

The Political Correctness Debate

The political correctness debate is one which has been surfacing over the past few years, particularly with certain political figures bringing this debate to the public platform. Let's firstly define what politically correct language is. Political correctness is the avoidance of expressions which may offend, exclude or marginalize certain groups or individuals on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

Politically correct language is a framework used to promote and maintain social harmony. However, PC language can also be viewed to be a hindrance to expression and freedom of speech. The take an individual has on this debate is dependent on the connotations they associate with the phrase "political correctness". Do they consider political correctness to be a social stabilizer or do they see it as language policing?

On one hand, the use of political correctness helps to confront prejudice in society and reinforce the idea of egalitarianism. This is achieved by slowly weakening the links between certain titles and the social groups they are associated with. This includes terms such as 'black', 'wogs', 'curries', 'retarded', 'spastic'. Using PC terms such as 'African-American', 'from Greek ethnicity', 'South-East Asian' and 'person with a disability' are more respectful ways in which to address individuals without using titles which associate them with certain stereotypes or prejudiced thoughts. In particular, using 'person with a disability' rather than 'disabled person' is a way in which to dilute the link between the individual and the "disability" and to reiterate that the disability is only a single element of many which make up the individual.

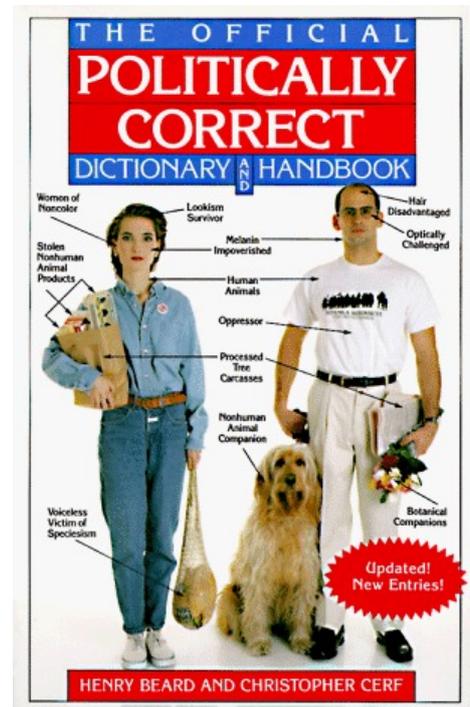
While these are the currently accepted, politically correct terms, their appropriateness is likely to change with time. Originally, it was socially acceptable to use terms like 'retard', 'chairman', 'policeman', 'black', 'man up', 'mother tongue'. However, with time, values change and society progresses and what is at one point considered socially acceptable becomes politically incorrect as further neutral terms are normalized. This includes replacements such as, 'differently abled', 'chairperson', 'police officer', 'African American' and 'native language' which have now been normalized. As society continues to progress, these phrases will be outdated and replaced by new, more socially acceptable terms. This consistent cycle is spinning at a more rapid rate with globalization. With globalization, ideologies and values can be shared on wide platforms instantaneously. Through the sharing of ideas, new ideas and perceptions are molded and with new perceptions, the language we use to express ourselves also changes and develops.

It is because of this rapid evolution in "socially acceptable" language that angers the public. Certain PC subtleties are seen by many as unnecessary. The trend towards political correctness is seen to inhibit freedom of expression, restricting individuals from speaking their mind in fear of causing offence. When there is public backlash over the lack of political correctness in a given situation, many individuals find this reaction to be highly excessive and a sign of over-sensitivity of the millennial generation. In an interview with ABC News, former soldier stated that, 'we just seem to bend over backwards for anyone that's different. It is making Australia a lot softer, it's making us a

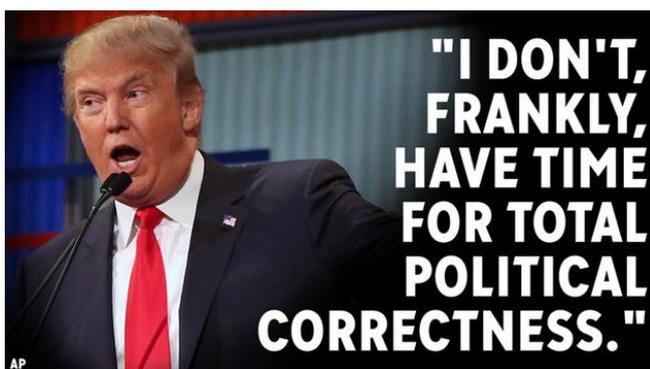
big more of a pushover country'. This frustration of many is further exasperated by the rapid evolution of normalized accepted terms in society.

When language used in the public domain borders of politically incorrect, there is a public uproar, in particular, by the younger generation. Donald Trump is a prime example of this and as put by The Atlantic, "the press takes him literally, but not seriously; his supporters take him seriously, but not literally." Simply put, the language choices of Donald Trump are strikingly bold; they incite fear and frustration amongst the public, deepening social prejudice through the reinforcement of stereotypes.

However, Trump's language echoed the frustration of Americans. It is void of obfuscating, complex politically correct language, giving the indication that Trump speaks his mind, hence garnering public support and above all trust. Building trust for a politician is next to impossible, however, when Trump speaks his mind, without fear of causing offense to minority groups, he is indeed able to build trust, as he speaks aloud what many think but fear to vocalize.



While this may sound bizarre given the strong global hatred towards Donald Trump, the matter of the fact is that Donald Trump won a majority vote. With a strong following of supporters despite his many controversies, it is important to recognize the power of Trump's linguistic choices.



We all remember the famous, 'build a wall' statement, which became a defining factor of Trump's presidential campaign. While a highly politically incorrect agenda, which marginalized Mexican people, many supported Trump's endeavors. In particular, American's, frustrated with their employment conditions are given an excuse to place blame onto a certain group of people. Trump, an influential figures' use of politically incorrect language to target

Mexican's effectively gave the freedom to others to speak what they had previously restricted themselves from vocalizing for fear of being politically incorrect

Aside from freedom of speech, the second major issue associated with political correctness is obfuscation. This form of political correctness is institutionalized and because of this there is a genuine danger that the immense emphasis on being politically correct means that often, vital information can be omitted from news scenarios because it targets or potentially targets a certain

individual or minority group. As a result, the information presented is bias and incomplete. The 2013 Rotherham child sex abuse scandal in the United Kingdom is a strong example of this. An estimated 1400 children were violated sexually. However, in the media, it was intentionally omitted that the majority of perpetrators were of Pakistani heritage. Similarly, in fear of provoking racial attacks against migrants during refugee resettlement, the German media made an effort to hide that the multiple sexual assaults during the 2016 New Year celebrations were conducted by men of North African or Middle Eastern ethnicity. The omission of such details does avoid marginalizing ethnic groups, but at the cost of significant and rightful information for the public. This tradeoff is one which is still being explored in society as the wave of political correctness is still quite new.

This debate is one which is still raw in society; it is yet to progress and as the world develops, the role PC language plays in our society will become clearer. Will PC language become more prevalent as society focuses more on social inclusion? Or, will the movement towards PC language be restricted due to the black-lash it faces for the shortcomings of this framework of communication?

Examples of Political Correctness:

Link to the 2017 Australia Day Lamb Ad by Meat and Livestock Co. This company releases an Australia Day lamb ad every year which aims to show a progressive and egalitarian Australian society, celebrating the idea of a politically correct society.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/video/2017/jan/12/australia-day-lamb-ad-tackles-indigenous-land-rights-and-immigration-video>

Link to Facebook video by The Line promoting gender equality and challenging the expectations of men and women:

<https://www.facebook.com/theline/videos/1431073140265456/>