

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the concept of political correctness (PC). This social phenomenon has recently become a political tool used widely by right-wing politicians to describe the divide between the ruling “elites” and the “ordinary people.” More generally, PC acts as an indicator of a broader cultural turn toward “post-material values” in the West. However, despite its prevalence, there is a lack of consensus on its definition and underlying purposes. This thesis wishes to contribute to the PC debate by 1) outlining the historical development of PC, 2) reviewing and synthesizing existing literature, 3) proposing a conceptualization of PC, and 4) developing a measurement tool for PC at the individual level. It is argued that PC has a dual nature: it is comprised of a normative (adherence to social norms and values) and a behavioral dimension (prescription of designated behaviors meant to be their expression). Moreover, it is hypothesized that a *gap* exists between these dimensions that can be influenced by reputational concerns (social desirability), perceived threats to freedom (psychological reactance), and political orientation. In this context, three pilot studies were conducted to validate the new measurement tools and examine the associations between PC’s two dimensions and social desirability, psychological reactance, and political orientation. By combining a constructivist perspective with insights from psychology, sociology, and linguistics and underpinning these with empirical research, the thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of PC’s duality.

## **Keywords**

Political Correctness (PC); Social Construction of Knowledge; Identities; Post-

material Values