snowman; -zoomorphic images: a monkey, a peacock, a crow	76	0.42
Group 4 -less significant	-positive zoomorphic images but	30	23.26

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Group I -the most In- sulting elements of cartoons	-zoomorphic images: a monkey, a pig	84	
Group 2 -rather in- sulting elements of cartoons	-depiction of negative emotions when a person's face is drawn ugly; -a face in the shape of a barely decent sign "a fig"; -a zoomorphic image: a snake; -negative images: images of a madwoman, a scare- crow	76	
Group 3 -less insulting elements of cartoons	-an emphasis on a person's unattractive appearance; -negative traits of character: malice, aggressiveness, etc.	76	
Group 4 -less signifi- cant (ambivalent) elements of cartoons	-zoomorphic images: a frog, a cow;  -positive images but with a touch of irony: Admiral Nelson, a hostess; -unaesthetic poses and gestures (e.g. "to stand with one's hands on one's hips; -an emphasis on age: a grandmother	84	
Group of pictures	Approximate alphabet of insulting elements in pic- tures		A num- ber of the participants who included the pic- ture into this group (%)
arranged according to  the degree of  abusiveness	determined by the female participants		
Group I -the most In- sulting elements of cartoons	-zoomorphic images: a snake, a monkey, a pig;  -negative emotions making a person's face ugly;	92	

Figure 11: Table 4 :



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