

“WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?”: DEFINING
AND MEASURING POLITICAL
CORRECTNESS

by

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“What Did You Just Say?”

Defining and Measuring Political Correctness

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Abstract

Political correctness (PC) is a common topic in pop culture and online posts, recently gaining fresh attention in the media and in politics. Meanwhile, researchers have been discussing the meaning of this term, as well as the implications for research, for nearly three decades.

However, up until now, there has been no method of measuring political correctness as a construct, nor even an agreed upon definition or understanding of PC. This paper describes PC as another “ism”, that is, PCism, and like other isms, PCism includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. The current study presents a new measure to assess the attitude components of political correctness indirectly through a language preferences assessment.

Validity and reliability of this new measure were evaluated and established across two different studies. Results suggest that the new PC measure is related to previously validated personality and attitude measures including Social Dominance Orientation, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Universal Orientation, and the Big Five factors of openness and agreeableness. However, the PC scale does not completely overlap with these existing measures, suggesting that it is capturing something unique. Future analysis is suggested in order to further validate the PC measure and also to probe the relationships with other measures to explain how language choices are related to attitude and personality factors.

Keywords: political correctness, biased language, social dominance, right-wing authoritarianism, personality, attitudes

“What Did You Just Say?”: Defining and Measuring Political Correctness

Political correctness (PC) has recently gained new momentum in the current highly polarized political scene in the United States, and some recent political candidates have even used the term as a way to ignite emotions and strengthen their base of support. When used in this way, *political correctness* nearly always refers to something negative; however, others view PC in a very positive light and may even see it as a compliment denoting respectful or polite behavior. As such, there is no general agreement on the definition of political correctness, which hinders researchers from being able to actually measure PC or see how it relates to other variables. Although political correctness is a widely-discussed subject, there is not a consistent nor validated measure for evaluating it. And while many people frequently use the term *political correctness* in social media and in general conversation, there is not even a consistent nor agreed upon definition or understanding of the term among the general public. This study presents a new measure of political correctness, identified indirectly through language preferences.

Definitions of PC

PC is deeply ambiguous and difficult to define. Some people have described political correctness as the opposite of free expression (e.g. Loury, 1994), especially in the fields of comedy (Saper, 1995), education (D’Souza, 1991), art (Rush, 1995), and business (Ely, Meyerson, & Davidson, 2006). Those who view PC as a fundamentally negative thing have gone as far as to claim that it is eroding basic democracy and is essentially causing discrimination with policies such as affirmative action, even calling such conditions a *culture war* (Devine, 1996). However, the basic principles of political correctness are fundamentally prosocial (Favreau, 1997); for example, focusing on issues like promoting equality, breaking down barriers that prevent equal opportunity, and discouraging discrimination; so it is almost

ironic that the term is now being used as way to dismiss those who promote the concept of political correctness.

Wilson (1995) traced the earliest origins of the phrase *politically correct* in the United States back to a Supreme Court case from 1793, but at that time, it was used in the literal sense as a political process that was not in the correct form. Later, in the first half of the twentieth century, the term began to be used in a similar way to how it is often recognized now, when liberals used the word to refer to themselves in a sarcastic way as taking extreme views to the extreme (Wilson, 1995). However, the current understanding of PC is most often used now by those on the political right in an attempt to dismiss or to discredit ideas by those on the political left (Hughes, 2010). This is a shift which happened around the late 1980s, followed by a massive increase in use through the 1990s in both politics and popular culture (Hughes, 2010). It was around this same time that the original term *politically correct* morphed into *political correctness* and became almost exclusively used to silence or discredit leftist views (Hughes, 2010). Hughes (2010) reported that this act of silencing paradoxically became the very thing to which those on the right were opposed. Interestingly, some have pushed for a change in the use of the term, such that it be used to refer to any politically agenda that is deemed “correct”. Illustrated by Favreau (1997), who pointed out that both the right and the left have ideas about what is the *correct* way to strive for social change, but only the leftist views are deemed PC, while the right-wing ones are not labeled anything, and thus perhaps just assumed to be correct by those who favor use of the term.

Historically, some have argued that political correctness was damaging to higher education (e.g. D’Souza, 1991); however, other researchers (e.g. Favreau, 1997; Wilson, 1995) made it clear that any evidence to support this assertion was anecdotal at best, and a complete

fabrication at most. Others see PC as putting on a public front that may be different from one's private views (e.g. Barker, 1994). Similarly, PC has also been identified as a "cultural performance" (Reinelt, 2011), where one wishes to be thoughtful and considerate of others in their behavior. Reinelt (2011) emphasized that PC is not the same thing as censorship, in that censoring language would make certain topics off limits or illegal, but that PC is simply asking oneself if their work or behavior is fitting or appropriate, and if it is ethically justifiable. Hughes (2010) wrote that the primary idealistic assumption of PC is that of equality. At the other extreme, political correctness has been referred to as a militant and even intolerant relativism (Devine, 1996).

More recently, researchers have defined PC as the use of inclusive language (see Strauts & Blanton, 2015), although the words that are considered acceptable or unacceptable change over time and are different across cultures (e.g. Hughes, 2010; Joseph, 2006). Hughes (2010) describes the core features of PC as a focus on offensive language, prejudiced attitudes, and insulting behavior directed towards those in marginalized groups; however, the author admits that those are not adequate to fully define PC, as it is too broad and ambiguous. Social scientists should be especially interested in measuring PC because of how it may relate to many other topics in psychology such as racism, sexism, and prejudice. One researcher even wrote "what about PCism?" as a research topic for social psychologists to cover in addition to things like sexism and racism (Lalonde, Doan, & Patterson, 2000, p. 332).

A major challenge in previous attempts to measure PC, was determining whether it was an *attitude* or a *behavior*. In other words, is it a behavior that people choose to use in certain situations to manage their appearance to others? Or, is it an internal attitude towards other groups? If an individual uses PC language, does that mean they are putting on a false front as a

show for others, or does their use of language come naturally from their internal motivations and cognitions? Additionally, cognitions, affect, and motivations can certainly influence future behavior, while past experiences can guide our current thought processes. So, the relationship between the cognitive aspect of PC and the behavioral aspect of PC is most likely interactive, with both influencing each other over time. Because of this, PC most likely includes both behaviors and cognitions. Borrowing from the language of Lalonde and colleagues (2000), PCism, just like all other “isms”, should include cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. And this project will focus on one aspect of PC, that is the internal attitude/affect component of language, measured through the behavioral expression of a language preferences choice. Specifically, PC will be recognized as making certain word choices or choosing language styles, and this might indicate internal attitudes towards others. In other words, PC is defined and recognized in this project as being *inclusive language*. Language preferences that are more inclusive and less prejudiced or discriminatory are understood in the current project to be PC language; whereas stereotyped and prejudiced language is labelled in this study as non-PC. Additionally, the measurement plan of this study was designed to create a situation where the participant would not realize what was being measured; this was intended to allow their natural attitudes toward language to be reflected in their initial language preferences and reduce the likelihood that they were putting on a false front to appear more socially desirable.

Past Research on PC

Most of the research and theoretical pieces on political correctness occurred through the 1990s, in reference to alleged (e.g. D’Souza, 1991), but unsubstantiated (e.g. Favreau, 1997; Wilson, 1995) reports about PC-fueled changes in fields such as education, but this research trend tapered off until picking up again much more recently. One inherent difficulty in using PC

as a research variable is its elusiveness. What is it exactly, and how can it be measured? Of the few studies that have attempted to measure it, it has generally been viewed as a type of self-censorship, where people would choose to not make certain statements if they were concerned about offending others (e.g. Barker, 1994; Loury, 1994). However, the problem with conceptualizing PC in this way is that one is simply assessing the individual's use of language in that particular setting, and it might be a function of impression management rather than a measure of an internal attitude towards language use.

One study in the field of social psychology (Barker, 1994) measured PC behavior among college students by giving them different topics, such as right to abortion or "ethnic jokes", then asked participants to indicate their positions in either a private and anonymous setting, or in a public condition where they could easily be identified. This was an interesting study because it actually measured an individual's behavior and whether they would change their reported stance, depending on the condition. However, the author found support for a change in attitude for only two topics (abortion and ethnic jokes), and discovered that other variables, such as political identity, gender, and race were much more likely to predict attitudes on other topics like homosexuality, military aggression, sexual harassment, and affirmative action (Barker, 1994). Barker explained this lack of support partially on the way PC had been defined in the study (i.e. as a public stance, rather than an indication of an attitude), and found instead that the setting actually had little effect on college students' attitudes.

Another study examined the relationships between perceptions of PC, threatened identities, and social attitudes (Lalonde et al., 2000). The PC tool used in that study was a measure of attitudes toward extreme stereotypical views of political correctness, that is, whether or not the participant believed in, or bought into, the extreme stereotypes of either a *PC Crusader*

(e.g. an extremist person who tries to censor other people and discriminates against White men) or a *PC Basher* (e.g. a person who is anti-PC only so they can continue expressing racist and sexist sentiments without fear). It was found that endorsement of those extreme views was significantly related to modern prejudice: those who believed in the idea that the PC crusader exists were also supportive of prejudiced views, whereas support in the idea of the PC basher was negatively correlated with support of modern prejudice (Lalonde et al., 2000). Analyzing the relationship between attitudes towards other groups and political correctness, by comparing them based on endorsement for opposing PC stereotypes is an appealing way to analyze PC as a construct. However, Lalonde and colleagues were measuring the participant's belief about stereotypical characters, but they were not measuring anything PC about the participants themselves, which is the goal of the current study.

More recently, PC has been used in research as an experimental manipulation (Goncalo, Chatman, Duguid, & Kennedy, 2015). Goncalo and his colleagues wanted to challenge the long-held assumption that creativity and novel thinking required participants to have as few constraints as possible so that they felt completely free to express any idea that came to mind without the fear that they would be misunderstood or at worse, accused of being biased. The researchers assigned groups of either mixed-gender or same-gender compositions into either a control condition or a PC norm condition. In the PC norm condition, they would make political correctness salient to the group by asking participants to think of examples of PC behavior just before they had them generate ideas on a neutral problem. In the control condition, PC was not made salient, and the results indicated that the mixed-gender groups had fewer ideas and lower novelty scores than the same-gender groups; this finding is in line with past research (reported in Goncalo et al., 2015). However, unlike previous studies, in the PC norm condition, the mixed-

gender groups actually outperformed the same-gender groups in both novelty scores and number of ideas (Goncalo et al., 2015). This finding indicates that adding constraints on idea generation by introducing political correctness may have served as a protective factor against the effects of uncertainty that is sometimes present in diverse groups. While the findings of that study are exciting, especially in the area of innovation and creativity, the researchers viewed PC as a constraint or a set of rules, which is different from the purpose of the current study.

Measuring PC as a Construct

A few studies (e.g. Brummett et al., 2007; Israel & Mohr, 2004) have used or referenced unpublished measures of political correctness developed by Christopher Brittan-Powell, in the areas of race (Brittan-Powell, 2001), gender (Brittan-Powell, 2000), and sexual orientation (Brittan-Powell, Bashshur, Pak, & Meyenburg, 1999); however, none of these scales have been published or widely referenced. In Brummett and colleagues (2007), the PC measures of race and gender were described as forced-choice (i.e. *true* or *false*) questions that were designed to measure a participant's tendency to respond in a politically correct manner. Sample items include "I have absolutely no racial stereotypes" (Brittan-Powell, 2001), and "I can say with absolute certainty that I always treat men and women the same" (Brittan-Powell, 2000). These measures showed considerable overlap with assessments of social desirability such as the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). Due to the PC measure's high face validity, the scale is probably good for assessing extreme attempts at a politically correct presentation or appearance. In other words, more answers of "true" to questions like "I have absolutely no racial stereotypes" most likely indicates a lack of social awareness and a tendency to try to give the perceived correct answer. The Brittan-Powell scales seem to be measuring something very different from the PC instrument presented in this paper

because those scales are likely assessing attempts at *appearing* politically correct, whereas the current study proposes to measure the actual language preferences of participants when they do not know what is being assessed.

Additionally, an older scale that measured attitudes toward censorship led the authors to conclude that support for censorship was similar to political correctness (Suedfeld, Steel, & Schmidt, 1994), but the scope and aim of that scale was also very different from the one presented here. Other than these few measures mentioned, there have been no other attempts to measure PC as its own construct or measurement variable. Previously, PC has only been used in research as an experimental manipulation (Goncalo et al., 2015), an extreme stereotype example (Lalonde et al., 2000), an attempt at self-censorship (Barker, 1994), or it was conflated with other variables (e.g. Suedfeld et al., 1994). The main problem with all the previous literature on PC is that it is inherently something difficult to understand and measure; a problem that the current study wishes to alleviate.

Because PCism is understood in this paper as being a construct made up of cognitions, affect, and behaviors, the way that other isms such as sexism or racism are measured provides an important resource for developing a measure of PC. However, measurement of prejudiced attitudes is a challenge because many of the thoughts and feelings associated with prejudice are implicit. A well-known example of this type of measurement tool is the *Implicit Association Test* (IAT) developed by Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz (1998), which is available online for anyone to access. The IAT is thought to measure implicit associations between certain groups of people and positive or negative words; the idea is that when individuals from specific groups are paired with words that are incongruent with the participant's implicit view of that group, they would be slower and make more mistakes when sorting the images and words

(Greenwald et al., 1998). Because of the ease of accessibility of this measurement tool, there has been an enormous amount of research in the area of prejudice that utilizes the IAT and evidence for the validity of the scale has been supported by other researchers (e.g. Nosek & Smyth, 2007). However, there are mixed results on whether implicit attitudes as measured by the IAT are related to explicit attitudes or behavior; some research has suggested that implicit and explicit attitudes are related, but distinct (Nosek & Smyth, 2007), whereas other authors have found no correlation between implicit and explicit attitudes (Karpinski & Hilton, 2001).

Nonetheless, there is empirical evidence to demonstrate that implicit attitudes, as measured with the IAT, predict behavior in interactions with people of another race (McConnell & Leibold, 2001), and interact with a climate of racial bias to predict discrimination (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005). While there were some criticisms of these empirical results (see Blanton et al., 2009), there was also further support in response to the Blanton et al. paper (McConnell & Leibold, 2009; Ziegert & Hanges, 2009). Despite the criticisms, the framework of the IAT is applicable to this paper as it is a measure of attitudes towards others, and the goal of this project is similar.

Theoretical Framework and Rationale for the Current Project

The need for an instrument to measure political correctness is the main rationale for this project. PC is something that is widely and commonly referenced, both in common language and also in social science, but researchers have thus far not been able to quantify it due to lack of a definition and a measurement instrument. To assess the validity of the new measurement tool, previously established measurements of prejudice, political orientation, and personality factors were administered to the participants after the presentation of the PC instrument (see Table 1 for a list of all scales used in the study).

Relation to prejudice and social dominance. The way that PC relates to prejudice has been debated for several decades. While many would suggest that the core principle of political correctness is to promote equality and reduce discrimination, others have suggested that PC itself is essentially discrimination (e.g. Devine, 1996), or even that PC language actually creates new types of prejudice, like modern sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). However, based on the definition of political correctness used in this study and in others, PCism is defined as having cognitive, behavioral, and affective components, of which, the attitude components could indirectly be measured through language preferences. Those who are low in PC are expected to prefer more pejorative and prejudiced words and phrases than those who are highly PC.

Researchers have found that higher scores on measures of social dominance orientation (SDO) are related to prejudice towards minority groups and a preference for a hierarchical relationship between groups in a society (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Thus, higher scores on SDO are expected to be associated with a preference for politically incorrect words. Additionally, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) has also previously been linked to prejudice (Altemeyer, 1988; 1998). People with a high RWA identification tend to prefer a uniform society that has minimal diversity and high social control, with restrictions on things like immigration, and strict laws concerning moral behavior. Further, RWA is characterized by obedience to authority, moral absolutism, prejudice, and intolerance (Altemeyer, 1988; 1998). Similarly, a recent meta-analysis examined the existing literature on the relationship of prejudice to social dominance orientation (SDO), right wing authoritarianism (RWA), and the Big Five personality factors. The researchers found that the effect of the personality factor agreeableness on prejudice was fully mediated by SDO, and the effect of openness on prejudice was mediated

by RWA (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). This finding suggests that both RWA and SDO should be related to low PC scores, as they are both related to endorsement of prejudiced ideas.

On the flip side of prejudice and social dominance, is the idea that humans are all equal and should have equal rights, and a deep concern for others along with a strong desire for social justice and equality. It is expected that those who feel a strong desire for social justice will be the same people who naturally choose more PC language when referring to people in other groups. This will be measured by the individual's concern for political correctness, both emotionally, and also through PC activism, like correcting people when they say something non-PC (Strauts & Blanton, 2015). Furthermore, it is expected that PC scores will be related to universal orientation, that is the idea that people are all the same and that groups of people should be treated fairly and equally. This will be measured through the Universal Orientation Scale (Phillips & Ziller, 1997).

Relation to personality traits and political orientation. Openness to experience has consistently been found to be inversely related to stereotyping and prejudice. For example, one study found that the personality factor of openness mitigated negative racial stereotypes and predicted explicit racial attitudes (Flynn, 2005). Additionally, openness has been found to be negatively correlated with a right-wing political ideology (van Hiel, Kossowska, & Mervielde, 2000). Similarly, openness to experience has been linked to actual vote choice; those high on openness were significantly less likely to vote for a conservative candidate (Osborne & Sibley, 2012). Another study found links between maladaptive personality traits, like compulsiveness, disagreeableness, and narcissism, with political ideology (van Hiel, Mervielde, & De Fruyt, 2004). The study by van Hiel and colleagues (2004) built upon previous literature that had already connected openness to experience with political ideology, and examined the other Big

Five factors of agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. They found support for the hypothesis that the maladaptive features of agreeableness (disagreeableness) and of conscientiousness (compulsiveness) were both related to right-wing political ideology (van Hiel et al., 2004). Additional research has linked narcissism to social dominance orientation, intergroup threat, and prejudice (Hodson, Hogg, & MacInnis, 2009), so it is expected that all of these factors will be related to PC.

Although a significant amount of past research has consistently found an inverse relationship between openness to experience and right-wing political orientation, some authors have cautioned that the relationship is correlational, and that one should not infer that personality causes or motivates people to develop particular political ideologies (Verhulst, Eaves, & Hatemi, 2012). A very recent finding indicated that education moderated the relationship between openness to experience and political orientation, those with higher levels of education and higher openness were more likely to support liberal political ideology (Osborne & Sibley, 2015). Because a college student sample was utilized in the current study, most of the participants in this paper have the same basic level of education. Nonetheless, based on the past literature highlighted here, both personality factors and political ideology were expected to correlate to the new PC instrument. Specifically, openness to experience and hypersensitive narcissism are expected to relate both to scores on the PC instrument and to political ideology.

Relation to creativity. There is evidence to support the conflicting ideas that political correctness might influence creativity either negatively or positively. Some researchers believe that individuals low in political correctness might be more creative because they do not feel pressure to conform and they feel free to say anything that comes to mind (e.g., Forster, Friedman, Butterbach, & Sassenberg, 2005; Sutton, 2002). However, one recent study found

that establishing PC norms by making it salient to the participants actually increased creativity (Goncalo et al., 2015). One theory that might explain this difference is the idea that individuals high in political correctness might be more creative because they are more open and thoughtful, and have trained themselves to think of other alternative suggestions rather than say the first thing that comes to mind. In support of this theory, there is evidence to indicate that people who score high on the Big Five personality factor of openness are more creative (e.g. Silvia, Nusbaum, Berg, Martin, & O'Connor, 2009; Sung & Choi, 2009) and that openness can be influenced by new experiences with other cultures and different people (Xu, Mar, & Peterson, 2013), which might also be related to political correctness such that, as exposure to other cultures increased, so does the likelihood of choosing more PC language. This paper aims to explore to possible ways that creativity might be related to political correctness.

Hypotheses

- I. The PC instrument is expected to be valid and reliable, and that differences in word choices and response latency will be indicative of real differences across participants.
 - a. The PC instrument is expected to have high internal consistency.
 - b. Answer choices should indicate a normal distribution and typical variation of answers as would be expected due to individual differences.
 - c. PC scores and response latency are not expected to differ by the demographic variables of age, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, or nation of origin. However, the relationships to all demographic variables will be explored.
- II. The PC instrument is expected to be related to other established measures of attitudes in the following ways:

- a. PC should be negatively related to social dominance orientation and right wing authoritarianism.
 - b. PC should be positively related to concern about political correctness, both emotion and activism, and positively related to scores on the universal orientation scale.
 - c. These relationships are expected to be present even when controlling for social desirability, motivation to control prejudice, and concern for appropriateness, which will be used as control variables.
- III. Scores on the PC instrument are expected to be related to different personality factors and traits in the following ways:
- a. PC is expected to be positively correlated with the Big Five personality factors of openness and agreeableness, but relationships to the rest of the Big Five factors will be examined as well.
 - b. PC scores are expected to be negatively correlated with high hypersensitive narcissism.
 - c. PC scores are also expected to be related to political orientation; with political orientation measured on a scale from very conservative to very liberal, PC is expected to be positively correlated with political orientation.
- IV. The relationship between the PC instrument and a measure of creativity will be explored. Based on previous research, already cited above, creativity (measured by the fluency and novelty of ideas) could be either negatively or positively related to political correctness. However, based on the most current research available (Goncalo et al., 2015), PC is expected in this study to be positively correlated with both measures of creativity.

General Method

Overview

The overarching purpose of this study was to create and validate a measure of political correctness. This measure was assessed across two data collections; the pilot collection was to determine if the PC measure had variability, to remove any items that did not seem to fit with the measure overall, and to analyze any potential factors that might exist across the items in the PC instrument. Then second data collection, identified as the main study, was to determine if the finalized version of the PC instrument could be validated by comparing it to other existing measures of prejudice, political orientation, social desirability, impression management, and other personality measures, along with confirming any factor patterns found in the first data collection.

Procedure

Because the goal of this paper was to assess political correctness through language preferences, participants were simply told that the study is an assessment of “everyday language preferences”, then they were shown pairs of words or phrases and were instructed to quickly choose the word or phrase that sounded “most natural” to them. The prompt is designed to force them to quickly make a selection, using their initial preference after reading them, and they are only given a few seconds to choose one of the words or phrases. In the main study, participants were presented with a variety of other measures following the presentation of the PC instrument.

PC Measure of Language Preferences

The design of this measurement tool was inspired by the *Implicit Association Test (IAT)* (Greenwald et al., 1998) that allows participants to categorize groups of people along with positive or negative words. The IAT measures performance differences when groups of people

are categorized with positive words, and then when they are paired with negative words, with the intent to assess the underlying automatic appraisal of that particular group (Greenwald et al., 1998). One major difference between this PC instrument and the IAT is that the IAT has correct answers and measures mistakes and reaction times, whereas the language preferences measure does not necessarily have correct answers. Another key difference is in the timing; the IAT is designed to assess an individual's implicit attitude, thus, participants must answer immediately upon presentation of the prompt. However, in the PC measure, participants are given two words or phrases to choose from, with the instructions to select the one that sounds "most natural" to them. They only have 6 seconds to make a selection, and a visible timer counts down from 4 seconds and then the survey will automatically move on to the next set of words if they do not make a selection in time. Even though participants are forced to answer very quickly, they still need time to read both words or phrases to then be able to choose one. So the PC instrument is not measuring their implicit attitudes, just their initial reaction to the words.

Because of the way that the instrument was set up, the survey will automatically advance if no word was selected within 6 seconds, so the possible selection choices are either of the two words or phrases, or a selection of *none* meaning that they timed out and the survey moved on to the next pair of words. The purpose of the countdown and automatic progression is to force the participant to choose using only their first perceptions or initial preference. Scoring of the PC instrument includes two components: the actual selection of the word, and the response latency, or the time it took to make a choice. PC choice will be calculated using a proportion score so that a higher score indicates more selections of the PC word in each pair. This proportion score will be calculated by simply dividing the number of PC words selected by the total number of good trials of all the PC words pairs, excluding the time outs and the skipped items. Timing is

calculated by how quickly the participants selects a word, and each participant will have a mean time score across all of their PC word pairs.

The measure initially included 64 pairs of politically incorrect, or biased, words or phrases paired with a more acceptable word or phrase (e.g. *Indian* vs. *Native American*). Additionally, there were 64 pairs of neutral words or phrases (e.g. *dinner* vs. *supper*) to prevent the participant from learning what the study is actually trying to measure, see *Figure 1* for an example of what the word pairs in the assessment look like. The goal of course, is to prevent the opportunity for a participant to answer in a “politically correct” manner, by choosing the word they think is the more acceptable, and this is the reason for the filler words, along with the instructions that this is a test of everyday language. All 128 word pairs were presented in a random order to each participant, and the choices within each pair were also randomized, on either the right or left side of the screen, for every participant. The non-PC words were collected based on feedback from various sources, including friends and colleagues, and also online sources about offensive language, then each non-PC word was paired with a more socially acceptable alternative. See *Table 2* for a list of the word pairs along with the pilot data results for each.

Twenty-two of the original pairs were removed due to lack of variability across answers, that is, when less than 9.5% of the sample chose a particular answer choice; this cutoff score was arbitrarily chosen because it would be rounded to ten percent. In the main study, two more word pairs (*hearing impaired/deaf* and *mute/nonverbal*) were added because those words were overlooked in the first data collection. In all, the main study included a total of 44 PC pairs along with the original 64 neutral filler word pairs, presented again in a random order for each participant.

Pilot Study

Method

Participants. The pilot collection included 435 students total, but 21 were removed for incorrect attention check answers (e.g. “if you are paying attention, select choice 6”), and 29 were removed for not completing the study and just quitting part of the way through. So the total number of participants included in the pilot analysis was 385, with an average age of 20.23. Sixty-five percent of the participants were women ($n = 251$), 120 were men, two people indicated “other” for gender, and there were 12 gender responses missing. The racial and ethnic breakdown was 27.72% African American/Black ($n = 107$), 25.39% Caucasian/White ($n = 98$), 19.43% Latino/Hispanic ($n = 75$), and 11.66% Asian ($n = 45$), 10% of the sample selected multiple races or ethnicities ($n = 39$), 8 participants chose “other”, and 13 were missing. The vast majority of the sample (75%, $n = 289$) selected the United States as their nation of origin, Mexico was the next closest (4.66%, $n = 18$), and 14 (3.63%) were missing. Twenty-seven other countries were represented in the sample, but each accounted for less than 2% of the total.

Procedure and materials. The materials included the PC language test and demographics questions including race/ethnicity, age, gender, and nation of origin. The procedures are as described previously; specifically, the PC and filler word pairs were presented to the participants in a randomized order, one pair at a time, followed by the demographics questions.

Results and Discussion

The goals of the pilot study were to determine if the language preference task could work through an online survey and if there would be variability in the answer choices, which would indicate that the measure was capturing some real differences in individual responding. An

additional goal was to gather enough data to reduce the number of word pairs, depending on the results of the pilot study. The PC instrument was scored using a proportion measure, calculated by dividing the number of PC words selected by the total number of good trials for all PC words, excluding any timeouts or skipped items. These proportion scores ranged from .30-.90 with a mean of .68 and a standard deviation of .10, and these scores were normally distributed (see Figure 2). Finally, the PC items showed high internal consistency measured by the KR-20 formula (Kuder & Richardson, 1937), which is a special case of the alpha coefficient designed to calculate reliability for a binary scale measure and is still widely used today (e.g., Jessee & Tanner, 2016; Kang et al., 2015). For the PC items, internal consistency was high (KR-20 = .927), and comparatively, there was no consistency among the filler items (KR-20 = -.075), which actually had a negative score because of a negative average covariance among items.

In addition to being normally distributed and having high internal consistency, the results of the pilot data indicated that most of the word pairs had variability across respondents; although for 22 of the pairs, one of the answer choices was selected by less than 10% of the sample (when rounded) and were removed from the instrument for the main study (see Table 2). The 10% cutoff number was selected partially based on item difficulty recommendations for a two-choice scale item (Lord, 1952). Additionally, a review of the item choices selected by less than 10% of the sample indicated that many of the words or phrases not selected were words that may generally be viewed as offensive by the majority of the population (e.g. “kike”), and these words moreover might convey to the participant the true purpose of the instrument. The goal of the PC instrument was to capture the participants’ initial reaction to the words, without them being aware that the purpose of the instrument was to measure their PC language preferences, so removal of these extreme items for the main study made sense.

Factor analysis. To determine if answer choices tend to fall into factors, for example, if participants seem to answer similarly on words about race, or nationality, or religion, etc., exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Even though participants chose between only two word choices, these data may be interpreted as an ordinal scale because responses were coded such that choosing the PC word over the non-PC word choice resulted in a higher score, or *more PC* as it is interpreted here. Typically, factor analysis is used only for ordinal or continuous variables, but it can also be used for categorical or even dichotomous variables (see Starkweather, 2014).

Using the guideline of Yong and Pearce (2013), principal component analysis using a promax rotation was conducted as a dimension reducing method using all of the PC pair selection scores. The oblique rotation was selected over the more common varimax rotation because any factors found were expected to correlate to one another. The correlation table revealed a large number of low inter item correlations ($r < .30$), but Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(2016) = 5341.72, p < .001$) and the KMO index was high (.86), so an examination of the principal component analysis was warranted. The scree plot indicated that the PC pair data best fit a one factor solution, which explained 18.16% of the variance after extraction, with an eigenvalue of 11.62. Furthermore, when factor analysis was completed again using all of the items, including the 64 filler word pairs, the results indicated that a two- or three-factor solution was likely the best fit, which explained 12.18% and 14.59% of the variance, respectively. So the conclusion was that the PC items were best interpreted as one complete factor on their own, separate from the filler items.

Conclusions. The goals of the pilot study were met, that is, the measure showed a normal distribution, variability of answers, and high internal consistency among the PC items,

but not among the filler items. Furthermore, items that should be removed due to lack of variability of answers were identified and removed for the main study. Factor analysis suggested that the PC instrument is comprised of only one factor, excluding the filler items, and should be used as a full scale measure.

Main Study

For the main study, some changes were made to the PC instrument including the removal of items that did not have variability of responses, and two new word pairs were added because they were previously overlooked in the pilot sample. Along with the adjusted measure of politically correct language preferences, participants were given previously validated scales that measured personality factors, social dominance orientation, right wing authoritarianism, social desirability, and political orientation, along with general demographics questions to test the construct validity and predictive ability of the PC measure.

Method

Participants. Just as in the pilot study, participants were recruited through the psychology department's participant pool, Sona, and they were given research credit for their participation. There were 424 participants who completed the entire survey, but 54 (12.7%) were removed for failing to correctly answer attention checks, for a total of 370 participants who were used for analyses. The mean age was 20.5, there were twice as many women (64%, $n = 238$) as men (31%, $n = 114$), plus 3 transgender participants (<1%), and the majority (73%, $n = 271$) were from the United States. The sample was very racially and ethnically diverse; specifically, 28% of the sample identified as Black ($n = 104$), 26% as Asian ($n = 96$), 18% as Hispanic ($n = 68$), 13% as White ($n = 47$), and 11% ($n = 40$) of the sample selected multiple races or another race or ethnicity. Religious affiliation was also assessed; the largest subgroup

was Agnostic (24%, $n = 93$), followed by Christian (16%, $n = 59$), Baha'i (11%, $n = 44$), Atheist (10%, $n = 38$), Jewish (9%, $n = 33$), then Muslim (8%, $n = 29$). Each of the remaining religions, or those who selected "unaffiliated" each accounted for less than 5% of the sample. Finally, 8% ($n = 31$) selected multiple religions and another 8% ($n = 32$) did not select a choice for religion.

Procedure and materials. The following measures were presented in the order listed below. The word task was completed first so that selections of words or phrases were not biased by the other measures of attitudes or prejudice. Each measure was presented in the order listed, but the items within the scales were randomized for each participant. See Table 1 for an organized list of all the measured used.

PC measure of language preferences. The PC measure was presented in the same way as previously described, with the 44 PC words pairs retained after the pilot study, and all of the original 64 filler word pairs. Each word pair was presented to the participants in a randomized order, one at a time, and they had 6 seconds to select a word—while a visible 4-second timer counted down—before the survey would automatically advance to the next word pair. The PC instrument variables that will be used in the analyses include response latency (a mean score that averages the time it took to select a choice across all PC word pairs), and the PC proportion score. The PC proportion score was calculated by dividing the number of PC words selected from the total number of good trials of the PC word pair choices, this is, for every trial where a choice was selected (excluding timeouts and skipped items).

Immediately following the PC word pairing task, participants were asked to answer the following open-ended question: "Please write what you think the word pair test you just took was measuring" to determine if they were aware of the manipulation. These open-ended answers were independently coded by the primary investigator and also a trained research assistant as

either a *no*, indicating they did not seem to know what was being measured, a *yes*, indicating that they definitely seemed to understand what was being assessed, and *maybe* for when it was unclear if they seemed to recognize the purpose of the task or not. Most of the participants (85%, $n = 314$) did not appear to recognize the purpose of the measure, some (6%, $n = 21$) clearly identified the test as being a measure of politically correct language choices, and another small percentage (10%, $n = 35$) may have recognized the task, but it was unclear. Regardless of whether or not the participants appeared to understand the intent of the study, all 370 were included in the analyses. An independent t-test was conducted to determine if there were differences in PC scores between those who failed to recognize the intent of the study and those who may have recognized the manipulation. The two groups who may have recognized the intent of the survey were combined together to form a larger sample, but the results of the t-test revealed no differences between those who may have recognized the intent of the study ($M = .58$, $SD = .13$), and those who did not ($M = .56$, $SD = .11$), $t(70) = -1.29$, $p = .199$.

The Big Five personality factors. The 44-item Big Five Inventory ([BFI] John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008) was used to assess each of the five factors of personality as defined in Goldberg (1992). The scale uses a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), and negatively worded items are reversed prior to computing each factor's composite average. Each of the five personality factors are represented in the survey: Extraversion (8 items); Agreeableness (9 items); Conscientiousness (9 items); Neuroticism (8 items); Openness (10 items). Internal reliabilities were high for each of the factors in this sample: Extraversion ($\alpha = .85$); Agreeableness ($\alpha = .74$); Conscientiousness ($\alpha = .78$); Neuroticism ($\alpha = .80$); Openness ($\alpha = .71$).

Social desirability. Social desirability was measured using the *Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR)* by Paulhus (1991). It is a 40-item measure of social desirability, consisting of two constructs, *self-deceptive positivity* (positively biased report to self) and *impression management* (positively biased presentation to others). Sample items include “I am a completely rational person” and “Once in a while I laugh at a dirty joke”. Each item is rated on a 7-point scale from 1 labeled as *not true*, to 7 labeled as *very true*, with 4 in the middle labeled as *somewhat* (Paulhus, 1991). Both subscales had good internal reliability: self-deceptive positivity (SDP) $\alpha = .70$, and impression management (IM) $\alpha = .75$.

Universal Orientation Scale. This is a 20-item scale measuring if people are all seen as being similar. Measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = *Does not describe me well* to 5 = *Describes me very well*. Sample questions include things like “I tend to value similarities over differences when I meet someone” and items like “Men and women will never totally understand each other because of their inborn differences” measured in reverse. Higher scores indicate more of a universal orientation, that is, the view that all humans are more similar to each other than different. The test of internal reliability in this sample was somewhat low ($\alpha = .60$), however, this could be a consequence of having multiple factors, which was suggested by the original authors (Phillips & Ziller, 1997). Even so, the full UOS is used for analyses in this study, just as Phillips and Ziller (1997) used in their validation paper.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). The 16-item Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) Scale (Pratto et al., 1994) measures attitudes towards social hierarchies and egalitarianism in general. A sample question is “some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups” and participants will be asked to respond how positively or negatively they feel in regards to each item. Responses are measured on 7-point scales ranging from 1 *very negative* to 7 *very positive*

and half of the items are reverse-scored. Higher scores indicate less support for egalitarianism and more support for exceptionalism, or social hierarchies based on group membership. Internal consistency was good ($\alpha = .87$).

Alternative Uses Test. This is a method used to evaluate divergent thinking in creativity research (Guilford, Christensen, Merrifield, & Wilson, 1960). In this study, participants were given two minutes to try to come up with as many “uses of a brick” as possible, and after the two minutes were up, the survey would automatically move on to the next item. Participants entered their answers into a text box, and these ideas were then coded by two trained research assistants who first came to an agreement on which ideas actually counted as ideas (excluding descriptive answers like “red brick”, song lyrics, or nonsensical answers like “brickety-brick-brick”), then they independently coded each idea for the *novelty* or originality of that idea within the sample. The novelty scores ranged from 1 to 5, and ideas that occurred only once or very rarely would receive a novelty score of 5, indicating higher novelty. Both trained research assistants coded all of the ideas (about 2400 ideas in all) and the intraclass correlation coefficient using a two-way mixed model assessing absolute agreement revealed high inter-rater reliability between the coders (ICC = .85, 95% CI [.83-.87], $F(2405) = 6.94, p < .001$).

Motivation to Control Prejudice (MCP). This survey assesses the extent to which individuals seek to control the expression of prejudice (Dunton & Fazio, 1997). Dunton and Fazio (1997) found support for a two-factor solution for their scale, one of which is important for the current study. This subscale was titled *concern with acting prejudiced*, and consisted of items that assessed being concerned about appearing prejudiced, about having prejudiced thoughts, and avoiding offensive expressions (Dunton & Fazio, 1997). Sample questions include things like “In today’s society it is important that one not be perceived as prejudiced in any

manner”, measured on a 7-point scale from -3 = *Strongly disagree* to 3 = *Strongly agree*.

Cronbach’s alpha showed acceptable internal consistency in this sample for the whole scale ($\alpha = .75$), and for the subscale that measured concern for acting prejudiced ($\alpha = .78$).

The original scale included two questions that specifically referenced Black people (e.g. “When speaking to a Black person, it’s important to me that he/she not think I’m prejudiced”), but these two questions were changed in the current study to simply replace “a Black person” with “a person from another race”. This change was especially important considering the diversity of the population at this University, and the fact that the largest racial group represented in the pilot sample (and then also in the main study) were students who identified as Black or African American. Additionally, it was for this same reason that the better-known Plant and Devine (1998) prejudice scale was not chosen for this study. In that measure, every single question specifically asks about views toward Black people and was thus inappropriate for this study.

Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS). This is a scale that measures hypersensitivity and self-absorbed feelings of vulnerability, an example question is “I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others.” The ten-item measure of covert narcissism is scored on a 5-point scale from *very uncharacteristic or untrue, strongly disagree* to *very characteristic or true, strongly agree* (Hendin & Cheek, 1997; 2013). Higher scores indicate more agreement with the items, and an indication of more hypersensitive narcissism traits. The reliability of the scale in this sample was acceptable ($\alpha = .71$).

Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA). This scale measures both acceptance of conservative and authoritarian political practices, and also the approval of social control over behavior. Taken from the original RWA scale (Altemeyer, 1998), this study used the shorter

version (Rattazzi, Bobbio, & Canova, 2007); specifically, I used the 14 items that Rattazzi and colleagues (2007) found to indicate two separate factors of RWA. The *authoritarian aggression and submission* subscale ($\alpha = .89$) included questions such as “Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us”, and the *conservatism* subscale ($\alpha = .81$) included items like “Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different from everyone else” (reverse coded). The items were measured on a 7-point scale from -3 = *Totally Disagree* to 3 = *Totally Agree*, and higher scores indicated a greater endorsement of right-wing authoritarian ideas.

Concern for Appropriateness scale (CFA). This scale is a measure of the tendency to conform, including self-monitoring due to social anxiety. Sample items include things like “I actively avoid wearing clothes that are not in style” and “I tend to show different sides of myself to different people”; scored on a 5-point scale, higher scores indicate a greater propensity towards conformity. The original validation of the scale (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984) found two factors, *cross-situational variability*, that is, the degree to which an individual might act differently in different situations, and *attention to social comparison*, which indicates a level of comparison of oneself to others, and then changing one’s behavior to conform to the group. However, a later review of the scale found support for just one factor (Cutler & Wolfe, 1985). In this study, both the full scale ($\alpha = .85$), and the two factors were examined (cross-situational variability [$\alpha = .80$], and attention to social comparison [$\alpha = .82$]).

Concern for Political Correctness (CPC). The CPC instrument was designed to assess the concern that people feel for language that is inclusive or politically correct compared to language that is non-inclusive or politically incorrect. Using a 7-point bipolar scale ranging from

-3 *Disagree Extremely*, to 3 *Agree Extremely*, with 0 as *Neutral* in the middle, participants indicated their agreement on 9 questions assessing attitudes towards other people using politically incorrect language. One sample statement is “I feel angry when a person says something politically incorrect”. This scale includes two subscales, an *emotion* subscale ($\alpha = .92$), which measures the negative emotional response to politically incorrect language, and the *activism* subscale ($\alpha = .93$), which assesses willingness to correct those who use such language. As part of the validation process, laboratory studies using non-PC comedy were used to provide criterion validity for the scale (Strauts & Blanton, 2015).

Political orientation. Participants were asked to identify the direction of their political orientation, on a 7-point scale from *very liberal* to *very conservative*. Then the scores were reversed so that higher scores indicate a more liberal orientation.

Demographics. General demographics included questions about gender, age, race or ethnicity, and nation of origin. These questions were used to determine if the sample is representative of the student population on this campus. Although no significant differences were expected to be found, the PC instrument variables were analyzed by each of the demographic variables to examine any potential differences across groups.

Results

Addressing hypothesis I. After the removal of all the items that did not show variability of responses in the pilot sample, only one word was selected by less than 9% of the sample (illegal alien vs. illegal immigrant); however, some might argue that neither of these choices are PC, so this item might not be a good pairing anyway. Furthermore, only 9.6% of the sample chose *illegal alien* in the pilot sample as well, so this item likely needed to be removed anyway. However, the rest of the items showed a typical variability of answers, indicating that the

measure is likely capturing some real difference in attitudes towards language preference. As expected, the PC proportion score ($M = .56$, $SD = .12$) had a normal distribution (see Figure 3). Similarly, this difference in language preference was not reflected in response latency, that is, the PC proportion was not related to the mean time ($r(367) = .075$, $p = .154$), so participants were likely not consistently taking more or less time to choose either the PC or the non-PC word. Furthermore, an examination of the relationship between the PC variables (PC proportion and response latency) and the demographic variables (age, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, and nation of origin) using a MANOVA found no main effects. There were no significant differences across the PC instrument variables by any of the demographic variables, as hypothesized. Additionally, the internal consistency of the PC items was good ($KR-20 = .88$).

Addressing hypothesis II. It was hypothesized that political correctness would be negatively related to social dominance orientation (SDO) and both subscales of right wing authoritarianism (RWA). The hypothesis was partially supported; PC was negatively related to SDO ($r(366) = -.155$, $p = .003$). So, those who selected more PC word choices were less likely to endorse items related to social dominance orientation, which is understood as the support for exceptionalism or having clear social hierarchies. Additionally, PC was negatively related to the RWA subscale Aggression and Submission, $r(365) = -.106$, $p = .044$, but not related to the RWA subscale Conservatism ($r(365) = -.043$, $p = .408$). This indicates that higher PC proportion scores were related to lower support for things like obedience and strong authoritarian leadership, but had no relationship to preferring a conservative lifestyle or endorsing rules about certain types of dress or behavior.

On the other hand, it was hypothesized that PC would be positively related to scores on the Universal Orientation scale (UO) and the Concern for PC scale (CPC), which comprises the

emotion factor (getting upset when others use non-PC language), and the *activism* factor (correcting others when they are non-PC). This hypothesis was also partially supported; as predicted, PC was positively related to having a universal orientation, $r(366) = .106, p = .043$, so that those with a higher PC proportion score were more likely to view people as being very similar across groups. Furthermore, PC was positively related to the CPC activism factor, $r(364) = .148, p = .005$, but not significantly related to the CPC emotion factor, $r(362) = .100, p = .058$, although this relationship was trending in the proposed direction. In other words, those who chose more PC words were also more likely to feel the need to correct others when they use non-PC language, but having higher PC scores did not necessarily mean that hearing non-PC language would lead to negative emotions like anger or sadness. See Table 3 for the correlations between all the variables.

Further analysis of the relationship between PC and the attitude and prejudice measures was conducted to determine if the relationships were significant even after controlling for social desirability, motivation to control prejudice, and concern for appropriateness. For predicting each measure of prejudice, a sequential regression analysis was conducted using all of the control variables in the first step, then adding the PC score in the second step to determine the effect of PC over and above the control variables. Only the control variables that fit the model were then included in the final, reported model. For predicting SDO, PC was significantly predictive even when controlling for the motivation to control prejudice and the concern for appropriateness (CFA) attention to social comparison factor ($\Delta F(1,361) = 4.04, p = .045$). The PC score uniquely accounted for .9% of the variance in SDO, and this was significant ($b = -.786, SE = .39, t(361) = -2.01, p = .045, sr^2 = .008$). However, when predicting RWA authoritarian aggression and submission, PC was no longer predictive when controlling for CFA attention to

social comparison and social desirability self-deceptive enhancement ($\Delta F(1,361) = 3.38, p = .067$).

Similarly, when controlling for motivation to control prejudice, PC no longer significantly predicted universal orientation ($\Delta F(1,362) = 1.95, p = .163$). Conversely, when controlling for CFA attention to social comparison, PC still significantly predicted concern for political correctness (CPC) activism, $\Delta F(1,360) = 7.81, p = .005$, and PC accounted for 1.6% of the variance in CPC activism over and above the control variable. Even when the control variables were included in the model, the relationship between PC and CPC activism remained significant ($b = 1.726, SE = .62, t(360) = 2.79, p = .005, sr^2 = .018$).

Addressing hypothesis III. It was hypothesized that the PC instrument would be related to personality traits and attitudes, political orientation, some of the Big Five personality traits, hypersensitive narcissism, and whether a person identified as conservative or liberal (political orientation). This hypothesis was partially supported. Specifically, I predicted that the Big Five traits of openness and agreeableness would be positively correlated with PC, and that hypothesis was supported for both openness ($r(366) = .149, p = .004$) and agreeableness ($r(366) = .163, p = .002$), and there was no relationship between PC scores and the other Big Five factors. However, PC was not significantly related to either hypersensitive narcissism or political orientation. See Table 3 for the correlations between all the variables.

Addressing hypothesis IV. It was hypothesized that PC scores would be positively correlated with measures of creativity, but results indicated that PC was not significantly related to either of the measures of creativity (fluency and novelty). However, response latency on the PC measure was negatively related to fluency, $r(370) = -.135, p = .010$, so that those who came up with fewer uses of a brick also took longer to choose a word during the PC word task.

However, this result probably has more to do with cognitive processing rather than the prediction that political correctness was related to creativity. All correlations are listed in Table 3.

General Discussion

The implications of this measure could be important for future research, not only for social psychology, but also in the fields of business, education, and politics. Researchers have theorized and argued for decades about the potential effects of political correctness across various fields, but up until now, there has been no way to assess those claims. Promising new research on PC in the field of business administration (Goncalo et al., 2015) has found that political correctness did not stifle creativity in all groups, as was the concern expressed by others previously (e.g., Hunter, 2005). However, the scale proposed here is different from anything used in previous research, as it is the first attempt at identifying the attitude component of PCism, measured through language preferences. If we can better understand PC as a construct, and we were able to measure it independent of other scales, this knowledge could be applied vastly, to anything from education, to business, and even to politics. Connecting PC to other measures of prejudice should be very beneficial for researchers, as one of the major challenges of measuring prejudiced attitudes is that individuals can typically recognize what is being measured and they will then be able to give the correct, or more desirable answer.

Divergent Validity

Based on the theory that this PC instrument would assess attitudes towards prejudiced or biased language choices, scores on the PC instrument were expected to be negatively correlated with established measures of prejudice, right-wing authoritarianism, and social dominance. Additionally, since the phrase “politically correct” tends to be associated with political liberals, scores on the PC measure were expected to be related to political orientation; specifically, PC

scores were expected to be negatively correlated with conservative orientation. While these hypotheses were only partially supported, most of the predicted relationships were supported. It is important to note here that while all the correlations to other measures were found to be consistent with predictions, none of these relationships demonstrated a complete overlap. Therefore, it is likely that the PC instrument is measuring something unique and different from the other measures of prejudice. Future analysis should be conducted to examine these relationships further and tease out any potential mediating or moderating effects of impression management, concern for appropriateness, or motivation to control prejudice with regard to the relationship between prejudice, political orientation, and preference towards PC or non-PC language.

Limitations

Despite the results with divergent validity, a major limitation in this study is the lack of convergent validity. Being the first measurement tool for PC, there are few options of validated measures which can be compared to the PC scores. However, a behavioral assessment of PCism would be a valuable tool to further validate the PC measure. Previous research found that concern for PC (measured using the emotion subscale of the *Concern for Political Correctness* [CPC] scale) was predictive of how funny participants found either neutral or politically incorrect jokes (Strauts & Blanton, 2015). Even though the CPC emotion subscale was not related to PC scores in this paper, using a similar behavioral measure for reactions to and feelings regarding PC language should be explored for future analysis.

Another limitation in this paper are the low correlations between measures (see Table 3). Even though many of the relationships between the PC measure and the other measures used in the study are statistically significant, they are all below a .2. However, the problem of low

correlations is not unique to this assessment, and is in fact a common problem in attitude surveys. A meta-analysis was conducted to examine the reasons behind the low correlations between implicit bias (measured using the IAT) and explicit self-report measures of bias (Hofmann, Gawronski, Gschwendner, Le, & Schmitt, 2005). Hofmann and colleagues collected 126 studies and found that approximately half of the variability was attributed to moderator variables, and the correlations could be increased when the self-reports were more spontaneous and when the explicit and implicit measures are directly related to each other.

Due the fact that PC is quite difficult to measure and there is no general agreed upon understanding of it, the main limitation of this study was the ambitious goal to clarify, define, and measure this elusive construct. The hypotheses were not completely supported, however, the results suggested that the PC instrument was, in fact, measuring something real and it is related to attitudes, prejudice, views towards other groups, and also to some personality traits. Further analysis is certainly necessary to further validate the measure, as this was only the first attempt at measuring PC.

Implications

The implications of this measure have the potential to go far beyond research purposes. Although an assessment tool for measuring political correctness would certainly be incredibly valuable to the research community, especially in the areas of political science and social psychology, the applicability of a PC measure could apply broadly across fields from academia, to politics, to industry. For example, a negative experience of politically incorrect language in the workplace can unfortunately have litigious outcomes, so preventing that should be a goal for any company. Therefore, if political correctness could be easily measured through a quick language preference test, companies might be able to potentially assess their employees'

prejudiced attitudes (through language), without the employees recognizing the goal of the assessment. In this way, the employees would then be less likely to give what they believe is the correct answer. The implications for businesses and industries further includes things like ensuring that employees feel free to express themselves and develop innovative and creative ideas, while also ensuring the psychological safety of all employees.

The lack of a relationship of the PC instrument to the creativity measures was disappointing, especially considering the amount of previous literature written on the topic, with different authors theorizing quite different outcomes from each other for the past few decades. Examining this potential relationship further is a logical next step, and could contribute greatly to the innovation and creativity body of literature. The lack of a relationship in this study could be due to the measure of creativity that was selected, perhaps the timing was not long enough, or the task was too simple to be able to demonstrate large enough differences across individuals that could then relate to the PC instrument. Additionally, the task (uses of a brick) may have been insufficient to capture differences on a measure of PC because it is such a neutral task, and may not differ by PC attitudes. Future analyses should consider adding a more socially relevant creativity task that might be more related to differences in PC attitudes.

Future Directions and Publication

The next steps for this particular dataset include conducting future analyses to attempt to explain why and how the control variables of desirable responding, impression management, and motivation to control prejudice might influence the relationship between PC and the prejudice and attitude measures of right-wing authoritarianism and universal orientation. It could be that most people have biases, but that those who chose the PC words are simply better at censoring themselves. Therefore, understanding the relationship between the PC measure and the measures

of self-censorship, impression management, and desirable responding could help to answer this question.

Furthermore, an examination of the PC manipulation check should be conducted to determine if the participants' understanding or recognition of the measure affected the relationship between their attitude scales and their PC scores. Even though there were no differences in PC scores across levels of the manipulation check, there could potentially be differences in the relationships between the scales. Moderation analysis might determine if the relationship of those measures differed depending on whether the participant recognized the test as being a measure of PC, or biased language, or if they simply assumed the measure was an assessment of everyday language, as they were told at the beginning of the study.

Additional suggestions for future research on this scale could include a different type of factor analysis which requires a transformation of the data using polychoric correlations to complete factor analysis for binary data of the PC answer choices (removing the timeouts), based on the guidelines of Starkweather (2014). Beyond that, follow-up data collections would be helpful to provide a better understanding of the measure and to help establish validity even further. This would be especially true if the follow-up collection had a different type of sample, perhaps a sample of people who are not college students would be a logical next step.

Because language is constantly changing across time and geographic areas, any future assessments of language preferences would have to consider these changes. In fact, I do not believe that the actual *content* of the PC measure matters as much as the idea of making the choice between two words or phrases. What is considered PC in one culture may be completely offensive in another culture, and things that used to be acceptable at one point in history may or may not still be acceptable today. An example of this is when certain groups take ownership of a

word or phrase that was once considered a slur against them; as group members reclaim that previously offensive word, the meaning of the word begins to change across the culture. These shifts in language must be considered with any measure of language preferences. In the future, this particular language preference test could be adjusted, words or pairs of words could be added or removed as they change meaning over time.

Despite the limitations of the study and the necessity of further research and analyses, I believe this new measurement tool provides an important contribution to the area of research on political correctness, being the first attempt at measuring this difficult subject. The concept of *political correctness* is not going away anytime soon, and I predict that it will continue to be used often across politics, media, and social media in the foreseeable future. Because of the high prevalence of this term and the disagreement regarding even the basic definition of the concept, this study proposing a novel method of measuring PC provides an important and timely contribution to the literature.

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Table 1

All Measures Used and the Hypothesized Relationships to Political Correctness

HYPOTHESIS	VARIABLE	HYPOTHESIZED REALTIONSHIP TO PC
PC instrument (hypothesis 1)	PC measure of language preferences	
	PC score (proportion of PC words to all good trials)	
	Response latency (mean time across all PC trials)	
	Demographic variables	
	Age	none
	Gender	none
	Race/ethnicity	none
	Religion	none
	Nation of origin	none
Attitude scales (hypothesis 2, a & b)	Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	negative
	Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)	
	Authoritarian aggression and submission	negative
	Conservatism	negative
	Concern for Political Correctness (CPC)	
	Emotion subscale	positive
	Activism subscale	positive
	Universal Orientation Scale	positive
Control variables (hypothesis 2, c)	Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR)	
	BIDR self-deceptive enhancement scale	control variable
	BIDR impression management scale	control variable
	Motivation to Control Prejudice (MCP)	
	Full scale	control variable
	Concern with acting prejudiced	control variable
	Concern for Appropriateness scale (CFA)	
	Full scale	control variable
	CFA cross situational variability	control variable
	CFA attention to social comparison	control variable
Personality factors (hypothesis 3)	The Big Five personality factors	
	Openness	positive
	Conscientiousness	exploratory
	Extraversion	exploratory
	Agreeableness	positive
	Neuroticism	exploratory
	Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS)	negative
	Political orientation	
	Liberal	positive
	Conservative	negative
Creativity (hypothesis 4)	Alternative Uses Test	
	Count and Novelty	positive

Table 2

Pilot Data for PC instrument Answer Choices with the Percentages and Frequencies for Each

item	Choice		Percentages			Frequencies			
	1	2	TO	1	2	TO	1	2	missing
PC01	African American	Black	19.2	31.6	49.0	74	122	189	1
PC02	illegal alien	illegal immigrant	20.5	9.6	69.7	79	37	269	1
PC03	barren	reproductively challenged	20.5	41.2	37.6	79	159	145	3
PC04	beanpole	thin	17.1	4.9	77.5	66	19	299	2
PC05	Bible thumper	Evangelical	21.0	20.5	58.5	81	79	226	0
PC06	bitch	female	19.2	11.4	68.9	74	44	266	2
PC07	bougie	snobby	18.4	21.8	59.6	71	84	230	1
PC08	bum	homeless	19.4	10.1	69.7	75	39	269	3
PC09	chick	girl	22.0	8.8	68.7	85	34	265	2
PC10	Chink	Asian	15.8	2.1	81.1	61	8	313	4
PC11	crazy	mentally disabled	19.9	40.7	39.1	77	157	151	1
PC12	crippled	disabled	21.5	17.4	59.8	83	67	231	5
PC13	Door-Knocker	Jehovah's Witness	16.3	17.1	64.5	63	66	249	8
PC14	dumb	mute	21.5	44.0	33.9	83	170	131	2
PC15	dyke	lesbian	19.7	6.0	73.8	76	23	285	2
PC16	Eskimo	Inuit	22.5	65.5	11.4	87	253	44	2
PC17	fag	gay	15.8	7.8	75.9	61	30	293	2
PC18	fat	overweight	17.9	40.2	41.2	69	155	159	3
PC19	fireman	fire fighter	18.7	31.9	48.4	72	123	187	4
PC20	ghetto	urban	19.9	52.3	27.5	77	202	106	1
PC21	ginger	redhead	16.6	45.3	37.8	64	175	146	1
PC22	Greaser	Italian	22.0	6.7	70.2	85	26	271	4
PC23	Gypsy	Roma	19.4	58.0	21.8	75	224	84	3
PC24	handicapped	disabled	20.7	40.9	38.3	80	158	148	0
PC25	hillybilly	country	19.2	11.1	69.2	74	43	267	2
PC26	hippy	earthy	22.8	52.3	24.1	88	202	93	3
PC27	Hispanic	Latino	20.7	57.5	20.7	80	222	80	4
PC28	holly roller	Evangelical	21.2	19.2	59.1	82	74	228	2
PC29	illegal immigrant	undocumented migrant	20.5	69.2	9.6	79	267	37	3
PC30	Indian	Native American	21.5	26.2	52.1	83	101	201	1
PC31	Islamic Extremist	Islamic Activist	24.9	34.2	39.9	96	132	154	4
PC32	Kike	Jew	16.8	3.4	79.5	65	13	307	1
PC33	lame	disabled	15.5	28.5	54.9	60	110	212	4
PC34	midget	little person	21.5	46.6	31.1	83	180	120	3
PC35	mulatto	biracial	22.3	8.3	68.4	86	32	264	4
PC36	negro	black	16.8	3.4	79.5	65	13	307	1

Table 2

Continued

item	Choice		Percentages			Frequencies			
	1	2	TO	1	2	TO	1	2	missing
PC37	nerdy	smart	18.7	15.8	65.0	72	61	251	2
PC38	obese	overweight	18.9	25.4	55.2	73	98	213	2
PC39	old maid	single woman	20.7	4.1	73.8	80	16	285	5
PC40	old maid	elderly	18.1	57.8	23.8	70	223	92	1
PC41	Oriental	Asian	21.2	7.5	71.2	82	29	275	0
PC42	pig	cop	21.0	18.9	60.1	81	73	232	0
PC43	policeman	police officer	22.5	28.5	47.9	87	110	185	4
PC44	queer	gay	20.5	5.4	74.1	79	21	286	0
PC45	Raghead	Muslim	19.4	3.1	77.2	75	12	298	1
PC46	redneck	southerner	19.9	32.9	46.9	77	127	181	1
PC47	Redskin	Native American	19.9	3.9	75.6	77	15	292	2
PC48	retarded	intellectually disabled	16.3	43.3	39.9	63	167	154	2
PC49	secretary	administrative assistant	16.8	68.7	13.7	65	265	53	3
PC50	she-male	transgender	20.7	7.3	71.0	80	28	274	4
PC51	skin & bones	thin	20.7	7.3	71.0	80	28	274	4
PC52	uppity	arrogant	21.8	6.7	71.0	84	26	274	2
PC53	Wagon burner	Native American	19.7	1.3	79.0	76	5	305	0
PC54	waitress	server	17.6	60.4	21.8	68	233	84	1
PC55	waterhead	special needs	19.4	5.4	74.6	75	21	288	2
PC56	Wetback	Mexican	17.9	2.8	79.0	69	11	305	1
PC57	whore	sex worker	15.8	58.8	24.4	61	227	94	4
PC58	Yankee	Northerner	15.8	27.7	56.0	61	107	216	2
PC59	Spic	Latino	19.2	2.6	77.5	74	10	299	3
PC60	stewardess	flight attendant	19.7	9.8	69.2	76	38	267	5
PC61	thunder thighs	curvy	18.7	16.6	64.0	72	64	247	3
PC62	tranny	cross-dresser	23.6	27.5	48.7	91	106	188	1
PC63	tree huger	environmentalist	21.2	29.0	49.5	82	112	191	1
PC64	twig	thin	18.4	7.5	73.3	71	29	283	3

Note. TO stands for Time Out and represents the participants who did not make a selection

within 6 seconds. The columns titled 1 and 2 represent the number of participants who chose that answer and the percentage. The cells that are highlighted in yellow indicate the pairs with very little variability in answer choices which were removed for the main study.

Table 3

Correlational Data Between the PC instrument and All Other Measures Use in The Study

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. PC Proportion																
2. PC Response Latency	.075															
3. RWA - Authoritarian Aggression and Submission	-.106*	-.113*														
4. RWA - Conservatism	-.043	.093	.323**													
5. Social Dominance Orientation	-.155**	-.042	.353**	.347**												
6. Universal Orientation Scale	.106*	.004	-.229**	-.250**	-.350**											
7. CPC - Emotion	.100	.001	-.126*	-.226**	-.181**	.106*										
8. CPC - Activism	.148**	-.031	-.147**	-.229**	-.217**	.156**	.725**									
9. Big Five - Openness	.149**	-.051	-.175**	-.232**	-.194**	.269**	.060	.174**								
10. Big Five - Conscientiousness	.075	.054	.134**	.155**	-.069	.136**	-.078	-.035	.203**							
11. Big Five - Extraversion	-.085	-.060	.113*	.042	-.031	.148**	-.001	.121*	.158**	.202**						
12. Big Five - Agreeableness	.163**	.050	.061	.094	-.257**	.261**	-.017	.030	.159**	.449**	.166**					
13. Big Five - Neuroticism	-.005	-.024	-.079	-.103*	-.095	-.108*	.295**	.167**	-.085	-.338**	-.244**	-.254**				
14. Hypersensitive Narcissism	-.067	-.023	.141**	-.064	.139**	-.200**	.287**	.149**	-.047	-.296**	-.176**	-.336**	.483**			
15. Political Orientation	.045	-.032	-.113*	.020	.027	.059	.017	.054	.036	.033	.036	.020	-.080	-.044		
16. Creativity - Novelty	.031	-.035	-.096	-.023	.048	.029	-.022	.005	-.003	-.086	-.032	-.117*	.048	.017	.029	
17. Creativity - Fluency	-.018	-.135**	-.088	-.114*	-.015	.034	.014	.069	.079	-.118*	.105*	-.057	.014	.094	-.007	.530**

Note. Values of *N* range from 362-370 across all of the scale instruments, and 325-329 for political orientation because many people declined to answer this particular question. Significant correlations are flagged.

* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

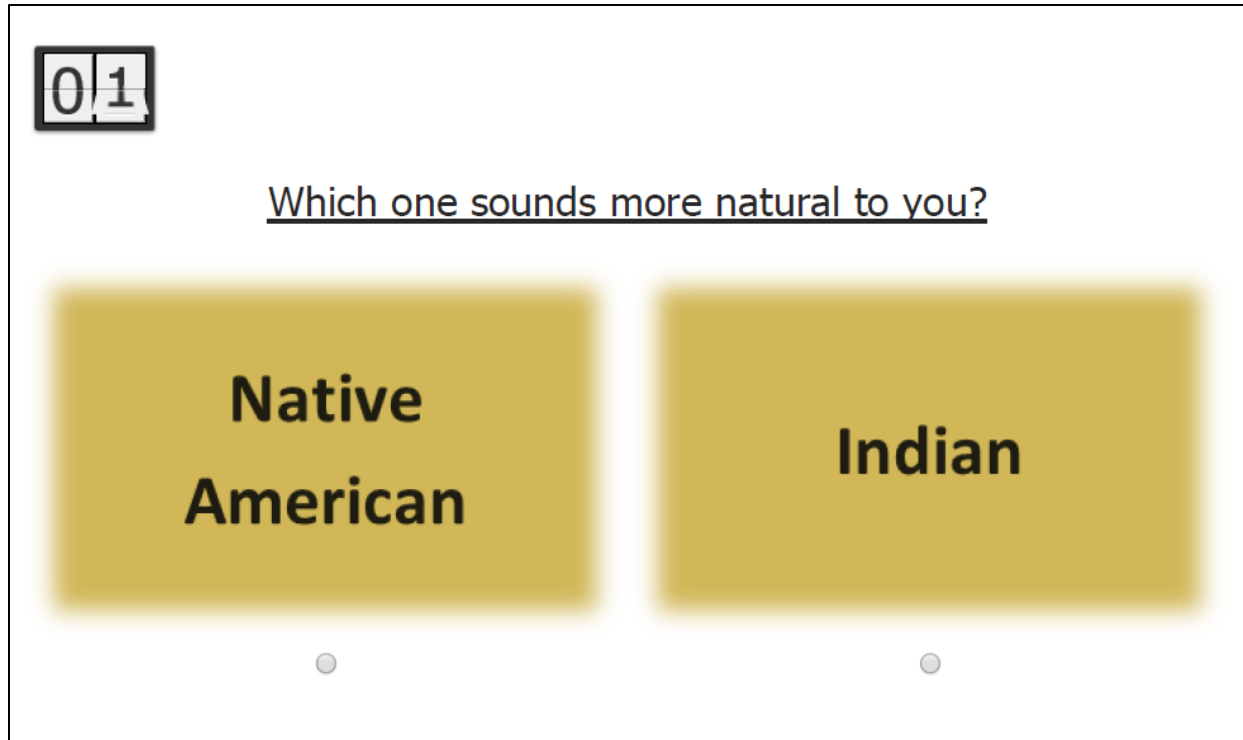


Figure 1. Example of word pairs to choose from on language preference task, with the countdown timer in the top corner. The timer counts down from 4 seconds, then the page automatically advances at 6 seconds if no choice was made.

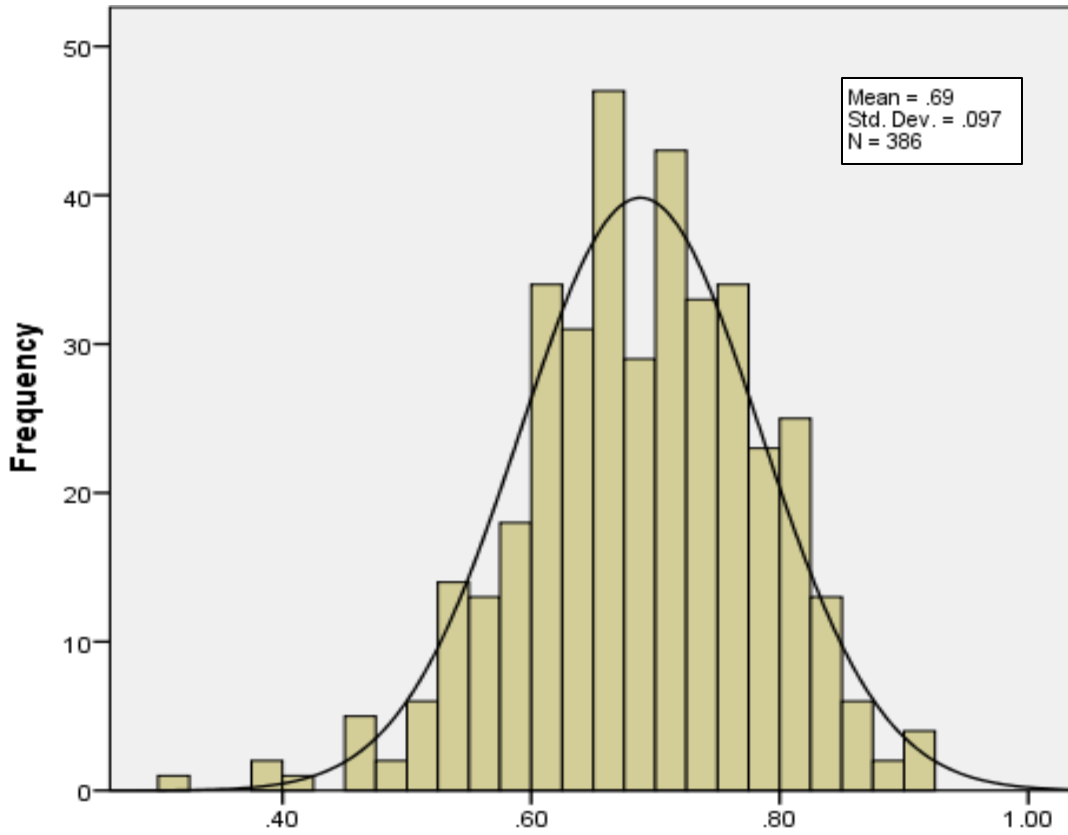


Figure 2. Distribution of scores on the PC scale in the pilot study. On the X-axis are the PC proportion scores, calculated by dividing the number of PC words selected by all good trials of the PC word pairs (excluding any timeouts or skipped items).

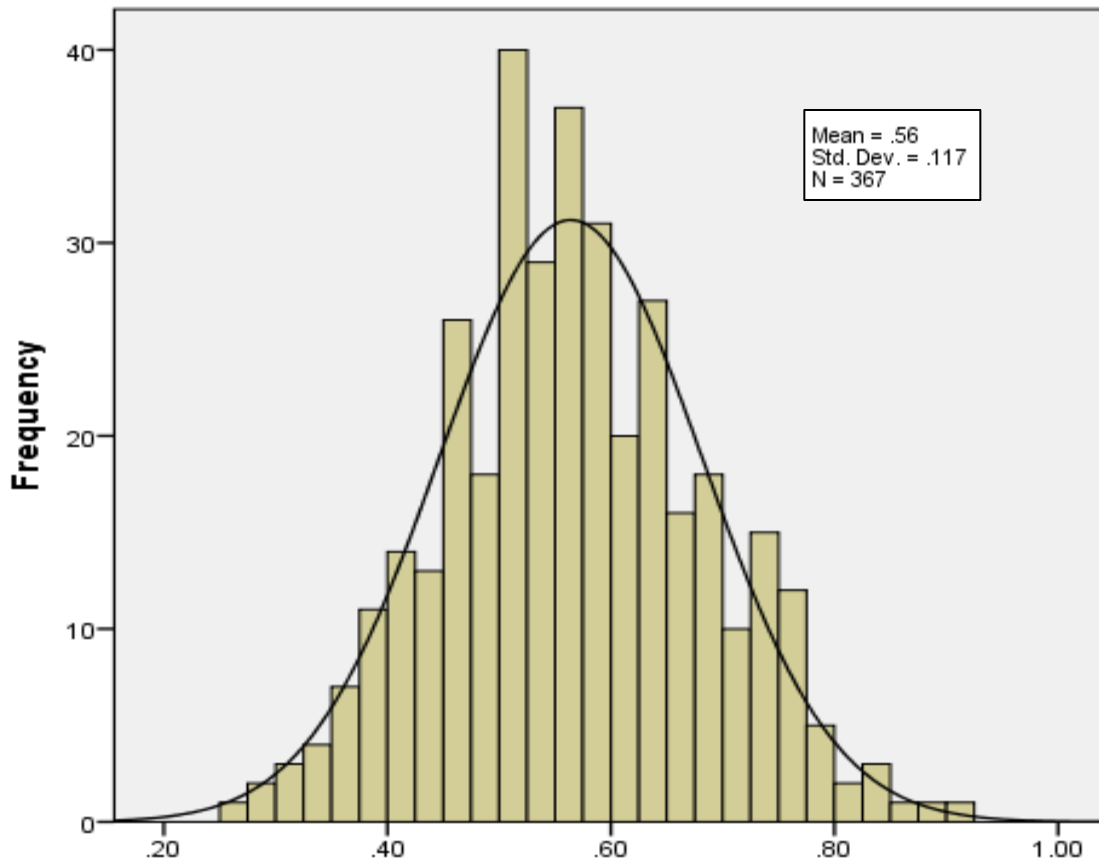


Figure 3. Distribution of scores on the PC scale in the main study. On the X-axis are the PC proportion scores, calculated by dividing the number of PC words selected by all good trials of the PC word pairs (excluding any timeouts or skipped items).

Appendix

PC Scores Across all Demographic Measures Used in the Main Study

		PC proportion score means (standard deviation in parentheses)					
Race/ethnicity	African American / Black (n=103)	Caucasian / White (n=47)	East Asian / South Asian / Pacific Islander (n=95)	Hispanic / Latino/a (n=67)	Native American / Alaskan Native / Indigenous (n=9)	Other / Multiple (n=31)	
	.553 (.12)	.590 (.11)	.554 (.10)	.574 (.12)	.594 (.12)	.560 (.14)	
Citizenship	US Citizen (n=268)			International (n=83)			
	.555 (.12)			.588 (.12)			
Gender	Men (n=112)		Women (n=237)		Other (n=3)		
	.556 (.13)		.566 (.11)		.710 (.09)		
Religion	Agnostic / Atheist (n=129)	Baha'i (n=38)	Christian (all) (n=59)	Jewish (n=33)	Muslim (n=29)	Unaffiliated (n=19)	Other/multiple (n=38)
	.559 (.12)	.557 (.11)	.568 (.14)	.583 (.12)	.559 (.13)	.600 (.13)	.567 (.09)
Age	Younger than 20 (n=188)		20-22 (n=118)	23-25 (n=17)	26-29 (n=13)	30 and older (n=16)	
	.575 (.11)		.546 (.12)	.581 (.11)	.584 (.15)	.531 (.08)	
Political orientation	Conservative orientation (n=65)			Neutral (n=105)		Liberal orientation (n=157)	
	.545 (.12)			.574 (.13)		.561 (.11)	

Note. There were no significant differences across any of the groups listed.