"A Punch Straight for the Heart":
Disparaging Political Cartoons and Ethical Guidelines

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Abstract

The field of political cartooning is an important element of editorial commentary in mass media worldwide. The content of cartoons, however, is sometimes disparaging, offensive and hateful toward members of "out groups," whether defined according to race, ethnicity or religious beliefs. As this article illustrates, this disparagement can have serious and unfortunate outcomes – from protest that turns violent – even deadly – to the alienation of those disparaged. This is particularly concerning in an age when media content may be viewed across cultural and national boundaries within moments of its publication. It is important to recognize the absence of cross-cultural sensitivity that often contributes to these situations. This article seeks to identify the ethical dilemmas in disparaging political cartoons by analyzing theoretical perspectives in both humor and ethics. Approaching these dilemmas from a global perspective, the article proposes a multi-point set of ethical guidelines, while also acknowledging the tension between free speech/press and the recommendation that cartoonists, editors and media organizations self-impose standards that, in effect, can limit their freedom. Particularly given that the primary organization promoting the interests of the U.S. political cartoonists – the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists – does not have a code of ethics, it is suggested that the guidelines proposed herein are especially appropriate for consideration. Ultimately, as with any code of ethics, the hope is that this one leads to a product that better respects multiple perspectives worldwide.

Keywords: political cartoons, ethics, disparaging, hate speech, humor

In February 2017, one of many political cartoons appearing in the American press featuring controversial U.S. Education Secretary nominee Betsy DeVos drew a "firestorm of criticism" (Clash, 2017). While many cartoons had depicted her unflatteringly, this one invoked race. The cartoon linked DeVos with civil rights icon Ruby Bridges who, as a six-year-old African American girl in 1960, was escorted by deputy U.S. marshals into an all-white New Orleans school amid barricades and a taunting crowd. The 2017 cartoon, by Glenn McCoy, depicted DeVos in a similar way, dealing with protesters when she attempted to visit a public school just after her confirmation. The image borrowed from a 1963 Norman Rockwell painting, but with "Nigger" replaced by "Conservative" and "NEA" substituting for "KKK" (see Figure 1). McCoy said he was surprised that readers found hate in his image, adding that he was trying to speak against hate. Outrage directed at McCoy and his work flooded social media. He apologized "if anyone was offended" (Clash, 2017). In fact, many people *were* offended.
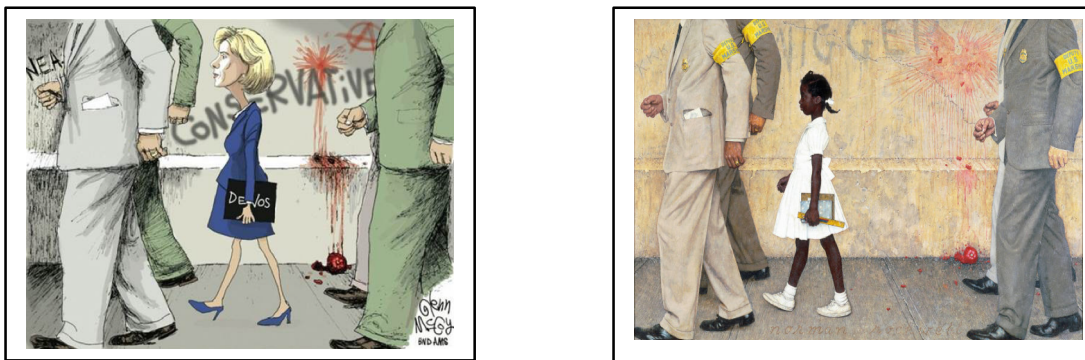

Figure 1. The 2017 political cartoon by Glenn McCoy (left) and the 1963 Rockwell painting of Ruby Bridges.

It is not unusual for political cartoons to upset some readers. There is "little doubt that genuine anguish has been felt by those whose convictions are deeply offended" (Thomas, 1985, pp. 7-8). For many political cartoonists, a primary goal is provocation. According to onetime *Los Angeles Times* editor William Thomas, political cartooning is "a genre that aims the most powerful and unambiguous punch it can muster straight for the heart" (p. 7). He called the work of a political cartoonist who worked for him "about as subtle as a rocket launch. He fully intends to hit as hard as he can" (p. 7). Nonetheless, Thomas said, "no newspaper views the cartoonist's latitude as boundless" (8). Even they, he maintained, must abide by certain guidelines.

Political cartooning has been used as a medium of comic expression since the 17th century. When print media became common and accessible, cartooning became one of the popular arts to comment socially and politically. Cartoons quickly became vehicles for humor, satire and irony. Academic analyses suggest they are jokes told in pictures (Samson & Huber, 2007), something very amusing and light in nature (Ahmed, 2009) and an illustration designed to convey political/social messages (Chiringhelli, 2011). A contemporary newspaper editor suggests that

1

rather than being like editorialists, political cartoonists are analogous to columnists because they include signed bylines with their opinionated work (Gillespie, 2017).

Popular discourses argue that political cartoons receive less attention than other journalistic genres and have been recognized as one of the neglected fields of political communication (Press, 1981; DeSousa & Medhurst, 1982; Speedling 2004). Over recent decades, scholars from different disciplines realized the lack of critical attention paid to political cartoons (Langeveld, 1981; DeSousa, 1984; Edwards, 1997; Koetzle & Brunell, 1996; Tunc, 2002). Though many disciplines – e.g., journalism, history, art, and linguistics – have included political cartoons in various analyses, no single discipline can truly represent this powerful means of communication. Scholars from various disciplines take political cartoons as an expression of humor and satire (DeSousa & Medhurst, 1982; Diamond, 2002; Gombrich, 1971; Speedling 2004). In describing the attributes of quality work, cartoonist Steve Sack includes humor: "The best cartoons are the ones that are simple, smart and funny." But he adds that political cartoons are "not supposed to be funny every day" (Rash, 2013).

Within journalism, scholars argue that the unique nature of wittiness, satire and humor make political cartoons different than other journalistic activities. This explains why ethical boundaries can differ between political cartooning and caricature (Ashfaq & Shami, 2016; Koetzle & Brunell, 1996; Anderson, 1988; Harrison, 1981). According to Koetzle and Brunell (1996), "in the world of the cartoons, there is no scandal too sensitive, no charge too outrageous, and no feature drawn to proportion. Political cartoons are only limited by the amount of lead in their pencils" (p.112). Similarly, political cartoonist Mike Peters added, "Most cartoonists like me – who like to attack – are like loaded guns. Every morning we start looking through the newspaper for a target to blast. That's our function" (Lorden, 2006, p. 145).

Political cartoons are sometimes used as tools of propaganda – "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015, p. 7). Other definitions of propaganda include "harm" to a person, group, movement, institution or nation as another element of propaganda. Using political cartoons as an instrument of propaganda can be traced to the late 19th century (Ashfaq, 2012; Caswell, 2004; Lively, 1942). Global incidents such as massive protests, riots and demonstrations led researchers from different disciplines to realize the importance and powerful impact of these cartoons. This prompted several research studies on the coverage of cartoon controversies and the reactions of people across the world. Critics of cartoons were seen as "cultural relativists," "politically correct elites" and "fundamentalists" if they were Muslims (Rostbøll, 2010, p. 407). Some scholars (Eide, 2008; Saleh, 2008; Danjoux, 2005; and Fisher, 1996) view political cartoons as a medium to invoke literal truth, having a connection with reality. Some cartoonists themselves "feel that literal truth is essential for integrity" (Lordan, 2006, p. 113). Other cartoonists argue that their medium – being visual rather than text-based – allows a creative license that is not limited to factual truth (Lordan, 2006, p. 113).

In analyzing political cartoons, some scholars have noted this juxtaposition between truth and propaganda. Harrison (1981), for example, argued that "cartoonists can manipulate the system unfairly.… They can lie. They can titillate and seduce. They can instigate and intimidate" (p. 2).

It is also true that, as Seymour-Ure (1986) writes, "the comments and insults conveyed in the graphic imagery of a cartoon have a crudity and offensiveness that might well be unacceptable if spelt out in the words" (Buell & Maus, 1988, p. 847). Owning their power of pen and drawings, this article argues, political cartooning is enhanced when cartoonists acknowledge the ethical issues that permeate their medium. Yet there are barriers – e.g., national, religious, cultural – that sometimes impede the necessary understanding.

The 2005 controversy surrounding cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad published by the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* is a case in point. The cartoons were blamed for inciting riots in much of the Muslim world. In the eyes of many Americans, however, "the protests were incomprehensible, a collective temper tantrum" (Solomon, 2013). This disparity in perception illustrates a lack of cross-cultural sensitivity. Solomon suggests the outcry may have reflected less on Islamic culture than on a cartoon culture.

After that controversy, the United Nations arranged an international gathering of political cartoonists to shed light on the power and effects of their trade. The conference's main objective was to discuss the ideas of responsible speech in political cartooning. In the opening ceremony, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "Cartoons can encourage us to look critically at ourselves, and increase our empathy for the sufferings and frustration of others, but they can also do the opposite. They have, in short, a big responsibility" (Burkhart, 2006). While an important analysis, the terrorist attacks on the offices of French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in retaliation for cartoons depicting Muhammad a decade later made clear that issues stemming from political cartooning remained, among them ethical boundaries that may be considered.

These global incidents are among those that serve as key rationales for analyzing the ethics of political cartooning. This article identifies the ethical dilemmas in political cartooning; recognizes the importance and need for responsible speech based on the nature, functions, importance and need of this genre; and proposes a set of guidelines to address these issues. It does so through a perspective that utilizes a variety of views from scholars across the globe. First, the article briefly defines disparaging political cartooning and how it functions in a multicultural society. Second, it explores different theoretical lenses of humor that can be applied while examining the mechanisms involved in sketching disparaging political cartoons, followed by a discussion that they work under the classical model of superiority theory. Third, the article acknowledges the important role that context plays. Fourth, the tension between free expression and responsible speech is explored. It is important to emphasize that this article in no way suggests limiting the freedom of political cartoonists. Next, under the light of different ethical approaches – and in recognizing that the primary organization promoting the interests of U.S. political cartoonists, the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, does not have a code of ethics – this article proposes a set of ethics-based recommendations and concludes that they can help to improve political cartooning across the world by suggesting an approach that embraces cross-cultural respect.

Defining disparaging political cartoons

Disparaging political cartoons are those intended to elicit amusement through the denigration, derogation or belittlement of a given target – for example, individuals, social and religious groups, political ideologies and material possessions (Ferguson & Ford, 2008). This is different from other forms of humor in that it both weakens and reinterprets the target subject (Fine, 1983; Wyer & Collins, 1992; Greenwood & Isbell, 2002).

Within the category of disparaging political cartooning, the racist political cartoon is a distinctive form. According to Solomon (2013), "for every cartoon that champions justice, there is another that panders to racial stereotype and sets out to foment prejudice and furious resentment." This form of cartooning has existed since human self-consciousness developed awareness that some people are different from others. This recognized difference leads to a sense of ethnocentrism, ethnic identity and superiority. The kind of political cartooning that exploits this serves to ridicule and belittle out-groups and to maintain and strengthen a sense of one's identity in some in-groups (Berger, 2012). Lively (1942) described such disparaging cartoons as "propagandist cartoons" (p. 99).

In defining propagandist cartoons, Lively (1942) argued that they do not "maintain the divine detachment of the *raisonneur*. They have a *parti pris* (i.e., a preconceived view) to further by attempting to influence the trend of thought" (p. 100). Similarly, de Saussure (1966) explained that things are "purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system" (p.117). This describes how ethnic, religious and radical groups attain and reinforce their identities and helps to explain how disparaging humor create opposition between in-groups and out-groups.

Theories of humor within disparaging political cartoons

In order to achieve this article's goal of articulating ethics-based recommendations regarding disparaging political cartoons, it is important to first explore different theoretical lenses of humor that can be applied to them. For more than two millennia, there have been three major theories of humor and laughter: superiority, incongruity and relief.

Superiority theory originates with the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. It deals with disparaging humor where amusement and fun are derived from the misfortunes and absurdities of others. As a result, the self is considered as "better off" than it actually is (Keith-Spiegel, 1972; Morreall, 1983; Piddington, 1963; Zillmann, Taylor & Lewis, 1998; Lockyer & Pickering, 2010). Dadlez (2011) stated, "superiority theory joins humor principally with ridicule and the enjoyment of one's own superiority in pinpointing the foibles or weaknesses of another" (p. 2). Bicknell (2007) also explained "there is an element of malice in much humor.… A good deal of our laughter in comedy is directed at misfortune, presented in such a way as to elicit amusement rather than outrage, tears or compassion" (p. 458).

Thomas Hobbes, a founder of modern political philosophy, is considered to be the pioneer of modern superiority theory. He identified humor with the creation of sudden glorification (a heightened sense of self-esteem), and aggressive gratification of the self as superior and the other as inferior (Zillmann et al., 1998). Most disparaging humor is produced under the umbrella of

superiority theory, juxtaposing the superior qualities of the audience in contrast with another group.

Disparaging political cartoons can be grounded mostly in the view that the elements of fun and amusement result from the sudden feeling of superiority or achievement that one feels from the recognition of the misfortunes of others. Aristotle argued, "the distinction between comic and tragedy is that comic represents people as worse as they actually are, whereas tragedy represents people better than they actually are" (Ferguson & Ford, 2008, p. 288). Therefore, fun and laughter can be expressions of malice at the less fortunate. Similarly, Hobbes (1651) added that people feel good about themselves when they see a disparaging comparison of others to them in humorous text. According to Gruner (1997), this kind of amusement involves conflict that creates tension and ends with victory of the winner and defeat of the loser. Under the umbrella of superiority theory, disparaging ethnic and racial political cartoons work on a model whereby humor targets marginalized out-groups. According to Gillota (2013), usually the dominant group within a society remains unseen in the humorous piece.

Why do people derive amusement from disparaging political cartoons? Humorous content allows people to gratify their suppressed or socially sanctioned needs, to justify the bias or aggression felt towards other groups; it strengthens one's superior position; and it heightens and upholds one's social memberships. Such political cartoons act as propaganda.

The second theory of humor explored here, incongruity, deals with the presence of surprise, juxtaposition and the violation of expectations. Humorous situations arise when the outcome is opposite the expected (Gervais & Wilson, 2005). This theory rejects the notion of superiority, basing humor instead on surprising moments within a situation (Cundall, 2007). Recent research, however, indicates limitations of this theory and adds that humor is more about perception and interpretation, rather than the recognition of incongruity (Cohen, 1999; Province, 2000).

Third, relief theory can be retrieved from the work of Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud. This theory suggests that humor is helpful in relieving problematic emotions and sentiments both physiologically and psychologically. In short, it is the release of energy into the nervous system (Lockyer & Pickering, 2009).

Some researchers have noted that these three lenses of humor are not mutually exclusive because they are theoretical frameworks of the same thing (Zamir, 2014; Shaw, 2010; Smuts, 2006; Levinson, 1998). Levinson (1998) argued that superiority theory "seems more concerned with the concomitants or mechanisms of the humorous reaction than with its conceptual core" (p. 564).

Within the context of examining humor, and in order to explore where some ethical limits in political cartooning may lie, it is necessary to examine the interplay between humor and offensiveness. According to Palmer (1987) "excessive contentiousness produces offense instead of humor, [and] excessive politeness produces boredom" (p. 175). While there is no universal agreement on precisely where the line between acceptable and possibly unacceptable offensive humor should be placed, some scholars support attempts to make the distinction. According to Younge (2000), "The idea that we should never draw an ethical line between what is acceptable

5

and what is offensive when it comes to humor is as disingenuous as it is bankrupt" (p. 3). Lockyer and Pickering (2010) added, "if we accept that we should never draw an ethical line between what is acceptable and what is offensive, then we accept that anyone can say anything about other people, however malicious or laden with bigotry, and that they may do so with impunity" (p.16). Many times, the distinction rests on context.

The relevance of context

How political cartoons are perceived is highly dependent on the context and setting in which they are published. What is funny at one time or place may not be at another. The extent of offense in a cartoon also depends on the degree to which it differs from the recipients' expected faith, beliefs and behaviors. Recipients' expectations are predominantly shaped and guided by cultural settings (Lee & Lim, 2008). Understanding the reaction of a political cartoon requires grounding in cultural constructs. Political cartoonist Martin Rowoson supported this argument: "All societies have taboos of tastes. What differs is the willingness of cartoonists to oppose them. Behind the theoretical freedom of the press in Britain, there is the self-censorship of taste, of what is 'sayable' and what is not" (Pollards, 2002). It is the acceptance of that kind of self-imposed restraint that this article advocates.

Before examining the importance of ethical guidelines for disparaging political cartooning, it is important to discuss that within the context of their potential harm, these works may be viewed in two ways. First, the pleasure of humor may not always be malicious. Second, what is malicious to some may be pleasurable to others. Again, whether a certain cartoon is humorous is highly dependent on context and social conventions.

Within the context of racial ideology, political cartoons are neither value-neutral nor separable from the consequences of racism whether they are political, social or economic. Therefore, these cartoons are predominantly used as a vehicle of propaganda for building and reinforcing disparaging stereotypes. This is often meant for the xenophobic construction of others. Lockyer and Pickering (2009) add that racist-based political cartoons are fundamentally dishonest and based on arrogance, lies, deceit and doublespeak for marginalized groups (p. 20). This disparity speaks volumes about power differentials and also highlights which group dominates a society politically, culturally and economically. These cartoons may also depict how power is unequally spread across different social and cultural institutions, why power relates to ideas of social superiority and why certain groups escape attention or become invisible as an ethnic category within the genre of disparaging humor.

The free speech dilemma

Though not directly within the scope of this article, it is necessary to acknowledge the tension between advocating a set of ethical guidelines and free speech. No nation's system of free expression provides absolute protection for speech and press. Even the exceptional approach of the United States that protects speech "more often, more intensely, and more controversially than is true elsewhere" (Abrams, 2017, p. xv) includes limitations. Thus, a set of recommendations that, if voluntarily followed incidentally restricts freedom by establishing modest boundaries, is not unprecedented. Complementing this kind of legal framework are ethical guidelines in media

– for example, those of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ). Though acknowledging that its code is not *enforceable* under the First Amendment, the SPJ nevertheless advocates the *application* of principles to achieve an ethical brand of journalism and enhance credibility. Absent credibility, journalists struggle.

Within the present context of analyzing disparaging political cartoons, the category of hate speech is most germane. The global debate over hate speech and its regulation, even within Western democracies, is longstanding (Gelber, 2002). While U.S. speech doctrine generally protects hate speech (Volokh, 2017) to "a degree that would be unimaginable elsewhere in the world" (Abrams, 2017, p. 14), other nations do not. Waldron (2012) is among those scholars who defend nations that restrict hate speech, calling attention to a dynamic this article spotlights when it comes to some disparaging political cartoons: It is the kind of speech that robs people of their dignity and the "fundamentals of basic reputation that entitle them to be treated as equals in the ordinary operations of society" (p. 3). Hate speech, according to Waldron, damages the fabric of mutual respect on which advanced democracies depend (p. 157).

Political cartoons & systems of ethics

Like other journalists, political cartoonists have professional associations. In the United States, the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists promotes the interests of cartoonists. While its president acknowledges the need for a code of ethics, it has yet to adopt one (Telnaes, 2017). To the extent that there are ethical boundaries in political cartooning, not only are they different from those governing other kinds of journalism, "cartoonists disagree on what these boundaries should be" (Lordan, 2006, p. 113). In determining what boundaries, if any, are applicable to political cartoons, it is helpful to explore various systems of ethics.

The world's oldest system of ethics is "royal command ethics" in which morality is obedient to the ruler. In this system, an authority figure decides what is wrong and right. Biblical religion deals with this kind of ethical system in which God as the ruler, issues commandments. A second ethical system in the ancient world called "virtue ethics" was based on human nature. This approach was inspired by Aristotle and deals with the virtues of human nature that bring happiness. A third system of ethics, called "duty ethics," emerged during the Enlightenment in the 18th century (Ashfaq & Shami, 2016). Also known as Kant's "categorical imperative," it suggests that human beings have an unconditional moral obligation in all circumstances (Lockyer & Pickering, 2009). Within this context, it is immoral to belittle any race in a political cartoon because it promotes racism. A fourth system and the newest, "utilitarianism," was established by Bentham (1789) and emerged in the 19th century from Britain, particularly in the works of Mill (1863). It suggests that right decisions are those most likely to produce the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Of these four ethical approaches, duty ethics and utilitarianism are most useful in discussing the consequences of disparaging political cartooning. Based on these, a social responsibility theory emerges, suggesting that individuals and organizations have responsibilities to perform their duties in ways that result in the betterment of society. Within a social responsibility perspective, the media are free but have certain social obligations (McQuail, 1994). These include an agreed-upon code of ethics and professional standards of truthfulness, objectivity and self-regulation

within established laws and institutions. This approach led some societies to establish press councils, draw professional journalistic codes of ethics and pass anti-monopoly laws (Ravi, 2012).

A code of ethics for political cartooning

In line with the social responsibility theory outlined above, this article proposes a six-point, ethics-based set of recommendations for the creators of disparaging political cartoons. It is emphasized that this set of principles is limited to the extent that, like any code of ethics, it cannot be mandated but rather is made available for consideration with the goal of improving political cartooning across the world.

Minimize harm

Perhaps the most commonly accepted moral principle is minimizing harm and not causing unnecessary suffering (SPJ, 2014). Also known as a duty to care, this is rooted in Kant's categorical imperative where a person must act "in such a way as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of anyone else, always as an end and never merely as a means" (1785, p. 46). Mill (1859) claimed that the only purpose for which power can be exercised over any member of a civilized society is to prevent harm to others. Mill posited that among the items over which such power may be exercised in an effort to avoid harm is speech.

Like columnists and other editorialists, many political cartoonists believe their goal is to persuade. They often do so through provocation and humor. The result, however, can be offensive to groups of people, sometimes to a level that may be emotionally or psychologically harmful. In analyzing the offense resulting from the series of cartoons depicting Mohammed in a Danish newspaper in 2005, Jones (2011) suggests that even those who are outside the group of those who would take offense should be sensitive to the work's potential to evoke such feelings – feelings that he claims are "a negative experience that, other things being equal, it is undesirable that anyone should suffer" (p. 77). The thrust of Jones' analysis is to question whether offensiveness reaches a level of concern that constitutes harm and thus merits sanction. Offensiveness, Jones acknowledges, may be outweighed by competing considerations, "especially in the area of speech and expression" (p.78). Nevertheless, he concludes, that should not suggest that offensive content cannot sometimes be harmful. It can, not only to those who take offense, but also because it may serve as a trigger for violent behavior. While this article does not call for any restriction of content merely because it may offend, harm or lead to violence, it suggests that within the context of an ethical framework to minimize harm, those who are in positions to produce content for consumption by mass audiences should be cognizant of the power they wield. That power includes the ability to offend and harm.

The reinforcement of negative ethnic and racial stereotypes in political cartoons is another harm that sometimes surfaces. Lockyer and Pickering (2009) note that in ethnic and racial cartoons, "Jews, Blacks, Pakistanis are depicted as greedy, oversexed and lazy" (p. 74). Such cartoons can promote racism. Similarly, when it comes to gender, some cartoons depict women as manipulative, stupid, indecisive, and irresponsible with money (Lockyer & Pickering, 2009).

Thus, as noted above with regard to hate speech, the harm in certain disparaging cartoons is their ability to rob large groups of individuals of their dignity.

Demonstrate cultural awareness

Harm can also be minimized through an understanding of cross-cultural differences. Because humor is often perceived differently across cultures, possessing cultural awareness at both local and global levels is an important asset for political cartoonists. According to Lee (1994), humor is a challenging form of communication across multicultural societies. Material intended to be humorous, but that creates offense, often stems from a lack of cross-cultural knowledge. Andrew (2010, p. 25) notes that cultural preferences determine what methods are conducive to laughter and which are appreciated and appropriate. Conversely, therefore, those same cultural preferences also determine what kind of content is inappropriate.

According to Lockyer and Pickering (2009), political cartoons are social and cultural products. What makes a political cartoon funny and satirical is highly dependent upon local and global cultural values, beliefs, attitudes and perspectives. One of the possible reasons that disparagement occurs in political cartoons is the misunderstanding of cultural settings. For instance, a political cartoon by Bill Garner published in the *Washington Times* on May 5, 2005 (see Figure 2) led to nationwide protests in Pakistan. The cartoon depicted Pakistan as a dog that is assisting the American military in the war against terrorism during the regime of Pervez Musharraf. The cartoon was published after the May 2, 2005 arrest of Abu Faraj al-Libi, an alleged senior Al-Qaeda member. In the cartoon, a U.S. solider praises the dog after finding Abu Faraj al-Libi. The problem stems from "dog" being an abusive word and a derogatory symbol in Pakistani culture. Pakistanis believed that the cartoon insulted them. Garner described the situation as an "unfortunate cultural misunderstanding" (Hasan, 2005). He argued, "It's a cultural gap, a cultural misunderstanding that caused the uproar" ("Dogged by a cartoon," 2005) and added that he did not intend to offend anyone. In American society, a dog is a symbol of faithfulness and man's best friend, but it was perceived otherwise in Pakistan due to cultural differences. Thus, it is important for political cartoonists to not only be aware of the social conventions and symbolic meanings, but to also be proficient in selecting theme, content and language.

Figure 2. Political cartoon by Bill Garner in Washington Times (May 5, 2005). Adapted from "Dogged by a Cartoon" by BBC News, May 10, 2005.

Respect beliefs

After recognizing differences across cultures, the next step is developing a respect for them. Jones (2011) champions this perspective: "If we take seriously the idea of respecting people as the bearers of beliefs, we have reason not to subject their most cherished beliefs to vilification and ridicule" (pp. 86-87). It is an assessment reminiscent of one explained by Bollinger (1986)

who advocates a social transformation wherein focus is shifted "from seeing the value in speech itself to seeing the need to deal with the problems revealed in the *reactions* to speech" (p. 48). Within the genre of political cartoons, then, a premium would be placed not merely on content, but on readers.

The Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics clearly states that ethical journalism treats subjects as human beings deserving respect and discourages undue intrusiveness and arrogance (SPJ, 2014). It stresses the need to show compassion for those who may be influenced by media content and to also consider cultural differences. As Jones (2011) states, respecting people carries with it reason not to subject their most cherished beliefs to vilification and ridicule (p. 87).

Be truthful

It is accepted journalistic canon that journalists seek truth and report it. "Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair" (SPJ, 2014). The principle is not different for those journalists who express opinions. A basic element of political cartooning, according to Press (1981), is presenting a picture of reality as the essence of truth. He argued that "a good political cartoon does not treat a trite subject as trivial, has a political message that does not obviously ring false, and is not presented with trite imagery or artistry" (p. 26). While there is no expectation that cartoons convey an exact realism, their goal should be to reveal truth. As Lordan (2006) writes, while the cartoonist is "free from the shackles of literal reality," it is necessary that he or she "illustrate some greater, somewhat hidden truth about the subject" (p. 112). In addition, whatever technique a cartoonist employs, the cartoon should be supported by reason (Ahmed, 2009; Anderson, 1988).

Be accountable

Accountability deals with the certain tasks, goals and occupational norms, restriction by laws and other voluntary promises to serve the pubic and the liability of effects from publication of their political cartoons (McQuail, 1994). Political cartoonists should be responsible for their work, and willing to explain their choices and processes to the public (Babcock, 2012). Due to some cultural or ideological restraints, if any misunderstanding occurs that may lead to harmful effects or trigger civil and social disorder, cartoonists should respond quickly to questions about clarity, the intention of their messages. They must acknowledge any mistakes or errors in judgment, particularly when it comes to cross-cultural misinterpretations. Given that they convey opinion, corrections may not be applicable to political cartooning, but clarifications and/or apologies may be appropriate under some circumstances.

Editors as watchdogs

Because editors are gatekeepers who stand between political cartoonists and their audiences, those editors should be subject to the same standards that apply to cartoonists themselves. While many political cartoonists are given wide latitude, ultimately their editors bear some burden of responsibility for the cartoons, as well. Scott Gillespie, an editor at the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, supervises that newspaper's editorial cartoonist. He reviews those cartoons "mainly for

taste and tone" and "may suggest a tweak here and there for clarity" (Gillespie, 2017). On a few occasions, he killed cartoons entirely. Gillespie's approach to cartoons serves as a model for what this article advocates – acknowledgement of the editor's responsibility in the realm of political cartooning.

Conclusion

The preceding account reveals that self-restriction of hate speech and disparagement in political cartoons, particularly according to formal guidelines, is rare. While not all hate speech is alike and its consequences may vary from one setting to another, in disparaging political cartoons it may produce harm. Political cartoons deeply penetrate the public psyche, sometimes used as tools of persuasion and propaganda that build on attitudes, morals, stereotypes and prejudice. These pieces of visual opinion have compelling impact upon readers as well as the capacity to incite violence, hatred and emotional distress.

There are several examples of the negative consequences of disparaging political cartoons that emphasize the need to consider ethical approaches. This article proposes a set of guidelines for political cartooning to minimize harm and to help engender respect of others' beliefs within plural democratic societies. These guidelines would be helpful to improve the ethics of political cartooning across the world and can easily co-exist with freedom of expression principles.

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