Political Correctness, Emotion Regulation Strategies

and Tolerance for Disagreement:

Is There a Missing Link?

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ABSTRACT

The connection between concern for politically correct speech, tolerance for disagreement and two emotion regulation strategies was explored using a correlational study, with mixed methods. Participants were drawn from the general population and completed an online survey with the Concern for Politically Correct speech scale, the Emotion Regulation questionnaire, the Tolerance for Disagreement scale and two qualitative questions. Results showed significant variations in terms of sex, age and religiosity. Individual differences on concern for politically correct speech were related to distinct emotion regulation strategies and to subjects' relational abilities to disagree. Willingness to engage in conflict by correcting others' politically incorrect statements and behaviour was related to lower degrees of emotional suppression, and higher levels of tolerance for disagreement were connected with a lower emotional impact of PC, suggesting that the emotional costs of concern for politically correct speech may be decreased by fostering a higher tolerance for disagreement.

INTRODUCTION

Political Correctness (PC) is a construct that acquired ubiquity by the end of the twentieth century, particularly in the context of academia and in connection to the policies and practices adopted in North American universities (Gauthier, 1997; Hughes, 2010). It could be argued that the current complexity to define PC stems from the paradox that lies at its core, entailed by its inclusive and well-intentioned values, paired with a set of restrictive and punitive practices aimed to enforce them. As highlighted by Hughes (2010), this contradiction is expressed in commonly associated terms to PC, such as "liberal orthodoxy" or "positive discrimination", expressions of the postmodern ideological entanglement between puritanism and liberalism that constitutes PC (Trenton, 1997).

During the mid 1990s, the term became frequently used to decry or to praise newly adopted terms that came to replace old-fashioned adjectives or nouns that were by then construed as offensive (Hughes, 2010). This process was referred by Pinker (1994) as "the euphemisms treadmill", a phenomenon which O'Neill (2011) describes in detail in order to illustrate the fact that this cyclic word replacement does not eliminate offense or discrimination, but merely provides a wider range of lexical ammunition to those who wish to discriminate and offend.

Lukianoff & Haidt (2015) offered a stark picture of the current status of PC in campuses across the United States, with a comprehensive account of an academic life intensely focused on real or imagined offenses. During a talk hosted in Trinity College Dublin (TCD), O'Neill (2015) expressed his concerns about the apparent difficulties of some individuals in accommodating dissent, after controversies surrounding restrictions imposed on a guest speaker by the same third level institution had reached the news (McMahon, 2015; Lynch, 2015).

The recent episodes briefly discussed above seem to indicate that PC is at the centre of academic life and that it may have far-reaching implications that go beyond academia. Considering that universities are not isolated from the society as a whole, it could be inferred that PC is a phenomenon that extends beyond academic circles, permeating public communication and the expression of what is acceptable (Henderson, 2016; Pirttisalo, 2016). Consequently, it could be argued that PC may hinder the possibility to establish meaningful societal debates, as these ultimately arise from the exposure to and the contrast of different perspectives (O'Neill, 2011; Klatt, 1997; Klatt, Seligman and de Russy, 2003; Furedy, 1998; Hollander, 1994).

This portrait of PC as a well intended but inherently contradictory force (Hughes, 2010), or as a restrictive and tyrannical social movement (Klatt et al., 2003) is in stark contrast with Wallach Scott's (1995) and Berube's (1995) stance, who consider the critiques on PC to be a right wing campaign against higher education in general and the liberal values at its core in particular. In addition, and to make matters more complicated, Fairclough (2003) warns that even PC advocates lack a profound theoretical understanding of the controversies that the phenomenon entails and therefore cannot address its critics effectively. Considering the disagreement in the literature, it is important to investigate PC within the context of a general population in order to shed light into the extent of its reach, as well as to understand the depth of its possible consequences.

Applying a pragmatic point of view to the topic, Žižek (Big Think, 2015) suggests that although PC is preferable to racism, it ultimately encompasses a fallacy. Žižek's perspective is in line with that of Klatt (1997), Klatt et al. (2003), and O'Neill (2015), who believe that PC advocates are trapped in the paradox of ultimately violating the pluralistic values they claim to promote, in their attempts to silence opinions they perceive to be opposed to those values. Furthermore, Žižek argues that politically correct forms of

communication prevent individuals from having genuine contact with each other, and suggests that PC-coated-exchanges hinder the possibility to establish real friendships and real relationships (Big Think, 2015).

In addition, it is important to note that researchers and scientific circles are not immune to societal debates. Academics such as Hollander (2013) have argued that the influence of PC has such intensity within Academia that it pervades the process of research and publication in its entirety. According to Hollander (2013), it is unusual for scientists to address issues considered controversial, as publication of such research seems unlikely to occur. PC proponents believe that research on sensitive topics should be discouraged, fearing that such scientific enquiries could cause discomfort or harm to less socially advantaged groups. Contrastingly, PC critics believe that a free society should promote a variety of research, including that on delicate matters, as the responsibility of advancing knowledge lies with academics, whose work will ultimately inform public policy (Gauthier, 1997).

Consequently, and perhaps given the intrinsic volatility surrounding inquiries on or defenses of PC, the literature on the subject within Psychology is not vast. It largely consists of academics' reflections and perspectives (i.e. Furedy, 1998), together with a handful of psychological studies which have explored PC in connection to Pluralistic Ignorance (Van Boven, 2000), stereotypes (Lalonde, Doan, & Patterson, 2000), sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005), interracial interaction (Norton, Sommers, Apfelbaum, Pura & Arieli, 2006), and creativity (Goncalo, Chatman, Duguid & Kennedy, 2015). Although Strauts and Blanton (2015) have investigated the connection between the concern for politically correct speech and perceived stress, the relation between PC and other emotional processes that might be at play at an individual level has not yet been explored. It is therefore the aim of this study to investigate PC from a psychological point of view, providing further knowledge in the topic area, expanding on such work as Strauts and Blanton's (2015).

Political Correctness – Definition

In order to operationalise the construct which will be studied, it is important to first agree on a definition. Interestingly, and despite the ubiquity of PC, there is no unambiguous consensus on what the construct entails. For example, according to Hollander (2013) PC is a mindset which comprises a number of ideas and attitudes not accurately circumscribed. For Loury (1994), on the other hand, PC is the practice of refraining from expressing certain ideas or opinions in public, in accordance with implicit rules governing particular social groups (p.430).

For the purpose of this study, Loury's (1994) definition of PC will be adopted, and will be subject to modification in connection to the qualitative aspect of the research, which will request the participants to define what PC means for them. In addition, it is interesting to note that although Loury's (1994) analysis is intrinsically political and sociological, he concludes his paper shifting the focus from the social to the personal sphere, as he claims that the tension between external norms and individual goals ultimately takes place within every human being.

Concern for Politically Correct Speech Scale

In their recently published research on concern for politically correct speech (CPC), Strauts and Blanton (2015) developed an instrument designed to measure the degree to which individuals are concerned for politically correct utterances. Their scale comprises two subscales, which consider the construct of CPC in an emotional (PC-Emotion, or PC-E) and a behavioural dimension (PC-Activism, or PC-A).

While the PC-E sub-scale aims to assess the extent to which individuals become emotionally affected by politically incorrect speech, the PC-A dimension is concerned with the participants' behaviour, and their willingness to enter into conflict with other people, for example by educating them on the "correct" ways to express themselves on a sensitive or controversial matter.

In their study, Strauts and Blanton (2015) found that both subscales predicted diminished levels of well-being. More specifically, high scores on PC-E were associated with higher levels of perceived stress, and higher scores on PC-A were predictive of interpersonal conflict and a less satisfactory social life. In the sections that follow emotion regulation and tolerance for disagreement will be discussed, and further explorations will be proposed in connection to the research already conducted by Strauts and Blanton (2015).

Emotion and emotion regulation

According to Campos, Frankel and Camras (2004), emotion is defined as a process whereby the significance of a mental or physical event is construed and acknowledged. This process is characterised by the authors as "a transaction between a person and an event, including what, in general, a person can do about the transaction." (p.369, 391). Considering emotion as a process that occurs over a period of time (Gross, 2001), differences arise between regulation strategies depending on the moment when they have the higher impact during the development of the emotion process (Gross & John, 2003). While the appraisal of the event determines the perceived quality of the emotion (i.e. positive or negative), the intensity with which it is felt correlates with the magnitude of the emotional response (Campos et al., 2004).

The ways in which these emotions are experienced, and the degree of control exerted

by the individual in the manner and the circumstances of these experiences is referred to as emotion regulation (Gross, 1998b, as cited in Gross 2002). This modulation is directly related to subjective well-being (Gross, 2002) and it occurs throughout the whole emotion process, since the appearance of the emotional response until the point where it is expressed as a behaviour (Campos et al., 2004). Moreover, Diamond & Aspinwall (2003) point out that emotion regulation strategies are developmental processes in constant transformation across the lifespan, which influence health and affective states, and are influenced in turn by the social context.

Further research in the field of emotion regulation has focused on expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal, as two of the most commonly observed strategies to modulate emotion (John & Gross, 2004; Gross, 2003). Cognitive reappraisal consists of interpreting an emotion-provoking event in such a way that its emotional impact –and the accompanying behavioural response- is modified, while suppression involves the inhibition of the expressive behaviour (John & Gross, 2004). Therefore, while reappraisal occurs early in the emotion timeline continuum, suppression takes place at the end of such timeline (John & Gross, 2004, Gross & John, 2003).

Interestingly, as suppression restrains behavioural responses regardless of the quality of the emotion, it has been shown to decrease positive expression of emotions, while having virtually no impact in the experience of negative emotion (Gross, 2002). As a consequence, suppression inhibits communication of cues that are vital for social bonds, interactions and social support (Butler et al, 2003). In comparison, reappraisal appears to be more socially desirable, as it reduces negative emotion, while leaving unaffected or even raising the experience of positive emotion (Gross, 2002).

Although Gross (2002) concedes that there are some negative emotions that are so

extreme in nature that if not suppressed could cause harm to the individual or to others (i.e. road rage), research suggests that emotional suppression has in general negative consequences for the individual (Gross & John, 2003). Therefore, if the definition of PC adopted for the present study is considered under the light of Gross' (2002) and Gross and John's (2003) findings, it is possible to infer that suppression of politically incorrect opinions, that may be associated to negative affect, could cause such feelings to prevail, or even to intensify, while diminishing experience of positive emotions and hindering social interactions and social support. Consequently, the link between emotion regulation and CPC will be explored within the context of the current study.

Moreover, Gross (2002) highlights that if suppression becomes the habitual response to negative emotions, this could compromise the individual's well-being, as well as hampering the possibility to produce a change for the better in his or her environment. Gross and John's (2003) research, with their Emotion Regulation self-report scale, indicate that people who use reappraisal as a regulation strategy, experience more positive emotion and have a richer social life. Their relationships with others are of better quality, which in general translates into higher levels of well-being and satisfaction. By contrast, individuals who use suppression to regulate their emotions deal more poorly with stress, have less clarity about their feelings and their social lives are less plentiful, as they refrain from sharing both negative but also positive emotions (Gross, 2002; Gross & John, 2003).

In summary, research indicates that suppression of negative emotion leads to less desirable outcomes for the individual than reappraisal (Gross & John, 2003; Richards & Gross, 2000). In the context of the present study, the connection between each of these strategies and the concern for politically correct speech will be investigated, in order to add to the literature, as no such link has yet been explored.

Tolerance

The Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (UNESCO, 1995) defines tolerance as a mindset that stems from recognising others' freedoms and rights, and which "in no circumstance can it be used to justify infringements of these fundamental values" (Article 1.2, pp. 10). The signatory states of the document agree that tolerance is essential for peace, and thus is at the core of democracy. In line with UNESCO's (1995) guidelines, and within a European context, Orlenius (2008) analyses the complexities of reconciling an education for democracy with the tolerance of intolerance, and stresses the importance of allowing the expression of all ideas, even of those considered controversial and difficult to accept. Although Edling (2012) agrees that tolerance is one of the key principles of Western societies,

she warns that rather than being an abstract concept, it is an embodied practice that encompasses a struggle between the ideal of toleration and the intense emotional reactions caused by what needs to be tolerated. In contrast, and offering a perspective that moves from the behavioural to the ideological sphere, Furedi (2012) highlights that tolerance is concerned with ideas, and with the affirmation of the individual autonomy to hold these personal beliefs.

Therefore, and considering all of the above, it could be argued that the literature points to a dyadic understanding of tolerance: while at a psychological level it has to do with the possibility of contemplating differences, in its behavioural dimension it is concerned with accepting their right to be expressed. Consequently, the way in which individuals understand and enact tolerance, and the manners in which they negotiate disagreement, become extremely relevant for the study of PC. Thus, tolerance will be examined as a part of the study in relation to PC, in particular when it entails tolerating that with which the individual disagrees.

Disagreement and tolerance

Loury (1994) points out that disagreement on significant issues, such as gender equality or religious freedom, is a consequence of individuals' ideological stances and perceptions of the world, and he evaluates these differences to be both positive and unavoidable. In his view, the tensions that arise from the contrast between those individual differences are productive, because they offer the possibility to exchange ideas that can enrich all the parties involved and contribute to the betterment of public policies.

Although Teven, Richmond and McCroskey (1998) concur with Loury (1994) and Furedi (2012) in considering disagreement to be potentially enriching, they attribute its constructive or destructive nature to factors such as individuals' communication styles and mutual affinity. The tolerance for disagreement (TFD) scale proposed by Teven et al. (1998) measures individual levels of TFD, a construct that can be conceptualised as the threshold between disagreement and conflict, that is to say, the degree of disagreement that people can tolerate before starting to perceive it conflict (McCroseky & Richmond, 1992, as cited in Teven et al. 1998).

Considering that McCroskey (1992, as cited in Teven et al., 1998) proposes that the higher the TFD, the higher the resistance to conflict, it is possible to infer that CPC, particularly in its behavioural aspect (PC-A, Strauts & Blanton, 2015) could be heavily influenced by the TFD of each individual. Applying Teven et al. (1998) conceptualisation, it could be argued that disagreement on a controversial issue where PC is concerned, could potentially turn into a conflict with another person depending on the degree of TFD, and the affinity levels between individuals. Therefore, as scores on PC-A have been found to be associated to relational difficulties arisen from confrontational behaviours originated in

ideological disagreement, it is not unreasonable to expect that high scores on PC-A would correlate to low scores on TFD.

Rationale

Research in this area is limited in nature, and bearing in mind the societal implications of PC, the aim of the current research is to examine this topic further and add to the relatively small body of psychological knowledge in the area. More specifically, possible connections between the CPC (Strauts & Blanton, 2015) and reappraisal and suppression as emotion regulation strategies, will be examined together with possible links between these constructs and TFD (Teven et al., 1998).

Strauts & Blanton (2015) found that high scorers on PC-E had higher levels of perceived stress, but no further research has been conducted so far on the relation between CPC and emotional life. Thus, it is of interest for the current study to investigate if a connection exists between emotion regulation and PC-E. In addition, high scores on PC-A were correlated with more interpersonal conflict (Strauts & Blanton, 2015), and thus possible relations between PC-A and TFD (Teven et al., 1998) will be investigated. Furthermore, according to Gross & John (2003), reappraisers have better and closer relationships with others than suppressors, and thus possible connections between these strategies, PC-E and PC-A will be explored. The results of this research will provide insight into some of the inner processes underlying PC at an individual level.

In addition, and as it has been outlined above, definitions of PC may vary. Given the fact that the term is present in public forums, media discussions and everyday conversation, it is important to illuminate the participants' understanding of the concept of PC. Therefore, the study will include a qualitative aspect to address this question.

Taking into account the fact that ideas and beliefs constitute two fundamental aspects of psychological life that arguably tint individuals' opinions and attitudes, and vice versa, the possible social consequences of expressing an opinion perceived to be politically incorrect may become a barometer of self-censorship (Loury, 1994). Thus, the results of this study aim to help participants as well, both as individuals and as members of society, to understand their own motivations to speak and act in accordance to or in challenge of PC norms.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between scores on PC-E and ER

H2: High scores on PC-E subscale will correlate with high scores in suppression ER strategy

H3: High scorers on PC-A subscale will score low in reappraisal ER strategy

H4: There will be a significant relationship between concern for politically correct speech and tolerance for disagreement, especially among high scorers on sub-scale PC-A

Qualitative aspect

The qualitative part of the study will consist of two questions, the first of which will ask participants to provide a definition of PC. The second question will ask them to state if they have recently refrained from expressing an opinion, for fear of being considered politically incorrect.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample of 107 participants was drawn from the general population. In terms of gender, 61.7% (n=66) of the sample were females and 38.3%, males (n=41). The minimum age to participate in the study was eighteen years, but there was no pre-established maximum. The age composition of the sample consisted of 37.4% of participants between 30 and 39 years (n=40), followed by 31.8% between the ages of 18 and 29 years (n=34), and 30.8% of subjects 40 years or older (n=33).

Although nationalities, cultural differences and level of education varied across the sample, there was a prevalence of European subjects (82.40%, n=84), while other ethnicities, were present in much smaller numbers. The same occurred in terms of education, as there was large proportion of subjects who reported to have completed third level (70.1%, n=75), and lesser percentages of participants with secondary and primary levels of schooling (30%). With regards to religiosity 16.8% of subjects rated themselves as religious (n=18) and 83.2% as non-religious (n=89), with 37.4% (n=40) of the sample having stated in a separate question

that they saw themselves as atheists, and 62.6% (n=67) as not atheists (Figure 1). Participants were invited to state the faith they professed, if any, and 30.1% of them declared they had none (n=28), while 17.2% (n=16) were Christians, 12.9% (n=12) Catholic, 10.8% (n=10) Agnostic, 8.6% (n=8) Buddhist.
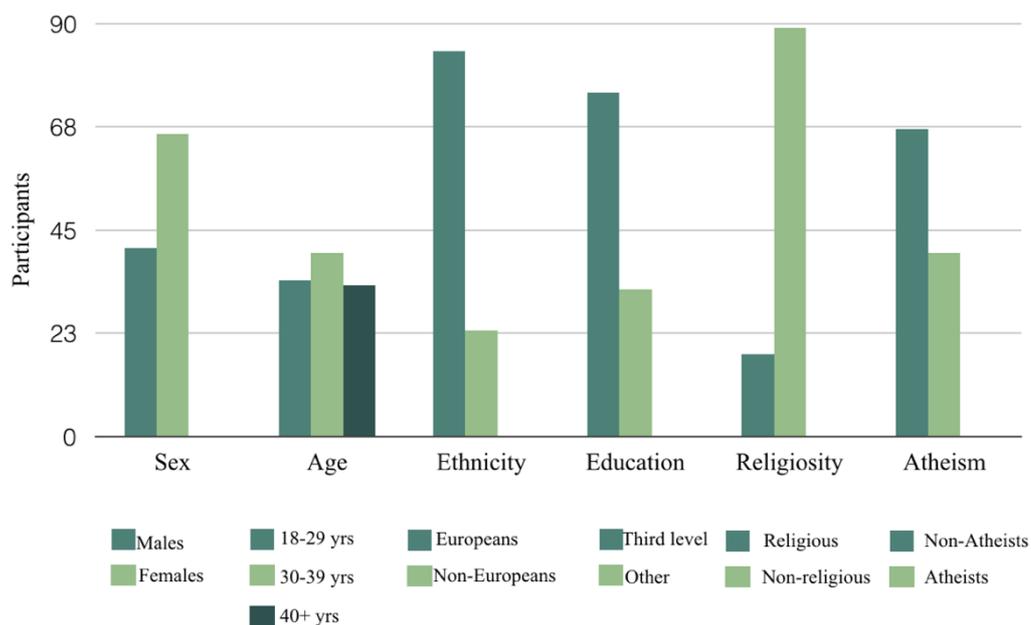

Figure1: Sample composition

Design

The study was conducted using a correlational design with mixed methods, involving three quantitative measures and two additional qualitative, open-ended questions. The qualitative aspect of the study consisted of asking participants to define Political Correctness

and then to state if they had recently refrained from expressing something, for fear of being considered politically incorrect.

Variables

The quantitative aspect of the study considered tolerance for disagreement and emotion regulation in its Suppression and Reappraisal dimensions as predictor variables, while the criterion was the concern for politically correct speech, in its behavioural and emotional dimensions, as well as as a whole.

Materials

Concern for Politically Correct speech (CPC) instrument

The CPC scale (Strauts & Blanton, 2015) was designed to measure different degrees of concern for politically correct speech amongst individuals. This instrument investigates CPC in its emotional and behavioural dimensions, by means of two subscales PC-Emotion (Cronbach's alpha = .90) and PC-Activism (Cronbach's alpha = .92). The measure consists of nine items, which are assessed using a scale of 7 points, where -3 represents total disagreement with the statement and 3, at the opposite end, stands for complete agreement.

The emotional dimension of the scale surveys the emotional effect that politically incorrect speech has on a given individual, whereby the higher the score in the subscale, the more upset the subject gets when confronted with utterances that are not politically correct. The PC-A subscale, on the other hand, focuses on the behavioural responses of the individual to politically incorrect speech, by measuring the extent to which they would be willing to engage in specific behaviours. Examples of the statements included in the scale are "I get anxious when I hear someone use politically incorrect language" (PC-E), and "When people

show political ignorance in their choice of words, I call this to their attention" (PC-A). The behavioural aspect of the scale aims to explore the degree to which a subject would engage in "correcting" behaviours, when confronted with a politically incorrect speaker.

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

The Emotion Regulation questionnaire (ERQ, Gross & John, (2003) is also composed of two subscales, which measure individual differences in the use of cognitive reappraisal (ER-R) and expressive suppression (ER-S) as distinctive strategies to regulate emotions. The ERQ comprises ten items that respondents are requested to rate on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is "strongly disagree", 4 is "neutral", and 7 is "strongly agree". For example, cognitive reappraisal is assessed by statements such as "when I want to feel more *positive* emotion (such as joy or amusement), I *change what I'm thinking about"*. The statement "when I'm feeling *negative* emotions, I make sure not to express them" is one of the items included in the ER-S subscale. According to Gross & John (2013), the alpha reliabilities of the scale averaged .79 for Reappraisal and .73 for Suppression.

Tolerance for Disagreement scale

The revised Tolerance for Disagreement Scale (Teven et al., 1998) consists of 15 items designed to assesses the degrees of tolerance that different individuals have toward disagreement. Statements like "I prefer to change the topic of discussion when disagreement occurs" and "I enjoy disagreeing with others" are rated from 5 (strongly disagree) to 1 (strongly agree). The scale has an expected reliability of .86, and it is the short version of the

initial TFD scale, which consisted of 20 items (Knutson et al, 1979, as cited in Teven, Richmond & McCroskey, 1998).

Procedure

The data was collected with an online survey, which was shared on social media and via e-mail. The subjects were invited to complete the questionnaire and did so voluntarily and for free. Demographic questions were asked before proceeding to the questionnaires and anyone reporting to be younger than 18 was automatically dismissed. Anonymity of participants was warranted and preserved.

In the introductory page to the survey, potential participants where informed that taking part in the study involved completing a questionnaire electronically. Before proceeding to the survey, subjects read an information sheet which explained the voluntary nature of participation in the study, and which provided general information about the research. More specifically, the subjects were informed that the study focused on some aspects of social attitudes, as well as emotions and feelings, but they did not receive any specific priming on what was the particular subject of the research prior to participation. In addition, subjects were made aware of the fact that by submitting the completed form, they were automatically consenting to take part in the study, and that they were able to withdraw at any point before submission. They were also informed upfront that due to the anonymous nature of the replies, it would not be possible to withdraw from the study after having submitted the survey.

The questionnaire was composed of an initial set of demographic questions, which investigated the faith, education level, degree of religiosity or atheism and religion of participants. Demographic questions were followed by the CPC scale (Strauts & Blanton, 2015), after which participants were invited to complete the qualitative questions of the

study. These asked them to first define PC and then to give account of any recent anecdote involving PC that they could recall. After the two open-ended questions, participants completed the ERQ (Gross & John, 2003) and finally the TFD (Teven et al., 1998) scale.

Upon completion of the questionnaires and before submitting the responses, participants were presented with contact details for support services, in case any of the questions had elicited any discomfort that could require professional assistance.

RESULTS

The subscales PC-Activism (M=-.05, SD =7.76) and PC-Emotion (M= -.77, SD= 6.45) returned negative average scores, suggesting that the general tendency of the sample was to be slightly unconcerned but close to neutrality (represented by 0 in these scales) with regards to politically incorrect speech. However, there was significant variation amongst responses. Consequently, when considering the scores of both subscales together in order to assess the gauge of CPC that the subjects reported, the general tendency was also slightly between -1 and 0, consistent with the trends observed separately in PC-A and PC-E. It is nevertheless important to highlight that here too, there was high degree of variation across the sample (M=-.51, SD=12.73). Participants' scores on subscale ER-Suppression suggest that on average, suppression was not the favoured strategy to regulate emotional responses across the sample (M=3.39, SD=1.28). Scores on ER-Reappraisal (M=4.83, SD=1.22), on the other hand, indicate that participants' tendency was to prefer this approach to suppression. Finally, the average scores on TFD (M=50.74, SD=8.90) were rather high, indicating high degrees of tolerance for disagreement across the sample. The CPC scale and its subscales functioned with high reliability in this study (α = .93), and so did ER-S (α = .76) and ER-R (α = .87),

but the TFD instrument did not behave with the high reliability predicted by Teven et. Al (1998), as the Cronbach's coefficient was $\alpha = .42$ (Table 1).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Measures*

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Political Correctness – Emotion	-.77	6.45	.93
Political Correctness – Activism	-.05	7.76	.93
Concern for Politically Correct Speech	-.51	12.73	.93
Emotion Regulation - Suppression	3.39	1.28	.76
Emotion Regulation - Reappraisal	4.83	1.22	.87
Tolerance for disagreement	50.74	8.90	.42

Qualitative analysis

Participants replied to two qualitative questions, the first of which asked them to define Political Correctness. The second question was intended to identify if PC was a phenomenon prevalent enough in their daily lives to be easily evoked in connection to a recent anecdote.

Definition of Political Correctness

Responses were coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines to thematic analysis, initially summarising the main concepts in each definition, and later identifying trends throughout the data set. During this stage, it became clear that the ideas about what is PC were extremely varied across the sample, and in some cases distant from those usually

associated with PC. For example, there was a participant who equated the concept to "being humane", and another one defined it as "love". After the first stage of familiarisation with the data was completed, a relatively large number of initial codes were identified and later regrouped into twelve initial themes. These themes were reviewed at a subsequent stage, and merged together forming four final themes and a miscellaneous category (Figure 2).

Definition 1: Speech and behaviour intended to avoid offending specific groups or individuals.

A significant number of participants defined PC as a specific way of speaking or behaving, which focuses on avoiding utterances that either might be misconstrued or that might hurt the feelings of certain individuals or groups. As expressed by one participant, it means "using words and behaving in a way that doesn't offend any group of people, i.e. avoiding comments about religion, race, gender etc., that can be interpreted negatively". Within this theme, three sub-themes appeared with regular frequency:

Sub-Theme 1: Avoiding to stereotype or discriminate, using neutral language to express oneself.

This aspect of the main theme was reflected in some participants' definitions, that specified that the language to be avoided in order to minimise the possibility to offend, was related to stereotypes, prejudices or discriminatory expressions. For example, participant two defined PC as not "stereotyping people into groups negatively", and participant eight equated PC to "being appropriate in words, avoiding sexism, racism, ageism". Other participants saw PC as an unbiased form of self expression, where prejudiced or historically charged terms are meticulously avoided in order to convey facts instead of opinions. In the words of participant 65, PC involves "calling things by their names without using classifications as means of

valorisation".

Sub-Theme 2: Displaying respect, acceptance and sensitivity.

Some participants looked at PC not only as refraining from expressing potentially hurtful ideas, but as actively showing respect for others; remaining open, acceptant and sensitive to them. Such is the case of participant 104, who defined PC as "being respectful of people regardless of your own beliefs".

Sub-Theme 3: Speaking or behaving in a polite manner.

In contrast with the previous sub-theme, this aspect of the main theme focuses on the fact that PC might be associated to being polite, but it is ultimately superficial, as it does "not necessarily express knowledge or true commitment with a particular issue". PC is, by this definition and according to participant 36, "the act of using elegant phrasing rather than bluntly stating what one believes in such a manner that no person is emotionally hurt".

Definition 2: Use of euphemisms which might result more offensive than the terms they came to replace.

Some participants stated that PC could be defined as the use of euphemisms to replace words that convey concepts that may be prejudiced or discriminatory, a process which does not come without pitfalls. The main issue highlighted by these subjects was that seen in this way, PC is "a way of avoiding getting down to the real subject by dancing around it with words that are often a lot more offensive". Another participant stated that PC is "an endless cycle of finding new ways to not say what you mean".

Definition 3: Socially acceptable way of speaking.

PC was also defined as aligning with socially accepted rules and behaviours by saying "what you think you are supposed to say in a social situation" or "what you know people will like to hear". In this sense, another participant equated PC to "social standards regarding which words and phrases are considered acceptable", and yet another one saw PC as a remedy for socially unacceptable actions and behaviours. For participants ascribing to this definition, PC could be defined as the mainstream way to express oneself, which demarcates what is permitted within a given social context.

Definition 4: Form of censorship.

A group of participants described PC as form of censorship with adverse effects on cultural diversity. From this point of view, PC is not only considered responsible of preventing the development of fruitful discussions before they begin, but also of separating people by creating "us" and "them" feelings. Participant 43 described PC as "straight jacket for expression" which limits spontaneous communication. In addition, and also within this theme, PC was defined as an individual's social awareness of the implications words have, which acts as a form of censorship when looked at from a cultural perspective.

Sub-Theme 1: Self-censorship to try to minimise offence.

Also considered as a form of censorship, but rather coming from the inside of the individual, some participants pointed out that PC could be seen as self-editing in an attempt to avoid hurting people's sensitivities, for the "fear of breaking taboos" or saying "anything controversial". Participant 61 highlighted that this is especially true when someone expresses a controversial opinion, and so he or she is motivated to carefully select words that do not

result offensive. The downside of this process was ascribed to the fact that it prevents the speaker from "giving a true, free and full explanation of what they mean".

Sub-Theme 2: While in the past PC was a tool to promote tolerance, now it is an instrument to censor opinions that are not mainstream.

In connection to this theme which sees PC as a form of censorship or self-censorship, a small number of participants distinguished between PC before and now, stating that while it used to be employed as an instrument for societal inclusion of disadvantaged groups, it has now become a censorship device which has allowed "its sphere to extend into minor disagreements and plain talk".

Miscellaneous.

Finally, some participants offered definitions of PC that are not classifiable within any of the themes described above, but which stand out as they propose other facets to the construct. For example, participant 96 saw PC as "a way of offloading responsibility of your reactions onto the people around you", and participant 90 proposed a description of PC that synthesises themes one and three:

> "Political correctness is the social movement to change the way people speak and the words they use when those words are considered offensive. It also involves determining what kinds of words and actions are offensive, as public perceptions change often, and calling out people who say something wrong."
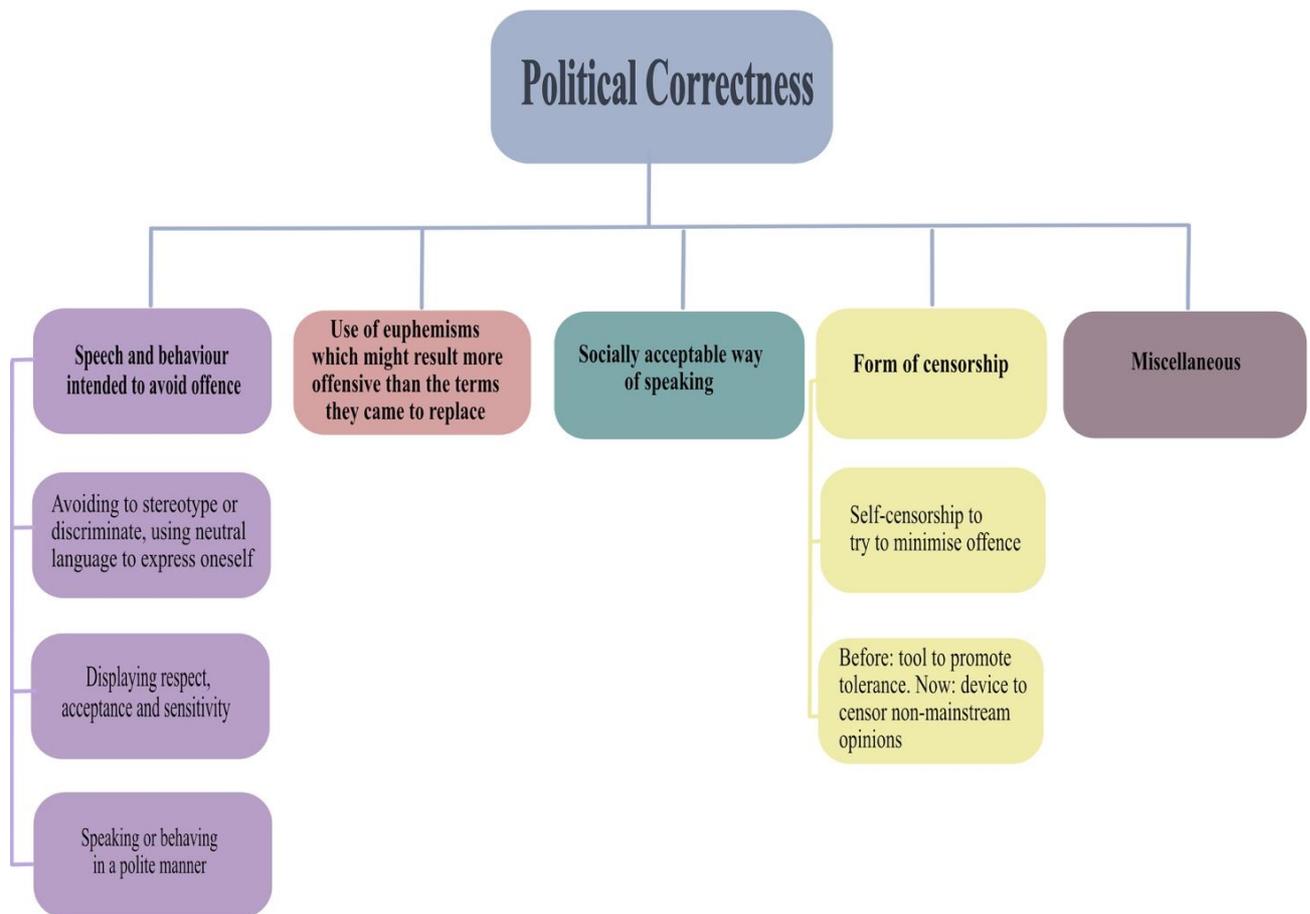
Figure 2. Model of the Definitions of Political Correctness

Prevalence and extent of PC

After defining PC, participants were asked if they remembered having recently refrained from expressing their thoughts on specific topics for fear to be perceived as politically incorrect. Following the initial familiarisation with the data, responses where divided into "yes" and "no" (Table 2), and codes were created for each of these groups of responses. In posterior analyses of the trends observed, these codes were developed into themes, that reflected the reasons behind each yes and each no (Figures 3 and 4).

Table 2. *Qualitative question two.*

Question	Yes	No	No response
Refrained from expressing an opinion for fear to be perceived as politically incorrect	29.24%	49.05%	21.70%

No

Of the 106 responses collected, 49% of the subjects (n=52) replied that they didn't remember having found themselves in a situation like that, or that in general they openly express what they think and feel. Five themes were developed for these negative answers following Brown and Clarke's (2006) guidelines and will be briefly described below.

1. Prefer to be corrected rather than refraining from expressing thoughts.

A number of participants stated different variations of the same idea, in which they expressed their willingness to share opinions, however controversial they might be, or whatever the consequences of doing so, as illustrated by participant 6: "I try and be as PC as possible but prefer to be called out on any misconception I have, as opposed to not voice my thoughts at all".

2. Never feared expressing own thoughts.

Other subjects stated that they did not remember an episode where they had refrained from expressing their ideas, as they never feared sharing their opinions. For example, participant 82 highlighted to always have expressed freely, "without fearing for any repercussions".

3. I can express myself while being polite.

Some respondents argued that, if precautions are taken as to being polite and choosing the right words, even opinions considered controversial can be shared. A slight variation of this theme can be observed in the words of participant 96, who stated: "I speak my mind, and try to avoid using politically incorrect language. I am willing to express politically incorrect ideas however".

4. I never express my true opinions.

Finally, some subjects stated that, as a norm, they do not express what they really feel and think, regardless of other people's opinion. This was the case 91, who replied that when interacting with others, he or she would only make only small talk in order not to share actual opinions.

Figure 3: Word frequency within the answers grouped as "No"

Yes

Participants who answered affirmatively offered anecdotes where they had not fully disclosed their thoughts and feelings for fear of being misconstrued as politically incorrect or racist.

Some of the stories recounted had recurring themes, which were coded and analysed as described above. The two themes identified are briefly described within this subsection.

1. Immigration, cultural and religious clashes.

Several respondents mentioned the "immigration crisis 2015" as a topic they had stopped discussing for fear of being perceived as "heartless". Other participants such as number eight, referred feeling at disadvantage in their own country, when compared to immigrants, for example in terms of access to public health services, but chose not to "openly verbalised this for fear of being called racist". Also within this theme, cultural clashes between Western and Islamic practices, as well as the role of religion in Western societies were mentioned as a topic that had caused some participants to withhold from sharing their opinions.

2. Politics, race, sex, and social inequality.

In terms of politics, a number of respondents referred to have refrained from openly talking about the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and race appeared in a number of anecdotes shared by respondents. Such is the case of participant 87, who disclosed: "I have a terrible professor, who also happens to be African-American, and I worry that if I express disapproval of her teaching style, I will be accused of racism". Finally, sex related humour as well as socio economic differences also were mentioned by other participants grouped within this theme.

Figure 4: Word frequency within the answers grouped as "Yes"

Inferential Statistics

The null could not be rejected for any of the four hypotheses made, as the correlations predicted were not found across the sample. Interestingly, however, other relationships that had not been predicted appeared, as well as variations in terms of sex, age and religiosity.

The prediction made in Hypothesis 1 that there would be a significant relation between scores on PC-E and ER was not corroborated, nor was it the second prediction made (H2), as no significant correlation was found between scores on PC-E and scores on ER-S. H3 was not corroborated either, given the fact that there was no relation found between scores on PC-A and ER–Reappraisal (Table 3). However, a Pearson's correlation found a

weak negative significant relationship between scores on PC-A (M = -.05, SD = 7.76) and ER-Suppression (M=3.39, SD = 1.29) (r(102) = -.24, p = .014), a relationship which accounts for 5.76% of the variation of scores.

The null could not be rejected for H4 either, as no significant relationship between scores on CPC and TFD was observed, nor was it found between PC-A and TFD. Nevertheless, the Pearson's correlation test conducted found a weak negative significant relationship between scores on PC-E (M = -.77, SD = 6.46) and TFD (M= 50.74, SD = 8.90) (r(100) = -.22, p = .028), a relationship which accounts for 4.84% of the variation of scores. In addition, a weak significant positive relationship was found between scores of CPC (M= -.51, SD = 12.73) and ER-R (M = 4.83, SD = 1.22) (r(102) = .19, p =.047). This relationship accounts for 3.80% of the variance.

Table 3: *Correlations for the whole sample*

Variable	PC-E	PC-A	CPC	ER-R	ER-S	TFD
PC-Emotion	1					
PC-Activism	.565**	1				
Concern for PC speech	.807**	.905**	1			
ER-Reappraisal	.156	.186	.195*	1		

ER-Suppression	-.152	-.238*	-.185	-.305**	1
Tolerance for disagreement	-.218*	.023	-.085	-.034	-.067	1

Gender differences

Although no significant relationships where found on any of the variables when focusing on females' results, significant correlations emerged when scores of males were considered. Positive moderate significant relationships were observed between males' scores on ER-R (M =4.66, SD = 1.23) and their scores on PC-A (M = -.85, SD = 8.07) (r(39) = .42, p = .007), as well as between their scores on ER-R and CPC (M = -3.10, SD = 13.15) (r(39) = .37, p = .016). These relationships explain 17.64% and 13.69% of the variation of scores, respectively. Moreover, moderate significant negative correlations were found between ER-S (M = 3.81, SD = 1,17) and PC-A (r(39) = -.46, p = .003), and ER-S and TFD (M = 53.80, SD = 9.61) (r(39) = -.33, p = .034), correlations that explain 21.16% and 10.89 % of the variance.

Sex differences were further explored using an independent samples t-test, in order to compare the scores of each group on the measures tested (Table 4). Significant differences between males' (M = -3.32, SD = 6.50) and females' (M = .86, SD =5.92) scores were found on PC-E (t(103) = 3.39, p = .001, CI (95%) 1.73 − 6.62), as well as on males (M = 3.82, SD = 1.17) and females (M = 3.12, SD = 1.29) responses on ER–Suppression (t(104) = -2.81, p = .006, CI (95%) -1.19 − -.20). Furthermore, a significant difference was also observed between scores of males (M = 53.80, SD = 9.61) and females (M = 48.75, SD = 7.86) on tolerance for disagreement (t(102) = -2.93, p = .004, CI (95%) -8.48 − -1.64). The effect size was large for

for PC-E (eta squared = .10) and TDF (eta squared = .78), and moderate for ER-S, (eta squared = .07).

Table 4: *Independent Samples T-tests displaying differences between males and females on the measures*

Variable	Mean	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
PC-E - Males	-3.32	6.50	3.39	103	.001
PC-E - Females	.86	5.92			
ER- S - Males	3.82	1.17	-2.82	104	.006
ER- S - Females	3.12	1.29			
TFD - Males	53.80	9.61	-2.93	102	.004
TFD - Females	48.75	7.86			

Age differences

A one-way, between-groups analysis of variance was conducted, to explore the impact of age on Concern for Politically Correct (CPC) speech, Emotion Regulation (ER) and Tolerance for Disagreement (TFD) scores. Participants were divided into three age groups: 18-29 years (group 1), 30-39 years (group 2), and 40+ years (group 3). Although no significant variations were observed on CPC and TFD, ER– Suppression differed significantly for groups 1 and 3 (F (2,103) = 4.12, p = .019), whose scores also were significantly different on ER – Reappraisal as well (F (2,103) = 4.92, p = .009). Scores from

participants in group 2 did not differ significantly from the other age groups' results. Tukey HSD post hoc analyses showed that group 3 scored significantly higher than group 1 on ER-Reappraisal (mean difference = .82, p = .016, CI (95%) .12 − 1.53), and that group 1 scored significantly higher than group 3 on ER − Suppression (mean difference = .95, p = .007, CI (95%) .23 − 1.68).

Religiosity

While no significant relations were found among religious subjects, a number of relationships appeared within the non-religious group (Table 5). A weak negative relation was found using a Pearson's correlation, between PC-E (M = -88, SD = 6.38) and ER-R (M = 4.84, SD = 1.22) (r(85) = -.23, *p* = .036), and between PC-E and TFD (M = 51.01, SD = 8.90) (r(85) = -.23, *p* = .036). These relationships accounted for 5.29% of the variation of scores, in both cases.

In addition, and also within the group of non-religious participants, weak significant correlations were found between ER-S (M = 3.44, SD = 1.21) and PC-A (M = .05, SD = 7.69) (r(85) = -.28, *p* = .009), and ER-S and CPC (M = -.46, SD = 12.40) (r(84) = -.22, *p* = .042), relationships which explain 7.84% and 4.84% of the variance, respectively.

When considering participants who grouped themselves as non-Atheists, only one positive weak significant relationship was found using Pearson's test, between PC-A (M = -.33, SD = 7.12) and TFD (M = 49.66, SD = 8.56) (r(63) = .27, *p* = .033). Interestingly, Pearson's tests conducted to analyse scores of Atheist participants showed moderate significant correlations between PC-E (M = -1.39, SD = 7.04) and TFD (M = 52.54, SD = 9.27) (r(36) = -.37, *p* = .024), PC-A (M = .44, SD = 8.83) and ER-S (M = 3.34, SD = 1.37) (r(37) = -.34 , *p* = .034), and CPC (M = -.45, SD = 13.84) and TFD (r(36) = -.39 , *p* = .017).

These relationships account for 13.69%, 11.56%, and 15.21% of the variation of scores, respectively (Table 6).

Table 5: *Correlations for non-religious participants*

Variable	PC-E	PC-A	CPC	ER-R	ER-S	TFD
PC-E – Non-religious	1					
PC-A - Non-religious	.508**	1				
CPC - Non-religious	.773**	.891**	1			
ER-R - Non-religious	.179	.179	.206	1		
ER-S - Non-religious	-.181	-.279**	-.219*	-.278**	1	
TFD - Non-religious	-.227*	-.022	-.116	-.013	-.005	1

Table 6: *Correlations for Atheist participants*

Variable	PC-E	PC-A	CPC	ER-R	ER-S	TFD
PC-E - Atheists	1					
PC-A - Atheists	.438**	1				

CPC - Atheists	.720**	.892**	1		
ER-R - Atheists	.081	.274	.240	1	
ER-S - Atheists	-.264	-.340*	-.319	-.438**	1
TFD - Atheists	-.372*	-.288	-.391*	-.097	.077	1

Relationship between PC-E, PC-A, ER and TFD

Multiple regression was used to assess the extent to which tolerance for disagreement and emotion regulation, both in its suppression and reappraisal dimensions, can predict concern for politically correct speech. Three multiple regression tests were conducted considering CPC as dependent variable, and subsequently looking as such at each of its two dimensions, PC-E and PC-A. Although the test did not return any significant prediction for the CPC scale as a whole, the results for PC-E indicated that one of the predictors explained 7% of the variance ($R^2 = .07$, $F (3, 97) = 3.43$, $p = .020$). It was found that tolerance for disagreement significantly predicted PC-Emotion ($\beta = -23$, $p = .018$, 95% CI = $-.30 - -.03$).

A subsequent multiple regression to test whether TFD, ER-S and ER-R were predictors of PC-Activism, indicated that these variables predicted 5% of the variance ($R^2 = .05$, $F (3, 98) = 2.84$, $p = .042$). Results showed that ER- Suppression significantly predicted PC-Activism ($\beta = -22$, $p = .033$, 95% CI = $-2.53 - -.11$).

DISCUSSION

The present research aimed to explore the connection between concern for politically correct speech and two different regulatory processes of emotion (reappraisal and suppression), as well as with tolerance of disagreement. In addition, the research intended to determine how participants defined PC and to elucidate if PC was a determining force present in their lives.

PC-A was found to be negatively correlated to ER- suppression and so was PC-E to TFD. On the other hand, PC-A and ER-Reappraisal were found to be positively correlated and so were ER-Reappraisal and CPC speech. Furthermore, this study showed that while tolerance for disagreement can predict scores on PC-Emotion, emotional suppression can be a predictor of PC-Activism, and also found a positive correlation between CPC and ER-Reappraisal. However, these relationships could not be explained in the light of the literature. Scores were further analysed in terms of sex, age and religiosity, and significant variations were observed. All the findings are analysed below.

The null could not be rejected for any of the four hypotheses, as none of the significant relationships predicted was found across the sample. However, other relations did appear. For example, PC-Activism was found to be negatively correlated ER-suppression, across the whole sample, and also within the male subsample. This result implies that participants who actively engage in correcting others when they perceive them to be politically incorrect, manifested lower tendencies to use suppression as a means to regulate their emotions. This is consistent with the literature on PC and ER, as Strauts and Blanton (2015) indicate that high scores on PC-A suggest a tendency to engage in actively correcting others over PC, a behaviour which stands in open contrast to expressive suppression, depicted in the literature on ER as the inhibition of affect (Butler et al., 2003).

In addition, PC-E was found to be negatively correlated to TFD. According to Strauts and Blanton (2015), higher scores on PC-E show an individual predisposition to become upset in the presence of political incorrectness (PI). The results of the present study suggest that the higher the tolerance for disagreement of the subject, the lesser the emotional impingement of politically incorrect speech and behaviour. This finding has significant implications, as it suggests that by fostering increased levels tolerance for disagreement, the emotional impact of PI could be attenuated.

When sex differences were explored further, significant relationships appeared among males, while none was observed in the female group. The negative relationship between males' scores on PC-A and ER-S was already explained above. Interestingly, however, males' scores also showed a positive correlation between PC-A and ER-Reappraisal. The literature suggests that cognitive reappraisal involves a reinterpretation of an emotion-eliciting event, in such a way that it allows the individual to both shape the emotion before it has fully unfolded, as well as to modulate its resulting behavioural response (John & Gross, 2004; Gross & John, 2003). Under this light, a possible interpretation of the present results, is that males who actively engage in correcting others' politically incorrect utterances and thus get involved in interpersonal conflict (Strauts & Blanton, 2015), may operate on the emotions produced by such conflict, by reinterpreting the situation at an early stage of the emotion-generative process. Consequently, these subjects would be able to shape the emotional reactions elicited by interpersonal conflict over PC, before such emotional outlets had fully unfolded.

Males' scores also showed a negative correlation between ER-Suppression and TFD. Teven et al., (1998) proposed that the higher the threshold between disagreement and conflict, the higher the TFD. Therefore, individuals with increased TFD are thought to be more resistant to conflict, and thus more willing to engage in discussions than people with lower degrees of the measure. It follows then that this possibility to engage in open disagreement, involves the will to openly express rather than inhibit emotions, and thus it is consistent with the findings of the present study.

Female participants scored significantly higher than males on PC-E, a result which suggests that the emotional impact of politically incorrect statements or behaviours was higher for women than for men. Interestingly, males scored significantly higher than females on emotional suppression. If this result is interpreted in connection with the correlations

between males' scores on emotion regulation and PC-A discussed above, one possible explanation for it would be that although males use suppression more than women in order to modulate their emotions, men employ reappraisal as a specific strategy to deal with the potential interpersonal conflicts that correcting others over PC may elicit. In addition, TFD was also significantly higher in males than in females, a result that should be further explored in future studies, as there is not enough literature in the area to interpret this finding.

Age differences were considered, and significant variation was found between the regulatory strategies that participants aged 18-29 (Group 1) and 40+ (Group 3) employed to modulate their emotions. Group 1 showed higher levels of ER-Suppression than group three, suggesting that at a younger age expressive suppression was preferred as a method to deal with emotional events, while cognitive reappraisal was higher among group 3. These results could be interpreted under Diamond & Aspinwall's (2003) postulation that emotion regulation is in constant change, and that there is variation across the lifespan in the preferred emotion regulation strategies.

The present study showed as well significant differences in terms of religiosity. While no significant relationships were found among religious subjects, some appeared within the non-religious and Atheist subsamples. Such is the case of PC-Emotion, which was negatively correlated with cognitive reappraisal among non-religious individuals. This result implies that the higher the emotional impact of political incorrectness, the lesser this subgroup used reinterpretation of potentially distressing events as a means to modulate negative emotions. Among the same group, as well as within the Atheists, PC-E was also negatively associated to TFD. These results are intriguing, as they suggest that non-religious and Atheist participants registered higher emotional impact of politically incorrect utterances, the less they found themselves able to accommodate dissent.

In addition, another inverse relationship was observed between PC-A and ER-S

among Atheist and non-religious participants. Following the same trend discussed for the male subsample, Atheists and non-religious subjects showed an increased willingness to engage in conflict with others over PC, paired with decreased emotional suppression. In addition, it was found that tolerance for disagreement was paired to increased PC-A among non-religious subjects, and to CPC speech among Atheists. These results add a novel component to the literature on PC, as they point to religious beliefs as potential predictors to specific behaviour and emotional responses towards PC.

PC definitions and anecdotes

The varied range of responses to the first qualitative question illustrated a heterogeneous set of ideas associated with PC, which were either favourable or critic of the construct, illustrating the debate already present in the literature, around the benefits, costs and implications of PC (O'Neill, 2011; Klatt, 1997; Klatt et al., 2003; Furedy, 1998; Hollander, 1994, Hughes, 2010; Wallach Scott 1995; Berube, 1995).

Although at first sight the definitions that emerged and the corresponding themes in which they were grouped may seem contrasting and distinct, it is interesting to note that they may not all be so when inspected more carefully. Many of the answers grouped within the first definition, which equated PC to speech and behaviour concerned with avoiding offence, were phrased in such a way that highlighted a restriction. In other words, the active component of these definitions was related to *not engage* in certain behaviours, *avoiding* the use of specific terms, or *refraining from* expressing in a certain way. Looked at in this way, these definitions seem to have much more in common with those in theme four, than what could initially be thought. However, although definitions of PC as "self-editing" or "self-censorship" (theme four) portrayed the restrictive aspect of the construct under a negative

light, those gathered in theme one seemed to see the positive aspects of the same restrictive behaviours.

Bearing in mind that the purpose of the second qualitative question was to determine if PC constituted an aspect of participants' daily experience, the responses for question 2 will not be extensively analysed. Suffice to say that the majority of respondents did not feel that PC was a limiting aspect of their normal communication, and that those who did, referred anecdotes that turned around immigration, politics, race, sex, and religion.

Strengths and weaknesses of the study

In terms of potential issues with the present study, it is important to highlight that the definition of PC was asked after having completed the CPC scale, and that the subjects were not primed to think about the concept prior to completing the questionnaire. This could have been a factor that impacted on their responses and should be taken into consideration when analysing the results on CPC and its two subscales. In addition, the sample was not sufficiently varied in terms of level of education or ethnic background, which challenges the generalizability of the present findings. It should also be noted that due to the time constraints inherent to this research, potentially confounding variables such as political orientations and personality traits that could have influenced the results, were not considered. Furthermore, the low degree of alpha reliability that was registered for the TFD scale should also be born in mind to analyse the present findings.

However, this research constitutes one of the few studies done to date in Psychology in the field of PC and the first to study this phenomenon in connection to emotion regulation and tolerance for disagreement. The results of this study provide further understanding of PC in its individual rather than social dimension, and they have opened the path to new explorations of PC within the field Psychology.

Future research

Considering all of the above, future research should attempt to elucidate the triadic relationship between ER-Suppression, TFD and PC-Activism, to map how these variables interact in specific contexts and in relation to concrete politically incorrect triggers of emotional reactions, given the fact that the present study has looked at these constructs abstractly, without connecting them to specific PC or PI statements or behaviours.

It is important to note that the sample for this study was of European descent in its majority, and so future research should also investigate different populations, as well as different cultural and religious backgrounds, in order to have a clearer understanding of the generalizability of the present results. Moreover, sex differences should be investigated further in connection to PC, particularly considering the variations found in terms of emotion modulation strategies. Future research should aim to understand how these differences in emotion regulatory strategies mediate the individual CPC speech and behaviour.

Considering the age variations found on regulatory processes of emotion, a longitudinal research which followed the development and change of these strategies across the lifespan, as proposed by Diamond & Aspinwall (2003), would be of great benefit to have a better understanding of the present results.

Finally, the differences observed in terms of religiosity and Atheism in connection to PC point to religious beliefs as potential predictors to specific behaviours and emotional responses towards PC, that need to be investigated further in subsequent research.

Conclusion

Individual differences on CPC were found to be related to distinct emotion regulation

strategies, as well as to subjects' relational abilities to disagree and to tolerate conflict with others. This study showed that the willingness to engage in conflict with others by actively correcting politically incorrect statements is paired with lower degrees of emotional suppression. In addition, the results analysed above suggest that fostering enhanced levels of tolerance for disagreement could attenuate the emotional impact of politically incorrect speech and behaviour.

Furthermore, sex differences were observed with regards to the emotional responses to politically incorrect statements and behaviour. While females were more emotionally impacted by PC than males, males were more prone to suppress their emotions than females, but employed cognitive reappraisal to decrease the potential negative impact of engaging in PC-A.

Moreover, the present research found that emotion regulatory processes differed with age, and while younger participants tended to employ emotional suppression, older subjects were more prone to cognitive reappraisal of events.

Finally, it was found that participants' degrees of TFD and PC-E, as well as their emotion regulation strategies, differed in terms of their spiritual orientations, as non-religious and Atheist participants appeared to suffer more the emotional impact of political incorrectness, and had lower degrees of tolerance for disagreement.

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APPENDIX

Concern for Politically Correct Speech scale (Strauts & Blanton, 2015).

Instructions

To some, "politically incorrect" speech is seen as harmful to society because it perpetuates stereotypes and prejudices, such as sexism and racism. Other people do not think politically incorrect language is harmful and have few concerns about it. We would like to know what you think. For the following questions, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the statements:

|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Strongly	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Slightly	Agree	Strongly
Disagree	quite a bit			Agree	quite a bit	agree

1. I get anxious when I hear someone use politically incorrect language. _____

2. I feel angry when a person says something politically incorrect. _____

3. The use of politically incorrect language around me makes me very uncomfortable. _____

4. I get mad when I hear someone use politically incorrect language. _____

5. When a person uses politically incorrect words, I point it out to them to help educate them about the issues. _____

6. Even if no harm was intended, I correct people if they say something that is politically incorrect. _____

7. When people show political ignorance in their choice of words, I call this to their attention. ____

8. I try to educate people around me about the political meaning of their words. ____

9. I will educate people about the political issues when their choice of words reveals misunderstanding. ____

Qualitative questions

1. Please define Political Correctness. What does Political Correctness mean for you?

2. Over the last few months, have you refrained from expressing what you really felt or thought about a particular topic for fear to be perceived as politically incorrect, or even racist? Please describe the situation and the way you felt or the thoughts you had about it.

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2013)

Instructions

We would like to ask you some questions about your emotional life, in particular, how you control (that is, regulate and manage) your emotions. The questions below involve two distinct aspects of your emotional life. One is your emotional experience, or what you feel like inside. The other is your emotional expression, or how you show your emotions in the way you talk, gesture, or behave. Although some of the following questions may seem similar to one another, they differ in important ways. For each item, please answer using the following scale:

1----------------2---------------3--------------4---------------5----------------6----------------7

strongly   **neutral**   **strongly**

disagree **agree**

1. When I want to feel more *positive* emotion (such as joy or amusement), I *change what I'm thinking about*. ____

2. I keep my emotions to myself. ____

3. When I want to feel less *negative* emotion (such as sadness or anger), I *change what I'm thinking about*. ____

4. When I am feeling *positive* emotions, I am careful not to express them. ____

5. When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself *think about it* in a way that helps me stay calm. ____

6. I control my emotions by *not expressing them*. ____

7. When I want to feel more *positive* emotion, I *change the way I'm thinking* about the situation. ____

8. I control my emotions by *changing the way I think* about the situation I'm in. ____

9. When I am feeling *negative* emotions, I make sure not to express them. ____

10. When I want to feel less *negative* emotion, I *change the way I'm thinking* about the situation. ____

Tolerance for disagreement scale (Teven et al., 1998)

Instructions

This questionnaire involves people's feelings and orientations. Hence, there are no right or wrong answers. We just want you to indicate your reaction to each item. All responses are to reflect the degree to which you believe the item applies to you. Please use the following system to indicate the degree to which you agree that the item describes you:

1-------------------------2----------------------3---------------------4---------------------5

strongly   **disagree**   **undecided**   **agree**   **strongly**

disagree   **agree**

1. It is more fun to be involved in a discussion where there is a lot of disagreement. ____

2. I enjoy talking to people with points of view different than mine. ____

3. I don't like to be in situations where people are in disagreement. ____

4. I prefer being in groups where everyone's beliefs are the same as mine. ____

5. Disagreements are generally helpful. ____

6. I prefer to change the topic of discussion when disagreement occurs. ____

7. I tend to create disagreements in conversations because it serves a useful purpose. ____

8. I enjoy arguing with other people about things on which we disagree. ____

9. I would prefer to work independently rather than to work with other people and have

disagreements. ____

10. I would prefer joining a group where no disagreements occur. ____

11. I don't like to disagree with other people. ____

12. Given a choice, I would leave a conversation rather than continue a disagreement. ____

13. I avoid talking with people who I think will disagree with me. ____

14. I enjoy disagreeing with others. ____

15. Disagreement stimulates a conversation and causes me to communicate more. ____

Contact details page, with support services provided to participants

If you found anything within this survey upsetting and feel that you need support, please consider the following options:

Within Ireland

GROW PHONE: 1890 474 474

http://grow.ie

Within the UK and Ireland

Samaritans

Free to Call Number - 116 123

Within Europe

Please find the support lines for 28 European countries here:

https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/116-your-country-0

International helplines

http://togetherweare-strong.tumblr.com/helpline

http://www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca