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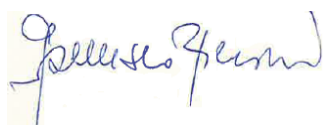
Corso di Laurea Magistrale in:  
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**POLITICALLY CORRECT:  
MERE MANNERS OR SHAPING MINDS?**

Tesi in Language, Culture, and Institutions  
of English-Speaking Countries II

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## **I. Introduction**

The title's question is related to the broader picture of what does politically correct actually mean. The questions that tackle the interest, which subsequently brought to the following research, have been primarily: should people be more politically correct, or should people be free to state everything that comes to their mind? And actually, does politically correct even exist, or is it a language construction that can be created and shaped by every individual? Does a guideline on political correctness exist, and do institutions follow it? And lastly, does politically correct language change society, or is it a mere façade?

Assuming that the following doubts can emerge in the mind of many, the decision was to broaden the knowledge on the topic, since the present literature does not give a punctual overview of the issues at stake, but it presents fragments that, without a deep understanding of the topic, fail to show the history and the purpose, if any, of political correctness.

The decision was to begin with a deep overview of the historical context, with the aim of creating a common basis of the origin and development of the expression. Political correctness has changed through time, from the 1917, when the first manifestation of the phrase was attested, to the present, in which the significance has changed completely from the previous century. It went from a literal meaning to a politicized one, used from diverse political wings and from social movements.

Furthermore, the research shows the different perceptions of politically correct language between countries thanks to different polls conducted in a total of 27 countries. The data were analyzed and put into context with the aim of giving an overview of the differences in perception by different influences in various contexts of society, taking into consideration, for example, political

views, countries of origin, belonging to minorities, and other variables in different fields.

For the purpose of the results of the title's question, the next natural step is the definition of linguistic relativity, in particular the attention is brought on the Sapir-Whorf theory on the effects the structure of a language has on a person's perception. The abovementioned theory was then linked to the research purpose, to analyze the effects of politically correct language on society. To achieve that, the focus is set on the division based on the crucial topics tackled by the supporters of the politically correct discourse, with the issues being gender identity and sexual orientation, disability inclusive language, gender-neutral language, and finally ethnic representation.

The final analysis constructs a way of evaluating the degree of political correctness language through the study of four public speeches discussed by English-speaking political actors selected based on their relevance in the political field, both for their status in society and for their position in their respective institutions. The speakers selected are Antonio Guterres, Donald Trump, Ursula von der Leyen, and Boris Johnson, with the speeches being their opening statements on their appointment to the respective positions of Secretary-General of the United Nations, as President of the U.S.A, as President of the European Commission, and as Prime Minister of the U.K.

The conclusive section structures an overview of the topics previously discussed, such as political correctness' relevance and different school of thought on the usage of ethically correct language, coupled with an evaluation of their relevance for future research.

## II. History of Political Correctness

### 2.1 Reference to Political Correctness Definitions

The history of political correctness has not been the object of several studies yet, so, to analyze in depth the phenomenon occurring in the current century, it was deemed useful to start with a depiction of the topic from the very beginning. The following analysis derives from the collection of information from various sources.

It could be useful at the beginning to understand the meaning of this wording by looking at the definitions given to the expression nowadays:

- According to Oxford Languages, political correctness is “the avoidance of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.”<sup>1</sup>.
- Similarly, to the previous one, Cambridge Dictionary affirms that political correctness is “the act of avoiding language and actions that could be offensive to others, especially those relating to sex and race”<sup>2</sup>.
- On the other hand, Britannica describes it as a “term used to refer to language that seems intended to give the least amount of offense, especially when describing groups identified by external markers such as race, gender, culture, or sexual orientation.”<sup>3</sup>.
- Moreover, Collins Dictionary gives a similar definition to the Cambridge Dictionary, defining political correctness as “the attitude or policy of being

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<sup>1</sup> Politically correct. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2022. <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/> Accessed 18 July 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Political correctness. *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2022. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/political-correctness> Accessed 18 July 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Roper, Cynthia. "Political correctness". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 31 Jan. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-correctness>. Accessed 29 August 2022.

extremely careful not to offend or upset any group of people in society who have a disadvantage, or who have been treated differently because of their sex, gender, race, or disability.”<sup>4</sup>.

All these notions share some common ground, in fact all of them say or imply the avoidance of certain terms, in particular the last two definitions are pointing out the groups of people that should be shielded by discriminatory wordings, that according to them are related to sex, gender, culture, race, sexual orientation or disability.

The definitions given by Oxford Languages<sup>1</sup> and Cambridge Dictionary<sup>2</sup> remain more vague regarding the groups involved in the shielding from discriminatory language, and this could be due to different reasons, including: the choice not to narrow it down just to some groups, and that more groups of interest could be involved even if it is not clear which ones yet, or that some people could fall in more than one category, so it could be unwise to strictly divide the society in groups, or that the wording should be applied in an universal fashion, meaning that the focus should not be towards specific patterns and groups but to the entirety of the vocabulary and the people involved in the conversation.

Besides from these conjectures, some slight differences can be seen in the four definitions, some of which are more detailed in the factual people involved in the discriminatory language, while others are more prone to a universal public of people who could be discriminated by an offensive wording.

It is deemed useful to underline how some definitions look at the past, such as the Collins Dictionary one, that interestingly uses the present perfect in the passive form, implying that the issues at stake doesn't involve just the present or the past, but are a progression that goes on starting from the past up to the present.

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<sup>4</sup> Political correctness. *Collins English Online Dictionary*, 2022. Accessed 18 July 2022.

What does political correctness actually mean? It depends on the person you are asking this question to and in what year. This is the reason the research is going to start from the very beginning, from the first time the term political correctness was used and recorded to the current 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 2.2 Political Correctness Historical Background

The Anglo-American expression politically correct designates an ideological and cultural orientation of extreme respect for all, in which any potential offence towards certain categories of people is avoided. According to this orientation, the opinions expressed must appear to be free from racial, ethnic, religious, gender, age, sexual orientation, or related to a person's physical or mental disabilities<sup>5</sup>.

Consideration to such issues originated in the United States of America, from where it spread to the rest of the Western world. Originating in left-wing circles in the 1930s, amplified by the 1968 uprisings and adopted by liberal and radical orientations, it took on significant dimensions in the late 1980s, when it became an opinion based on the recognition of the rights of cultures and aimed at eradicating from linguistic customs uses deemed offensive to any minority (it was then, e.g., that Afro-American replaced black, nigger and negro to designate the black people of America).

To regulate linguistic behavior, partly in response to escalating incidents of racism, verbal conduct regulations (so-called speech codes) were drawn up in American universities designed to discourage the use of insulting and offensive epithets.

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<sup>5</sup> Politically correct. *Encyclopedia Treccani*, 2011. [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/politically-correct\\_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/politically-correct_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/). Retrieved: 29/07/2022.

Despite its egalitarian and progressive ideals, political correctness has raised numerous controversies. Indeed, it is accused of linguistic conformism and ideological tyranny that limits freedom of expression. It is argued that, under the guise of claiming ideals of social justice, political correctness merely intervenes in the form (i.e., language) rather than the substance of problems, contributing to the nurturing of a new institutional hypocrisy<sup>6</sup>. Those, on the other hand, who adopt the ideological assumptions of political correctness reiterate the intent of such an orientation to establish preliminary rules for a civilized discussion of problems, without claiming to solve them<sup>6</sup>.

## 2.3 The Early Usage and Connotations

As the “Encyclopedia of Swearing”<sup>7</sup> argues, political correctness is “a form of self-censorship and conformity that has grown up, paradoxically, in free Western societies, especially in America” with the aim of eliminating prejudicial language, for this reason language becomes a crucial aspect of the phenomenon.

The starting point is the belief that posing challenges in the language side will bring to changes in social attitudes<sup>7</sup>. It will be seen later on in the chapter how truthful is the comment of the book’s author stating that political correctness derives from not so easily defined origins and pressures.

The term commonly appeared in Marxist-Leninist vocabulary after the Russian Revolution of 1917<sup>3</sup> to indicate full adherence to political orthodoxy, so

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<sup>6</sup> Canobbio, Sabina (2009), *Confini invisibili: l’interdizione linguistica nell’Italia contemporanea*, in *La lingua come cultura*, a cura di G. Iannàccaro & V. Matera, Torino, UTET, pp. 35-47.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Hughes, *An encyclopedia of swearing: The social history of oaths, profanity, foul language, and ethnic slurs in the English-speaking world*, Routledge, 2015, pp. 348-349.



with regard to how party saw politics, denoting conformity to the official Communist Party doctrine.

In an article by Fredrick T. Birchall called “Personal Liberty Vanishes in Reich”<sup>8</sup> submitted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1934 in Berlin, in the section “Must Hold Property Intact” The New York Times reported that Nazi Germany would grant permits to journalists who were “pure 'Aryans' whose views were politically correct”<sup>8</sup>. Even in this case, with a different background to the word, the conformity to the Party rules is emphasized again, in the sense of pureness of the race and beliefs of the Nazi Germany, so opposed to the previous mention of the Marxist-Leninist vocabulary.

As Herbert Kohl puts it in his paper “Uncommon differences: On Political Correctness, Core Curriculum and Democracy in Education”<sup>9</sup>, the term politically correct was already in use in the 1940s referred to the debates between Socialists and the American Communist Party. “Politically correct” was used against Communists in order to condemn their dogmatism that “led to defend party positions regardless of their moral substance”<sup>9</sup>.

Mao Zedong, in a 1957<sup>10</sup> speech, then translated and printed as a little red book, used massively the words “correct” and “incorrect” tied to ideas, and he stated that the best way to solve contradictions was through discussion, criticism and education, not through coercion and repression<sup>10</sup>.

The New Left was influenced by this little red book since it was used both from Black panthers and white radicals. But it was actually already in 1935

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<sup>8</sup> Birchall, Friedrich, T. Personal Liberty Vanishes in Reich; 'Duties' Supplant Rights as Nazis Reject Concept of Impartial Justice. REGIMENTATION COMPLETE Work, Play, Study, Speech and Property Rigidly Supervised by 'Totalitarian' State. 1934. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/1934/12/31/archives/personal-liberty-vanishes-in-reich-duties-supplant-rights-as-nazis.html?auth=linked-google1tap> Accessed 10 July 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Kohl, Herbert R.. “Uncommon Differences: On Political Correctness, Core Curriculum and Democracy in Education.” The Lion and the Unicorn 16 (1992): 1 - 16.

<sup>10</sup> Liao, Pin. Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966. First Edition. p.52 <http://www.marx2mao.com/PDFs/QCM66.pdf> Accessed: 10/07/2022.

that J.W. Krutch<sup>11</sup> asserted that the leftists seemed more prone to conservatism as they believed more in “correct opinions” instead of conflicting ideas and debate.

## **2.4 The Middle-Ages of Political Correctness**

Mao Zedong<sup>13</sup>, in 1963, asked himself a question regarding the correct ideas and where they came from, and concluded that thinking in a correct way was ultimately to accept the party line in a disciplined way, this led to the actual definition of the word “correct” in the expression “politically correct”. Since the word was connected to the political side of the discourse, the adjective could not be missed, this is the moment the current expression “politically correct” emerges, as to reflect the way of thinking of the group<sup>13</sup>.

Thanks to Ruth Perry’s<sup>17</sup> article, a change in the rhetoric of political correctness can be noticed during the 1960s due to the profound social changes in America as well as all over the world. She observed that “each side felt that the other side was standing in the way of liberation”<sup>17</sup>, and both of them – Republicans and Democrats – thought that using political correctness was beneficial to the whole society.

Perry<sup>17</sup> then sums up the first decades of the life of the expression with a couple of sentences, finding a common point of the different movements that arose in that period, such as the Black Power movement, the New Left, Feminists, Black Panthers, all had a common ground, they wanted to change the rules, they didn’t want to stick to what was pre-constituted, the famous quote

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<sup>11</sup> Krutch, Joseph Wood. “On Academic Freedom” in *The Nation* (April 17, 1935)

“question authority! Don’t trust anyone over 30!”<sup>12</sup> said by the activist Jack Weinberg in 1964 sums it up.

Every one of these movements felt different from the past, discontinuous, and visionary. In the framework depicted, the direct consequence was that each one of them envisioned “political correctness” in a different and unique way, with these premises, it seems difficult to find a harmonization of the objective of correctness. This is the reason why later on the expression became difficult to understand, seeing that it was “used every which way—straight, ironically, satirically, interrogatively.”<sup>17</sup> and the Right started to despise the term, while the left adopted it, it was ultimately “politicized”.

Consulting the “Safire’s Political Dictionary”<sup>13</sup> by William Safire, the first recent recorded attestation of the term politically correct seems to appear in the 1970 anthology “The Black Woman”<sup>14</sup>, a collection of stories edited by Toni Cade Bambara.

The book underlines other insightful moments in the history of “politically correct” such as the 1970s, in which PC was seen as “an assertion of liberal or progressive activists” and gives the notions above regarding “The Black Woman”, adding a quote from the anthology reported as: “Racism and chauvinism are anti-people. And a man cannot be politically correct and a chauvinist too”<sup>14</sup>. Since the 1980s the phrase changed in its purpose and became a controversial expression in the universities, utilized by conservatives to attack the conformist academics who were liberal in their way of communicating.

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<sup>12</sup> Daily Planet Staff. Don’t trust anyone over 30 unless it’s Jack Weinberg. The Berkeley Daily Planet, 6 April 2000

<sup>13</sup> Safire, William, *Safire’s Political Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Bambara, Toni Cade. *The Black Woman; an anthology*, New York, New American Library, 1970.

As Geoffrey Hughes<sup>7</sup> asserts, in the late 1980s the expression became the focus of major debates, most of them on campuses in America. It will be investigated later that in American campuses the question whether the language used was politically correct or not raised a series of issues, with codes of speech and behavior coupled with the antagonism of people asserting that these specifics were against the First Amendment of the Constitution<sup>7</sup>. It was said that politically correct language was an attempt at thought control such as the Orwellian one, and a new “McCarthyistic” witch hunt<sup>7</sup>.

As the *Encyclopedia of Swearing*<sup>7</sup> points out, the actual sources of complaints in the use of language, namely religious oaths and sexual insults, were not the major issues discussed. What happened instead, was that they concentrated on expressions related to ethnicities, disabilities, criminal behavior, for example it was preferred the term “underprivileged” in place of “poor.” Regarding ethnicities and the color of the skin, the adjectives “black” and “white” given before were changed, as a matter of fact the adjective “black” was avoided even in spheres in which it was not meant to address people, such as the black pieces in the game chess, while “white” was superseded by “Caucasian”.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, it was added the suffix -ism to a series of words with the purpose of underlining their negative connotation. “Racism” was already present in the 1930s, during the 1960s and 1970s were added the terms “sexism”, “ageism”, “ableism”, “lookism”.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.5 Politically Correct in the 1990s

Thanks to many authors, it can be seen how the term “politically correct” was utilized in many different forms and in contrasting ways: some use it as the actual wording suggests, others use it metaphorically, still others use it to mock other groups. In this comes to help the author Debra L. Schultz with her book “To Reclaim a Legacy of Diversity: Analyzing the "Political Correctness" Debates in Higher Education.”<sup>15</sup> This gives us the opportunity to start the conversation on universities and campuses: here the debate on political correctness was and still is crucial, here is where some of the most lit arguments have taken place. Even the writer points out that the expression “political correctness” was used in so many topics and with so many shades that “fostered confusion and inhibited reasoned discussion”<sup>15</sup>. In fact, it becomes difficult to understand through the coverage of media what was actually seen as “politically correct” and what on the contrary was pointed to mock the utilization of it.

The author states that “under the catch-all of "p.c."<sup>15</sup>, critics attacked multiculturalism, women's studies, ethnic studies, curriculum reform, affirmative action, and other efforts to create inclusive campus climates” without distinguishing between these very different topics, that is why in the public thought “‘p.c.’ became synonymous with attempts to dictate behavior and stifle free speech”<sup>15</sup>.

Going on in the journey until nowadays, the wording became a way of mocking and started to be seen as an exaggeration, this is the meaning of the book “The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook” by Christopher Cerf and Henry Beard (1993)<sup>16</sup>, that gave an ironic definition to a catalogue of words, suggesting different wordings in order to be “politically

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<sup>15</sup> Schultz, Debra L. et al. *To Reclaim a Legacy of Diversity: Analyzing the "Political Correctness" Debates in Higher Education*. National Council for Research on Women, New York, NY. 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Cerf, Christopher; Beard, Henry. *The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook*, Villard Books, 1993.

correct”, such as changing “dead” in “terminally inconvenienced”, or “dishonest” in “ethically misguided”<sup>16</sup>.

Furthermore, the Safire’s Political Dictionary<sup>13</sup> adds some examples of words in the Handbook above<sup>16</sup> that actually needed correction, such as “fireman”, “policeman”, “mailman”, which were changed into the subsequent versions: “firefighter”, “police officer”, “postal worker”. Last but not least, in this series of examples it is quoted “Mankind”, with a clear accent toward the masculine side, now expressed with the term “humanity”, which can encompass more clearly all the people<sup>13</sup>.

The preview of the book “The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook”<sup>16</sup> is already telling the reader what to expect, a satire to the political correctness, that seems to be widespread for the first time during the 1990s. In fact, the preface warns the reader with the following words:

*Welcome to the nineties. But you better watch what you say.  
If you're not politically correct, not even your pet-oops, your animal companion -will  
love you anymore.  
Consider this list. If you use any of the words in the left-hand column, you're in danger  
of being written off as hopelessly ableist. Ageist. Ethnocentric or Eurocentric.  
Hegemonic. Heterosexist, logocentric, lookist, patriarchal, or phallogentric. Racist,  
sexist, sizeist, or speciesist. Or-worse still! - all of the above.*<sup>11</sup>

What follows the warning is a series of nouns and adjectives changed ironically in a “politically correct” fashion, with the intent of mocking the whole subject.

Still in 1992, Ruth Perry in the article “Historically correct”<sup>17</sup> depicts the history of the expression under similar circumstances. In the headline, she argues that “*the phrase ‘politically correct’ [...] has glimmered and vanished again as successive movements for social change have stumbled across the uncertain*

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<sup>17</sup> Perry, Ruth. *Historically correct*, The Women's Review of Books, Vol. 9, No. 5 (Feb. 1992), pp. 15-16.

*terrain. [...] Like a recurring refrain in a song, or an incantatory line in a poem, its meaning changes each time it appears..*"<sup>17</sup>

Regarding feminist movements, it is of importance their insights in the framework of this analysis, in that, the author Ellen Willis in the third chapter of her book "No more nice girls"<sup>18</sup> (1992) looks inside the feminist movement of her period asserting in brackets that also the feminists used the term "politically correct", and they used it in an ironic sense when referring to the anti-pornography movement.

In fact, the anti-pornography movement at the time was trying to define what was a "feminist sexuality"<sup>18</sup>, but the feminist movement was against the idea that there should have been such a concept.

Keeping in mind universities, in October 1990 the reporter Richard Bernstein returned from a reportage in Berkley about students' activism and authored an article in the New York Times called "The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct"<sup>19</sup>. He pointed out in his article his already manifest aversion toward the flux of political correctness started in universities, as he stated that campuses were threatened by "a growing intolerance, a closing of debate, a pressure to conform." He focused on the fact that there was an "unofficial ideology of the university"<sup>19</sup>, in that for example "Biodegradable garbage bags get the PC seal of approval"<sup>20</sup>

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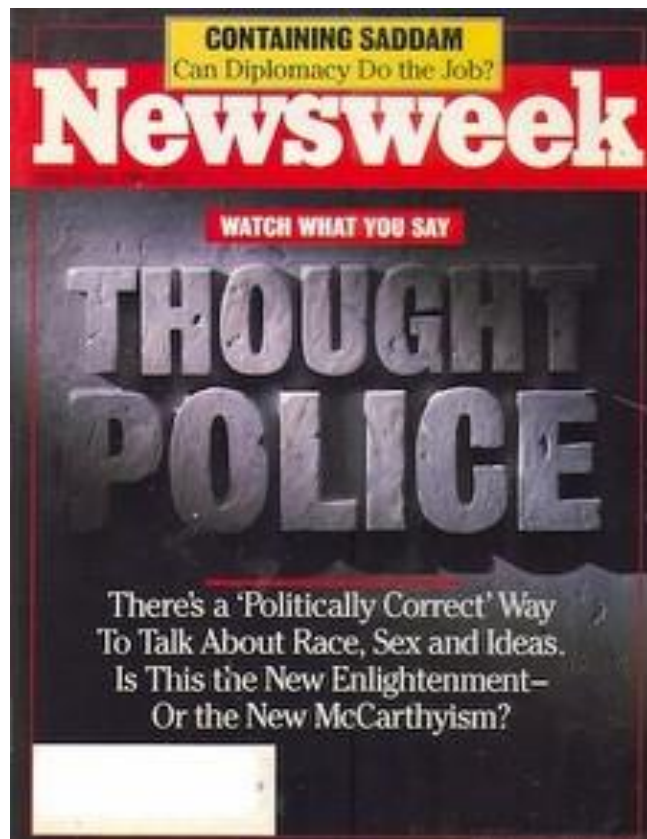
<sup>18</sup> Willis, Ellen, 'Toward a Feminist Sexual Revolution', No More Nice Girls: Countercultural Essays (Minneapolis, MN, 2012; online edn, Minnesota Scholarship Online, 24 Aug. 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816680795.003.0003>, accessed 29 Aug. 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Bernstein, Richard. Ideas & Trends; The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct. The New York Times. 28 Oct. 1990. <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/28/weekinreview/ideas-trends-the-rising-hegemony-of-the-politically-correct.html> Accessed: 20/07/2022

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

The article abovementioned “The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct”<sup>19</sup> caused a strong reaction all over America, as a consequence many other articles popped out to denounce the new view in universities<sup>21</sup>.

Some of the most important articles about this theme are written by columnists who denounced the way politically correct was viewed. An example is Dorothy Rabinowitz, who described in the Wall Street the situation as the “brave new world of ideological zealotry”<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 1:** Newsweek “Thought Police” Cover 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1990<sup>23</sup>

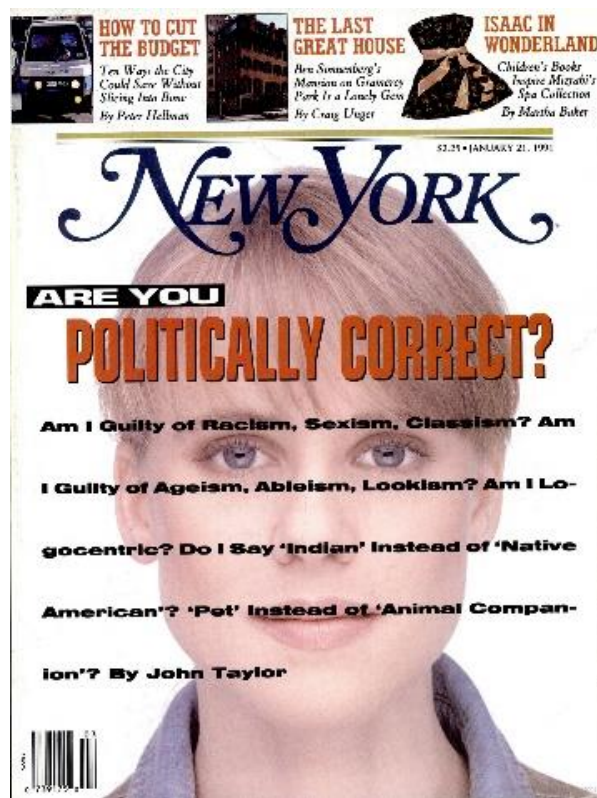
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<sup>21</sup> Weigel, Morgan. Political Correctness: how the right invented a phantom enemy- The Guardian, 30 Nov. 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/30/political-correctness-how-the-right-invented-phantom-enemy-donald-trump> Accessed: 19/07/2022

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.



On the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1990, a Newsweek cover puts it very clearly with the title in capital letters “THOUGHT POLICE”<sup>23</sup>, the cover asks a rhetorical question, that after the capital letters title seems self-answering, which is “There’s a ‘politically correct’ way to talk about race, sex and ideas. Is this the New Enlightenment – or the New McCarthyism?”<sup>23</sup>, using McCarthyism to imply that the focus of politically correct would have been to restrict criticism as a thing. As a matter of fact, as Scatamburlo states, the connotation of McCarthyism was actually not correct, in that the Senator was actually followed mostly by Right-wingers, the same Right-wingers that in the 1990s were against political correctness<sup>28</sup>.



**Figure 2** New York Magazine Newspaper cover, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1991<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Adler, Perry. Thought Police. Newsweek, 24 Dec. 1991 <https://reason.com/2015/01/30/what-the-hell-does-politically-correct-m/> Accessed: 17/07/2022

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, John. (1991, January 21). Are you politically correct?. New York. Pages 32-40. [https://books.google.it/books?id=PukCAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gb\\_s\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.it/books?id=PukCAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gb_s_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) Accessed: 18/07/2022

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1991, another cover in the New York Times pops out with the title “Are you politically correct?”<sup>25</sup> reporting a series of questions regarding how a person should be labeled, if it should be labeled. On page 32 starts the actual article<sup>25</sup> the cover anticipated, an 8-page-long report on the topic at hand, that was spreading at a faster rate than before, this accelerating rate occurring after the publication of the above spoken “The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct”<sup>19</sup>.

The article investigated what was already on everyone’s mouth: political correctness. And it does so in a critical sense, so that John Taylor demonizes the manner in which the politically correct language was conducted in universities.

In fact, he gives the example of a professor, Thernstrom, who taught the lecture “Peopling of America”, a course on the history of race relations in the USA<sup>25</sup>. By Tylor, he was said to have “solid liberal democratic credentials”<sup>25</sup>, regardless of that he was accused by two students to be a racist for the way he was conducting the course and addressing the various ethnicities.

As a result of that, he decided to drop the course at Harvard University since he did not know how to behave and was afraid to be labeled as a racist from the next-course students. The article gives also a list passed by students as a flyer of what they thought it should have been changed, which can be found below:

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<sup>25</sup> Taylor, John. (1991, January 21). Are you politically correct?. New York. Pages 32-40. [https://books.google.it/books?id=PukCAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.it/books?id=PukCAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) Accessed: 18/07/2022

SPECIFIC MANIFESTATIONS OF OPPRESSION:

As you can see from the above definition of oppression, people can be oppressed in many ways and for many reasons because they are perceived to be different. As groups of people begin the process of realizing that they are oppressed, and why, new words tend to be created to express the concepts that the existing language cannot. Thus, some of the words below may be familiar to you while others may be new.

**ABLEISM:**- oppression of the differently abled, by the temporarily able.

**AGEISM:**- oppression of the young and the old, by young adults and the middle-aged in the belief that others are "incapable" or unable to take care of themselves.

**ANTI-SEMITISM:**- Oppression of Jewish peoples in the belief that they are members of an inferior group because of ethnic identity and religion

**CLASSISM:**- oppression of the working-class and non-propertied, by the upper and middle-class.

**ETHNOCENTRISM:**- oppression of cultures other than the dominant one in the belief that the dominant way of doing things is the superior way.

**HETEROSEXISM:**- oppression of those of sexual orientations other than heterosexual, such as gays, lesbians, and bisexuals; this can take place by not acknowledging their existence. Homophobia is the fear of lesbians, gays, or bisexuals.

**LOOKISM:**- the belief that appearance is an indicator of a person's value; the construction of a standard for beauty/attractiveness; and oppression through stereotypes and generalizations of both those who do not fit that standard and those who do.

**RACISM:**- the belief that one group of people are superior to another and therefore have the right to dominate, and the power to institute and enforce their prejudices and discriminations.

**RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION:**- oppression of religions other than the dominant one in the belief that the dominant way of worship is the only correct way.

**SEXISM:**- stereotyping of males and females on the basis of their gender; the oppression of women by society in the belief that gender is an indication of ability.

Don't write

Figure 3: New York Newspaper 21<sup>st</sup> of January, 1991<sup>25</sup>

In the list, most of the terms considered by the students are also challenged nowadays or not utilized anymore. For this reason, the 1990s is the decade in which the expression "politically correct" started to have the connotation that can be found in the decades thereafter.

The article divided in sections shows the macro-arguments of the politically correct movements during that period, specifically the "gender feminists", who are considered in "a form of psychosis, is a slogan-filled machinery" by Paglia, and "Afrocentrism" considered an "even more extreme wing of the politically correct" by Taylor<sup>25</sup>.

In the 1990s, a digression is due to the linguistic importance in the debate regarding political correctness. The linguist Robin Lakoff, a professor emerita at

the University of California, drafted the book “The Language War”<sup>26</sup> in 2000. In chapter 3 she examines the nature of definitions, which tend to be biased, and the result of political correctness until 2000.

She asserts that: “*Political correctness*’ has been the epithet of choice used to discredit a wide array of discursive practices generally thought of as *lefty*”<sup>26</sup>, she provides then a brief list of topics in which a change was asked to happen, quoting:

- *the development of campus codes against hate speech*
- *the questioning of the established literary canon*
- *attacks on, and examinations of, sexism and racism*
- *the adoption of self-descriptions originated by the minorities they described (e.g., "woman" for "girl" or "lady"; "African American" for "Negro"; "gay" for "homosexual"; "Asian" for "Oriental")*
- *the deconstructionist/postmodern doubting of the knowability or reality of historical truth and the trustworthiness of authority*<sup>26</sup>

Political correctness, in her analysis, is needed to give representation to groups that did not have the possibility to create language and did not feel represented by the pre-existing words. And this is the reason, according to Lakoff, for the hatred towards this expression by the people who had the unique right in forming words previously.<sup>26</sup>

Lakoff<sup>26</sup> reaffirms what was seen previously related to groups: she recaps the Black Panthers movement underlining their choice or reappropriation of “Black” in the 1960s as an example, and the recontextualization of their status made by women.

The book is titled “The language war”, and also in the case of politically correct it has been noticed the struggle to reach the appropriation of this term, in

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<sup>26</sup> Robin Tolmach-Lakoff. 2000. The Language War. Berkeley: University of California Press. P. 91.

fact, as Lakoff puts it, “The New Right virtually copyrighted the term as its own, yet they did not originate it, but borrowed it from the enemy, the Old Left.”<sup>26</sup>

Starting from the Leninist Left, Paul Berman in his book “Debating P.C.: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses”<sup>27</sup> argues that, at the very beginning, the phrasing “politically correct” was an approval by the Leninist left to affirm that the person in question was following the party line. Then the meaning changed when adopted by leftists do “denote someone whose line-toeing fervor was too much to bear”<sup>27</sup>. Only in a subsequent moment, due to the debate over political correctness, people started to use it in conjunction with irony, and not related to radicalism.

Already in 1992 Berman acknowledged that “something big and important is under discussion”<sup>27</sup>, since the debate was continuing to grow and still is, but another thing is to understand at the time the actual meaning of the phrasing, in fact it was not possible for him to actually describe what this big and important “something”<sup>27</sup> was.

When the expression migrated from the left to the right wing it changed again in its essence, from the teasing inside the party observed before in the left, then it became a divisive matter, aiming at discerning “us versus them”<sup>26</sup>.

The New Left accused the conservatives to use political correctness to change, deviate the debate to the expressions in order to avoid talking about the compelling matters of discrimination, gender class, and inequalities, which were the core point of political correctness.

In fact, as can be seen in the book “Soldiers of misfortune: the New Right's culture war and the politics of political correctness”<sup>28</sup> by Scatamburlo Valerie L., it did not stop just with the New Right’s compelling speeches, it went

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<sup>27</sup> Berman, Paul. *Debating P.C.: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*. Delta, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Scatamburlo, Valerie L, *Soldiers of misfortune Soldiers of misfortune: the New Right's culture war and the politics of political correctness*, New York: Peter Lang, 1998. Pp. 130-140.

on with the media, as she puts it “the media undoubtedly played a significant role in advancing the campaign against P.C. within the larger public sphere and helped to popularize the backlash even beyond the New Right’s expectations”<sup>28</sup>.

From now on, the analysis is going to become fuzzier because of the role of media even stronger thanks to the internet dilating into the public sphere. Thanks to that, the debate over political correctness became of national interest rather than being delegated just to the academic side. Even the president of the United States of America George Bush took on the debate in 1991 and condemned what he called “the Left-wing plot”<sup>28</sup> to take over universities. This assertion gave credit and intensified the crusade of the New Right against the forces of political correctness.

Politically correct was seen by the media as the enemy of free expression, so that they saw themselves as the protectors of this freedom. Scatamburlo believes that media were the ultimate motive for the creation of a mass misconception of political correctness, in that they did not provide an “objective account of campus politics,” with the creation of the myth of a political correctness invasion on the campuses, they were the ones who “launched the issue into popular consciousness.

Hughes<sup>7</sup>, through the analysis of the year 1994, takes into account the essay “The Culture Wars on the American Campus” by John Anette in the book *The War of Words*<sup>29</sup>. The script asserts that politically correct language, to avoid judgmental terms, prefers to use polysyllabic euphemistic substitutions, some examples might be:

- visually impaired, instead of blind
- sex worker, preferred to prostitute
- substance dependence, in place of drug addiction
- disabled, instead of cripple or spastic<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Dunant, Sarah, ed. *The War of Words: The Political Correctness Debate*. London: Virago, 1994.

These modifications provoked different outcomes, some of which questioning the efficacy of these changes, which are perceived to be more cosmetic than efficient. The perfect example to that is Barbara Ehrenreich, author and political activist, who questioned these choices, stating that outlawing certain terms does not change the underlying sexist attitude regarding that matter, adding that purifying the language is not the revolution.

The author Hughes<sup>7</sup> reckon that Barbara Ehrenreich could be right in the fact that substitutions will not change mental attitudes but draw the possibility that these choices might serve the purpose of raising consciousness in those matters.

## **2.6 Political Correctness in Recent Times**

After 1995 a substantial decrease on the debate occurred, with not little difficulties in retrieving information about the changes of the expression usage. Retrieving data from different sources in which political correctness has been used in an endemic way to explain other socio-linguistic phenomenon, it was possible to understand the context of the usage and the difficulties people had in distinguishing the “politically correct way” to express themselves and where these decisions brought them.

In the paper “Political Correctness”<sup>30</sup> by Stephen Morris, for example, PC was seen as a concerning matter, in that it was likely the misunderstanding of a discourse in which PC was used. in Morris’ words political correctness is related to the phenomenon explained as follows: “because certain statements will lead listeners to make adverse inferences about the type of the speaker, speakers have an incentive to alter what they say to avoid that inference.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Morris, Stephen. “Political Correctness.” *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 109, no. 2, 2001, pp. 231–65. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.1086/319554>. Accessed 4 Sep. 2022.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

The author states that there are two ways this is going to end, there is the version in which the speaker uses different words to convey the message, but the listeners are able nonetheless to invert the signals (words) and still deduce the correct message conveyed, this way will be the “harmless” option in which the welfare consequences will be few: the labels will change but the information given will be conveyed in the right way. The second option is the one Morris is concerned about, in which the speaker uses different words to avoid the adverse inference, but this results in the loss of real information

This paper is concerned with the potentially more important version, where speakers’ attempts to avoid the adverse inference led to the loss of real information, as a result “all parties may lose from the suppression of information due to political correctness”<sup>32</sup>.

In the following page Morris<sup>33</sup> argues that reputational concerns of the speaker can lead to the loss of socially valuable information. But he also asserts that reputational concerns can serve some social purpose. As a result, “any welfare losses associated with political correctness must be set against the benefits of reputational concerns”<sup>34</sup>.

Bringing another example of the thought during recent times, in 2018 has been conducted a debate<sup>35</sup> by the Intelligence Squared U.S on political correctness on campuses. With four debaters, two of them against the motion and the other two for the motion. The debaters for the motion to stop safe spaces are David L. Hudson Jr., a First Amendment expert and law professor at Vanderbilt University, and Suzanne Nossel, a leading voice on free expression issues<sup>36</sup>. On the “against” side there are Ashutosh Bhagwat, the Martin Luther King Jr. professor of law at UC Davis, and Michael S. Roth, the president of Wesleyan

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<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> Intelligence Squared U.S. (2018). Trigger Warning: Safe Spaces Are Dangerous. <https://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/debate/trigger-warning-safe-spaces-are-dangerous/#/> Accessed: 04/09/2022.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.



University and is known as a historian, curator, author, and public advocate for liberal education<sup>37</sup>.

As a result of the ninety minutes debate, the main points used for the motion by David L. Hudson Jr. and Suzanne Nossel were:

- *By fostering a campus culture where some ideas are deemed “dangerous,” safe spaces restrict free speech and intellectual diversity by silencing those whose views are unpopular or don’t conform to the status quo.*
- *Rather than promoting campus unity, safe spaces isolate like-minded students and divide campuses around issues of race, gender, and sexuality. Further, they prevent students from different cultural, economic, and intellectual backgrounds from coming together for productive and meaningful exchange of ideas.*
- *Trigger warnings and safe spaces infantilize young adults, promote victimhood, and create a learning environment that deprives students of a complete, intellectually balanced education.*<sup>38</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum, Ashutosh Bhagwat and Michael S. Roth, advocating against the motion, supported the following points:

- *Safe spaces promote free speech and free expression. When students have access to supportive and empathetic communities on campus, they are empowered to speak up in class or in other intellectual forums.*
- *Today’s student body is the most culturally and racially diverse in history. Safe spaces offer traditionally marginalized students an opportunity to learn without fear of hate speech, bigotry, racism, or other forms of hostility that too often prevent them from being fully immersed in the academic community.*
- *Trigger warnings and safe spaces foster resilience in students. For victims of PTSD, assault, and other forms of violence, these tools allow them to*

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<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

*engage with potentially troubling content in ways that are healthy and productive.*<sup>39</sup>

The debate can be valuable to understand the sentiment of recent times, underlined by a strong division between the importance of using politically correct means of expression both in language and in facts, and the risks people face when using a PC approach to life on campuses and in everyday life.

After a thorough inquiry, it seems that the scientific research did not investigate the topic further after the middle 1990s. For this reason, a different type of investigation has been conducted based on the generalized sentiment of the 20 years following. The debate started to lighten up again around 2016, with the appearance of Donald Trump in the U.S. political scenario, which led to an even worse depiction of political correctness, being Donald Trump completely against the usage of such PC terms.

When he ran for the presidency of the United States, he said in an appearance on “Meet the press” in August 2015:

“We have to straighten out our country, we have to make our country great again, and we need energy and enthusiasm,” “And this political correctness is just absolutely killing us as a country. You can’t say anything. Anything you say today, they’ll find a reason why it’s not good.”<sup>40</sup>

Most of the Donald Trump transcript found depict always the same thought: political correctness is against freedom of speech, and it is something no one should follow. This is also the case for his voters and for the majority of journals and articles about this topic. The term politically correct is utilized more by people criticizing it than by the ones believing in this form of speech.

Today the topic is still ongoing, with many articles debating on whether political correctness is effectively shaping minds, or it is just mere manners.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>40</sup> Kennedy, R. W., Kennedy, R. (2021). *The Immaculate Mistake: How Evangelicals Gave Birth to Donald Trump*. Stati Uniti: Cascade Books.

### **III. Difference in Perception Between Selected Countries**

The focus of this chapter will be on the ways political correctness is seen throughout different countries, and the noticeable differences and similarities found based on the country and the political spectrum of reference.

The analysis will be conducted taking into consideration different polls and analyzing the aspects relevant for the research, in order of appearance in the chapter:

- 2019-2020 Pew Research poll, called “Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive in U.S., Western Europe”, answered by 4,069 respondents in their country of belonging, which are the U.S., UK, France, and Germany. The data collected are part of a research on the broader spectrum of the views about national identity becoming more inclusive in the U.S. and in Western Europe.
- 23 December 2020 - 8 January 2021 Ipsos survey, called “culture wars in the UK”, conducted in 28 countries and published in June 2021 with a total of 23,004 participants from Singapore, the United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, Turkey, and twenty-two other countries.
- February 06 - March 15, 2019, National Tracking crosstabulation results poll, conducted in the United States by Morning Consult on political correctness, with a U.S. national sample of 13,206 Adults<sup>53</sup>.

In the following chapter will be used only the graphical representations thought to be useful for the purpose of the topic discussed, while it will be excluded the figures and data related to culture wars in general. The most relevant issues will be the differences in perception of political correctness by diverse ethnic groups and political ideologies.

### 3.1 Different Views in U.S., UK, France, and Germany

It is notable the difference between countries in the perception of social norms, in particular political correctness. During the research were used some graphs perceived to be useful in the understanding of the topic by the Pew Research Center<sup>41</sup>, that is an American study center based in Washington that provides information on social problems, public opinion, demographic trends about the United States and the world in general.

For this reason, the graphs shown will always consider the United States, moreover the countries analyzed are mostly Germany, U.K and France, while no Italian analysis will be found nor will be included in the study. For this reason, it will not be possible a conclusive generalization on the results shown, but it will be nonetheless useful both to understand the differences and similarities of these four countries, and to compare the outcomes with the subsequent researches found in the next sections of the chapter.

The graphs shown in this section are among the findings of a Pew Research Center survey conducted from the 10<sup>th</sup> of November to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 2020, among 4,069 adults in France, Germany, the UK, and the United States. The results shown in the figures will only be the sum of the respondents who answered the question, the Pew Research Center left out from the survey the people who did not respond to the question considered.<sup>42</sup>

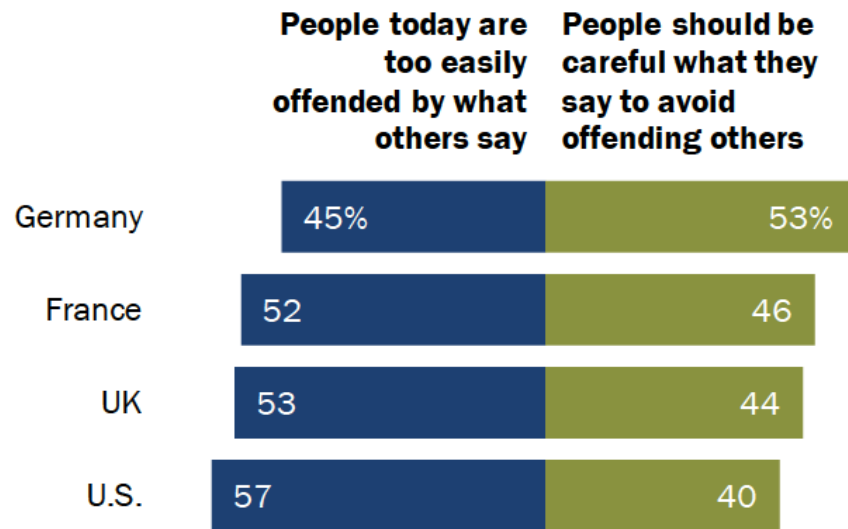
In this section the focus will be on the parts of the Pew Research Center investigation in which all the four countries abovementioned are included, so as to give a general overview of the distinctions between them.

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<sup>41</sup> Pew Research Center. Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive in U.S., Western Europe. 4 May 2021. [https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/05/05/views-about-national-identity-becoming-more-inclusive-in-us-western-europe/pg\\_2021-05-05\\_cultural-grievances\\_3-04/](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/05/05/views-about-national-identity-becoming-more-inclusive-in-us-western-europe/pg_2021-05-05_cultural-grievances_3-04/) Accessed: 01/09/2022

<sup>42</sup> Silver, Laura; Fagan, Moira; Connaughton, Aidan; Mordecai, Mara. Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive in U.S., Western Europe, Report, May 5, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/05/05/views-about-national-identity-becoming-more-inclusive-in-us-western-europe/> Accessed: 01/09/2022.

*% who say ...*



**Figure 4** Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q12. “Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive in U.S., Western Europe”<sup>42</sup>

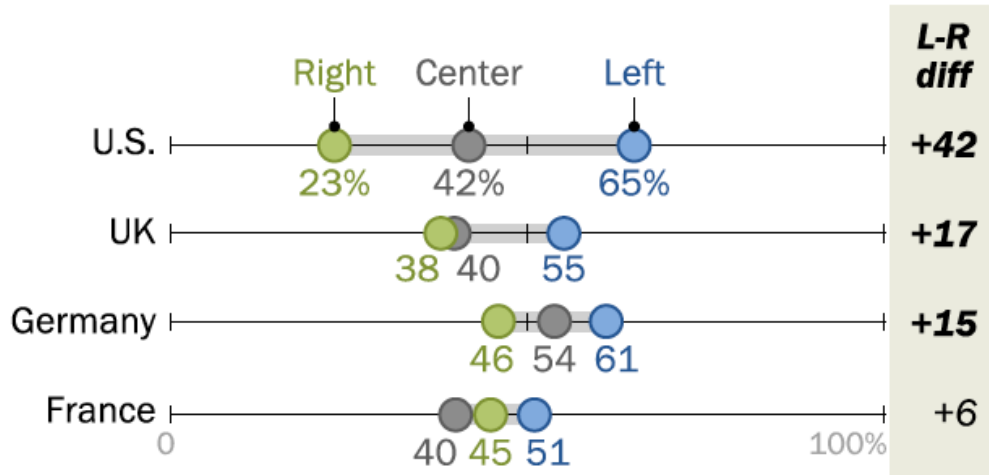
In the graph above (Figure 4), it can be noticed the largest difference to be between Germany and U.S, with the former more concerned about the possibility to offend other people or groups of people, and the latter asserting that people are too easily offended by the opinions of others. Even if they differ by just 12 percentile points, it is nonetheless relevant in that from the German side they reach a majority in the carefulness regarding what they say (53%), on the contrary in the United States the voters reached a majority (57%) on the opposite of the spectrum.

Indeed, in Germany 53% of the respondents argued that people ought to be careful with their wording in order not to offend other people, this was attested only at 40% in the case of U.S., in which the majority of 57% of the respondents believed that people are too easily offended and just 40% think that people should be careful with their choices of wording.

In the middle positions there are France and the UK with balanced results between respondents believing the delivery of the speech should be careful (France 52% and UK 53% of the respondents) and the others arguing that it is

the receiver of the speech to be too easily offended (France 46% and UK 44% of the respondents)

*% who say people should **be careful what they say to avoid offending others***



**Figure 5:** Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q12. “Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive in U.S., Western Europe”<sup>43</sup>

The second chart of the section (Figure 5) falls in line with the background of political correctness seen in the second chapter, in which it was clear the different opinion on the topic by the Left, more prone to use politically correct speech, and the Right, already in the past and then with President Trump, who saw political correctness as the degeneration of free speech advocating for the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Indeed, considering the four countries, the strongest polarization is noticeable in the U.S., where Left and Right differ with 42 percentile points, with

<sup>43</sup> Pew Research Center. Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive in U.S., Western Europe. 4 May 2021. [https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/05/05/views-about-national-identity-becoming-more-inclusive-in-us-western-europe/pg\\_2021-05-05\\_cultural-grievances\\_3-04/](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/05/05/views-about-national-identity-becoming-more-inclusive-in-us-western-europe/pg_2021-05-05_cultural-grievances_3-04/) Accessed: 01/09/2022

the Left being substantively more concerned to avoid offenses while talking attesting a 65% of people believing so.

The Right voters, on the contrary, believed to be the case only for 23% of the respondents. A different case is made in France, with a distance of just 6% between the Left and the Right, both concerned with the usage of words, accordingly the Left stops at 51%, while the Right at 45%, concluding a homogenization of thought between the two parties.

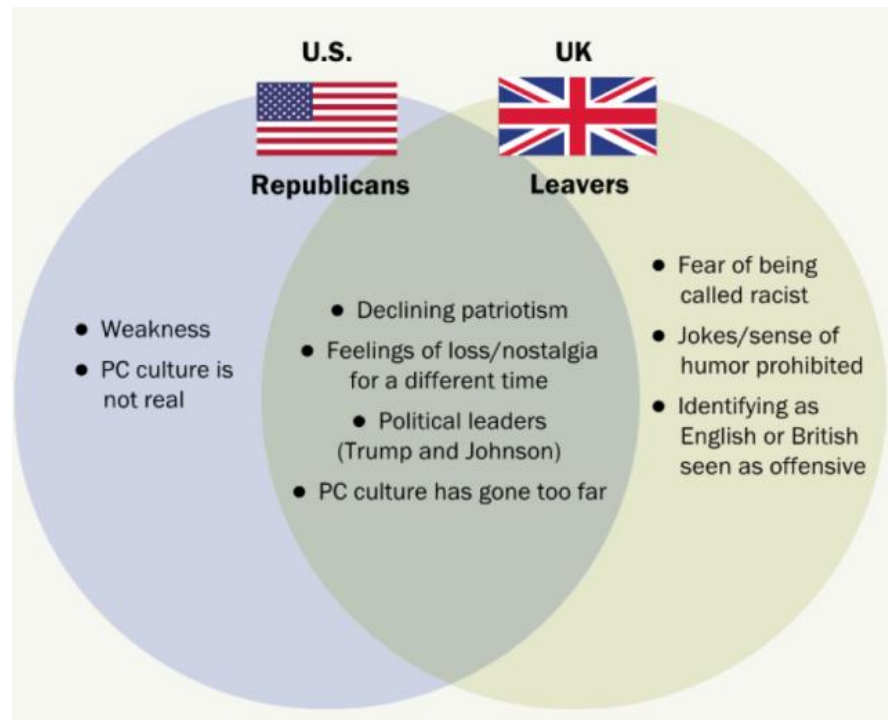
Germany and UK respondents gave comparable results, not too far between Left and Right, with the Right respondents of Germany being at 38% and the United Kingdom ones being at 46%, on the Left side, in Germany 61% believes people should be careful with their opinion, in UK 55% of them holds this thought.

What is noticeable is the compared results of the four countries, in fact, all the Left respondents are above 50% and over the results of the Right ones. This means that, in all the four cases, the Left is more prone to believe that people should be concerned with avoiding offenses with what they say.

A point should be made regarding the Center voters, which falls always in the middle beside the case of France, in which it is the more intransigent regarding the thought of taking into consideration the possible offences to other groups of people while speaking. In UK, the Center respondents voted almost identically as the Left, and also in the case of the United States they feel more linked to the Left string of thought, while in Germany the Center is slightly leaning towards the Right opinions on the matter.

### 3.2 Case Study: U.S. - UK Similarities on the Political Spectrum

Targeting now British and American focus groups during the same study of the Pew Research Center<sup>41</sup>, the following graphical representations will show the breadth of ideas shared by focus groups participants.



**Figure 6:** Focus groups conducted Aug. 19- Nov. 20, 2019.  
Source: “Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive in U.S., Western Europe”<sup>44</sup>

Figure 2 shows the differences and similarities between U.S Republicans focus group and UK Leavers focus group regarding politically correct culture.

UK Leavers and U.S. Republicans emphasized the negative aspects of politically correct culture or, as they put it, “cancel culture.” These groups stressed what they perceived to be a declining patriotism due to PC culture.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem.



UK Leavers pointed to stereotypes they felt: people proud to be English are seen as racists, and people can't say anything anymore, such as the perceived prohibition of jokes. Comparably, Republicans in the U.S. discussed declining respect for the American flag, the Pledge of Allegiance and "the pride of America and being an American... being dwindled away."<sup>42</sup> The Republicans think that, due to political correctness, people show weakness and that politically correct culture is not an actual reality.

The pattern seen as common by the research is that both Republicans and Leavers feel a declining patriotism because of political correctness, indeed, some participants pointed with nostalgia to a time when people were not "forced to tolerate things in this country."<sup>42</sup> Moreover, they both have as leaders of reference people contrary to PC, namely Trump and Johnson, and, as their leaders, they think political correctness has gone too far.

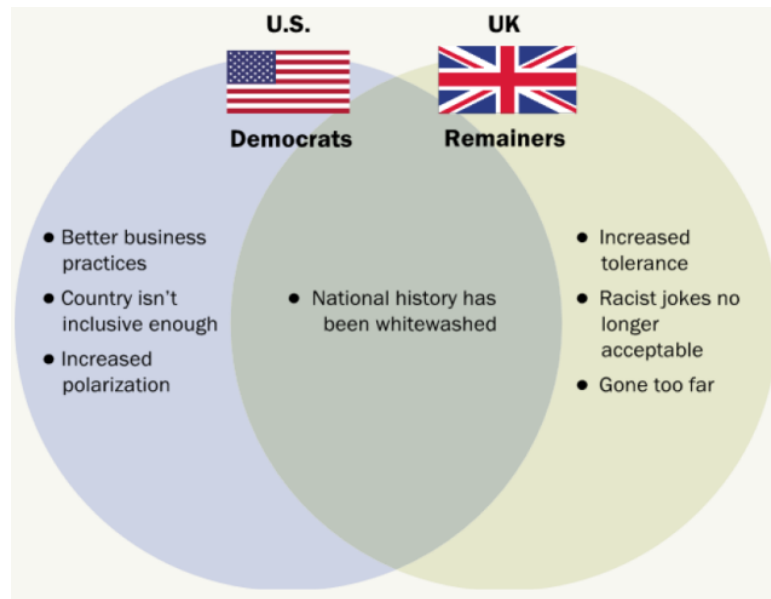
UK Leavers and U.S. Republicans brought up Donald Trump and Prime Minister Boris Johnson in the context of PC culture. Leavers looked to Johnson as a positive example of someone advocating against the PC culture, while Republicans mentioned situations in which Trump and his supporters were victimized by PC culture advocates<sup>45</sup>.

However, some aspects of politically correct culture were characterized in a different way in the U.S. and the UK. Indeed, UK participants talked about the role of media in enforcing PC culture and the prohibition of certain jokes for being racist. For instance, UK Leavers group said they "should be able to make a racist joke, but it might not be perceived as a joke."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem.



**Figure 7:** Focus groups conducted Aug. 19- Nov. 20, 2019.  
 Source: “Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive  
 in U.S., Western Europe”<sup>47</sup>

The opposite side of the debate is composed by the U.S. Democrats and the UK Remainers, which share similar views between them, and opposite ones compared to the formers. Some Democrats and Remainers discussed how PC culture has led to a reckoning with national history. Some UK participants discussed the necessity of renaming statues and monuments, one U.S. Democrat stated that shameful events “did happen and it affects our country and how people think of other people and ourselves.”<sup>48</sup>

Remainer and Democratic groups also focused on different issues when it came to PC culture. Remainers thought PC culture was the reason there is more tolerance in society. One UK participant discussed racist cartoons from the 1970s, arguing that “if you were to see it nowadays, you’d think ‘oof’ because things have just changed ... it’s stamped out now.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, one group of Democrats argued that one “instance where cancel culture is helping” is through boycotts of certain products to combat harmful business practice abroad.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

Some Democrats and Remainers were not on the side of their groups, arguing that they were worried that PC culture could end up being harmful. Some Remainers thought PC culture had “gone to an extreme” and that it meant always being afraid of offending somebody. Democrats worried that the “weaponization of difference” could exacerbate polarization.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.3 Generalized Feelings Toward Political Correctness

The multinational market research and consulting firm Ipsos conducted a survey on 28 markets, namely Singapore, the United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, Turkey, and 22 other markets between 23 December 2020 and 8 January 2021<sup>52</sup>. The data they used is weighted so that each country’s sample composition reflects the demographic profile of the adult population, the total respondents in the 28 countries are 23,004.

The survey “Culture wars around the world: how countries perceive divisions”<sup>52</sup> contains a relevant question for our analysis. Indeed, in the first section dedicated to political correctness, it has been posed the issue regarding whether people are too easily offended, or whether people need to change the way they talk to be more sensitive to those from different backgrounds, in these terms:

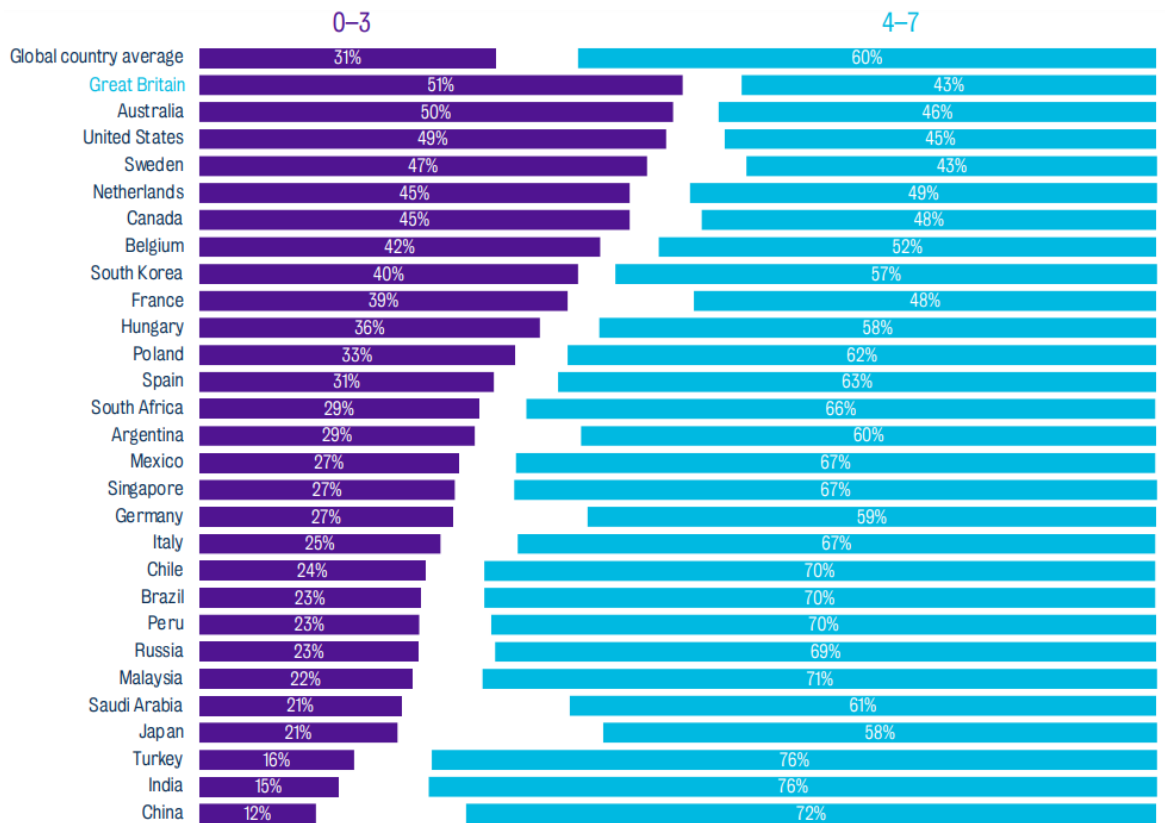
*“Some people think that the way people talk needs to be more sensitive to people from different backgrounds. Others think that many people are just too easily offended. Where would you place yourself on this scale? 0 – people are too easily offended, 7 – need to change the way people talk”<sup>52</sup>.*

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<sup>51</sup> Pew Research Center. Views About National Identity Becoming More Inclusive in U.S., Western Europe. 4 May 2021. [https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/05/05/views-about-national-identity-becoming-more-inclusive-in-us-western-europe/pg\\_2021-05-05\\_cultural-grievances\\_3-04/](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/05/05/views-about-national-identity-becoming-more-inclusive-in-us-western-europe/pg_2021-05-05_cultural-grievances_3-04/) Accessed: 01/09/2022

<sup>52</sup> Duffy B, Murkin G, Skinner G, Benson R, Gottfried G, Hesketh R et al. *Culture wars around the world: how countries perceive divisions*. 2021, Report. <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-054>

The results given by the respondents of the question are shown below, with a division per country, with the addition of the global country average.



**Figure 8:** Culture wars in the UK | June 2021<sup>52</sup>.  
23,004 adults interviewed online between 23 Dec 2020 and 8 Jan 2021

Considering Ipsos graph (Figure 5), when asked to rate their feelings about political correctness on a scale, the respondents who felt the strongest on the issue that people are too easily offended are the UK ones. This result, compared to the previous study<sup>42</sup> considered (Figure 4), shows similar findings with a majority of the people contrary to adopt a more politically correct language.

Only those in Australia (50%) and the U.S. (49%) feel as strongly regarding the matter, and this is still in accordance with the previous polls<sup>42</sup>

(Figure 4), even if it is slightly more mitigated attesting the U.S. at 49%, while the previous one attested this thought at 57%. Similarly, other countries, namely Sweden (47%), Canada and the Netherlands (both 45%) are not far behind<sup>52</sup>.

On the other end of the spectrum, respondents in India (76% score themselves 4 to 7 on the scale), Turkey (76%) and China (72%) are most likely to feel that people should change the way they talk to be more sensitive to those from different backgrounds.

Looking at the bigger picture, most countries of the 28 considered lean towards the thought that people need to change the way they talk, with the Global Country Average at 60%<sup>52</sup> on the matter, and only a 31% place themselves 0 to 3 on the scale, considering that people are too easily offended.

### **3.4 Case Study: The U.S. Composition of Thought**

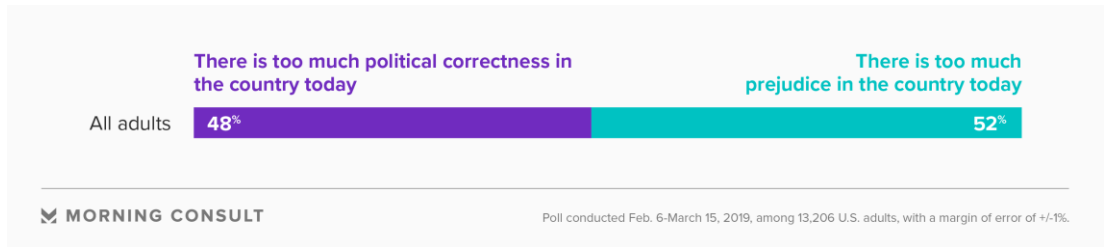
The U.S. create an interesting case thanks to the heterogenous composition of the society and presence of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which has been largely waved against political correctness. The analysis was possible thanks to Morning Consult, a global decision intelligence company, which conducted a National Tracking Poll in 2019 on political correctness<sup>53</sup>. The poll referred to was conducted from February 06 to March 15, 2019, among a U.S. national sample of 13206 Adults<sup>53</sup>.

The consistency in the aggregate result of the poll with the other polls analyzed beforehand is noticeable, in this case 48% of the respondents believe there is too much political correctness in their country, but still there is a majority

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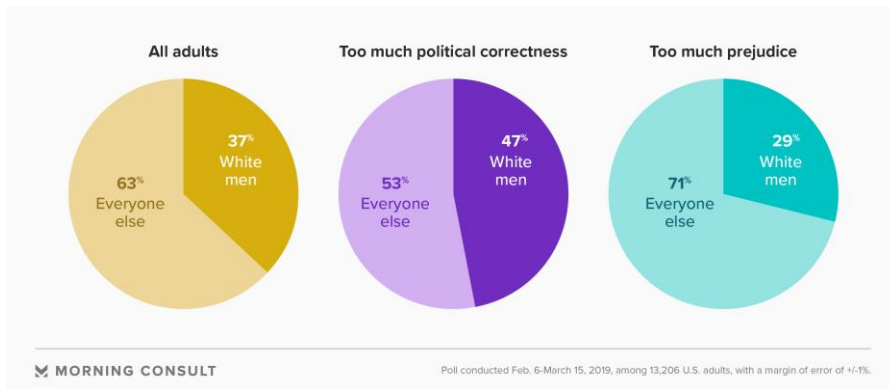
<sup>53</sup> Morning Consult. National Tracking Poll #190210 February 06 - March 15, 2019. Crosstabulation Results

of them believing there still is too much prejudice, as a consequence, Americans are divided on the issue. (Figure 6)



**Figure 9:** Morning Consult Poll<sup>54</sup>. Poll conducted Feb.6-March 15, 2019. U.S.

When it is also considered the identity of the respondents, it comes out that the majority of the voters for the first option is white, male, Republican and supportive of Trump<sup>53</sup>. A simplification of the matter is shown in Figure 7, in which the White men correspond to almost 50% of the answer that there is “too much political correctness”, and just 29% white male asserting that there is “too much prejudice”.



**Figure 10:** Morning Consult Poll<sup>54</sup> Poll conducted Feb.6-March 15, 2019. U.S.

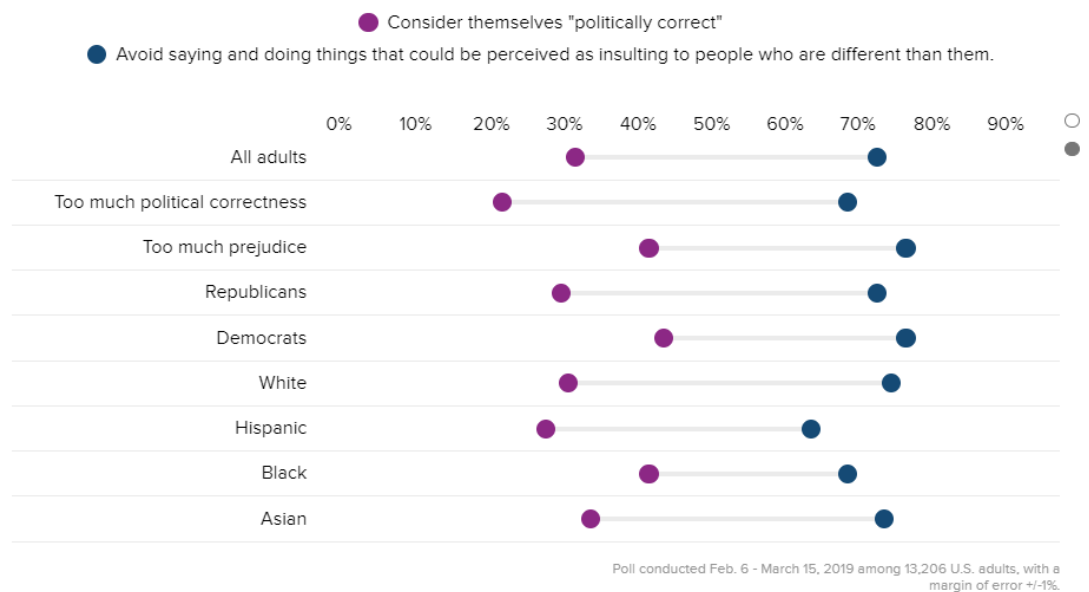
As shown in Figure 8, adults consider themselves to be politically correct in the 34% of the cases, with distinctions based on ethnicity and political

<sup>54</sup> Piacenza, Johanna; Easley, Cameron; Yokley, Eli. PC and Prejudice: Gauging Divides in America’s Culture War, April 24, 2019. Morning Consult, Washington. <https://morningconsult.com/2019/04/24/pc-and-prejudice-gauging-divides-in-americas-culture-war/> Accessed: 01.09.2022.

ideology. Indeed, Democrats feel to be more politically correct than the Republicans, consistently with the previous research, and Black people feel to be more politically correct on average (44%) than the respective White (33%), Hispanic (30%) and Asian people (36%).

But when correlated with the behavior they adopt the percentages change, it turns out that people who don't like the *politically correct* label will still try to adhere to that type of behavior. Adults who said there's too much political correctness in the country were nearly three times as likely to say they tried to meet the political correctness definition than they were to apply the label to themselves<sup>53</sup>. Those who said there's too much prejudice in the country also shied away from the term, with less than half of them saying they considered themselves politically correct.<sup>54</sup>

In Figure 8, it can be noticed the large difference between the perception to be politically correct and the avoidance each group practices when it interacts with people outside of its circle, with an average of all adults moving from a 34% of respondents considering themselves to be politically correct, to a 75% of people avoiding to say and do things that could be perceived as insulting people different than them.



**Figure 11:** Morning Consult Poll<sup>54</sup>. Poll conducted Feb.6-March 15, 2019. U.S.

In Figure 9 the questions asked by the poll are related to the divisive matter whether the importance should be given more to free speech or to social norms, political correctness included. In the poll, most of the people who viewed politically correct culture as too pervasive in American society in general felt free to express themselves on the abovementioned topics. But the same people were also overwhelmingly more likely to express confusion about more abstract questions concerning the state of the country's discourse on the social norms.

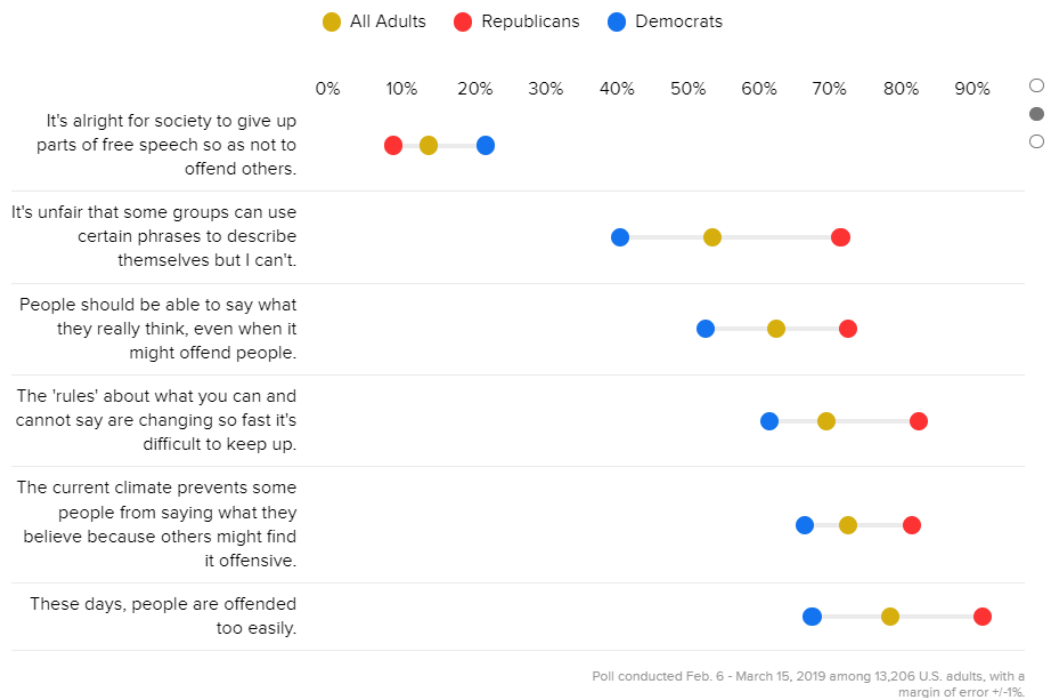
Large groups of the respondents agreed that the social customs about what they can and cannot say are changing too fast, so it is difficult to keep up, that people are offended too easily, and that the current climate prevents people from saying what they think because others might find it offensive.

But these were sentiments also shared with a majority of the poll's broader population, suggesting that when it comes to free speech, Americans are not as nearly divided as one's could think<sup>54</sup>.

Coming back on the divisions between Republicans and Democrats, it is of importance their view on the questions shown in Figure 9. Beside of the first question "it's alright for society to give up parts of free speech so as not to offend others," all the others taken into consideration are formulated at the opposite side of the spectrum, and this is consistent with the findings below.

The Republicans find themselves on the left side of the chart in the first answer, but on the right concerning all the other ones picturing a marked closedness with regards to political correctness, while the Republicans find themselves more open to the possibility of coming to terms with the new social norms created by political correctness.





**Figure 12:** Morning Consult Poll<sup>54</sup>. Poll conducted Feb.6-March 15, 2019. U.S.

Beside the graphs shown in the research above, some other points are found to be notable, which are related to the perception of the aggregate sample of the respondents on the acceptability to express their own opinions about the topics proposed by the study<sup>53</sup>, with the section “people who are similar to me” to be the most positively answered by them (78% of the adults being comfortable expressing their opinion).

The results show that, beside the abovementioned theme, there is a descendent scale on the acceptability to express adult’s opinion in the matters of immigration (72%), politics (71%), gender (69%), religion (68%), sexuality (65%), race (63%), and lastly people who are different from them, with just 59% of people responding positively to it<sup>53</sup>. People are more afraid to express their opinions freely when they feel the interlocutor is perceived to be different from them.

## IV. Linguistic Relativity and Key Terms of Political Correctness

An analysis on the linguistic background is useful to better understand the objective of this dissertation: the comprehension of the reason to adopt (or not) a politically correct language. It comes in hand the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. In linguistics, the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (abbreviated SWH), also known as the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis, states that the cognitive development of each human being is influenced by the language spoken. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis explains, in part, the need for politically correct language. This hypothesis claims that there is a relationship between the language a person uses and their perception of the world<sup>55</sup>. In its most extreme form, this hypothesis assumes that the way we express ourselves determines the way we think.<sup>56</sup>

The hypothesis is named after the German-born American linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf.

Linguistic relativity has been seen in different, frequently contradictory ways in its history.<sup>57</sup> The idea is often stated in two forms: the strong hypothesis, now referred to as linguistic determinism, was held by some of the early linguists before World War II, while the weak hypothesis is mostly held by some modern linguists.<sup>58</sup>

The linguistic determinism asserts that language establishes thought and that linguistic categories define cognitive categories. This version is generally seen as false by modern linguists.

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<sup>55</sup> Caplan, Amanda. Politically Correct Language. ETAI Forum. Summer, 2008. Vol. XIX No. 3. <http://www.etai.org.il/documents/ETAI-Forum-Vol.-XIX-No.-3-Summer-2008.pdf#page=13> Retrieved: 07.09.2022

<sup>56</sup> Leavitt, J. (2010). *Linguistic Relativities: Language Diversity and Modern Thought*. (pp. 3-5). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>58</sup> Boroditsky, Lera; Liberman, Mark (13–23 December 2010). "For and Against Linguistic Relativity". *The Economist*. Archived from the original on 15 February 2012. Retrieved 06.09.2022. (a debate between university professors)

The weak version states that linguistic categories only affect thought and decisions.<sup>59</sup> Research on weaker forms has arrived at positive empirical evidence for this relationship<sup>60</sup>.

Important to underline, the difference between strong and weak versions is a later development<sup>61</sup>; Whorf and Sapir did not create the abovementioned dichotomy, even if their views of this theory are phrased in stronger or weaker terms<sup>62</sup>.

The assumption is that language helps us construct the reality we live in and, if the language is invalid and inaccurate, then our understanding of the world will also be distorted<sup>63</sup>, since “if people are taught to avoid what some perceive as disparaging, insensitive, or biased language, societal attitudes will in turn become less disparaging, insensitive, and biased”<sup>64</sup>. By this logic, a society that believes in tolerance and inclusion needs a vocabulary that reflects these values.

Changes in language have taken place in many different areas. The demand for racial equality in the US provided an important impetus towards the need for PC language. The first descendants of the slaves from Africa called themselves Africans. But, as they had been born in the US, this was considered inaccurate and in 1835 the black leaders replaced African with Negro or Colored American.<sup>59</sup> In the late 1960s, black became the accepted term. Recently, people of color<sup>65</sup> has become the PC term.

Changes in English and changes in the role of women in society have necessitated PC language unbiased by gender. The word chairman was sufficient

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<sup>59</sup> Ahearn, Laura M. (2012). *Living language: an introduction to linguistic anthropology*. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K. p. 69.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>61</sup> Hill, Jane H; Mannheim, Bruce (1992), "Language and World view", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21: 381–406

<sup>62</sup> Kennison, Shelia (2013). *Introduction to language development* (1 ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

<sup>63</sup> Spender, D. (1980). *Man Made Language*. Publ. Routledge & Kegan Paul. Tsehelska, M. (2006). <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ot/spender.htm> Accessed: 10/09/22

<sup>64</sup> Nagel, S.J., Fain, M.A., Sanders, S. L. (1998). What is political correctness doing to the English language? *Vienna English Working Papers* Vol. 7 No. 2 (p56-70).

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem.

before women began fulfilling this role. Then chairwoman was introduced and has evolved into the gender-neutral chair<sup>64</sup>. Many professions have adopted PC language. Male stewards and female air hostesses are now commonly called flight attendants in the US. Actor defines both female and male performers, in the same way that male and female writers are authors and no longer authors and authoresses, these aspects will be investigated in the following segments of the chapter. Spender claims that high status professions are related to men and therefore women who occupy these posts are referred to as a deviation, such as female doctor.

Romaine in his study in 2001<sup>66</sup> found the following usages in the British National Corpus: lady doctor was used 125 times, woman doctor 20 times, female doctor 10 times, and compared them to male doctor, used only 14 times. However, Romaine gives an example of the opposite phenomenon, the male midwife, where the norm is female, so the male is seen as a deviation. There are twenty instances of male nurse and one of female nurse in the BNC<sup>66</sup>.

The language used to describe disabilities has changed greatly in the move towards more PC language. Crippled became handicapped and then disabled and is now physically challenged or differently abled<sup>64</sup>. Challenged has become a common term, visually challenged replaces the word “blind.” In education, the acronym LD has changed from Learning Disability to Learning Difficulties to the politically correct term used today: Learning Differences. Down’s Syndrome has replaced mongoloid. A deaf person is now referred as hearing impaired, thereby covering the wide range of hearing disorders between partial hearing loss to the complete inability to hear<sup>55</sup>. People who reach a certain age are senior citizens, not old people anymore.

Heightened awareness of the sociological implications of language exists today and political correctness has entered some elements of society.<sup>55</sup> However,

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<sup>66</sup> Romaine, S. (2001). A Corpus-Based View of Gender in British and American English in *Gender Across Languages The linguistic representation of women and men*. Volume I edited by Marlis Hellinger and Hadumod BuBmann. Published by John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia. <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~romaine/corpusgender.pdf> Accessed: 02/09/2022

while PC language is expected in public and professional life and within academia, it has not yet entered ‘the vernacular mainstream’<sup>64</sup>.

Now the focus will be on the division of political correctness based on the crucial topics tackled by the advocated of the linguistic changes.

## **4.1 Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation**

Discussing gender identity and sexual orientation is not an easy topic, as also other issues found in this chapter, the names and definitions inside the broad spectrum of gender identity are changing at a fast rate and not all the communities around the world see eye-to-eye on them. For this reason, in this chapter different associations, committees and communities will find space that will have the room necessary to discuss the difficulties people face when struggling with their identity affirmation in their community. Most of the talks will be left to the communities interested, the ones that decided to speak up for themselves and for other people with the same issues. This section is mostly a revision of the literature on these matters.

As the Ontario Human Rights Commission asserts, the words people use to describe themselves and others are particularly important. The right terms can affirm identities and challenge discriminatory attitudes. The wrong ones can disempower, demean and reinforce exclusion<sup>69</sup>. In general, if a person feels in doubt, the most respectful approach is to ask their interlocutors how they self-identify.

Starting from the assumption that for centuries the society has seen gender identity not as a spectrum, but as a binary, the Human Rights Campaign explains beforehand the definition of *gender binary*, which is a system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions

and roles fit traditional expectations.<sup>67</sup> As a result, the term *non-binary* was created, which refers to a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman, it could identify as both, neither or something else outside these categories. Not every non-binary person identifies as transgender, even if most adhere to this definition. In the non-binary category can also be identified agender, bigender, genderfluid and genderqueer people.<sup>68</sup>

*Gender identity* is each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, nor anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex.<sup>69</sup> This differ from *sex*, the anatomical classification of people as male, female or intersex, usually assigned at birth.<sup>70</sup> Related to these matters, *gender expression* is how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender, including behavior and appearance. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes.

According to HRC<sup>67</sup>, *cisgender* refers to people whose gender identity aligns with the ones associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. When this is not the case, generally the person involved takes on a process that will eventually lead to the acknowledgement, acceptance and appreciation towards their gender identity or their sexual orientation, which will lead to the sharing of their discoveries with others, this is called *coming out*.

What should always be avoided is *outing* someone, which means exposing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious consequences on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Glossary of Terms. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms> Accessed: 07/09/2022

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>69</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission. Policy on preventing discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression. April 14, 2014. Ontario. <https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20preventing%20discrimination%20because%20of%20gender%20identity%20and%20gender%20expression.pdf> Accessed: 08/09/2022.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem.

In this picture, who has diverse gender identities and expressions that differ from the stereotypical gender norms is usually referred as *gender non-conforming, gender variant or gender queer*, individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth and may or may not identify as trans. Lived gender identity is the gender a person feels internally and expresses publicly in their daily life.

*Trans or transgender* is an umbrella term which, as abovementioned, refers to people with diverse gender identities and expressions. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, trans woman (male-to-female MTF), trans man (female-to-male FTM), transsexual, cross-dressers, or gender nonconforming, gender variant or gender queer.<sup>71</sup> In this context the subgroups will not be investigated in order to evite confusing the reader and give a broader, general picture of the issues. The classifications above are not to be confused with one's sexual orientation, these are not related to one another. Indeed, the sexual orientation is referred as an inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.<sup>67</sup>

When investigating sexual orientation, Human Rights Campaign talks about *questioning*, a word used to depict people who are in the process of exploring their gender identity or their sexual orientation.<sup>72</sup>

A word should be spent on *sexual orientation*, which vary from asexuality to pansexual and many more in the middle, which is an inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.<sup>73</sup>

In the spectrum of sexual orientation can be found, as abovementioned, *asexual* people, characterized by a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or interest in sexual activity with others. Also in this case, asexuality is seen as a spectrum, in which can be found people who experience conditional, little or no sexual attraction towards other people.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Glossary of Terms. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms> Accessed: 07/09/2022

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>74</sup> Ibidem.

Beside cisgender people, there are *same-gender loving* people, who express attraction to and love of people of the same gender<sup>75</sup>, these people could be also referred as *gay* and *lesbian* people. Moreover, in the spectrum of sexual orientation, appear also *bisexual* people, who are emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity, even if this can also occur in different periods, ways and at different degrees. This term can be used sometimes interchangeably with *pansexual*, which describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender.

Of course, not only people actively involved in LGBTQ+ community take part in the process of raising awareness on the human rights of these people, indeed, are considered also the *allies*, people actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people, encompassing not only straight and cisgender allies, but also those within the community who support each other<sup>71</sup>. This is in contrast with *homophobia*, the fear and hatred of or discomfort towards people who are attracted to members of the same sex, or *biphobia*, the same concept towards people who love and are sexually attracted to more than one gender<sup>76</sup>. The same feeling is reported concerning *transphobia*, according to that people show prejudice or hatred in speech or actions towards transgender or gender-nonconforming people, centering these negative feelings on gender identity<sup>77</sup>.

An annotation should be made on gender dysphoria and euphoria, who opposed and interconnected terms. *Gender dysphoria* refers to the medical term for the psychological and physical distress that happens when one's sex assigned at birth does not align with their gender, while *gender euphoria* denotes the satisfaction felt when one's gender is affirmed<sup>78</sup>. As a consequence, exists a *gender-affirming care*, medical care that affirms or recognizes the gender identity of the person receiving medical care, for minors this can include puberty

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<sup>75</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>77</sup> Branigin, Anne. A guide to the words we use in our gender coverage, 2022. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2022/04/01/gender-identity-glossary/> Accessed: 09/09/2022.

<sup>78</sup> Ibidem.



or hormone blockers, while for adults this could mean hormone therapy and various surgical procedures, such as speech therapy, breast and/or genital reconstruction and facial plastic surgery<sup>79</sup>.

## 4.2 Disability Inclusive Language

In 2019 has been launched the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, a key framework for policy and action to disability inclusion at the United Nations<sup>80</sup>, this can be seen in a broader spectrum as a step towards a more inclusive way to address people with disabilities. Many steps have been made during the last decades, including not only language, but also accessibility to toilets, buildings, and other services, in order to make it possible for them to live a full life without the constraints posed not by their disabilities but by the way the access to these services have been built.

The UN Disability Inclusion Strategy is aimed at removing barriers and engaging persons with disabilities in all spheres of work and life in order to achieve sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion. What will be at the center of the dissertation analysis is the section regarding internal and external communications, which should be respectful of persons with disabilities.<sup>81</sup>

To redact this document were conducted studies on disability-inclusive language materials followed by a consultation process with expert, during this phase people with disabilities were also included.

According to the document, the language that we use to refer to people with disabilities has an impact, as it shapes our perception of the world, as Sapir-

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<sup>79</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>80</sup> UN Geneva. *Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines*, 2021. <https://www.ungeneva.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf> Accessed: 07/09/2022

<sup>81</sup> Ibidem.

Whorf Hypothesis assumes. The language towards people with disabilities has evolved over time, and terms commonly used some years ago are no longer acceptable by the society. For this reason, the UN Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines deems important to raise awareness about appropriate language to use when talking to or about people with disabilities<sup>82</sup>. On the contrary, not using an appropriate language could lead to a feeling of exclusion or offense and can create a barrier to full and meaningful participation of people with disabilities in the everyday life.

The use of derogatory language could amount to discrimination and impinge on the enjoyment of their human rights. One reason for the adoption of these guidelines is that by adopting language that celebrates diversity, people will contribute to strengthening the human rights model of disability and to create a more inclusive community. At the same time, inclusive language is a key tool in combating ableism and its entrenched manifestations, which is the discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities, with a focus on the fact that people with disabilities becomes defined by them and perceived as inferior by people without disabilities. Ableism can be seen in many forms, including harmful language.<sup>83</sup>

Before a more accurate list of preferred terms redacted by the UN, the document offers some general guidelines that were consistent with other sources on the topic, which include people-first language, avoidance of labels and stereotypes, avoidance of condescending euphemisms, and a reasonable perspective on disability, which should not be seen as an illness or a problem. Analyzing each of these topics can lead to a greater understanding of the diversity enriching our community as a whole.

The use of *people-first language* is the most universally accepted language for referring to persons with disabilities. It is also the language used in

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<sup>82</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> Ibidem.

the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>84</sup>. The purpose of people-first language emphasizes the person, not the disability, thanks to the placement of a reference to the person or group before the reference to the disability. For example, it is preferred the usage of *people with disability*, or *students with dyslexia*, or *people with intellectual disabilities*. There are some exceptions to the rule, which does not apply to all types of disabilities. When referring to people who are blind, the terms used can be *blind people* or *people who are blind*, and the same applies to deaf or deafblind persons. The document invites the reader to ask the person how decides to identify if in doubt<sup>80</sup> because people with disabilities does not construct a homogeneous group, with the possibility to identify themselves in various ways.

Another point is the avoidance of labels and stereotypes, since disability is a part of human diversity, and should not be dramatized or sensationalized, portraying them as inspirational for their disability is not the correct path to their acceptance in society<sup>85</sup>. Indeed, it conveys the message that it is unusual for people with disabilities to have a successful and a productive life, seeing them as brave overcoming their disabilities are patronizing, because people with disabilities are the same as everyone else in terms of talents and abilities. An example of that is the term “survivor,” which is applied sometimes to people recovered from a health condition, such as *stroke survivor*, or during their recovery people are seen as they were in a battle, such as *to battle cancer*<sup>86</sup>, which are sometimes seen as inappropriate of offensive.

Also, the vulnerability with which people with disabilities are seen is inappropriate, in that vulnerability is not intrinsic to the person concerned, instead vulnerability is produced by external circumstances, in fact each person may experience vulnerability in given situations, even if some people with disabilities can experience vulnerability more times than the rest of the

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<sup>84</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2006. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities> Accessed: 10/09/2022

<sup>85</sup> UN Geneva. *Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines*, 2021. <https://www.ungeneva.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf> Accessed: 07/09/2022

<sup>86</sup> Ibidem.

population to violence for example, but less on other issues such as identity theft<sup>87</sup>. Most of the vulnerabilities connected to people with disabilities are addressed, such as specific barriers, they are no longer in the condition of feeling these exposures.

Another guideline given by the UN document is to avoid labelling of people or groups of people if it is not relevant for the discourse, pointing to their disability only when it leads to more clarity or provides useful information. In contrast, “disability should not be made invisible either”<sup>88</sup>, making it a priority to include it in conversations and in work-related matters, always discussing them in an open and respectful way.

Analyzing the condescending euphemisms, some expressions have started to be used as alternatives to inappropriate language, but many words actually reflect the misguided idea that disability needs to be softened, with terms such as *people of determination*, *people of all abilities*, or *disAbility*<sup>89</sup>, which can be seen as offensive and patronizing. Bringing an example to clarify the message, using *differently abled* is problematic in that every person is differently abled when compared to another.

Euphemisms are denying the reality and construct a way to avoid an open discussion on disabilities, it is preferred *people with disabilities* to the previous analyzed term. Also *special* is commonly rejected, considered to be offensive and condescending stigmatizing the differences of a person, mostly due to its combination with *needs* or *assistance*. The general recommendation is to utilize more positive or neutral language when possible.

Disability is not a health condition unless the person with disability is under medical care, this is the reason disability should not be seen as something needing to be cured or fixed. Also, the charity side tends to view disability as a burden that people without disabilities must solve, says the Guideline<sup>90</sup>. The perpetuation of negative attitudes and stereotypes regarding people with

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<sup>87</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>88</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>89</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem.

disabilities is enhanced by the depiction of them as objects of charity and pity. What helps in this matter is the usage of appropriate words avoiding the label of people by their diagnoses such as *person with dyslexia*, preferred to *dyslexic*, using people-first language permits to create the idea that people are not only identifiable by their disability.

The language guideline suggests avoiding expressions such as *suffers from*, *afflicted with* or *stricken with*, because they give the idea of powerlessness and a condition of constant pain, what is preferred by the community is saying that a person has a certain disability or that is blind or deaf. Victimization of the person based on the disability should not happen, in that actually calling them victims is not appropriate, also for its connotation linked to vulnerability.

An analysis on oral and informal speech has been conducted<sup>91</sup>, and suggests that people with disability feels comfortable with the expressions used in daily life, such as “have you heard the news” referred to a deaf person. Instead, using inappropriate and hurtful wordings should be avoided completely, such as “I have Alzheimer’s” when people forget something, or “you are paranoid” when a person acts with mistrust.<sup>92</sup>

“Never use disability-related terms as an insult or to express criticism”<sup>93</sup> is the conclusive suggestion given, and it seems the correct way to approach this aspect, the goal of a correct language is taking into consideration the intentions of the speaker in order to avoid hurting people, after the redaction of this section it is reasonable an effort thanks to useful practical insights following.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>93</sup> Ibidem.

**Table 1 Disability Inclusive Language**

Recommended Language	Language to be avoided
person with disability person with [type of impairment] persons with disabilities people with disabilities (only informal)	disabled person, handicapped, person with special needs, handicapable, atypical, person living with a disability, differently abled, people of all abilities, people of determination, person living with a disability
person without disability the rest of the population	normal, healthy, able-bodied, typical, whole of sound body/mind
Have [disability/impairment/condition]	suffer from, afflicted by, stricken by, troubled with
person with an intellectual disability person with an intellectual impairment person with a learning disability	retarded, simple, slow, afflicted, brain damaged, intellectually challenged, subnormal, of unsound mind, feeble-minded, mentally handicapped
person with a psychosocial disability	insane, crazy, maniac, psycho, hypersensitive, lunatic, demented, panicked, agitated, mentally deranged, mentally ill
deaf person person who is deaf person with a hearing disability person with a hearing impairment person with hearing loss hard-of-hearing person deafblind person	the deaf, hearing impaired, deaf and dumb, deaf and mute
blind person person who is blind person with a vision/visual disability person with a vision/visual impairment person with low vision deafblind person	the blind, partially sighted

<p>person with a physical disability</p> <p>person with a physical impairment</p>	<p>crippled, invalid, deformed, lame, handicapped, physically challenged, person with physical limitations, limp</p>
<p>wheelchair user</p> <p>person who uses a wheelchair</p> <p>person with a mobility disability</p> <p>person with a mobility impairment</p> <p>person using a mobility device</p>	<p>confined/restricted to a wheelchair</p> <p>wheelchair-bound</p>
<p>person of short stature</p> <p>little person</p> <p>person with achondroplasia (only if the person has this condition)</p>	<p>midget, dwarf, stunted</p>
<p>person with Down syndrome</p> <p>person with trisomy-21</p>	<p>mongoloid, special person, down</p>
<p>person with albinism</p>	<p>albino person</p>
<p>affected by leprosy</p>	<p>leper, leprosy patient</p>
<p>person who uses a communication device</p> <p>person who uses an alternative method of communication</p>	<p>non-verbal, can't talk</p>
<p>accessible parking</p> <p>parking reserved for persons with disabilities</p> <p>accessible bathroom</p>	<p>disabled/handicapped parking</p> <p>handicapped bathroom</p>

### 4.3 Gender-Neutral Language

Language is seen as an important tool for determining gender, this implies that language also could be used as a tool for establishing gender-equality and to challenge gender perceptions. In Western culture and languages, actions toward gender-fair languages have primarily focused on making women more salient and reducing the *male bias*. For example, in the seventies, as seen in the historical chapter, the feminist movement questioned the use of a generic masculine pronoun to refer to people in general.

There are two main types of gender fair language: *balancing/feminization* and *neutralization*. Feminization implies the use of gender-appropriate forms and it is more often used in languages with grammatical gender, as German, French and Italian, for example by adding feminine versions to masculine titles. Neutralization is more commonly employed in so called ‘natural gender languages’ as English, Swedish, Norwegian, and implies that gender-neutral forms are preferred over gendered forms. Some examples of this string of thought, which will be investigated during the current section, are preferring the usage of the word *parents* instead of *mum and dad*, and *humankind* instead of *mankind*.

Gender-fair language is often implemented over several years. It commonly starts with activist movements who propose a change. Since people have a preference for status quo<sup>94</sup>, and a preservation of traditional gender arrangements<sup>95</sup>, new linguistic gender word forms may be negatively reacted upon. Proponents of non-sexist language have been attacked, words have been defined as being linguistically wrong or awkward, and feminine occupational titles have been evaluated more negatively than their masculine traditional

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<sup>94</sup> Jost, J. T., Banaji, M. B., and Nosek, B. A. (2004). A decade of system justification theory: accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo. *Polit. Psychol.* 25, 881–919.

<sup>95</sup> Jost, J. T., Nosek, B. A., and Gosling, S. D. (2008). Ideology: its resurgence in social, personality, and political psychology. *Perspect. Psychol. Sci.* 3, 126–136.



form<sup>96</sup>. However, the attitudes may change the longer gender-fair language has been used<sup>97</sup>. Whether such attitude change occurs also for gender-neutral pronouns within a country has not been studied before.

As documented in the contributions in Hellinger and Bußmann<sup>98</sup>, which analyze 30 languages (Chinese, Arabic, English, Hindi, Finnish, Turkish, Swahili), an almost universal and fundamental asymmetry lies in the use of masculine generics. For example, in English the generic *he* can be used when gender is irrelevant and in German, masculine role nouns serve as labels for mixed gender groups. Thus, masculine forms not only designate men but also mixed-gender groups or referents whose gender is unknown or unspecified<sup>99</sup>, while feminine refers to women only. That masculine forms are used to represent all human beings is in accord with the traditional gender hierarchy<sup>100</sup>.

Gender-fair language (GFL), also called gender-neutral language and non-sexist language, was introduced as a response to this structural asymmetry and as part of a broader attempt to reduce stereotyping and discrimination in language. Gender-neutral language aims to abolish asymmetries in referring to and addressing women and men, for example, by replacing masculine forms (postman) with gender-unmarked forms (post officer).

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<sup>96</sup> Formanowicz, M., Bedynska, S., Cislak, A., Braun, F., and Sczesny, S. (2013). Side effects of gender-fair language: how feminine job titles influence the evaluation of female applicants. *Euro. J. Soc. Psychol.* 43, 62–71.

<sup>97</sup> Moreland, R. L., and Topolinski, S. (2010). The mere exposure phenomenon: a lingering melody by Robert Zajonc. *Emot. Rev.* 2, 329–339.

<sup>98</sup> Hellinger, M., and Bußmann, H. (2001, 2002, 2003). *Gender Across Languages: The Linguistic Representation of Women and Men*, Vol. 1, 2, 3. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

<sup>99</sup> Stahlberg, D., Braun, F., Irmen, L., and Sczesny, S. (2007). “Representation of the sexes in language,” in *Social Communication. A Volume in the Series. Frontiers of Social Psychology*, ed. K. Fiedler (New York, NY: Psychology Press), 163–187.

<sup>100</sup> Ridgeway, C. L., and Correll, S. J. (2004). Unpacking the gender system: a theoretical perspective on gender beliefs and social relations. *Gend. Soc.* 18, 510–531.

**Table 2 Overview of language types regarding expression of gender and gender asymmetries.**

<b>Language type</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Visibility of gender and gender asymmetries</b>	<b>Preferred strategies for GFL</b>
1) Genderless (Finnish, Turkish)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Personal nouns and pronouns NOT differentiated for gender</li> <li>– Gender expressed only lexically via attributes (e.g., ‘male/female [student]’) or lexical gender nouns (e.g., ‘woman,’ ‘father’)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Referential gender often not explicit</li> <li>– Gender asymmetries exist but are less frequent than in (2) and (3).</li> </ul>	GFL policies generally deemed unnecessary
(2) Natural gender (English, Swedish)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Most personal nouns gender-neutral (e.g., neighbor, student)</li> <li>– Personal pronouns differentiated for gender (Swedish hon/han ‘she/he’)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Referential gender more often explicit than (1), but less often than (3).</li> <li>– Lexical and pronominal asymmetries exist, but less frequent than (3).</li> </ul>	Neutralization
(3) Grammatical gender (French, German, Italian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Every noun has grammatical gender</li> <li>– Gender of personal nouns match referent</li> <li>– Personal pronouns differentiated for gender</li> <li>– Pronouns and other dependent words gendered (der Student (male) eine Studentin (female))</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Referential gender often explicit</li> <li>– All kinds of asymmetries exist</li> </ul>	Feminization + Neutralization

Depending on the language’s structure, gender asymmetries may be more or less conspicuous. Three types of languages can be distinguished: grammatical gender languages, natural gender languages, and genderless

languages<sup>101</sup>. Table 1 gives an overview of this typology, describing the main characteristics of the different types with regard to gender and gender asymmetries as well as preferred strategies of linguistic gender-fairness. In grammatical gender languages every noun has a grammatical gender, and the gender of personal nouns tends to express the gender of the referent. In natural gender languages personal nouns tend to be gender-neutral and referential gender is expressed pronominally (in English *he* or *she*). In genderless languages personal nouns and pronouns do not signal gender, which is only expressed through attributes or in lexical gender words such as *father*. Consequently, gender and linguistic gender asymmetries are much more visible in grammatical gender languages than in natural gender languages or genderless languages<sup>102</sup>.

The way gender is encoded in a language may be associated with societal gender equality<sup>103</sup>. This assumption was tested empirically for 111 countries with different language systems selecting geographic, religious, political, and developmental differences<sup>104</sup>. In this research, the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum was used to determine gender equality. Countries with grammatical gender languages were found to reach lower levels of social gender equality than countries with natural gender languages or genderless languages. This suggests that gender asymmetries are accompanied by societal gender inequalities.

A survey on sexist attitudes yielded additional evidence for this relationship<sup>105</sup>: respondents (native English-speakers and bilinguals) exhibited

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<sup>101</sup> Stahlberg, D., Braun, F., Irmen, L., and Sczesny, S. (2007). "Representation of the sexes in language," in *Social Communication. A Volume in the Series. Frontiers of Social Psychology*, ed. K. Fiedler (New York, NY: Psychology Press), 163–187.

<sup>102</sup> Hellinger, M., and Bußmann, H. (2001, 2002, 2003). *Gender Across Languages: The Linguistic Representation of Women and Men*, Vol. 1, 2, 3. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

<sup>103</sup> Stahlberg, D., Braun, F., Irmen, L., and Sczesny, S. (2007). "Representation of the sexes in language," in *Social Communication. A Volume in the Series. Frontiers of Social Psychology*, ed. K. Fiedler (New York, NY: Psychology Press), 163–187.

<sup>104</sup> Prewitt-Freilino, J. L., Caswell, T. A., and Laakso, E. K. (2012). The gendering of language: a comparison of gender equality in countries with gendered, natural gender, and genderless languages. *Sex Roles* 66, 268–281.

<sup>105</sup> Wasserman, B. D., and Weseley, A. J. (2009). Qué? Quoi? Do languages with grammatical gender promote sexist attitudes? *Sex Roles* 61, 634–643.

more sexist attitudes when the survey was conducted in a grammatical gender language (Spanish or French) than in a natural gender language (English).

Research has revealed that masculine generics induce a male bias in mental interpretations, as a result people think more of male than female people of the category<sup>106</sup>. The masculine bias in language has been observed in English<sup>107, 108</sup>, French<sup>109</sup>, German<sup>110</sup>, Italian<sup>111</sup>, Polish<sup>112</sup>, and Spanish<sup>113</sup>.

In general, different strategies can be used to make language gender-fair and avoid detrimental effects of masculine generics: neutralization, feminization and a combination of the two, as seen in Table (1). Which strategy is the most appropriate depends on the language concerned. In the framework of neutralization, gender-marked terms are replaced by gender-indefinite nouns. In grammatical gender languages, gender-differentiated forms are replaced by epicenes, which are forms within variant grammatical gender which refer to female as well as male people. Neutralization has been recommended especially for natural gender languages and genderless languages, as it is fairly easy to avoid gender markings in these languages. Thus, *“singular they is the dominant epicene pronoun in modern written British English. However, despite its use, singular they has never been endorsed by institutions of the English language, such as major*

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<sup>106</sup> Stahlberg, D., Braun, F., Irmen, L., and Sczesny, S. (2007). “Representation of the sexes in language,” in *Social Communication. A Volume in the Series. Frontiers of Social Psychology*, ed. K. Fiedler (New York, NY: Psychology Press), 163–187.

<sup>107</sup> Crawford, M., and English, L. (1984). Generic versus specific inclusion of women in language: effects on recall. *J. Psycholinguist. Res.* 13, 373–381.

<sup>108</sup> Ng, S. H. (1990). Androcentric coding of man and his in memory by language users. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 26, 455–464.

<sup>109</sup> Gabriel, U., Gygax, P., Sarasin, O., Garnham, A., and Oakhill, J. (2008). Au-pairs are rarely male: role names’ gender stereotype information across three languages. *Behav. Res. Methods* 40, 206–212.

<sup>110</sup> Irmen, L. (2007). What’s in a (role) name? Formal and conceptual aspects of comprehending personal nouns. *J. Psycholinguist. Res.* 36, 431–456.

<sup>111</sup> Cacciari, C., and Padovani, R. (2007). Further evidence on gender stereotype priming in language: semantic facilitation and inhibition on Italian role nouns. *Appl. Psycholinguist.* 28, 277–293.

<sup>112</sup> Bojarska, K. (2011). The impact of the androcentric and gender-inclusive language constructions on the gendered associations. *Stud. Psychol.* 49, 53–68.

<sup>113</sup> Carreiras, M., Garnham, A., Oakhill, J. V., and Cain, K. (1996). The use of stereotypical gender information in constructing a mental model: evidence from English and Spanish. *Q. J. Exp. Psychol. A* 49, 639–663.

*dictionaries and style guides (although many style guides now reject generic he...)*<sup>114</sup>. Recently, a gender-neutral third person pronoun was invented in Swedish: *hen*, which will be discussed later in this section.

In contrast, feminization is based on the explicit inclusion of women. Thus, masculine generics are replaced by feminine-masculine word pairs or abbreviated forms with slashes. Feminization has been recommended for grammatical gender languages such as German, Czech, and Italian<sup>115</sup>, usually in combination with neutralizing in order to avoid overly complex sentence structures. However, feminization is not always advantageous for women. An example is the German (originally French) suffix *-euse* or *-öse*. Feminine terms such as *Masseuse* (female masseur) and *Frisöse* (female hairdresser) evoke sexual or frivolous associations, so that the neutral suffix *-in* is usually preferred, as in *Ingenieur-in* or *Spediteur-in*<sup>116</sup>. Especially in Slavic languages feminine job titles tend to be associated with lesser status, with rural speech, or with the meaning *wife of...* rather than *female jobholder*<sup>117</sup>. There are also asymmetries in meaning between feminine and masculine forms, as with Polish *secretary*, in the feminine form designates a personal assistant, whereas the masculine form refers also to a high governmental function. Problems of this kind can limit the possibilities of feminization in some languages. Where feminization faces such structural problems, its use is less widespread and may have negative effects<sup>118</sup>. But where feminine suffixes are productive, feminization can become a linguistic norm and can be evaluated positively<sup>119</sup>. The focus of early research on gender-fair language was mostly on the masculine bias linked with masculine

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<sup>114</sup> Paterson, L. L. (2014). *British Pronoun Use, Prescription, and Processing: Linguistic and Social Influences Affecting 'They' and 'He.'* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 2

<sup>115</sup> Moser, F., Sato, S., Chiarini, T., Dmitrov-Devold, K., and Kuhn, E. (2011). Comparative Analysis of Existing Guidelines for Gender-Fair Language within the ITN LCG Network (Work Package B ITN LCG).

<sup>116</sup> Sczesny S, Formanowicz Mand Moser F (2016) Can Gender-Fair Language Reduce Gender Stereotyping and Discrimination? *Front. Psychol.* 7:25. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292642170\\_Can\\_Gender-Fair\\_Language\\_Reduce\\_Gender\\_Stereotyping\\_and\\_Discrimination](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292642170_Can_Gender-Fair_Language_Reduce_Gender_Stereotyping_and_Discrimination) Retrieved: Sep 13, 2022.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>119</sup> Vervecken, D., and Hannover, B. (2012). Ambassadors of gender equality? How use of pair forms versus masculine as generics impacts perception of the speaker. *Eur. J. Soc. Psychol.* 42, 754–762.

generics. The latest findings are more comprehensive and indicate how linguistic asymmetries may facilitate (unintended) forms of social discrimination. For example, adult women were reluctant to apply to gender-biased job advertisements and were more interested in the same job when the advertisement had an unbiased form<sup>120</sup>. Also, the likelihood of naming women as possible candidates for the office of chancellor in Germany was found to depend on the grammatical gender of the word ‘chancellor’ in the question<sup>121</sup>.

Moreover, self-evaluation and other’s assessments were found to be influenced by linguistic structures. Thus, girls assumed women to be less successful in typically male occupations when the jobs were described with masculine rather than gender-fair forms, and they were also less interested in these occupations<sup>122</sup>. The boosting of children’s self-efficacy was created by using feminine-masculine word pairs for traditionally male occupations<sup>123</sup>. Furthermore, occupations described in pair forms mitigated the difference between ascribed success to female and male jobholders in gendered occupations<sup>124</sup>. In a study on Austrian German people, the wording of job advertisements influenced the evaluation of candidates for leadership positions<sup>125</sup>: men were perceived as fitting a high-status leadership position better than women when a masculine job title was used, but when the job advertisement was gender-fair, women and men were judged as equally suited.

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<sup>120</sup> Sczesny S, Formanowicz Mand Moser F (2016) Can Gender-Fair Language Reduce Gender Stereotyping and Discrimination? *Front. Psychol.* 7:25. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292642170\\_Can\\_Gender-Fair\\_Language\\_Reduce\\_Gender\\_Stereotyping\\_and\\_Discrimination](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292642170_Can_Gender-Fair_Language_Reduce_Gender_Stereotyping_and_Discrimination) Retrieved: Sep 13, 2022.

<sup>121</sup> tahlberg, D., and Sczesny, S. (2001). Effekte des generischen Maskulinums und alternativer Sprachformen auf den gedanklichen Einbezug von Frauen [The impact of masculine generics on the cognitive inclusion of women]. *Psychol.Rundsch.* 52, 131–140.

<sup>122</sup> Sczesny S, Formanowicz Mand Moser F (2016) Can Gender-Fair Language Reduce Gender Stereotyping and Discrimination? *Front. Psychol.* 7:25. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292642170\\_Can\\_Gender-Fair\\_Language\\_Reduce\\_Gender\\_Stereotyping\\_and\\_Discrimination](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292642170_Can_Gender-Fair_Language_Reduce_Gender_Stereotyping_and_Discrimination) Retrieved: Sep 13, 2022.

<sup>123</sup> Vervecken, D., and Hannover, B. (2015). Yes I can! Effects of gender fair job descriptions on children’s perceptions of job status, job difficulty, and vocational self-efficacy. *Soc. Psychol.* 46, 76–92.

<sup>124</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>125</sup> Horvath, L. K., and Sczesny, S. (2015). Reducing women’s lack of fit with leadership? Effects of the wording of job advertisements. *Eur. J. Work Organ. Psychol.*

This difference did not occur in the context of a lower-status position (project leader).

The use of gender-neutral pronouns is increasingly common in society, it seems more relevant when talking about English language, but some changes happened also in other languages such as Swedish, where in 2012 has been added a new pronoun. It was proposed an additional pronoun to the already existing *hon* (she) and *han* (he), and that would be *hen*, that can be used generically, when gender is unknown or irrelevant, and as a transgender pronoun for people who categorize themselves outside the gender dichotomy<sup>126</sup>.

The spark that started the debate in 2012 was the publishing of a children's book that used *hen* for the main character of the book, instead of using a gendered pronoun. The author and the publisher also wrote a debate article together with Karin Milles, a linguist researcher and advisor of gender-fair language planning, arguing for the introduction of a gender-neutral pronoun. Advocates of the word argued that children are too much influenced by gender categories, where non-gendered pronouns allow them to visualize and develop their stories much more freely. Antagonists argued that children listening to nongendered stories would be disoriented not knowing their gender. Later in 2012, the Language Council of Sweden provided official recommendations about Swedish language, among them the recommendation that "hen" should not be used.

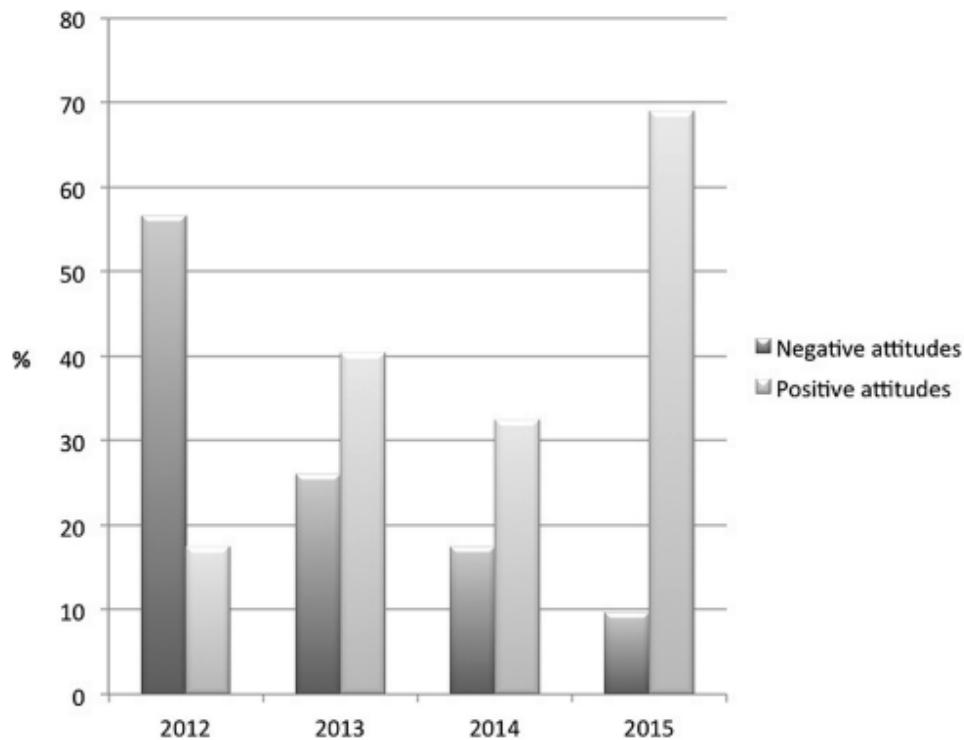
In 2013 the situation changed, with the Swedish Language Council changing their recommendation, it proposed that *hen* could be used as a gender-neutral pronoun but with caution because it may have distracted from the message to convey. In 2014, the word was included in the 2015th edition of the unofficial norm of the Swedish language called SAOL. In this year, the language council also formally changed their guidelines for gender fair language in public

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<sup>126</sup> Gustafsson Sendén M, Bäck EA and Lindqvist A (2015) Introducing a gender-neutral pronoun in a natural gender language: the influence of time on attitudes and behavior. *Front. Psychol.* 6:893. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00893

authorities and included *hen* as an alternative to other neutral or gender balanced forms<sup>127</sup>.

Until the publication of the study on the Swedish third pronoun addition in 2015, no other two-gendered pronoun language added the new neutral one that had reached the broader population of language users.



**Figure 13:** Polarization of attitudes toward *hen* was reversed from 2012 to 2015. [Negative attitudes were rated from 0 to 1, positive attitudes were 6 and 7 on the rating scale]<sup>128</sup>

From 2012 to 2015 there has been changes in the attitude by the population towards this change. In 2012 the majority of the population was against *hen*, but already in 2014 there was a change in attitudes with a more positive perception of the new word. According to the research<sup>129</sup>, time was the most relevant factor for attitudes. This suggests that new words challenging the pre-constituted binary system are not welcomed positively at first, but with time these attitudes tend to be normalized quickly.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>128</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>129</sup> Ibidem.



## 4.4 Equality in Ethnic Representation

Race and ethnicity are social constructs, without scientific or biological meaning. The indistinct construct of racial and ethnic categories has been increasingly acknowledged, and concerns about use of these terms in medical and health research, education, and practice have been progressively recognized. Historically, although inappropriately, race has been considered a biological construct<sup>130</sup>.

As Flanagin states, “Race and ethnicity are dynamic, shaped by geographic, cultural, and sociopolitical forces”<sup>131</sup>, it is then consequent that race and ethnicity are social constructs with limited utility. However, the terms may be useful as a lens through which to study and view racism and disparities and inequities in health care, education, and research for example<sup>132, 133</sup>. Terms and categories used to define and describe race and ethnicity have changed with time based on sociocultural shifts and greater awareness of the role of racism in society<sup>134</sup>.

The terms race, with the first annotated usage dating back to the 1500s, and ethnicity, with first usage dating back to the late 1700s,<sup>135</sup> have changed and continue to evolve semantically. The Oxford English Dictionary currently defines race as “a group of people connected by common descent or origin” or “any of the (putative) major groupings of mankind, usually defined in terms of distinct physical features or shared ethnicity” and ethnicity as “membership of a group regarded as ultimately of common descent or having a common national

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<sup>130</sup> Flanagin A, Frey T, Christiansen SL, AMA Manual of Style Committee. Updated Guidance on the Reporting of Race and Ethnicity in Medical and Science Journals. *JAMA*. 2021;326(7):621–627.

<sup>131</sup> Borrell LN, Elhawary JR, Fuentes-Afflick E, et al. Race and genetic ancestry in medicine: a time for reckoning with racism. *N Engl J Med*. 2021;384(5):474-480.

<sup>132</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>133</sup> Race to Justice toolkit. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/dpho/race-to-justice-action-kit-glossary.pdf> Accessed: 10.09.2022

<sup>134</sup> Flanagin A, Frey T, Christiansen SL, AMA Manual of Style Committee. Updated Guidance on the Reporting of Race and Ethnicity in Medical and Science Journals. *JAMA*. 2021;326(7):621–627.

<sup>135</sup> Stamper K. Why we confuse race and ethnicity: a lexicographer’s perspective. *Conscious Style Guide*. February 13, 2019.. <https://consciousstyleguide.com/why-we-confuse-race-ethnicity-lexicographers-perspective/> Accessed 11/09/2022.

or cultural tradition.”<sup>136</sup>. In the US, for example, ethnicity has referred to Hispanic or Latino, Latina, or Latinx people. Outside of the US, other terms of ethnicity may apply within specific nations or ancestry groups. As noted in a lexicographer’s post on the Conscious Style Guide, race and ethnicity are difficult to untangle<sup>137</sup>. In general, ethnicity has historically referred to a person’s cultural identity (e.g., language, customs, religion), while race to broad categories of people that are divided arbitrarily but based on ancestral origin and physical characteristics.<sup>138</sup> Definitions that rely on external determinations of physical characteristics are problematic and may perpetuate racism. Moreover, there is concern about whether these and other definitions are appropriate or out-of-date<sup>139</sup> and whether separation of subcategories of race from subcategories of ethnicity could be discriminatory, especially when used by governmental agencies and institutions to guide policy, funding allocations, budgets, and data-driven business and research decisions.<sup>140</sup> Thus, proposals have been made that these terms be unified into an aggregate, mutually exclusive set of categories as in *race and ethnicity*.<sup>141</sup>

The term *ethnic* was derived from the word *ethnos*, in Greek meaning people or nation, and during the 18th century became the object of research in ethnology, which is now called cultural anthropology in the United States and social anthropology in the United Kingdom<sup>142</sup>. The word *ethnic* was used by Homer to describe a flock of animals, which is “a biologically defined

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<sup>136</sup> Oxford English Dictionary.. <https://www.oed.com/> Accessed 11/09/2022

<sup>137</sup> Stamper K. Why we confuse race and ethnicity: a lexicographer’s perspective. Conscious Style Guide. February 13, 2019.. <https://consciousstyleguide.com/why-we-confuse-race-ethnicity-lexicographers-perspective/> Accessed 11/09/2022

<sup>138</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>139</sup> McWhorter J. The dictionary definition of racism has to change. The Atlantic. June 22, 2020.. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/dictionary-definition-racism-has-change/613324/> Accessed 11/09/2022

<sup>140</sup> González-Hermoso J, Santos R. Separating race from ethnicity in surveys risks inaccurate picture of the Latinx community. Urban Wire. October 15, 2019. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/separating-race-ethnicity-surveys-risks-inaccurate-picture-latinx-community> Accessed 13/09/2022.

<sup>141</sup> Flores G. Language barriers and hospitalized children: are we overlooking the most important risk factor for adverse events? JAMA Pediatr. 2020;174(12): e203238.

<sup>142</sup> Vermeulen H. F., (2015). Before Boas: The genesis of ethnography and ethnology in the German Enlightenment. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

grouping”<sup>143</sup>. Later, the term was applied to humans to mean a unity of people of common culture and language or of common blood and descent. By the 20th century, “ethnicity” was used to refer to “others,” someone different from *us* <sup>144</sup>.

Another way used to define an ethnic group as *otherness* and *minority* can be still found in contemporary dictionaries, for example, Oxford Dictionaries define ethnic groups as:

*Relating to a population subgroup (within a larger or dominant national or cultural group) with a common national or cultural tradition: 1.1 Relating to national and cultural origins; 1.2 Denoting origin by birth or descent rather than by present nationality <ethnic Indian populations>; 1.3 Characteristic of or belonging to a non-Western cultural tradition.*<sup>145</sup>

Thus, ethnic identity might refer to identification with a group that is perceived as being different from the majority, whether for cultural, “*racial*,” or religious reasons<sup>146</sup>. At some point, the historical meaning of *ethnic*, which meant “different from the majority” or the *outsider*, shifted from implying religious differences to cultural ones<sup>147</sup>.

However, from 1975 on, the term *ethnicity* started to be used when referring to all groups in a society “characterized by a distinct sense of difference because of culture and descent”<sup>148</sup>, including majority groups. Through this evolution, the meaning of ethnicity came closer to the European concept of nationality<sup>149</sup>.

In the 19th century, Max Weber focused on the subjective belief of group members that they have common descent, perceived ancestry, culture, and

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<sup>143</sup> Sekulić D. (2008). Ethnic group. In: Schaefer R.T. (Ed.) Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society (pp. 456-459). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. P. 456

<sup>144</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>145</sup> *Ethnic*. (n.d.-b). In Oxford dictionaries.

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ethnic> Accessed: 14/09/2022.

<sup>146</sup> Persky I., Birman D. (2005). Ethnic identity in acculturation research: A study of multiple identities of Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36, 557-572.

<sup>147</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>148</sup> Sekulić D. (2008). Ethnic group. In: Schaefer R.T. (Ed.) Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society (pp. 456-459). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Pp. 456-457.

<sup>149</sup> Ibidem.

language. “Subjective belief in common descent can be based on a similarity of physical type and custom, but which cultural components are important varies from group to group”<sup>150</sup>. Adding physical features to the definition of ethnic groups made it more similar to the term *race*.

*Ethnic groups* are, therefore, subject to change and redefinition, as the result of a social process in which people draw boundaries around themselves, producing and reproducing culture, acknowledging ancestry, and using their language as an emblem of the group<sup>151</sup>.

Analyzing definitions of ethnicity in 65 sociological and anthropological studies, Isajiw<sup>152</sup> identified 10 of its most common attributes, which are: common geographical or national roots or common ancestry; common culture, practices, religion, physical, or racial; language; we-consciousness; loyalty and community; social bond domination; common values; separate institutions; minority status; and immigration genesis.

More recently, in 2001<sup>153</sup> it was examined the many ways that ethnic groups have been defined: as minority or political status, attachment to a location, sharing a common language, religion, or place of origin. The researcher found all these definitions inadequate, as for him, an ethnic group is simply a social construction that arises in many historical circumstances and evolves constantly. Instead, he offers a different definition: “The ethnic group is any substantial aggregation of persons who are perceived by themselves and/or others to share a unique set of cultural and historical commonalities”<sup>154</sup>.

The history of the distinctions between the terms *ethnicity*, *race*, *nations*, and *ethnic groups* is highly complicated. From American researchers’ perspective, especially in psychology and sociology, ethnicity is very much

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<sup>150</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>151</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>152</sup> Isajiw W. W. (1974). Definitions of ethnicity. *Ethnicity*, 1, 111-124.

<sup>153</sup> Zelinsky W. (2001). *The enigma of ethnicity: Another American dilemma*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

<sup>154</sup> Zelinsky W. (2001). *The enigma of ethnicity: Another American dilemma*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. P. 43

connected to *race*, with the two concepts strongly overlapping<sup>155</sup>. For example, an American study<sup>156</sup> examining the prototypicality of different ethnic groups for American identity, took into consideration European American, Asian American, Latino/as, and African American groups. Similar confusion appears in the United Kingdom, where the meaning of race overlaps with ethnicity. However, a handbook by Benet-Martinez<sup>157</sup> calls using the terms *ethnicity* and *race* interchangeably a common mistake, as *ethnicity* usually implies a shared identity and cultural ancestry whereas *race* does not.

In addition, there are many problems and misunderstandings about the term *race*, starting from doubts about its biological reality. A theory of permanent racial types is called “the most serious source of misunderstanding” and “an error in the science of pre-Darwinian era” by Banton in 1998<sup>158</sup>. Because all human populations have a diverse genetic origin, the notion of *race* has been known for more than a century to lack scientific justification<sup>159</sup>. Moreover, the term “race” can be understood in many different ways, such as a lineage, subspecies, class, status, or social construct<sup>160</sup>. Because of such confusions, and their consequences during World War II, UNESCO committee on *race* suggested to replace this term with *ethnic group*.

Thus, many researchers argue that ethnicity refers to people who, apart from *race*, also share origins or social background, a common language, a specific geographic location, religious tradition and identity, and a set of traditions and customs that distinguish their ethnic group from others in their *racial group*, including style of speech and/or style of dress<sup>161</sup>.

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<sup>155</sup> Phinney J. S., Ong A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 54, 271-281.

<sup>156</sup> Huynh Q.-L., Devos T., Altman H. R. (2015). Boundaries of American identity: Relations between ethnic group prototypicality and policy attitudes. *Political Psychology*, 36, 449-468.

<sup>157</sup> Benet-Martínez V. (2008). Cross-cultural personality research. In Robins R. W., Fraley C., Krueger R. F. (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in personality psychology* (pp. 170-189). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

<sup>158</sup> Banton M. (1998). *Racial theories*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. P. 3

<sup>159</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>161</sup> Benet-Martínez V., Hong Y. Y. (Eds.). (2014). *The Oxford handbook of multicultural identity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

The editors of the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*<sup>162</sup>, recognizing that ethnicity is an immensely complex concept, decided to treat as *ethnic groups* any aggregate characterized by some of the 14 following features, although in combinations that can vary considerably: common geographic origins; migratory status; “race”; language or dialect; religious faith or faiths; ties that transcend kinship, neighborhood, and community boundaries; shared traditions, values, symbols; literature, folklore and music; food preferences; settlement and employment patterns; special interests with regard to politics in the homeland and in the United States; institutions that specifically serve and maintain the group; an internal sense of distinctiveness; and an external perception of distinctiveness.

According to the “Health Equity Style Guide for the COVID-19 Response”, racism is defined as a “system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks... (“race”), that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and undermines realization of the full potential of our whole society through the waste of human resources.”<sup>163</sup> Note that racism and prejudice can occur without phenotypic discrimination.

Looking at other relevant terms, the word *ancestry* refers to a person’s country or region of origin or an individual’s lineage of descent. Another characteristic of many populations is *genetic admixture*, which refers to genetic exchange among people from different ancestries<sup>164</sup>. *Ancestry* and genetic admixture may provide more useful information about population health and genetic variants than do racial and ethnic categories.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Thernstrom S., Orlov A., Handlin O. (Eds.). (1980). *Harvard encyclopedia of American ethnic groups*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

<sup>163</sup> Health Equity Style Guide for the COVID-19 Response: Principles and Preferred Terms for Non-Stigmatizing, Bias-Free Language. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2020.

<sup>164</sup> Borrell LN, Elhawary JR, Fuentes-Afflick E, et al. Race and genetic ancestry in medicine: a time for reckoning with racism. *N Engl J Med*. 2021;384(5):474-480.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibidem*.

Although *race* and *ethnicity* have no biological meaning, the terms have important, albeit contested, social meanings<sup>166</sup>. Neglecting to report race and ethnicity in research disregards the reality of social stratification, injustices, and inequities and implications for population health,<sup>167</sup> and removing race and ethnicity from research may conceal disparities.

Jones<sup>168</sup> and the CDC style guide<sup>169</sup> have defined 3 levels of racism: systemic, institutionalized, and structural. “Structures, policies, practices, and norms resulting in differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by ‘race’ (e.g., how major systems—the economy, politics, education, criminal justice, health, etc.—perpetuate unfair advantage).”<sup>170</sup> The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook advises to not shorten these terms to “racism,” to avoid confusion with the other definitions.<sup>171</sup>

It is useful the definition given by CDC of interpersonal and personally mediated racism, which is connotated as “prejudice and discrimination, where prejudice is differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intents of others by *race*, and discrimination is differential actions towards others by ‘race.’ These can be either intentional or unintentional.”<sup>172</sup> This can have internalized racism as a consequence, which is the “acceptance by members of the stigmatized *races* of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth.”<sup>173</sup>

In order to generally classify *race*, *ethnicity* and *national origin*, the Department of Diversity Initiatives of the University of South Carolina redacted a guide to better understand the terminology utilized in current times to refer to

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<sup>166</sup> Flanagan A, Frey T, Christiansen SL, AMA Manual of Style Committee. Updated Guidance on the Reporting of Race and Ethnicity in Medical and Science Journals. *JAMA*. 2021;326(7):621–627.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>168</sup> Jones CP. Confronting institutionalized racism. *Phylon*. 2002;50(1/2):7-22.

<sup>169</sup> Health Equity Style Guide for the COVID-19 Response: Principles and Preferred Terms for Non-Stigmatizing, Bias-Free Language. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2020.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>171</sup> AP Stylebook. <https://www.apstylebook.com/> Accessed 13/09/2022.

<sup>172</sup> Health Equity Style Guide for the COVID-19 Response: Principles and Preferred Terms for Non-Stigmatizing, Bias-Free Language. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2020.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibidem*.

a person’s ethnicity<sup>174</sup>. The guide was originally created to provide the members of the USC Aiken community with up-to-date inclusive language terminology, nonetheless it could be useful as a general custom for everyone. As a general rule, however, the best approach is asking the individual or the group their preferred terms to be addressed by. Following a list of the most common different identities:

**Table 3 Race, Ethnicity, & National Origin<sup>175</sup>**

Identity	Explanation	Examples
African American/black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Black and African American are not always interchangeable.</li> <li>– Some may identify as African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino or other.</li> <li>– If referring to a group in general, use black (lowercase).</li> </ul>	Refer to groups as black students, black faculty members, etc., not blacks. Consider the necessity of using race within your text. “Would I mention ‘white student’ or ‘white faculty member’?”
Hispanic, Latin(a/o), & Latinx	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hispanic: people from Spanish-speaking countries.</li> <li>– Latino, Latina, or Latinx: person of Latin American descent who can be of any background or language.</li> <li>– When referring to a group, generally use Latinx as it is gender inclusive.</li> </ul>	People from Mexico, Cuba, and Guatemala who speak Spanish are both Hispanic and Latinx. Brazilians who speak Portuguese are Latinx but not Hispanic. Spanish-speaking people in Spain and outside Latin America are Hispanic but not Latinx.

<sup>174</sup> Department of Diversity Initiatives. Guide to Inclusive Language. 2022, Aiken University of South Carolina. <https://www.usca.edu/diversity-initiatives/training-resources/guide-to-inclusive-language/inclusive-language-guide/file> Accessed: 14/09/2022.

<sup>175</sup> Ibidem.



<p>Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Desi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Asian refers to citizens of countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent, or to describe people of Asian descent. Asian Americans trace their origins to these regions.</li> <li>– Pacific Islander: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian, Fijian, people of the Pacific Island.</li> <li>– Desi: individuals whose cultural and ethnic identity are related to the Indian subcontinent and diaspora.</li> <li>– Use Asian/Pacific Islander when referring to the relevant population in its entirety. Otherwise, use the preferred term of the individual or group.</li> </ul>	<p>Refer to groups as Asian students, Asian faculty members, etc., not Asians. Consider the necessity of using race within your text.</p>
<p>Native American</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Native American is preferred unless the individual or group specifies otherwise.</li> <li>– Some prefer American Indian.</li> </ul>	<p>The term “Indian” is used only when referring to people from India, not for Native Americans.</p>
<p>People of Color</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Do not use the term minority to refer to individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li>– Instead, use “people of color.”</li> </ul>	<p>Do not use the term “colored people”</p>
<p>Underserved/ Underrepresented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Do not use the term minority to describe students from diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>– When referring to multiple groups from diverse backgrounds, use “Underserved/Underrepresented.”</li> <li>– Use the specific group title when possible.</li> </ul>	<p>For example: LGBTQ+ students, black students, undocumented students, etc.</p>

## **V. Texts Analysis on Political Correctness**

The following analysis is based on the opening statements of four different politicians at the beginning of their mandates, in particular: the opening statement by Ursula von der Leyen in July 2019 when she was appointed President of the European Commission, the statement by António Guterres on his appointment as Secretary-General of the United Nations in October 2016, the inaugural address by Donald Trump in January 2017 when he became President of the United States of America, and the first speech by Boris Johnson in July 2019 when he became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

The choices of the speeches come from a deep analysis on the meaning of these countries, international organization and political system. First of all, the selection comes from the need to address the English language in order to conduct a linguistic analysis having the same language of reference to better compare the findings, and the major English-speaking countries are the United Kingdom and the United States, so the decision fell on these two, moreover, the inclusion of the most relevant organizations was thought to be useful in the understanding of choices of wordings and arguments by a concert of states, so among the most relevant the decision was to discuss the speech of the President of the EU commission, in order to add a communitarian sense related to a specific region, and the speech of the United Nation's Secretary-General to give a broader sense of the sentiment of virtually 193 Member States.

The choices of the people were related to the nearness of their appointment, choosing a time frame of less than three years in order to better compare their arguments, related with the choice of selecting only speeches before the Covid-19 pandemic, otherwise some of the speeches would not have been comparable for the strong linkage with the current issues at stake. Moreover, the selection was not only on the institutions, but also on the speaker, in that it was selected the small sample of people as much heterogeneous as possible, with two males from two of the major countries in the world also for their importance in the current issues, one female from another major country,

especially in the European Union, and one Portuguese male, all having different perspectives connected also to their background and political party of belonging.

The analysis will follow the dates of speeches, starting from the furthest, namely António Guterres in 2016, to the nearest in time with Boris Johnson in 2019, in the middle there will be the speeches by Donald Trump and Ursula von der Leyen.

## **5.1 António Guterres' Statement Appointed Secretary-General of the U.N.**

António Guterres' first statement on his appointment by the General Assembly to the position of Secretary-General of the United Nation started addressing the President of the General assembly, the Secretary-General, and lastly he decided to address in general "*Ladies and Gentlemen*"<sup>176</sup>, a choice of inclusivity to address everyone in the room regardless of their gender. He shares his positive feelings toward the appointment to the position of Secretary-General, he perceives gratitude, humility and responsibility. He addresses the General Assembly and the Security Council thanking them for entrusting him the position, sharing his admiration for their openness and transparency during the selection process, and for the competency of the candidates for the same position.

He poses himself to the service of all Member States, stating that he was "chosen by all Member States"<sup>177</sup>, this positive connotation continues in the following lines. This shows that Guterres is open to every one of the 193 Member States, and he is ready to listen to them all, regardless of their differences, this

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<sup>176</sup> Guterres, António, 2016. Statement by Mr. António Guterres on his appointment by the General Assembly to the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations, 13 October 2016 <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2016-10-13/appointment-general-assembly-position-secretary-general-united> Accessed: 20/09/2022.

<sup>177</sup> Ibidem.

points to inclusivity and shows politically correct language through the process of thanking without excluding anyone.

Guterres then finishes the first section of his speech talking in general about the challenges faced by the UN and his humble approach in addressing the “dramatic problems of today’s complex world”<sup>178</sup>, showing openness in their resolution, wanting to find “solutions that benefit everyone involved,” again the goal is inclusiveness.

Again, in the second and last section of his statement, he addresses “Excellencies” and following “Ladies and Gentlemen”<sup>179</sup>, maybe the choice would have been even better with a comprehensive word for all the people involved, but still, he refers to both genders.

He then brings the example he witnessed related to war zones and refugee camps, pointing his office toward human dignity, seeing how the most vulnerable people were treated during those difficult situations, he decided to focus on the “most socially and economically underprivileged”<sup>180</sup>, also the choice of using this periphrasis instead of *poor* for example shows his respect toward all the people. Furthermore, he made a digression on gender equality, using those exact words, stating his awareness on the issues women face daily, tackling the violence women are subjected to just based on the fact that they are women. He uses the word *women*, an inclusive way to address the assigned-at-birth gender, and Guterres shows his closeness to the fact that it does not happen only in specific matters, but in society in general, in the family and in the workplace. The violence he talks about is related to conflicts and while they are fleeing from an unsafe space, again underlining his experience in war zones and refugee camps. His priority will be both in protecting and empowering *women and girls*<sup>181</sup>, in this including and also emphasizing the young population.

In his closing lines, Guterres also reports the universal values of the United Nations, which are “peace, justice, human dignity, tolerance and

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<sup>178</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>179</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>180</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>181</sup> Ibidem.

solidarity”<sup>182</sup>. Based on this assumption, he includes that an important asset is diversity in all its forms, so it is important not to see it as a threat. He talks about ethnicity, saying that “societies that are more and more multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious, diversity can bring us together, not drive us apart”<sup>183</sup>. Guterres demonstrates inclusivity and openness for almost all the issues of political correctness seen previously, from gender equality to the respect for diverse ethnicities. His speech in general seems to follow the path of political correctness, not in a fictitious way to please the masses, but because he feels this is the just way to address issues and the present people. He can be defined politically correct both in his wordings and in the content of the speech.

## **5.2 Donald Trump’s Inaugural Address as President of the U.S.A.**

The following speech analyzed is the inaugural address by Donald Trump on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 in Washington D.C.<sup>184</sup> The speech starts with Trump thanking the Chief Justice Roberts, and then the latest presidents of the United States of America in order, starting from Carter, then Clinton, Following Bush and the nearest President Obama; he also thanks “fellow Americans, and people of the world”<sup>185</sup>. The starting point seems to unite all the world’s population regardless of their origins, but putting the accent on the Americans, and, seeing the nature of the talk, it seems reasonable to do so. Despite his more “presidential” delivery, the combative language and rampant attack of policies and policy makers of the past remains. President Trump set the tone for this

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<sup>182</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>183</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>184</sup> Trump, Donald, 2017. Remarks Of President Donald J. Trump, *Inaugural Address. Friday, January 20, 2017, Washington, D.C.* <https://it.usembassy.gov/president-trump-inaugural-address/> Accessed: 20/09/2022.

<sup>185</sup> Ibidem.

presidency with an unconventional inaugural address that makes clear he will not play the political game as usual.

Although he began by thanking the former Presidents in attendance and used inclusive language like *us* and *we*, President Trump did not mention his opponent or her supporters. He decided not to make conciliatory assurances of consensus and compromise. Instead, he took aim at the political failings of the past. He blamed the Washington establishment for the plight of struggling families. Shortly after, President Trump uses “we, the citizens of America”<sup>186</sup>, so he restrict the field to just American people and uses words such as *rebuild*, *restore*<sup>187</sup>, which seem in contrast to what was said a couple of lines before, he seems to diminish the work of previous presidents, saying that with him “we will get the job done”, it is not a thankful statement anymore, he shows disrespect to the work done before his presidency.

Indeed, Trump followed the same scheme in the following minutes, in which he explains the transfer of power and he claims that “we are grateful to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout this transition. They have been magnificent,” deciding to talk for all the people with the usage of *we* instead of *me*. But in the following sentence, Trump uses *however*, meaning that there will be a change attached to the transfer of power, and explicitly asserting that the ceremony has more meaning than just a transfer of power, it is the moment “we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People”<sup>188</sup>, implying that the previous mandates did not take into account the population, he diminishes the work done before him.

In fact, he continues to be politically incorrect in a long digression of all the things the former presidents have failed to do, especially underlining the lack of respect of the population, in that he configures as a populist, distancing himself from the constituted power. For example, he asserts that “Politicians

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<sup>186</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>187</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>188</sup> Ibidem.

prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country<sup>189</sup>,” drawing a line between *us*, meaning the population, and *them*, the politicians, the establishment. He talks about a small group that has taken the rewards, while the people have suffered the costs of that. He goes on with “their victories,” which have not been “your victories”<sup>190</sup>, and a following list of the things *they* have done, while *you* were worsening *your* position and wealth.

The major theme of President Trump’s inaugural address is that middle class Americans have been disenfranchised by globalization, that “the wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed all across the world.” He distances from what was done in the past, asserting “that all changes – starting right here, and right now, because this moment is your moment: it belongs to you”<sup>191</sup>, he openly disrespects the previous mandates. It seems that who he thanked at the beginning are in reality the people he is despising in front of all the Americans.

He seems to advocate for the underprivileged in the sentence “there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land”<sup>192</sup>, but with the addition of “while they celebrated in our nation’s Capital”<sup>193</sup>, it is clear that he was in fact exploiting the suffering of people to attack the other politicians. Trump described a country that has served the elites to the detriment of everyday Americans. He continues with the dichotomy *they* and *you* for the rest of his speech, and this constitutes not only a political choice, but a politically incorrect choice, he could have chosen to talk just about the struggles of the American population, but the dichotomy constitutes a constant reminder that people were suffering because the politicians were only making choices for themselves, and this amounts to a manipulation of the thought generating the speech.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>190</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>191</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>192</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>193</sup> Ibidem.

The President of the U.S.A. incites the Americans about his addressing as President making them believe that the moment was shared, saying that “it belongs to everyone gathered here today and everyone watching all across America. This is your day. This is your celebration.”<sup>194</sup> Trump distances from the moment saying that it was the population’s day, not his, to celebrate. Early in Trump’s speech, he talked about “the forgotten men and women” of America, saying “The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer”, in that Trump is implying that he is going to unburden the American people by disengaging the United States from the world that it leads, closing its borders, and put “American first.”

He promised to put *America first*, and to rebuild the nation using American labor and American products. He described a nation tormented by poor schools, rusting factories, impoverished children and crime, as he asserts “Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities”<sup>195</sup>, he acknowledges the difficulties of the vulnerable part of the population, but without assessing the possibilities to tackle the problem. The same happens with “an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge”<sup>196</sup>, in that the accent posed is on the students, which are said to be young and beautiful, no a politically correct choice, in that not all the students must be young, and the word *beautiful* appears out of context, not relevant for their development as human beings. Moreover, he puts all these issues in the same paragraph with “the crime and gangs and drugs”<sup>197</sup>, that does not have anything in common with the previous arguments, besides helping to picture the worst scenario in the present.

Trump warned, “This American carnage stops here, and it stops right now.”<sup>198</sup> He promised that he will make other countries pay their share for

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<sup>194</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>195</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>196</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>197</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>198</sup> Ibidem.



America's help, but never addressed how the U.S.A can actually disengage from problems abroad.

Trump's speech had a populous appeal targeted at the people feeling forgotten by the political process. As asserted beforehand, he sees his election as returning power to the people. Trump explained American jobs and protected borders as integral in achieving his vision and its promises of wealth, strength, safety, and greatness.

He changes the previously seen dichotomy into *we* and *they* in a positive way, because at this point he is not addressing the politicians anymore, but he connects with the underprivileged saying that "their pain is our pain. Their dreams are our dreams; and their success will be our success. We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny."<sup>199</sup> So, after dividing from within, he shows unity between the people of America, but this immediately changes when he returns to talk about people and countries from the outside, saying "we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry" related to armies, defense of the borders, failing to defend American ones but defending others, adding that, as a consequence "America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay"<sup>200</sup>.

He configures again the negative feeling toward the outside world, saying they "made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon,"<sup>201</sup> generating an incorrect feeling of threat felt by him and used as a proper reality statement in his speech, adding that in the process millions of American workers were left behind. Trump uses the verb *ripped* regarding the wealth of the middle class, implying that the former presidential mandates caused the redistribution of the wealth across the world, together with the globalization, meaning he will seek to close off America's borders.

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<sup>199</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>200</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>201</sup> Ibidem.

He cuts with the past with the sentence “But that is the past. And now we are looking only to the future”<sup>202</sup>, trying to close the negative feelings of the population regarding the administration in the past, and generate a manipulatory positive feeling of rebirth in the future thanks to his mandate, and he reiterates the America’s First slogan accordingly. He reconstructs the alleged previously damaged sides into positive decisions, such as “decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs” which “will be made to benefit American workers and American families,” leaving outside the human beings suffering from connected consequences.

He focuses just on the American side of the story, without considering the different perspective on the protection of human dignity for example, as he asserts “we must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.”

Trump goes on accentuating the work and goals to reach all together, as part of his populist approach, as in “We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams.” But he underlines that people using welfare subsidies should not use them, instead they should get back to work, without discerning between people who, for example, cannot work, he generally says “we will get our people off of welfare and back to work.”<sup>203</sup>

When referring to the outside alliances, he lets on that the most important task is to “unite the civilized world against Radical Islamic Terrorism”<sup>204</sup>, deciding not to investigate the complex issues the world faces, not just limited to terrorism toward the United States. For the President Trump, the right way to eliminate prejudice is through patriotism, and refers to the Bible to strengthen his point, without any reference to the multiculturalism and openness with regards to other countries and ethnicities. He asserts that the protection the USA

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<sup>202</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>203</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>204</sup> Ibidem.

needs comes from the “great men and women of our military and law enforcement and, most importantly, [...] by God.”<sup>205</sup>, in this he refers to both men and women, but restricted to the American soldiers, not humanity as a whole.

At this point of the speech, he returns to the politicians, referring probably to the former administrations again, diminishing their work saying they were “all talk and no action,” who were always complaining without doing something.

Again, Trump takes as an example the soldiers, in this context to talk briefly about different ethnicities, asserting that “whether we are black, brown, or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots”, so racism is eliminated in his view only if there is the common background of American patriotism. Same is related to children, he implies that every child is equal and have the same dreams just for the fact that they are born in America.

Trump sought to understand what Americans want, he assumed the general sentiment of the people was that “Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves. These are the just and reasonable demands of a righteous public.”<sup>206</sup> He is again politically incorrect assuming that every American would feel the same regarding different issues, and according to him his thought, if shared, was righteous, so that the ones not thinking the same were on the wrong side.

President Trump’s inaugural address was true to the tone and tenor of his campaign rhetoric, he described his vision for America, an *America first* vision that did not pledge unity to heal the deeply fractured electorate. While this could have been the moment for Trump to calm fears and send a positive message, this speech will go down as a missed opportunity.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>206</sup> Ibidem.

### 5.3 Ursula von der Leyen's Opening Statement as President of the European Commission

The opening statement by Ursula von der Leyen<sup>207</sup>, at the time candidate for President of the European Commission, is a long speech composed by different sections. The analysis will look both at the content and the form she used to understand her position toward political correctness and the choices she made regarding the underprivileged.

In the prologue of her statement, she addresses the President of the European Parliament and all the present members, calling them *honourable*, showing them respect.

She then decides to talk about the first female President of the European Parliament in the 40 years prior elections of the European Union, she said female, not girl or woman, in that she tries to be more politically correct possible. She also underlines the importance of the previous crucial female representers which paved the way for the future generations.

In this framework, she is the result of this process, culminating in a female President of the European Commission: Ursula von der Leyen, and she says that it is thanks to every one of the European icons and to Simone Veil that she is presenting her vision of Europe. Indeed, her long speech she mentions many times the string *men and women*, she could have better chosen *people*, but her choice seems to be a matter of clarity, not to mix up the population in general and the people she is addressing. The choice is also related to the importance of the women in the process of the European Union; indeed, she feels the necessity to also underline the *founding mothers*, not just the founding fathers, in the creation of the crucial steps after the Second World War. Still in the prologue,

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<sup>207</sup> Von der Leyen, Ursula, 2019. Opening Statement in the European Parliament Plenary Session by Ursula von der Leyen, Candidate for President of the European Commission. Strasbourg, 16 July 2019, European Commission.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_19\\_4230](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_19_4230)

she states her preferred ways to be addressed, which are a mother, a doctor, and a politician. These aspects will be crucial in her discourse, together with the fact of being a woman. Shortly after, she decides to address all the “500 million Europeans”,<sup>208</sup> leaving no one behind, trying to include every citizen.

Every time she starts a new topic, she continues to address the present *honourable members* to underline the importance of the listeners.

The fact that she is a mother is influential in being more open and reliant on the previous generation for “my children’s generation,” including in that all the children adding generation to the sentence. He decides to talk about all the hot and uncomfortable topics, such as “demographic change, globalisation of the world economy, rapid digitalisation of our working environment and, of course, climate change”<sup>209</sup>, she decides not to stay silent in front of the issues at stake all over the world, inclusion again present. Von der Leyen reinforces the shared sentiment stating, “we are all feeling quite clearly the effects of climate change” and “we are all feeling the concrete effects of demographic change.”<sup>210</sup>

As a solution to all the issues, the President of the European Commission suggests that “We want multilateralism, we want fair trade, we defend the rules-based order because we know it is better for all of us. We have to do it the European way. [...] we must first rediscover our unity. If we are united on the inside, nobody will divide us from the outside”<sup>211</sup>, in this she is ambivalent, both suggesting opening up even more to multilateralism potentially to the world, and to unite the Europeans to avoid the division created by the outside, in that she is saying implicitly that there is someone outside Europe threatening the unity of Europe.

Ursula von der Leyen thinks that “our most pressing challenge is keeping our planet healthy,” using *our* to make people understand that the option is just to work together, keeping in mind the goal of climate-neutrality, but wanting to reinforce it by reaching it before its due date. “The world has to move

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<sup>208</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>209</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>210</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>211</sup> Ibidem.

together”<sup>212</sup>, she asserts, both to be inclusive and to give the utmost importance to the topic and to raise awareness that this is a duty posed on every person and every country around the world. “But what is good for our planet must also be good for our people and our regions” President says, to make people understand that the costs should not burden the citizens of Europe, adding further on the speech that “we leave nobody behind” and “let’s open the door,” being inclusive at least. She keeps an eye on the social perspective when talking about economy, the core of the European Union, adding that “we must reconcile the market with the social.”

The final warning of the first section of the speech is that all the countries have to “share the burden”<sup>213</sup>, so the inclusiveness is coupled with the necessity of everyone to take its responsibility.

The section about the European potential starts with the “our” thoughts again, with the repetition of the word in “using all of our potential: our people, our talent, our diversity”, focusing particularly on *hard working families*, a choice of words connected to the underprivileged, choosing to address them in one of the most neutral way possible, adding the necessity of a minimum wage to reach a decent living. Again, she addressed the underprivileged asking for “better protection for those who lose their jobs when our economy takes a severe hit,” not leaving anyone behind.<sup>214</sup>

She then starts a digression on *young people*, deciding to speak up about this category and letting them feel important and heard, a decision reflecting her attachment to family issues and a politically correct one, she links her closeness with “I know as a mother of seven”<sup>215</sup>, specifying her status of mother, and she calls them the most vulnerable, a choice not entirely politically correct putting them in the sphere of help instead of empowerment. She treats them as a collateral damage of the choices of older people, and in need of help by them,

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<sup>212</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>213</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>214</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>215</sup> Ibidem.

but tackling the crucial point of respecting their “most basic of rights like healthcare and education.”

She takes an important step in political correctness, tackling gender equality, calling it with the proper name, and she proposes to do so directly in the institution she participates in, so “if Member States do not propose enough female Commissioners, I will not hesitate to ask for new names” and she directly put herself in the group of women using the inclusive *we*: “we represent half of our population. We want our fair share.”<sup>216</sup>

She does not stop there, she also addresses the crucial issue of *violence against women*, and the choice of words is the manual of politically correct language, asserting that it is not a women’s issue, proposing to close the gap between *us*, meaning men and women.

In the section about Europe’s values, she tackles the liberty and independence reached with hard fighting by the Europeans, with the Rule of Law as the most important instrument to continue with the current path. Von der Leyen decides to call upon *Lady Justice*, not a random choice, it is the result of the underrepresenting of women in society that, in her view, seemed to need more acknowledgement.

According to European and Ursula’s values, she also addresses the people drowned in the Mediterranean calling for action the countries that are not doing enough on the matter, pinning the duty to save lives and the “legal and moral duty to respect the dignity of every human being.” She adds that “saving alone is not enough. We must reduce irregular migration, we must fight smugglers and traffickers – it is organised crime –, we must preserve the right to asylum and improve the situation of refugees [...] We need empathy,”<sup>217</sup> using the right words to call these issues, without politicizing them. Beforehand, the President asserts that “the Rule of Law is universal, it applies to all,” so asserting that the unity is not only something to cherish on, but also a duty. Indeed, she talks about “A Common European Asylum System” which “must be exactly that

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<sup>216</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>217</sup> Ibidem.

– common,” again talking about the universal duty that comes with the present problematics, asking to “help each other and contribute.” Ursula brings a personal example of a refugee she welcomed in her home, slightly becoming a mother-to-son talk.

Ursula von der Leyen, then, introduces the importance of being more than citizens of a country, but citizens of Europe and also stay transatlantic, with the cornerstone of it being NATO, so a decision toward openness and inclusion in the citizenship front, regarding humanity.

She constructs a sentence representing both genders, saying “Our servicemen and servicewomen work side by side with police officers, diplomats and development aid workers. These men and women deserve our utmost respect and recognition for their tireless service for Europe.”<sup>218</sup> She could have chosen a more inclusive word representing both sexes, and the supposition is that she decided to say both of them is dictated by the need to feel also women represented, so she pointed out the importance of women in this context, probably without this clarification people would have assumed it was mostly referred to men.

Von der Leyen shows enough inclusiveness also mentioning the United Kingdom, specifying that they “will remain our ally, our partner and our friend.”<sup>219</sup> And she goes further announcing that she is ready to extension the withdrawal date, showing her goodwill in transforming their relationship in the best way possible for both sides.

The President of the European Commission is also showing openness with regards to the citizens of the European Union when looking inwards, in that she affirms that “I promised I'd come to listen. I have heard your concerns, your hopes and your expectations”, as a result she said that “I want us to work together”, wanting a concert of states making the difference all together, a

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<sup>218</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>219</sup> Ibidem.



pluralism that alludes to leaving no one behind and making people feel heard, indeed, she explicitly declares “I am convinced that our stronger partnership will further help to make people's voices heard.”<sup>220</sup>

The end of her speech consists in a promise for Europe. The starting point is a brief digression on her father’s experience of war and explicitly referring to *Mr. President* of the European Parliament, with the experience being on the *horrific war*, which led to “death, destruction, displacement and devastation on our continent”<sup>221</sup>, but she decided to focus on the last part of the Second World War, the end of it, and she tells how her father decided to openly talk about it to her and her six *brothers and sisters*, not siblings. For this and many other reasons, von der Leyen first takes responsibility for her country’s actions, Germany, and she sees only one option: “to unite and strengthen Europe.” She makes a distinction between the supporters of this goal and the people against it, this is the first time in her speech that she decided to divide instead of uniting. She will be a bitter opponent of the second category. For the rest, she feels again inclusive saying “we can count on one another both in good times and bad. Because we know that we may argue but we can make up again.”<sup>222</sup>

The last lines are dedicated to an extremely inclusive language, she says, “all of us in this room” and that Europe has “grown, matured and become strong with its 500 million inhabitants”<sup>223</sup>, not forgetting anyone. And she closes with “our young people,” being always one of her pivotal points, and the closing line being a sentence in different language stating “es lebe Europa, vive l'Europe, long live Europe!”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>221</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>222</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>223</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>224</sup> Ibidem.

## 5.4 Boris Johnson's First Speech as Prime Minister of the U.K.

Johnson's acceptance speech differs in content from the previous ones analyzed. In fact, he begins with *Good afternoon*<sup>225</sup>, without any specific address to any person involved in his rise to office as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. He starts with the traditional address to the Queen on accepting the request to form a government, but it seems in his speech that the queen invited him to form a government, but in the United Kingdom it does not work like this. In fact, the queen does not appoint directly, nor invite a Prime Minister to form a government, instead she accepts his nomination. After that, Johnson continues with a short tribute to "the fortitude and patience of my predecessor and her deep sense of public service"<sup>226</sup>, but without mentioning Theresa May by name, he cannot bring himself to mention Theresa May by name here or anywhere else in the speech, he is brutal toward his predecessor and politically incorrect in doing so, adding that his positive acknowledgement toward his predecessor is really short.

Shortly after, he reinforces his political incorrectness with a longer critique on May specifically on how her handling of Brexit, he asserts "but in spite of all her efforts it has become clear that there are pessimists at home and abroad who think that after three years of indecision that this country has become a prisoner to the old arguments of 2016 and that in this home of democracy we are incapable of honouring a basic democratic mandate."<sup>227</sup> Johnson's criticism derives from the need to turn Britain in a different direction concerning Brexit, which has become a point of contention especially during May's term.

Johnson dedicates most of the rest of his speech for the actions that need to be taken in order to deliver Brexit and to the many successes of Britain in multiple fields. Johnson's rhetoric is largely positive, where he frames the

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<sup>225</sup> Johnson, Boris, 2019. Boris Johnson's first speech as Prime Minister: 24 July 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/boris-johnsons-first-speech-as-prime-minister-24-july-2019> Accessed: 27/09/2022.

<sup>226</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>227</sup> Ibidem.

narrative of Brexit to be one of success and freedom from the constraints of the European Union, for example in the lines telling the people “So let us begin work now to create freeports that will drive growth and thousands of high-skilled jobs in left behind areas. Let’s start now. To liberate the UK’s extraordinary bioscience sector from anti genetic modification rules and let’s develop the blight-resistant crops that will feed the world”<sup>228</sup>. In this section, he starts listing many areas of society and infrastructure that will be affected by Brexit and makes multiple, direct promises of better policies. This strategy of giving clear promises to the constituents seems like a logical one, as the preceding three years have not moved the process of separation forward much at all. Therefore, the clearly articulated policy changes and the predicted effects on the society and the economy are effective choices to strengthen Johnson’s competence face and appeal to the electorate after a long period of uncertainty.

One of the most important promises Johnson makes in this speech is the promise of not bringing back checks on the Irish border, which has been a source of immense tension in the country. As he states, “I am convinced that we can do a deal without checks at the Irish border, because we refuse under any circumstances to have such checks and yet without that anti-democratic backstop”<sup>229</sup>.

Yet, with the securing of the Prime minister position he started to announce specific policy changes and make several new promises with confidence.

The several domestic policy promises, which also included a pledge to fix the broken social care system, are aimed at showing that a Johnson premiership will not just be about Brexit, some of them are, in his words, “My job is to make your streets safer – and we are going to begin with another 20,000 police on the streets [...]. My job is to make sure you don’t have to wait 3 weeks to see your GP and we start work this week [...]. My job is to protect you or your parents or grandparents from the fear of having to sell your home to pay for the

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<sup>228</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>229</sup> Ibidem.

costs of care, and so I am announcing now [...] that we will fix the crisis in social care once and for all with a clear plan we have prepared [...]. My job is to make sure your kids get a superb education [...], we are going to level up per pupil funding in primary and secondary schools”<sup>230</sup>, and so on.

In the sentence “it is time we unleashed the productive power not just of London and the Southeast but of every corner of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the awesome foursome”, Johnson decides to refer to the four nations not as the *United Kingdom*, instead, he uses this jokey and almost politically incorrect phrase.

Further on, Johnson asserts that “it is of course vital at the same time that we prepare for the remote possibility that Brussels refuses any further to negotiate and we are forced to come out with no deal, not because we want that outcome – of course not, but because it is only common sense to prepare”<sup>231</sup>. Johnson says that *no deal* is a remote possibility here, but later on he warms to the idea with a flourish on how well the UK will be prepared, for this reason, he does not seem consistent.

During his speech, he usually refers to both genders explicitly saying, *men and women*, as it was the case in the sentence “I am today building a great team of men and women”<sup>232</sup>, a politically correct choice in addressing his government. The same cannot be said when he refers to the underprivileged population, deciding to call them *the forgotten people*, same with the underdeveloped cities, called *the left behind towns* by Boris Johnson, he decides to use a colloquial way of speaking, almost as the discourse was not already prepared, and it seems to be effective in conveying the message to the people, but he could have used more appropriate words in this context.

A reference to the human rights and equality is present, but it is not articulated in a proper section for the matter, all the issues discussed previously during this research are put together in one sentence, which is “for the equalities

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<sup>230</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>231</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>232</sup> Ibidem.

on which we insist – whether race or gender or LGBT or the right of every girl in the world to 12 years of quality education and for the values we stand for around the world.”<sup>233</sup> It seems that he is trying to convey in the word “equality” all the different issues, which have different solutions for each of them, the aim here is just to mention them in order to show that also these issues will be tackled, but he fails to mention how this goal will be achieved.

Even in the last section he wants to remark the ineptitude of Theresa May saying “after three years of unfounded self-doubt it is time to change the record”<sup>234</sup>, choosing again the way of political incorrectness.

Johnson dedicates the final section of his speech to the narrative of an extraordinary pool of future possibilities for Britain and reminding how “No one in the last few centuries has succeeded in betting against the pluck and nerve and ambition of this country.” Johnson then notes on how the work to prepare for Brexit will start, and he will, together with the Conservative party, “work flat out to give this country the leadership it deserves, and that work begins now”<sup>235</sup>. In this concluding segment Johnson uses the colloquialisms that have been present throughout the speech, while appealing to his constituents as being leaders at their service.

The Prime Minister concludes his acceptance speech by condensing his core message, according to which Britain has and continues to surpass limitations and expectations. The conclusion of it is a general “thank you very much”<sup>236</sup>, without any reference to the people this thanking is addressed to.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>234</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>235</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>236</sup> Ibidem.

## VI. Conclusions

The following section will conclude the study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the study aims and questions and discussing the value and contribution thereof. It will also review the limitations of the study and propose opportunities for future research.

This study aimed to investigate the purpose and usage of politically correct language. Starting from the research questions viewed in the introductory chapter of the dissertation, the results indicate that there is not a unique and rigid way to use politically correct language, also because political correctness' meaning has changed over time and it is bound to change again in the future, linked to the nature of the research, a linguistic one. Language changes through time and through cultures, and this is related to the linguistic relativity studied during the research, for this reason the following assumptions are considered in the timeframe related to the study.

Further readings show that politically correct language is viewed differently based on the country of belonging, political view, ethnicity, income, and other factors, and this has been cleared with a cross-study of various polls considering a cross examination both between countries and within countries. Furthermore, the language was influential in deciding the degree of political correctness of the respondents, and this strengthens the abovementioned linguistic relativity theory, according to which there is a correlation between a person's perception and the linguistic construction. When respondents were asked, among other questions, if people should be more politically correct or if they should be free to state what they think without filters, the results varied according to the people's composition. This means that there are no rigid rules concerning the usage of politically correct terminology, and this will be confirmed in the last chapter.

Focusing on the second research question stated in the introductory phase, regarding the existence, if any, of political correctness, and the possibility that it can be shaped by everyone, the results indicate that politically correct

exists and has existed through time, the rules of the game have changed, but the core message instilled in it crystallized over time. Politically correct language exists with the passive aim of avoiding offending others, and the positive aim to choose and use words focusing on empathy, justice and fairness. It can be summarized as a choice of words and expressions outward looking with the purpose of maintaining a positive approach towards differences in society. To answer to the second question, yes people can shape the language construction according to their own sensibility and thoughts, but a broader frame exists, and it can be useful to create the personal way of speaking based on the guidelines posed by institutions.

The previous considerations are linked to the next research question: if a guideline on political correctness exists and if institutions follow it. It can be noticed during the dissertation that more than one guideline exist, but the frameworks are similar in their core meaning and message. Through the chapters, and especially in chapter IV, it was possible to convey the most relevant guidelines, including the one of the European Parliament, of the topics deemed to be the most significant for political correctness, which are gender identity and sexual orientation, disability inclusive language, gender-neutral language, and ethnic representation. Thanks to the work of many institutions, it was possible to create and publish in this dissertation the respective tables based on the common grounds found in the aforementioned guidelines.

One of the core inquiries was related to the institutions and the people representing them, posing the question whether institutions follow the guidelines of political correctness. Accordingly, it was conducted a linguistic analysis of four public speeches discussed by English-speaking political actors selected based on their relevance in the political field, both for their status in society and for their position in their respective institutions. The speakers selected were Antonio Guterres, Donald Trump, Ursula von der Leyen, and Boris Johnson, and the speeches were all their opening statements on their appointment to the respective positions of Secretary-General of the United Nations, as President of the U.S.A, as President of the European Commission, and as Prime Minister of the U.K. The results show that the respect of the politically correct language was

a choice of the speaker, which was sometimes respected, while in some cases it was not, this demonstrates that the selections are not binding, and everyone is free to decide whether it is according to their beliefs to use a certain language or not. The usage of inclusive language was more present in the people representing the institutions with more countries involved, while the ones representing one nation - the U.S.A. and the U.K. - felt free to use a more direct speech without much thought on the politically correct way to address the population. This was present both in the choice of words and in the essence of their speech.

Lastly, the most important and controversial argument was based on whether politically correct language changes society, or if it constructs mere manners. The question can be answered differently based on the person asked. An overview of the topic suggests that the underprivileged sections of population favor the utilization of a more inclusive language and feel more represented in society when this kind of language is applied. Making people feel more represented can pose the possibility to enhance cooperation and a better understanding of the other and virtually pose no direct negative consequences. It is deemed the importance of free speech, which cannot be hindered by the extreme supporters of political correctness, the message of the speaker should be conveyed as it was meant by them, but the importance of having regards toward the other should be nonetheless a priority in society.

The study of this research is limited in terms of timeframe and could not take into consideration all the aspects outside of the competences of the study. the aim of the research is to give an overview of the most relevant aspects of political correctness so far and deliver a linguistic analysis on a limited sample of speakers.

Future research can be useful to add further variables with the intention of giving a more accurate understanding of the issues discussed and broader the sample of people considered. The basis of the analysis conducted can open other possibilities of study not directly related to this topic, analyzing each of the ethnical, gender and disability groups in a more specific sector.



Concluding, politically correct language should not have a strictly positive or negative connotation, it should be seen as a tool, an instrument of communication, which can be used to various degrees based on the beliefs of the speaker and the interlocutor the message must be conveyed to, always considering that the shades can fluctuate across time.

## Summary in Italian

Questo studio si propone di indagare lo scopo e l'uso del linguaggio politicamente corretto. La domanda del titolo, il cui senso è legato alla funzione del politicamente corretto, è messa in relazione al quadro più ampio del significato di politicamente corretto. Le domande che hanno suscitato l'interesse, e che hanno portato, in seguito, alla ricerca condotta, sono state principalmente: le persone dovrebbero essere più politicamente corrette o dovrebbero essere libere di esprimersi solamente secondo le loro preferenze linguistiche? In particolare, il politicamente corretto esiste o è una costruzione linguistica che può essere creata e modellata da ogni individuo? Esiste una linea guida sul politicamente corretto e le istituzioni la seguono? E infine, il linguaggio politicamente corretto cambia la società o costituisce solamente buone maniere?

Partendo dal presupposto che i seguenti dubbi possano emergere nella mente di molti, la decisione è stata quella di ampliare le conoscenze sull'argomento. Infatti, la letteratura attuale non fornisce una panoramica puntuale riguardante questo argomento, ma presenta frammenti che, senza una comprensione approfondita dell'argomento, non riescono a spiegare un quadro più ampio della storia e dello scopo, se esiste, della correttezza politica.

Partendo dalle domande di ricerca sopra citate, i risultati indicano che non esiste un modo unico e rigido di usare il linguaggio politicamente corretto, anche tenendo in considerazione che il significato di politicamente corretto è cambiato nel tempo ed è destinato a cambiare ancora in futuro. Il linguaggio differisce anche tra le culture, e questo è legato alla relatività linguistica studiata durante la ricerca, per questo motivo le seguenti considerazioni sono strettamente connesse all'arco di tempo relativo allo studio.

La decisione è stata quella di iniziare con una panoramica approfondita del contesto storico, con l'obiettivo di creare una base comune dell'origine e dello sviluppo dell'espressione. Il politicamente corretto è cambiato nel tempo, partendo dal 1917, quando è stata attestata la prima manifestazione dell'espressione, e arrivando al presente, in cui il significato è completamente

cambiato rispetto al secolo precedente. L'espressione è mutata, partendo da un significato letterale e arrivando a un'accezione politicizzata, utilizzata da diverse correnti politiche e da movimenti sociali, ognuno di questi con una propria sfumatura di significato. Il termine è apparso nel vocabolario marxista-leninista dopo la Rivoluzione russa del 1917 per indicare la piena adesione all'ortodossia politica; quindi, per quanto riguarda il modo in cui il partito vede la politica, denotando la conformità alla dottrina ufficiale del Partito Comunista. Negli anni Quaranta il termine *politically correct* si riferiva ai dibattiti tra i Socialisti e il Partito Comunista Americano. "Politicamente corretto" fu usato contro i comunisti per condannare il loro dogmatismo che portava a difendere le posizioni del partito a prescindere dalla loro sostanza morale. Inoltre, un cambiamento nella retorica della correttezza politica può essere notato durante gli anni Sessanta, invece, a causa dei profondi cambiamenti sociali in America e in tutto il mondo. Ogni schieramento politico riteneva che l'altro ostacolasse la liberazione, ed entrambi - repubblicani e democratici - pensavano che l'uso della correttezza politica fosse vantaggiosa per l'intera società. Negli anni Settanta, il politicamente corretto era visto come un'affermazione degli attivisti liberali o progressisti. Dagli anni Ottanta la frase cambiò il suo scopo e divenne un'espressione controversa nelle università, utilizzata dai conservatori per attaccare gli accademici conformisti che erano liberali nel loro modo di comunicare. All'inizio degli anni '90 si può notare come il termine "politicamente corretto" sia stato utilizzato in molte forme diverse e in modi contrastanti: alcuni lo hanno usato come suggerisce la dicitura stessa, altri lo usano in senso metaforico, altri ancora lo usano per prendere in giro altri gruppi. Durante gli anni Novanta, con il termine politicamente corretto i critici hanno attaccato il multiculturalismo, gli studi sulle donne, gli studi etnici, la riforma dei programmi di studio, l'azione positiva e altri sforzi per creare un clima inclusivo all'interno dei campus senza distinguere tra questi argomenti molto diversi; ecco perché nel pensiero pubblico il politicamente corretto è diventato sinonimo di tentativi di imporre un determinato comportamento e soffocare la libertà di parola. Si può quindi notare come all'inizio l'espressione "politicamente corretto" era un'approvazione della sinistra leninista per affermare che la persona

in questione seguiva la linea del partito. Poi il significato è cambiato quando è stato adottato dalla sinistra per indicare qualcuno il cui fervore per la linea era troppo duro. Solo in un secondo momento, a causa del dibattito sulla correttezza politica, si è iniziato a usarlo in combinazione con l'ironia e non in relazione al radicalismo. Quando l'espressione è migrata dalla sinistra alla destra è diventata una questione divisiva, volta a discernere "noi contro loro". La Sinistra ha accusato i conservatori di usare la correttezza politica per deviare il dibattito verso la forma delle espressioni con l'obiettivo di evitare di parlare delle questioni impellenti della discriminazione, della classe di genere e delle disuguaglianze, che erano il punto centrale della correttezza politica. Negli anni Novanta il politicamente corretto è stato visto dai media come il nemico della libertà di espressione, tanto che essi si sono visti come i protettori di questa libertà. Si ritiene, infatti, che i media siano stati il motivo ultimo per la creazione di un'idea di massa sbagliata della correttezza politica. Dopo il 1995 si è verificata una sostanziale diminuzione del dibattito. Recuperando dati da diverse fonti in cui il politicamente corretto è stato utilizzato in modo endemico per spiegare altri fenomeni sociolinguistici, è stato possibile comprendere il contesto d'uso e le difficoltà incontrate dalle persone nel distinguere il modo "politicamente corretto" di esprimersi e dove queste decisioni le hanno portate. Il dibattito ha iniziato a riaccendersi intorno al 2016, con la comparsa di Donald Trump nello scenario politico statunitense, che ha portato a una rappresentazione ancora peggiore della correttezza politica, essendo Donald Trump completamente contrario all'uso di tali termini. Oggi l'argomento è ancora attuale, con molti articoli che discutono se il politicamente corretto stia effettivamente plasmando le menti o se si tratti solo di buone maniere.

Inoltre, la ricerca mostra le diverse percezioni del linguaggio politicamente corretto tra i Paesi grazie a svariati sondaggi condotti in un totale di 28 Paesi in un range temporale ristretto e più vicino possibile all'anno corrente, prendendo in considerazione quattro sondaggi condotti tra il 2019 e il 2021. I dati sono stati analizzati e contestualizzati con l'obiettivo di fornire una visione d'insieme delle differenze di percezione tra Paesi e all'interno degli

stessi. È notevole la differenza tra i Paesi nella percezione delle norme sociali, in particolare della correttezza politica. Il linguaggio politicamente corretto è visto in modo diverso in base al Paese di appartenenza, alla visione politica, all'etnia, al reddito e ad altri fattori, e questo è stato chiarito con uno studio incrociato di vari sondaggi. Inoltre, la lingua è stata influente nel decidere il grado di correttezza politica degli intervistati, e questo rafforza la teoria della relatività linguistica, secondo la quale esiste una correlazione tra la percezione di una persona e la costruzione linguistica utilizzata.

È possibile notare, ad esempio, che tra la Sinistra e la Destra politica è evidente la diversa opinione sull'argomento da parte della Sinistra, più incline a usare discorsi politicamente corretti, e della Destra. Già in passato e poi con il presidente Trump, si può quindi notare come la Sinistra è più incline a credere che le persone debbano preoccuparsi di evitare offese nelle loro affermazioni. Guardando al quadro generale, la maggior parte dei 28 Paesi considerati propende per l'idea che le persone debbano cambiare il loro modo di parlare: la media globale dei Paesi si attesta al 60% e solo il 31% ritiene che le persone si offendano troppo facilmente. In particolare, gli Stati Uniti creano un caso interessante grazie alla composizione eterogenea della società e alla presenza del Primo Emendamento della Costituzione, che è stato ampiamente invocato contro la correttezza politica. I Democratici si sentono più politicamente corretti dei Repubblicani, e le persone nere si sentono più politicamente corrette in media rispetto a bianchi, ispanici e asiatici. Se messe in relazione con i comportamenti adottati le percentuali invece cambiano, si scopre che le persone che non gradiscono l'etichetta di "politicamente corretto" cercano comunque di aderire a quel tipo di comportamento. Gli adulti che hanno dichiarato che c'è troppa correttezza politica nel Paese avevano una probabilità quasi tripla di affermare di aver cercato di soddisfare la definizione di politicamente corretto rispetto a quella di applicare l'etichetta a sé stessi. Anche coloro che hanno detto che c'è troppo pregiudizio nel Paese si sono allontanati dal termine, con meno della metà di loro che ha detto di considerarsi politicamente corretto.

Quando agli intervistati è stato chiesto, tra le altre domande, se le persone dovessero essere più politicamente corrette o se dovessero essere libere di dire ciò che pensano senza filtri, i risultati variano a seconda della composizione degli intervistati. Ciò significa che non esistono regole rigide sull'uso della terminologia politicamente corretta, come verrà confermato nell'ultimo capitolo.

Ai fini dei risultati della domanda nel titolo di questa ricerca, il passo successivo è la definizione della relatività linguistica, in particolare l'attenzione viene portata sulla teoria di Sapir-Whorf sugli effetti che la struttura di una lingua ha sulla percezione di una persona. In linguistica, l'ipotesi Sapir-Whorf (abbreviata SWH), nota anche come ipotesi della relatività linguistica, afferma che lo sviluppo cognitivo di ogni essere umano è influenzato dalla lingua parlata. L'ipotesi Sapir-Whorf spiega, in parte, la necessità di un linguaggio politicamente corretto. Questa ipotesi sostiene che esiste una relazione tra la lingua utilizzata da una persona e la sua percezione del mondo. Nella sua forma più estrema, questa ipotesi presuppone che il modo in cui ci esprimiamo determini il modo in cui pensiamo. Il presupposto è che il linguaggio ci aiuta a costruire la realtà in cui viviamo e, se il linguaggio non è valido e accurato, anche la nostra comprensione del mondo sarà distorta, poiché se si insegna alle persone a evitare ciò che alcuni percepiscono come linguaggio denigratorio, insensibile o di parte, gli atteggiamenti della società diventeranno a loro volta meno denigratori, insensibili e di parte. Secondo questa logica, una società che crede nella tolleranza e nell'inclusione ha bisogno di un vocabolario che rifletta questi valori.

I cambiamenti nel linguaggio sono avvenuti in molti ambiti diversi. La richiesta di uguaglianza razziale negli Stati Uniti ha fornito un importante impulso per la necessità di un linguaggio comune. I primi discendenti degli schiavi africani si chiamavano africani. Ma, poiché erano nati negli Stati Uniti, questo era considerato impreciso e nel 1835 i leader neri sostituirono *African* con *Negro* o *Colored American*. Alla fine degli anni Sessanta, nero divenne il termine accettato. Recentemente, persone di colore è diventato il termine comune. I cambiamenti nella lingua inglese e nel ruolo delle donne nella società hanno reso necessario un linguaggio politicamente corretto svincolato dal

genere. La parola *chairman* era sufficiente prima che le donne iniziassero a ricoprire questo ruolo. Poi è stata introdotta la parola *chairwoman*, che si è evoluta nel termine neutro *chair*. Negli Stati Uniti gli steward maschi e le hostess femmine sono ora comunemente chiamati assistenti di volo. Il termine definisce sia gli interpreti femminili che quelli maschili, allo stesso modo in cui gli *authors* and *authoresses* ora vengono chiamati in generale *writers*.

Il linguaggio usato per descrivere le disabilità è cambiato notevolmente nel passaggio a un linguaggio più consono. *Crippled* (storpio) è diventato *handicapped* (handicappato), poi *disable* (disabile) e ora è *physically challenged* (diversamente abile). *Challenged* è diventato un termine comune, come *visually challenged* sostituisce la parola *blind* (cieco). Nel campo dell'istruzione, l'acronimo LD è cambiato da *Learning Disability* (disabilità di apprendimento) a *Learning Difficulties* (difficoltà di apprendimento) fino al termine politicamente corretto usato oggi: *Learning Differences* (Differenze di apprendimento). *Down's Syndrome* (sindrome di Down) ha sostituito il termine *mongoloid*. Una persona sorda viene ora definita *hearing impaired* (ipoacusica), coprendo così l'ampia gamma di disturbi uditivi che vanno dalla perdita parziale dell'udito alla completa incapacità di sentire. Le persone che raggiungono una certa età sono cittadini *senior*, non più *old people*. Anche nel quadro di razza ed etnia, si è visto come questi siano costrutti sociali, privi di significato scientifico o biologico. Il costrutto indistinto delle categorie razziali ed etniche è stato sempre più riconosciuto e le preoccupazioni sull'uso di questi termini nella ricerca, nell'educazione e nella pratica medica e sanitaria sono state progressivamente riconosciute. Storicamente, in modo inappropriato, la razza è stata considerata un costrutto biologico. I termini e le categorie utilizzati per definire e descrivere la razza e l'etnia sono cambiati nel tempo in base ai cambiamenti socioculturali e alla maggiore consapevolezza del ruolo del razzismo nella società. Così, molti ricercatori sostengono che l'etnicità si riferisce a persone che, oltre alla "razza", condividono anche le origini o il background sociale, una lingua comune, una specifica posizione geografica, una tradizione e un'identità religiosa e un insieme di tradizioni e costumi che distinguono il loro gruppo etnico da altri del loro gruppo "razziale", tra cui lo

stile di parola e/o lo stile di abbigliamento. Al fine di classificare in modo generale la razza, l'etnia e l'origine nazionale, sono state redatte delle guide per comprendere meglio la terminologia utilizzata al giorno d'oggi per riferirsi all'etnia di una persona. Come regola generale, tuttavia, l'approccio migliore è quello di chiedere all'individuo o al gruppo i termini preferiti con cui ci si rivolge a loro.

La suddetta teoria è stata poi collegata allo scopo della ricerca, con l'obiettivo di analizzare gli effetti del linguaggio politicamente corretto sulla società. A tal fine, l'attenzione si concentra sulla divisione in base ai temi cruciali affrontati dai sostenitori del discorso politicamente corretto: identità di genere e orientamento sessuale, linguaggio inclusivo della disabilità, linguaggio *gender-neutral* e, infine, la rappresentazione etnica. I risultati indicano che il politicamente corretto esiste ed è esistito nel tempo, le regole sono cambiate, ma il messaggio centrale in esso instillato si è cristallizzato nel tempo. Il linguaggio politicamente corretto esiste con l'obiettivo passivo di evitare di offendere gli altri e con l'obiettivo positivo di scegliere e utilizzare parole incentrate sull'empatia, la giustizia e l'equità. Si può riassumere come una scelta di parole ed espressioni orientate verso l'esterno con lo scopo di mantenere un approccio positivo nei confronti delle differenze nella società. Per rispondere alla seconda domanda, ovvero se il politicamente corretto possa essere creato e modellato da ogni individuo, sì, le persone possono modellare la costruzione del linguaggio secondo la propria sensibilità e i propri pensieri, ma esiste una cornice più ampia e può essere utile creare un modo di parlare personale sulla base delle linee guida poste dalle istituzioni.

Le considerazioni precedenti sono legate alla successiva domanda di ricerca: se esiste una linea guida sulla correttezza politica e se le istituzioni la seguono. Nel corso della tesi si può notare che esistono più linee guida, ma i quadri di riferimento sono simili nel loro significato e messaggio di fondo. Attraverso i capitoli, e in particolare nel capitolo IV, è stato possibile trasmettere le linee guida più rilevanti, tra cui quella del Parlamento Europeo e i temi ritenuti più significativi per la correttezza politica, che sono l'identità di genere e l'orientamento sessuale, il linguaggio inclusivo della disabilità, il linguaggio



*gender-neutral* e la rappresentazione etnica. Grazie al lavoro di molte istituzioni, è stato possibile creare e pubblicare in questa tesi le rispettive tabelle basate sulle basi comuni trovate nelle suddette linee guida.

L'analisi finale costituisce un modo per valutare il grado di linguaggio politicamente corretto attraverso lo studio di quattro discorsi pubblici pronunciati da attori politici in lingua inglese, selezionati in base alla loro rilevanza in campo politico, sia per il loro status nella società che per la loro posizione nelle rispettive istituzioni. L'indagine riguarda le istituzioni e le persone che le rappresentano, ponendo la questione se le istituzioni seguono le linee guida del politicamente corretto.

Gli oratori selezionati sono Antonio Guterres, Donald Trump, Ursula von der Leyen e Boris Johnson, e i discorsi sono le loro dichiarazioni di apertura alla nomina alle rispettive cariche di Segretario Generale delle Nazioni Unite, Presidente degli Stati Uniti, Presidente della Commissione Europea e Primo Ministro del Regno Unito.

La scelta delle persone è legata alla vicinanza della loro nomina, scegliendo un arco temporale inferiore ai tre anni per poter meglio confrontare le loro argomentazioni, correlate alla decisione di selezionare solo interventi precedenti alla pandemia di Covid-19, altrimenti alcuni dei discorsi non sarebbero stati confrontabili per il forte legame con le attuali problematiche. Inoltre, la selezione non ha riguardato solo le istituzioni, ma anche gli oratori, in quanto è stato scelto un campione ristretto di persone il più possibile eterogeneo, con due uomini provenienti da due dei principali Paesi del mondo anche per la loro importanza nelle questioni attuali, una donna proveniente da un altro grande Paese all'interno dell'Unione Europea, e un uomo portoghese, tutti con prospettive diverse legate anche al loro background e al partito politico di appartenenza.

I risultati mostrano che il rispetto del linguaggio politicamente corretto è stata una scelta dell'oratore, il quale a volte ha scelto di rispettare il linguaggio politicamente corretto, mentre altre volte ha scelto di non utilizzare un linguaggio inclusivo. Questo dimostra che le linee guida non sono vincolanti e

ognuno è libero di decidere se è in accordo con le proprie convinzioni usare o meno un certo linguaggio. L'uso di un linguaggio inclusivo è stato più presente nelle persone che rappresentavano le istituzioni con più Paesi coinvolti, mentre quelle che rappresentavano una sola nazione, ovvero gli Stati Uniti e il Regno Unito, si sono sentite libere di usare un discorso più diretto senza pensare al modo politicamente corretto di rivolgersi alla popolazione. Ciò era presente sia nella scelta delle parole che nell'essenza del loro discorso.

Infine, l'argomentazione più importante e controversa si è basata sulla questione se il linguaggio politicamente corretto cambi la società o se costruisca mere buone maniere. Alla domanda si può rispondere in modo diverso a seconda dell'interlocutore.

Una panoramica sull'argomento suggerisce che le fasce più svantaggiate della popolazione sono favorevoli all'utilizzo di un linguaggio più inclusivo e si sentono più rappresentate nella società quando viene applicato questo tipo di linguaggio. Far sentire le persone più rappresentate può offrire la possibilità di migliorare la cooperazione e la comprensione dell'altro e praticamente non comporta conseguenze negative dirette. Si ritiene che l'importanza della libertà di parola, che non può essere ostacolata dai sostenitori estremi della correttezza politica, debba essere trasmessa nel modo in cui l'oratore la intende, ma l'importanza di avere rispetto per l'altro deve essere comunque una priorità nella società.

L'obiettivo della ricerca è quello di fornire una panoramica degli aspetti più rilevanti del politicamente corretto fino ad oggi e di fornire un'analisi linguistica su un campione limitato di persone.

In futuro potrà essere utile aggiungere ulteriori variabili con l'intento di fornire una comprensione più accurata dei temi trattati e ampliare il campione di persone considerate. La base dell'analisi condotta può aprire altre possibilità di studio non direttamente collegate a questo argomento, analizzando ciascuno dei gruppi etnici, di genere e di disabilità in un settore più specifico.

In conclusione, il linguaggio politicamente corretto non deve avere una connotazione strettamente positiva o negativa, ma deve essere visto come uno strumento, un mezzo di comunicazione, che può essere utilizzato in varia misura in base alle convinzioni di chi parla e dell'interlocutore a cui il messaggio deve essere trasmesso, sempre considerando che le sfumature possono fluttuare nel tempo.

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