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Investigating the Relationships of Attitude Clarity and Correctness with Political Identification Strength and Evaluations of an Ideological Group

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INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIPS OF ATTITUDE CLARITY AND CORRECTNESS

WITH POLITICAL IDENTIFICATION STRENGTH AND EVALUATIONS OF AN

IDEOLOGICAL GROUP

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Martinez, Gustavo, <u>Investigating the Relationships of Attitude Clarity and Correctness with</u> <u>Political Identification Strength and Evaluations of an Ideological Group.</u> Master of Arts (MA), August 2017, 28 pp., 5 tables, 37 references.

The present study examines two underlying attitude certainty dimensions in the context of political groups: attitude clarity and attitude correctness. Attitude clarity is the subjective sense that one knows what one's attitude is, and attitude correctness is the subjective sense that one's attitude is correct or valid. Based on predictions derived from social identity theory and attitude attribution research, it was expected that attitude clarity and attitude correctness of six political attitudes would have diverging effects in regards to political party identity strength, attitudes towards the political outgroup, and rationalization attribution for the political outgroup. These hypotheses were not supported, and a combination of post hoc exploratory factor and parallel analyses did not lend support for a two factor structure of attitude certainty. Post hoc regression models separating social equality from federal spending attitudes did yield a unique effect for attitude clarity but not attitude correctness regarding outgroup attitudes. These findings are discussed in regards to the existing attitude certainty literature and suggest new avenues of research.

DEDICATION

The completion of my Masters would not have been possible without the love and

support of my family. Thank you Grandpa, Grandma, and Mom for always being there for me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Attitudes are broadly defined as an individual's evaluation of some aspect of the world (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). They are thought to draw lines, and segregate, an otherwise chaotic environment, motivating the individual to approach things that they evaluate as good for them and avoid things they evaluate as bad (Allport, 1935). Attitude objects can range from people, places, events, ideas, or anything an individual can like or dislike. Attitudes can vary in terms of their valence (positive, negative, ambivalent) and strength. Stronger attitudes are typically more stable over time, resistant to change, and have a stronger impact on information processing and behavior than weaker attitudes (Krosnick & Petty, 1995).

Attitude strength has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct made up of attributes such as importance, knowledge, intensity, accessibility, ambivalence, certainty, extremity, and elaboration (Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Carnot, 1993). Arguments have been made for a conceptual overlap among many of these attributes (Haddock, Rothman, & Schwarz, 1996; Bassili, 1996); however, factors thought to overlap with one another have been demonstrated repeatedly to have unique predictors and consequences (Visser, Bizer, & Krosnick, 2004). Some of these dimensions have different relationships with important democratic consequences as well. For example, attitude importance and attitude certainty are positively related to citizens' pre-election intentions to vote, but only the former predicts whether they

actually do (Visser, et al., 2003). Attitude certainty and extremity affect political polarization, but importance has a unique effect on political deliberations (Wojcieszak, 2012).

Attitude certainty is the sense of conviction with which one holds an attitude (Abelson, 1988), and is one of the most researched dimensions of attitude strength in the political science literature (Miller and Peterson, 2004). Political scientists such as Alvarez (1998) have attempted to develop measures of attitude certainty. It is typically measured by asking the person how confident they are of their attitudes, or how sure they are of their attitude's validity, accuracy, or correctness through meta-attitudinal measures (Gross, Holtz, & Miller, 1995). Some established antecedents of attitude certainty are direct experience (Fazio & Zanna, 1978), repetition and attitude accessibility (Holland, Verplanken, & Van Knippenberg, 2003), subjective ease of retrieval (Haddock, Rothman, Reber, & Scwharz, 1999), and social consensus (Visser & Mirabile, 2004). Attitude-behavior correspondence (Krishnan & Smith, 1998), resistance to counter arguments (Krosnick & Abelson, 1992), attitude persistence over time (Bassili, 1996), and information processing (Tiedens & Linton, 2001) are in turn bolstered by attitude certainty. A recent conceptualization in social psychology posits two related, but conceptually and statistically distinct factors of attitude certainty (Petrocelli, Tormala, & Rucker, 2007).

Petrocelli and colleagues (2007) provided evidence for two factors of attitude certainty: attitude correctness and attitude clarity. Being certain about an attitude may reveal whether one is sure that their attitude is valid or justified (attitude correctness), or that one feels that they know what their true attitude on the topic is (attitude clarity). For instance, an individual may be clear of what their true attitude towards abortion is, but not be as confident in its correctness when in a social environment that holds contrasting views. To test out this two-factor model, seven items generated to either probe clarity or correctness (e.g., "How certain are you that you

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know what your true attitude on this topic really is?," and "To what extent do you think other people should have the same attitude as you on this issue?") were subject to an exploratory factor analysis across two independent samples to see whether a one or two factor solution was a better fit. In both samples, clarity and correctness were significantly correlated ($r = .55$ in sample 1, and $r = .44$ in sample 2) but analyses suggested that the two-factor solution was a better fit for the data, and both sets of items demonstrated high internal consistency. Subsequent experiments demonstrated that these two factors have unique predictors with repetition affecting clarity and social consensus affecting correctness. Both factors also predicted a global measure of attitude certainty.

More recent studies by Cheatham and Tormala (2015) and Rios, Demarree, and Statzer (2014) demonstrated the unique effects of the two factors in attitudinal advocacy and conflict management, respectively. Rios and colleagues (2014), through multiple studies, demonstrated the negative effect attitude correctness can have on interpersonal interactions. In dealing with a party of differing opinion those individuals who had high attitude correctness used competitive strategies of asserting their own opinion and trying to win the argument to resolve it. Attitude clarity on the other hand was related to learning about the other group. In Cheatham and Tormala's study (2015), attitude correctness but not attitude clarity was related to people's intentions to persuade other individuals of their own attitudes. Both attitude clarity and attitude correctness were related to sharing intentions without trying to be persuasive. With attitude certainty being an important factor for political research and its dimensions having consequences for intergroup conflict, investigating these dimensions in political intergroup situations is an important step for research investigating the potential importance of attitude certainty dimensions for political groups.

Liberalism and Conservativism are the two dominant political ideologies in American politics. Political ideologies have been defined as an interrelated set of moral and political attitudes that motivate, organize, and give meaning to political behavior, and are typically shared with an identifiable group (Jost, 2006; Tedin, 1987). The most meaningful and enduring differences between ideologies concern two dimensions: attitudes towards inequality and attitudes toward social change versus tradition (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a, 2003b). Conservatives generally consider people inherently unequal and are in favor of tradition, order, and authority. Liberals on the other hand are more equalitarian and believe social change brings about improvement (Erikson, Luttbeg, & Teddin, 1988). Liberals typically identify as Democrats, and Conservatives as Republicans (Angus, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). Abortion rights, same-sex marriage, and affirmative action are examples of policies that these opposing political groups have differing attitudes on (Brewer & Wilcox, 2005; Chambers, Baron, & Inman, 2006; Noelle-Neumann, 1998).

These differences in political attitudes and ideologies manifest themselves and lead to conflict in face-to-face discussions with friends and acquaintances, protests and counter-protests and social media posts and comments. Political research has often applied social identity theory to its studies as it addresses problems of interest such as intergroup conflict (Huddy, 2001). Predictions generated from social identity theory are expected by some researchers to be readily applicable to political identities because of their collective as opposed to individualistic base for social identity (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995). The main hypothesis of social identity theory states "pressures to evaluate one's own group positively through ingroup / outgroup comparisons lead social groups to attempt to differentiate themselves from each other" (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). When intergroup comparisons are salient, in-group bias occurs and the out-group

is evaluated negatively (McGarty, 2001). Intergroup comparisons in politics are stressed in conflict over issues such as women's rights, and attitudes play a central role in the handling of these disagreements (De Dreu & Van Knippenberg, 2005).

One of the dimensions of attitude certainty, correctness, may compound a negative evaluation of the out-group in disagreements, because an individual with high attitude correctness believes their own attitude is superior to others' (Petrocelli et al., 2007). Kenworthy and Miller (2002) put forth a possible source for why individuals might feel superior. When individuals evaluate in-group or out-group attitudes their like or dislike is attributed to either internal or external sources. Internal attributions can be divided into rational or emotional. An attitude position based on rationality is viewed as the most desirable, and due to bias, in-group attitudes are thought of as more rational than out-group attitudes. These rationality attributions made about out-group positions also factor in to attitudes held towards political out-groups (Popan, Kenworthy, Frame, Lyons, & Snuggs, 2010). When an individual strongly believes that their attitude is correct and that others should feel the way they do, they should attribute their own stance to rationality more intensely. An opposing party may not be deemed rational because if they were, they would hold the "correct" attitudes. Therefore, attitude correctness may have an effect on both attributions of rationality and evaluations of an out-group.

Attitude clarity on the other hand does not appear to concern intergroup comparisons. The traditional measure of attitude correctness asks the respondent to "think of all possible attitudes" and about "other people," but attitude clarity only concerns the respondent's "true thoughts and feelings" (Petrocelli et al., 2007). This conception of attitude clarity should then not affect negative evaluations of an out-group. This is not to say that attitude clarity has no relationship with social groups whatsoever. Certainty in what an individual's own true beliefs are

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should make it easier to identify with a group that reflects their attitudes. If an individual truly knows their feelings toward politics then they will want to associate with those who feel the same. Individuals have a core motivation to identify with social groups out of a need to reduce self-uncertainty according to uncertainty identity theory, an extension of social identity theory (Hogg, 2000). Indeed, attitude certainty has been demonstrated to affect self-certainty (Clarkson, Tormala, DeSensi, & Wheeler, 2008).

Attitude certainty predicts self-certainty when the attitudes in question are important to the self-concept. Attitudes towards issues like abortion rights can constitute a major basis of a given social identity (Kenworthy & Miller, 2002). In an experimental test of the effects of attitude certainty on self-certainty, Clarkson and colleagues (2008) had undergraduates complete an online survey of their attitude towards gun control and how important this issue was to their core values and beliefs. To test attitude certainty, participants were randomly assigned to either a condition where they reported their attitude towards gun control over multiple items, which increased certainty, or only once. The students also reported their desire for feedback from a fake personality test included in the survey. This was the assessment of self-certainty, as those who are uncertain of "who they are" should express a desire to learn more about their characteristics (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Desire for feedback was significantly lower (i.e., participants were higher in self-certainty) for individuals who repeatedly expressed their attitude compared to those who did so only once, if gun control was central to their core values.

A second study by Clarkson and colleagues (2008) manipulated attitude certainty with social consensus, and its effect on a measure of self-doubt instead of self-certainty obtained similar results. This study had participants report their attitudes toward capital punishment, freedom of expression, and affirmative action. Afterwards, participants were told the attitude

survey had been administered to approximately 2,100 fellow students, and depending on whether they were randomly assigned to a high or low consensus condition were told that their attitude profile matched approximately 89% of students surveyed or 11%. An eight-item measure of self-doubt was then completed. Finally, participants reported group identification with the student body over nine items. Only among the participants who identified with the consensus group did attitude certainty affect self-certainty. These two studies by Clarkson and colleagues (2008) illustrate attitude certainty is an important variable in studying self-certainty and related constructs. The more certain an individual is of their true attitudes toward the policy issues addressed in this study the more they should identify with the corresponding ideology reflecting those views in order to reduce self-uncertainty. Attitude clarity will be expected to have a stronger relationship with political group identification than attitude correctness because clarity involves knowing aspects of the self, while correctness is a more evaluative meta-attitudinal cognition.

Attitude certainty has been a topic of interest in political science and self-certainty research, and its dimensions impact interpersonal conflict in unique ways (Rios et al., 2014). Conflict between political ideologies is tense enough that discussion of political issues is often discouraged in public settings. It is considered rude to ask someone about his or her political beliefs. However, these ideological conflicts do happen and it serves to learn what exacerbates them and what bolsters identity with political ideologies. Using social identity and attribution theory this study looks to synthesize different threads of research that are seemingly related but have not been investigated together. I test three hypotheses: First, attitude correctness will be a better predictor of attitudes toward the political out-group than will attitude clarity. Second, attitude clarity will be a better predictor of political group identity strength than will attitude

correctness. Third, attitude correctness will also be a stronger predictor of rationality attribution towards the outgroup than attitude clarity. Results may further expand the scope and applicability of attitude certainty studies in political psychology using a salient intergroup dimension. To the author's knowledge, exploration of the underlying dimensions of attitude certainty in this context will be the first of its kind.

CHAPTER II

METHODLOGY AND FINDINGS

Methods

Participants and Design

Participants for this study consisted of a convenience sample of 389 students from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley enrolled in psychology courses. They were compensated for their participation with course credit and could participate as part of a course requirement or for extra-credit. This study was cross-sectional and correlational in design. Participants could complete the survey in any setting as long as they had access to the appropriate web site assigning credit. After attention check items and limiting analyses to those identifying as either Republican or Democrat, 280 participants ($M_{age} =$ 20.3, $SD_{age} = 2.99$) remained.

Measures

Demographic Survey. Participants were first asked to complete basic demographics concerning age, gender, and ethnicity. About 93% of the sample identified as Hispanic or Latino and 76% as women. Next, participants reported whether they voted during the 2016 General Election. They were then asked "Generally speaking, do you usually consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?" as derived from the American National Election Studies 2016 Pilot Study. Approximately 76% of the sample identified as Democrats.

Political Party Strength. Respondents were then asked to complete a 9-item scale adapted from Poteat and Mereish (2012) that measured identity strength with the political party

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they identified with. This scale consisted of such items as, "How certain are you of your identification as a Democrat/Republican?"; "How important is your Democrat/Republican identity to you personally?" and "How closely do you pay attention to stories about Democrats and Republicans in the news?" Response items ranged from 1 = extremely important to 5 = not important at all. Appropriate items were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated a stronger identity with the party. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient (.93) indicated a highly reliable instrument.

Attitudes Certainty Dimensions. Next, participants were presented with a statement in favor of or against one of six domestic policy issues in randomized order (same sex marriage, abortion rights, women's equality, a government insurance plan, federal department budget cuts, and aid to the poor). After reporting their attitude towards it on a 9-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly against* to 9 =*strongly in favor*, participants were asked of their attitude clarity and attitude correctness concerning that one issue. The measure was adapted from Petroceilli et al. (2007). Responses ranged from *1 = not at all* to *9 = very much*. The attitude clarity scale consisted of four items, two examples of which are: "How certain are you that you know what your true attitude on this issue really is?" and "To what extent is your true attitude toward this issue clear in your mind?" The attitude correctness scale consisted of three: How certain are you that of all the possible attitudes one might have toward this issue, your attitude reflects the right way to think and feel about the issue?" "To what extent do you think other people should have the same attitude as you on this issue?" and "How certain are you that your attitude toward this issue is the correct attitude to have?" No items needed to be reverse coded. Items were summed across issues to leave four items of attitude correctness and three attitude correctness to reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha for both attitude clarity (.98) and correctness (.93) scales

were exceptional. Following this, attitudes and rationalization attribution towards the political outgroup were presented in a random order.

Attribution of Rationality for Outgroup Attitudes. Participants were asked to indicate via an eight-item measure to what degree they attribute rationality to the political outgroup's general thought process. Examples of items are "They do not seem to have put much thought or deliberation into their views" and "They do not expose themselves to opposing arguments." Participants responded on seven point scales (0 = *does not apply* at all, 6 = *applies very much*) to rate their agreement with the statement. Appropriate items were reverse coded and Cronbach's reliability coefficient indicated an adequate value of .81.

Attitudes towards Political Party Outgroup. Attitudes towards the political outgroup were assessed by six 7-point bipolar scales adapted from Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp (1997). Participants were asked to indicate how they feel about the political outgroup in terms of friendly-hostility, trust-suspiciousness, negative-positive, contempt-respect, admiration-disgust, and warm-coldness. Items were reverse coded to indicate higher scores as having more favorable attitudes. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .90.

Attention Check Items. Participants additionally encountered three instructed response items throughout the survey, serving as attention check items. These were encountered in attitude certainty items concerning a government health insurance plan and rationalization attribution measures. These items were 7-point bipolar scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Approximately 11% of the sample failed to respond to two out three attention check items and thus removed from the study.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to the focal hypothesis tests, descriptive statistics and correlations were examined. Table 1 provides means, standard deviations, and correlations for the variables used. Histograms were examined for all variables involved in the study's hypotheses and each variable was also subject to a Kolmogrov-Smirnov test for normality. Three of the four scales: attitude correctness, $D(249) = .085$, $p < .001$, attitude clarity, $D(249) = .119$, $p < .001$, and attitudes toward the outgroup, $D(249) = .107$, $p < .001$, were found to be significantly skewed. Thus, all further analyses were based on a nonparametric bootstrapping approach.

Table 1
Correlations and Descriptives ($N = 248$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Attitude Clarity	--	.75***	-.23***	.08	-.16*	.10	.05	.05
2. Attitude Correctness		--	-.24***	.07	-.17**	.07	.08	.08
3. Political Outgroup Attitudes			--	-.08	.47***	-.18**	-.21**	-.29**
4. Political Party Identity Strength				--	-.06	.08	-.04	-.07
5. Rationality Attribution toward Outgroup					--	-.11	.06	-.04
6. Age						--	.09	-.01
7. Gender							--	.10
8. Political Party								--
M	183.87	129.61	19.21	29.68	28.29	20.36	0.53	0.52
SD	27.38	23.64	6.53	7.96	8.25	3.12	0.84	0.85

Note. For Political Party variable, Democrat is coded 1 and Republican -1. For Gender variable, female is coded 1 and male -1.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Pearson's correlations between the variables indicated that attitude clarity and attitude correctness had a strong positive correlation, $r(313) = .735$, $p < .001$. Both attitude clarity, $r(260) = -.227$, $p<.001$, and attitude correctness, $r(262) = -.252$, $p < .001$, had weak negative correlations with attitudes towards the outgroup. Identity strength was not correlated with attitude clarity, $r(261) = .083$, $p > .10$, attitude correctness, $r(263) = .077$, $p > .10$, or attitudes towards the outgroup, $r(273) = -.081$, $p > .10$. This last finding fails to provide preliminary

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support for the prediction that attitude clarity would be a better predictor than attitude correctness regarding political party identity strength.

Main Hypotheses

Next, multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the three main hypotheses of the study. All three models used attitude clarity and attitude correctness as predictors as shown in Table 2. The first model's outcome variable was attitudes toward the political outgroup. The results showed that the model accounted for a significant amount of variance regarding attitudes toward the political outgroup $F(2,252) = 8.41$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .063$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = .056$. However, neither regression coefficient for attitude correctness, $b = -.16$, $p = .084$, 95%CI [-.320, .043], or attitude clarity, $b = -.12$, $p = .168$, 95%CI [-.303, .055], was significant. The second regression model predicted political party identity strength from attitude clarity and attitude correctness. This model did not account for a significant amount of variance regarding political party identity strength, $F(2,249) = .752$, $p = .47$, $R^2 = .006$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = -.002$. The third regression model analysis attempted to predict attributions of rationality for the political outgroup. This model was significant and accounted for approximately three percent of the variance in outgroup rationality attribution, $F(2,250) = 4.42$, $p = .013$ $R^2 = .034$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = .026$. When analyzing bootstraps for

coefficients neither predictor was significant. All three models failed to differentiate between

attitude clarity and attitude correctness as predictors.

Table 2
Predictors of Political Outgroup Attitudes, Political Party Identity Strength, and Rationality Attribution for Political Outgroup

Variable	Outgroup Attitudes ($N = 252$)			Identity Strength ($N = 252$)			Rationality Attribution (N = 252)		
	b	*SE b*	95% CI of *b*	*b*	*SE b*	95% CI of b	*b*	*SE b*	95% CI of *b*
Constant	-0.04	0.06	[-.153, .085]	0.02	0.06	[-.103, .147]	-0.03	0.06	[-.158, .099]
Attitude Clarity	-0.12	0.08	[-.303, .055]	0.05	0.10	[-.139, .241]	-0.07	0.11	[-.310, .138]
Attitude Correctness	-0.16	0.09	[-.320, .043]	0.03	0.10	[-.157, .221]	-0.13	0.13	[-.377, .142]
R^2	.06			.01			.03		
F	8.41***			.75			4.42*		

Note. CI = confidence interval. Results based on 1000 bootstrap samples
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

Post-Hoc Analyses

Due to none of the study's hypotheses being met, an exploratory analysis was carried out

on the data. Three different approaches were undertaken. First off, due to the lack of

differentiation between attitude correctness and attitude clarity variables, as well as the strong

positive correlation between them, an exploratory factor analysis of these scales' items was run

to assess factor loadings and whether a one or two factor construct of attitude certainty

adequately represents the data. Second, control variables correlated with outcome variables as

shown in Table 1, were introduced to the models tested previously and then re-examined. These

variables were age, gender, and political party. Third, the previous study using Petrocelli's et al.

(2007) measurements of attitude certainty dimensions kept these item's focus on a single issue.

This study's construct of attitude correctness and attitude clarity is made up of summed items

across six political issues. Though the reliability for both scales as constructed are adequate

(above .90) a different approach may yield more reliable data. Political identities are thought to

at least vary across two dimensions, economic/fiscal attitudes and social attitudes (Feldman &

Johnston, 2014). With this in mind, scales for attitude correctness (social), attitude clarity

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(social), attitude correctness (economic), and attitude clarity (economic) were created, and the main hypotheses re-examined with these scales as the predictors.

Exploratory Factor Analysis and Parallel Analysis. Seven items measuring attitude clarity and attitude correctness on six political issues were to be factor analyzed using principal axis factoring with oblique (direct oblimin) rotation. The sample was adequate for the analysis as indicated by The Kaiser-Meyer–Olkin measure and Barlett's Test of Sphericity. An initial principal component analysis suggested a one-factor solution, with only one eigenvalue above Kaiser's significance criteria of one. The scree plot also had a considerable drop from factor 1 to 2 and leveled off upon further values. Upon conducting the two-factor extraction with oblique rotation, the second factor only accounted for about 9% of the variance. In support of a two-factor solution, the pattern matrix as shown in Table 3 suggests all scale items, except for the first correctness item, had a unique relationship only with their appropriate factor. To aid in determining the appropriate amount of factors to retain, a parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) was run. As indicated by Table 4, comparisons of principle component eigenvalues to parallel analysis eigenvalues show a one factor solution was best.

Table 3
Pattern Matrix

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Clarity 1	.947	.022
Clarity 2	1.003	-.038
Clarity 3	.947	.034
Clarity 4	.968	.013
Correctness 1	.326	.665
Correctness 2	.021	.828
Correctness 3	-.078	1.032

Note. N = 256
Note. Extraction method: Principal Axis Factoring, Rotation method: Oblimin

Table 4
Parallel Analysis

Component	Raw Data Eigenvalue	Random Data Eigenvalue
1	5.747	1.334
2	0.779	1.197
3	0.213	1.110
4	0.100	1.034
5	0.069	0.970
6	0.061	0.909
7	0.031	0.841

Note. 1000 random data sets.

Control Variables. When re-examining the main hypothesized models with control variables, two out of three were significant as shown in TABLE 5. In the model predicting outgroup attitudes, the predictor variables accounted for about 19 percent of the variance, $F(5,246) = 11.30$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .187$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = .170$. The predictors accounted for about five percent when the outcome variable was rationality attribution for the political outgroup, $F(5,246) = 2.54$, $p = .029$, $R^2 = .049$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = .03$. Once again, attitude certainty dimensions failed to differentiate in regards to predicting outgroup attitudes, rationality attribution, and identity strength. For the model predicting outgroup attitudes, there was unique contribution from all

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three control variables. For the model predicting rationality attribution, age appeared to trend towards significance, $b = -.097$, $p = .081$, 95%CI [-.226, .006].

Table 5
Predictors of Political Outgroup Attitudes, Political Party Identity Strength, and Attribution of Reationaility for Outgroup Attitudes

Variable	Outgroup Attitudes ($N = 251$)			Identity Strength ($N = 252$)			Rationality Attribution (N = 252)		
	b	SE b	95% CI of b	b	SE b	95% CI of b	b	SE b	95% CI of b
Constant	0.23	0.08	[.072. .401]	0.10	0.10	[-.081, .292]	-0.06	0.08	[-.224, .111]
Attitude Clarity	-0.11	0.08	[-.284, .048]	-0.04	0.09	[-.137, .219]	-0.06	0.11	[-.263, .153]
Attitude Correctness	0.12	0.09	[-.277, .067]	0.04	0.09	[-.118, .231]	-0.13	0.13	[-.388, .134]
Age	-0.15*	0.07	[-.288, -.035]	0.07	0.07	[-.078, .226]	-0.10^	0.06	[-.221, -.006]
Gender	-0.19**	0.07	[-.326, -.060]	-0.05	0.08	[-.217, .106]	0.10	0.07	[-.057, .236]
Political Party	-0.31**	0.08	[-.471, -.163]	-0.09	0.08	[-.256, .063]	-0.04	0.07	[-.169, .107]
R^2	.19			.02			.05		
F	11.30***			.93			2.54*		

Note. CI = confidence interval. Results based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Note. Female coded as 1 and Male -1 for Gender Variable, Democrat coded as 1 and Republican -1 for Political Party Variable

^$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$

Social and Economic Attitudes. In creating new scales of attitude correctness and attitude clarity based on social and economic attitudes, a reliability check was conducted and all four scales had a Cronbach's Alpha above .90 and were thus reliable. Three multiple linear regression analyses were run as shown in Table 6. With previous analyses showing the unique contribution of the control variables in predicting outgroup attitudes, they were included for these analyses as well. The results showed that only the model predicting outgroup attitudes was significant, $F(7,244) = 9.48$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .214$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .191$. In this model, confidence intervals for all three control variables did not include zero and were thus significant. Attitude

clarity concerning social issues was the only attitude certainty dimension that had a unique

contribution to the model, $b = -.32$, p = .009, 95%CI = [-.548, -.103].

Table 6

Predictors of Political Outgroup Attitudes, Political Party Identity Strength, and Attribution of Reationaility for Outgroup Attitudes

Variable	Outgroup Attitudes ($N = 251$)			Identity Strength ($N = 252$)			Rationality Attribution (N = 252)		
	b	SE b	95% CI of b	b	SE b	95% CI of b	b	SE b	95% CI of b
Constant	0.21	0.08	[.043. .375]	0.10	0.10	[-.097, .297]	-0.06	0.08	[-.215, .099]
Attitude Clarity (S)	-0.32**	0.12	[-.548, -.103]	-0.04	0.13	[-.287, .204]	-0.10	0.15	[-.392, .196]
Attitude Correctness (S)	0.05	0.11	[-.170, .282]	0.03	0.13	[-.227, .276]	-0.01	0.17	[-.333, .331]
Attitude Clarity (E)	0.22	0.12	[-.064, .502]	0.08	0.13	[-.172, .358]	0.04	0.18	[-.313, .400]
Atitude Correctness (E)	-0.21	0,14	[-.500, .077]	0.01	0.14	[-.252, .280]	-0.14	0.19	[-.534, .221]
Age	-0.17**	0.07	[-.315, -.061]	0.06	0.07	[-.070, .216]	-0.10^	0.06	[-.250, -.003]
Gender	-0.14*	0.07	[-.281, -.002]	-0.04	0.08	[-.199, .125]	0.10	0.08	[-.049, .252]
Political Party	-0.33**	0.07	[-.466, -.179]	-0.09	0.08	[-.259, .061]	-0.05	0.07	[-.196, .102]
R^2	.21			.02			.05		
F	9.48***			.72			1.85		

Note. CI = confidence interval. Results based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Note. Female coded as 1 and Male -1 for Gender Variable, Democrat coded as 1 and Republican -1 for Political Party Variable

*^p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001*

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The general objective of this study was to differentiate between attitude certainty dimensions in predicting political outgroup attitudes, rationalization attribution, and identity strength. Attitude correctness was hypothesized to be a better predictor of outgroup attitudes and rationalization attribution, and attitude clarity would better predict political party identity strength. Results showed that neither attitude certainty dimension had unique predictive power for any of the outcomes. All hypotheses put forth in this study were not supported. Attitude certainty dimensions failed to differentiate in their relationships with all variables involved. All correlations involving attitude clarity and attitude correctness were the same strength and direction, and the dimensions themselves were strongly correlated. An exploratory factor and parallel analysis overall suggested a one factor solution. This is all support for treating attitude certainty as a univariate construct, at least when concerning multiple political attitudes.

When introducing demographic variables into the hypothesized models, age, gender, and political party were all important predictors for political outgroup attitudes. Being older, a Democrat, and female predicted less favorable attitudes for the opposing political party. The sample being overwhelmingly Democrat and female likely contributed to this finding. Identity strength, however, did not have a relationship with any variable in the study, and the models using rationalization attribution as an outcome explained little of the variance. Attitude certainty

dimensions appear to be of no consequence to political party identity strength and rationalization attributions. When attempting to predict these variables in future studies it may be best to focus on other factors of attitude strength or treat attitude certainty as a univariate construct.

Because of differences in methodology with previous attitude certainty dimension studies, further post hoc exploratory analyses re-examined the hypotheses differentiating between social and economic attitudes. Items regarding aid to poor, cuts to health and education departments, and a government health insurance plan were summed to create attitude certainty dimension scales regarding federal spending issues. All other attitude items addressed in the study (same sex marriage, abortion, women's roles) fell under the social issues scale counterpart. It was using these constructs of attitude certainty dimensions that showed a unique effect when re-examining models predicting outgroup attitudes and lent support to a two factor construct of attitude certainty.

Attitude clarity concerning social issues, but not attitude correctness, was a significant predictor of political outgroup attitudes, even when controlling for demographic variables. Being certain of your true thoughts and feelings regarding abortion, same sex marriage, and women's roles led to less favorable attitudes of the political outgroup. Attitude correctness was hypothesized to be the better predictor of outgroup attitudes, having previously been associated with a competitive conflict style (Rios et al., 2014). This was not the case in this study. Although both dimensions of certainty for economic attitudes trended toward significance, correctness concerning social issues was clearly not important. Rios and colleagues' 2014 study of certainty dimensions and conflict style, concerned junk food taxes, SUV vandalism, and airline seating regulations. These differences in attitudes is likely the reason why attitude certainty dimensions differed in importance across studies. Knowing your true attitudes towards social issues, but not

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whether they are correct or not, leads to a less favorable opinion of the opposing political party. The differing moral foundations of Democrats and Republicans may be the reason being correct about these issues is not important, but being clear is.

Democrats tend to weigh social justice more-so than law and tradition in importance, while Republicans do the opposite (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Republicans may often cite the Bible when articulating opposition to same sex relationships and abortion, while Democrats speak to standards of equality. It's possible opposing parties understand this fundamental difference, and the idea of correctness itself is thought of as relative concerning the intergroup relationship. The participant may believe they have the correct attitude toward abortion, but this is no different from what an opposing political party member would feel, and thus not a strong reason to dislike them. Knowing where you stand regarding social equality attitudes, however, could be indicative of among other things, direct experiences concerning these issues, an extensive knowledge of the subject, or of being in an environment with similar attitudes. These factors may reinforce clarity and bolster dislike of groups that don't hold similar opinions even if they may not be correct to others.

Ideas for Future Research

Future research attempting to differentiate between attitude certainty dimensions should consider the coherence of the attitudes addressed. Constructs of attitude clarity and correctness did not differentiate when multiple political attitudes were evaluated as one. How parsimonious attitudes must be in order to discern between certainty dimensions can be investigated in future studies. If parsimony is not an issue at all and these factors are distinct in some circumstances but not in others, why might that be? A wide range of attitudes with corresponding certainty dimension items need to be factor analyzed separately to better understand and arguably validate

the two factor structure of certainty. The methodology in addressing multiple attitudes is also deserving of exploration. How might the clarity and correctness of groups of attitudes best be measured as they were in this study? Would items asking about each individual attitude or items asking the participant to think of the attitudes in total be more valid? Attitude certainty dimension studies have used multiple types of measures, so in considering methodology, future researchers should consider sticking close to the Petrocelli et al. (2007) instrument or variations.

The relationship between attitude certainty and political outgroup attitudes deserve further study as well. This study asked Republicans to evaluate Democrats and vice versa. Evaluations of different political parties or identities may yield different results. Replicating the unique effects of attitude clarity on political outgroup attitudes would lend further credibility to the two factor structure of certainty. To this author's knowledge there have been no studies where attitude certainty dimensions and other factors of attitude strength have been examined as covariates. With clarity of social quality attitudes being a significant predictor of political outgroup evaluations even in the presence of demographic control variables, other factors of attitude strength such as attitude importance need to be considered when considering the true impact of clarity on political attitudes.

Limitations

There are limitations to discuss in addition to the methodology as previously expressed. First, all study participants were Hispanic, while previous studies of attitude certainty dimensions had predominantly Caucasian samples. Differences in how these issues resonate for a minority sample should be considered when interpreting results. Hispanics have strong ties with religiosity. Fatigue due to repeated exposure to the attitude certainty dimension items over multiple issues is feasible, but attention check items are expected to account for this effect.

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Attitudes chosen for the study may also not encompass the full breadth of social and economic attitudes, so interpretation of results should be done so carefully. This study was also correlational in design.

Concluding Remarks

Attitude certainty dimensions failed to differentiate in the initial analyses not supporting the idea of a two factor structure of certainty. The unique contribution of attitude clarity on political outgroup attitudes was found only in exploratory post hoc analyses by separating economic attitudes from those concerning social equality. The scope of the attitudes in question should then be of concern for future certainty researchers. The two factor structure of certainty needs replication under different attitudes and samples. This study suggested a one factor structure of certainty to be more applicable to young college age Hispanics concerning six political issues in total. How might that structure hold up under a different ethnic group concerning foreign policy attitudes? The exploratory finding of clarity but not the correctness of social equality attitudes affecting political outgroup attitudes however is important if replicable. In a political culture described by some researchers as post truth (Suiter, 2016), data reflecting this irrelevance of correctness in feelings toward a political party deserves further study. With attitude certainty dimension literature not being extensive, this study hopes to have contributed to new avenues of research and questions to be addressed in the future.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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