

Political Correctness and Politically Correct People: South Park Case

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Abstract

In this work, the concept of Political Correctness (P.C) and Politically Correct People (P.C.P.) will be evaluated through the case study. As the case study, the animated cartoon named “South Park” was chosen. Even though South Park is a cartoon, it should not be forgotten that it criticises real-world events. In 2015, South Park took political correctness as it’s basis for the 19th season of the show. How do P.C.P communicate in South Park? How do they influence the society in South Park? What is the correlation between P.C. and ads? Answers to these questions will be sought out. Episodes of the show are analyzed qualitatively. Political Correctness is seemingly a quite positive term. But in South Park, P.C.P. restrict the freedom of speech. They also falsely accuse people of being sexist or being racist etc. They have slowly become a social pressure group. While P.C.P. does succeed in protecting the minorities, they also pressurize the majority. Corporations use political correctness to pressurize people into donating to their social cause. Ads are constantly changing forms. They take on multiple forms like news or even humans. South Park claims that advertisements are starting to become dangerous to the consumers. All of the claims mentioned above should be analyzed on real customers and corporations. At the same time, findings obtained from South Park do show that P.C. can be easily exaggerated and society can get harmed because of it. These findings are limited to South Park. The study offers different perspectives about P.C. and ads.

Keywords: Political Correctness, Politically Correct People, Ad, Corporate Social Responsibility, South Park

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Introduction

We live in a world of uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, where the disparate communication of individuals, communities and society are at times in conflict. One of the complex issues is Political Correctness (PC).

PC is the principle of avoiding language and behaviour that may offend minorities groups of people.

(<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/political-correctness>)

Not surprisingly, 'political correctness' has over the years caused a lot of heated argument and has divided people, into its ardent advocates and opponents. While the former defend it on the grounds that it can effectively combat intolerance, prejudice, and injustice, the latter object to it as merely an instrument of control and manipulation and an impediment to the freedom of speech. Opponents base their argument on the fact that things are sometimes taken too far, many expressions already accepted or suggested as "political correctness" sounding exaggerated, unnatural, and ridiculous. Furthermore, they argue that political correctness frequently obscures the meaning and is directed against clarity, thereby deteriorating the language

(Plančić, Zanchia, Čudićfile:///C:/Users/user1/Downloads/toms_vol2no1_doi008.pdf).

There are not a lot of academic studies based on PC and on top of that, most of these studies are theoretical (Morris, 2001); (Norten, Sommers, 2006); (Hughes, 1993); (Fairclough, 2003, (Barreto, 2005), (Wilson, 1995).

(https://scholar.google.com.tr/scholar?hl=tr&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=political+correctness&btnG),

PC is an important theme conflict in intellectual life and in internet (<https://www.quora.com/Is-political-correctness-preventing-free-speech-If-so-what-are-some-examples>). A consensus among advocates and opponents seems difficult. So the advocates criticize those who oppose their rhetoric.

Cartoon film, South Park, has dealt with the issue of PC in a season in 2015. South Park has asserted a lot of claims about PC and PCP. It describes the problems that political correctness may cause. This paper deals with the concept of "political correctness and political correct people" and it is analyzed in the classic cartoon film "South Park" as a case study. It is considered important to draw attention to the relationship between advertising and political correctness.

Politically Correctness and Politically Correct People

Political Correctness first appeared in the Russian Revolution of 1917 (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-correctness>). The term which has become a late 20th-century catch-phrase in Western European and North American liberal democracies but also has found currency in the political climate of the Asian and Eastern countries (Konye, 2016; 53). The advocates are called Politically Correct People or Social Justice Warrior (SJW).

PC, 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. The concept has been discussed, disputed, criticized, and satirized by commentators from across the political spectrum. The term has often been used derisively to ridicule the notion that altering language usage can change the public's perceptions and beliefs as well as influence outcomes (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-correctness>).

Specifically, the PC movement supporters object to:

1. the use of terms that they consider sexist (especially as used by men against women) or racist (as used by whites against blacks), or terms used against the physically or mentally impaired, older people, short people, etc.
2. stereotypes, such as the assumption that women are less intelligent than men, and blacks less intelligent than whites,
3. inappropriate laughter, such as jokes at the expense of the disabled, homosexuals, and ethnic minorities.

(http://didattica.uniroma2.it/assets/uploads/corsi/145308/14_Politically_Correct_2_Definition_Background.pdf)

Advocates of politically correct (PC) language claim that it is a civilizing influence on society, that it discourages the use of words that have negative or offensive connotations and thereby grants respect to people who are the victims of unfair stereotypes. In this view, the purpose and effect of politically correct language are to prevent bullying and offensive behavior and to replace terms loaded with offensive undertones with allegedly impartial words (O'Neill, 2011;279).

The language of speech has changed due to political correctness. In Turkey, common phrases like "act like a man", has changed into phrases like "act like a human". We can say that such statements are preferred.

General terms containing the segment man, such as mankind and man-made, were made inclusive by using synonyms such as humankind and artificial. Later, the names of jobs and occupations were revised to become sexually neutral. Speakers of English have found new ways to avoid sex markers: flight attendant (since the terms steward and stewardess are no longer used), sales person (salesman and saleswoman have been outlawed), police officer (instead of policeman) and chairperson or chair (instead of chairman) (Zabotkina 1989).

For the PC correct language, replacement of existing terminology with politically correct terms has two purported virtues:

1. It reduces the social acceptability of using offensive terms.
2. It discourages the reflexive use of words that import a negative stereotype, thereby promoting conscious thinking about how to describe others fairly on their merits (O'Neill, 280).

The concept of PC has begun to affect society more and more. It causes controversy, especially in social media. (<https://www.quora.com/Is-political-correctness-preventing-free-speech-If-so-what-are-some-examples>).

South Park

American adult-oriented animated comedy series that has aired on the cable network Comedy Central since 1997. The controversial series won Emmy Awards for outstanding animated program in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2012. The series was created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone, who, in addition to writing, directing, and editing each episode, provide the voices of the four boys as well as of nearly every other male character in the series. South Park is set in a fictional Colorado town of the same name and focuses largely on the antics of four grade-school boys: Eric Cartman, Stanley Marsh, Kyle Broflovski, and Kenneth (Kenny) McCormick. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/South-Park-television-series>)



Figure 1: South Park

(<https://www.thrillist.com/entertainment/nation/south-park-best-episodes-every-season>)

South Park is a cartoon film known for its critical approach to current and global events, celebrities, executives and political leaders for adults. It is mainly based on events in the US. South Park presents a microcosm (little universe) of the United States. (Weinstock; 2008)



Figure 2: 4 Childrens' Story

(<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/south-park-air-8-day-marathon-all-episodes-season-premiere-1032080>)

South Park is being watched by millions of people all over the world. It raises awareness of the issues it deals with, provides different perspectives, causes debates and sometimes becomes the target of criticism. It has important predictions and criticisms about the point where Political Correctness can come from.

Methodology

The main subject of South Park's analyzed 2015 season is the PC. Therefore, it is chosen as Purposive Sampling. Illustrative Case Studies, which is one of the types of case studies, are used. It is depicted and a case study analysis is conducted. This case study is descriptive.

In Illustrative Case Studies, the event is examined in depth in terms of its many features. The data is comprehensive and detailed. In a case study, the researcher could compare the case study by focusing on many factors (Neuman, 2007; 102). As in most case studies, qualitative research approach is used in this study.

In the analyzed sections, PCPs' communication styles, their effects on society and the relationship between PC and ads are analyzed.

Research Questions;

- How do Politically Correct People communicate in South Park?
- How do Political Correctness influence the society in South Park?
- What is the correlation between political correctness and ads in South Park?

Findings

The findings of the study are given below. The questions of the research are tried to be answered in the context of the case.

-How do Politically Correct People communicate in South Park?

New main character in the analyzed sections is PC Principal. He is the stereotypical "PC" in South Park. PC Principal is the new school headmaster in town. His initials mean "politically correct". On the first day, he accuses the whole town of being racist. One of the most criticized issues of PCP is that they are biased and generalize the problems to the whole society. (Plančić, Zanchia, Čudić file:///C:/Users/user1/Downloads/toms_vol2no1_doi008.pdf). He also behaves in this way. He appear as self-righteous and judgmental.



Figure 3: PC Principal

(<https://giphy.com/gifs/southpark-south-park-xTiTnC3NegnG4rcy6Q>)

groups, women and people with physical disabilities. But PC Principal is biased. He is not open to different ideas. He does not listen to other people's objections and their ideas. He uses bad and rough language and applies brute force to the students. He dismisses those who have different opinions, such as teachers. He draws an image that threatens the freedom of speech. (Episodes 1, 3, 6, 7 and 9)

-How do PC influence the society?

In South Park, even the police cannot intervene with minorities. Because PCP protects minorities. According to PCP: minorities have valued more than majorities and white people are always wrong. PCs also pressurize the police (Episode 4). There has been a turmoil in the city. Police have to tolerate it. Police continue to act as bad as they used to. The danger is eliminated (Episode 6).

South Park tries to explain that if any group is overly supported, the balances will change if they are defended even when they are wrong. This may cause confusion. It can disrupt society. If PCP get too strong and pressure on society increase, for societies may have negative consequences. South Park have predicted the future.

-What is the correlation between political correctness and corporations/ advertisements?

A large art and entertainment center is built in South Park. Ads promise more than the product. They promise a happy life style. Visiting this entertainment center is an absolute must. Ads give you the message that you have no choice but to go to this center. No one goes to the old shops.

South Park claims that corporations have been using donations to collect funds using "political correctness". Social responsibility is a voluntary activity, however in the South Park, it is becoming the pressure for charity (Episode 3).

At a store in South Park, the cashier presses customers to help hungry children for 1 dollar. A customer does not accept. But the cashier exposes the customer. The customer replies that if he had helped others in every purchase, he wouldn't have any money left. The cashier insists. The customer agrees to give a dollar at the end. However, because of the low amount of money he donated, he is mocked and the customer cries and leaves the shop. The customer criticizes the store. He says:

“Hungry children may need help. But it's not right for the cashier to press us, we don't have to help. \$ 2 a day, \$ 62 a month.” (Episode 4)



Figure 5: Customer and Cashier, in Whole Food
(<http://ppcorn.com/us/south-park-season-19-safe-space-episode-review/>)

The customer is considered right. Helping those in need is undoubtedly important. However, charity is a voluntary activity. No one should be forced to charity by the excuse of PC.

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Shameless America (a club in the show) organizes a charity night. The character "Reality" comes to the charity event. He says: You raise three hundred thousand dollars, but you spend half a million dollars on absurd crystal glasses. (Episode 5)



Figure 6: Reality Character
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YouCsnmMLY>)

There are two criticisms of social responsibility and corporates in the series. The first one is that corporates are putting excessive pressure on their customers for charity, using political correctness. Second, the cost of the charity event is higher than the charity amount sometimes.

Episode 9 describes the current status of advertisements. It's last claim is that ads are manipulating people using the PC.

According to South Park; people tried to destroy ads for years. There was no escape from the ads, but people knew what was advertising and what was not. People invented devices so that they can skip the ads. The ads seemed to end. People were

happy. But then, when the internet was discovered, there was a very different channel where ads could spread. On the internet, pop-ups started to appear. Scientists from around the world invented adblockers to stop these ads. No more ads on the internet, no ads on phones. However, ads have become smarter over time. Ads have begun to show themselves as news. People were actually reading ads thinking they were reading news.

Ads in the form of news on the internet are especially increasing. Ethical aspects of news-type advertising are discussed.

(http://globalmedia-tr.emu.edu.tr/guz2006/Hakemli_Yazilar/%DCmit%20atabek.%20Internette%20Etik.%20Onayli.pdf) The question of what internet users think about news-related ads should be investigated.

The depiction of advertisements in South Park are as follows: Ads took the human form. A gardener or a neighbor can be ad. As the ads increased, the cost of the products used increased. South park has become an expensive area. South Park's people's struggle with advertising is summarized. It is a utopian forecast for the future.

The depiction of ads in South Park continue as such (said by a news reporter character): "The purpose of an ad; is to manipulate. The entire news industry was seized by ads. All our colleagues were forced to do what the ads wanted." If the ads take over the world it will be the end of the human species, so some people have bowed to the ad. Ads on the internet are personalized. When you look at the website of a product you are looking for, you will now see the ad of that product on all sites.

According to South Park; ads have begun to be sympathetic as they enter the human form. Every ad lies. Every ad fakes. The characters saw the ice cream ad and ordered an ice cream.

Actually, they have no intention of eating ice cream. An opening of luxury shops has changed the concept of consumption and has made the products more expensive. Cities have changed. This is not only in the US but in the whole world. Ads are turned into people, because ads think it is necessary to destroy humans. The children are beginning to suspect that ads are reading their minds or if there are agents amongst them in South Park. There are ads that you don't realize are ads. They will print a new issue of the newspaper and explain that the purpose of the ads is to deceive people. But the girl character in the ad form beats them all. Ads itself is not easy to cope with. Ads have taken over the world. But they don't want this to be known.

PCP have been manipulated according to South Park. PCPs are unintentionally giving support to humanity's biggest enemy, the ads (Episode 7).

PC Principal admits: "They are trying to change the world by using me and people like me. Ads don't want people to know the truth." PC's are trying to destroy advertisements. If you are on the side of the advertising companies, they provide you with all kinds of opportunities. PC Principal kills the girl in the ad form and the humanity wins. (Episode 10).

As can be seen, ads are heavily criticized. In a worldwide cartoon, ads are presented as the biggest enemy. This is a very heavy charge. It is extremely sad for ads. Do people really see ads as danger? Does South Park unfairly criticise ads? Or did ads become a hateful element? What's the most annoying thing in ads? The answer to this questions should be investigated in different countries and different target groups. Hate of ads seems dangerous for the future of advertising. But ads have many benefits for consumers. To create awareness, to teach the use of new products, to entertain etc. (Episode 9)

Results

Political Correctness; encourages people to use polite language in all kinds of communication. Their aim is not to hurt the disadvantaged and minority people. PC is spread all over the world. Number of PCP is increasing day by day. Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau's news is interesting "(<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/07/justin-trudeau-tells-woman-to-say-peoplekind-not-mankind>) As can be seen, PCP are found in every part of society. Protection of the rights of people in each group is of fundamental importance. But in defending the minority, it is also important to not hate majority. Minority should not break the heart of those who are not disadvantaged.

South Park is a cartoon for adults who criticize social, political issues. In 2015, he criticized "political correctness and politically correct people" in a season. It has revealed what kind of problems can lead to political correctness in the future. According to the findings, the results of the study can be summarized as follows:

We can say that the PCPs should be more polite. It is unacceptable that PCP's oppressing people and acting hateful. According to South Park, which criticizes social problems, the PC has begun to become an element of pressure that restricts people's freedom of speech. In real life, PCP has received a lot of criticism in this respect.

It is thought that there is a need to draw boundaries on the political correctness. It is advisable for the communicators to conduct research on this subject.

In South Park, it is claimed that there is a connection between PC and ads. According to these episodes, corporates, and ads forces their customers to behave politically correct. Has ads become an element of hatred? In South Park, ads are shown as enemies. Do people really hate ads so much? Should marketing people and advertisers investigate this question?

Again, according to the South Park, corporations force customers to donate to social issues by creating pressure with advertisements and salespeople. This is an important claim. In the field of marketing, advertising and business, this issue should be analyzed with its ethical dimensions.

One of the most important results to be taken from this study is to build consensus among those who are advocates and opponents about PC. It is important to Political Correctness. However, the use of politically correct language should be ensured not by pressure, and by insulting.

Findings are limited to South Park and cannot be generalized. It should not be forgotten that it affects the masses while criticizing society and real event.

Aknowledgement

With regards to my encouraging son Dervişan

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