

Antidotes to Uncertainty

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INTRODUCTION

Two key social psychology theories of uncertainty management

• Kees Van den Bos's **Uncertainty Management Model (UMM)** argues that when individuals feel uncertain, they use *fairness judgments* to cope with their uncertainty

• Michael Hogg's **Uncertainty-Identity Theory (UIT)** argues that when individuals feel uncertain, they *identify with groups* to manage their uncertainty

RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this literature review was to effectively analyze UMM and UIT and find relevant research that pushes the boundaries of both models and highlights key connections between the two.

Key Similarity:

Both models rely on the assumption that feelings of uncertainty about one's perceptions, beliefs and attitudes are threatening

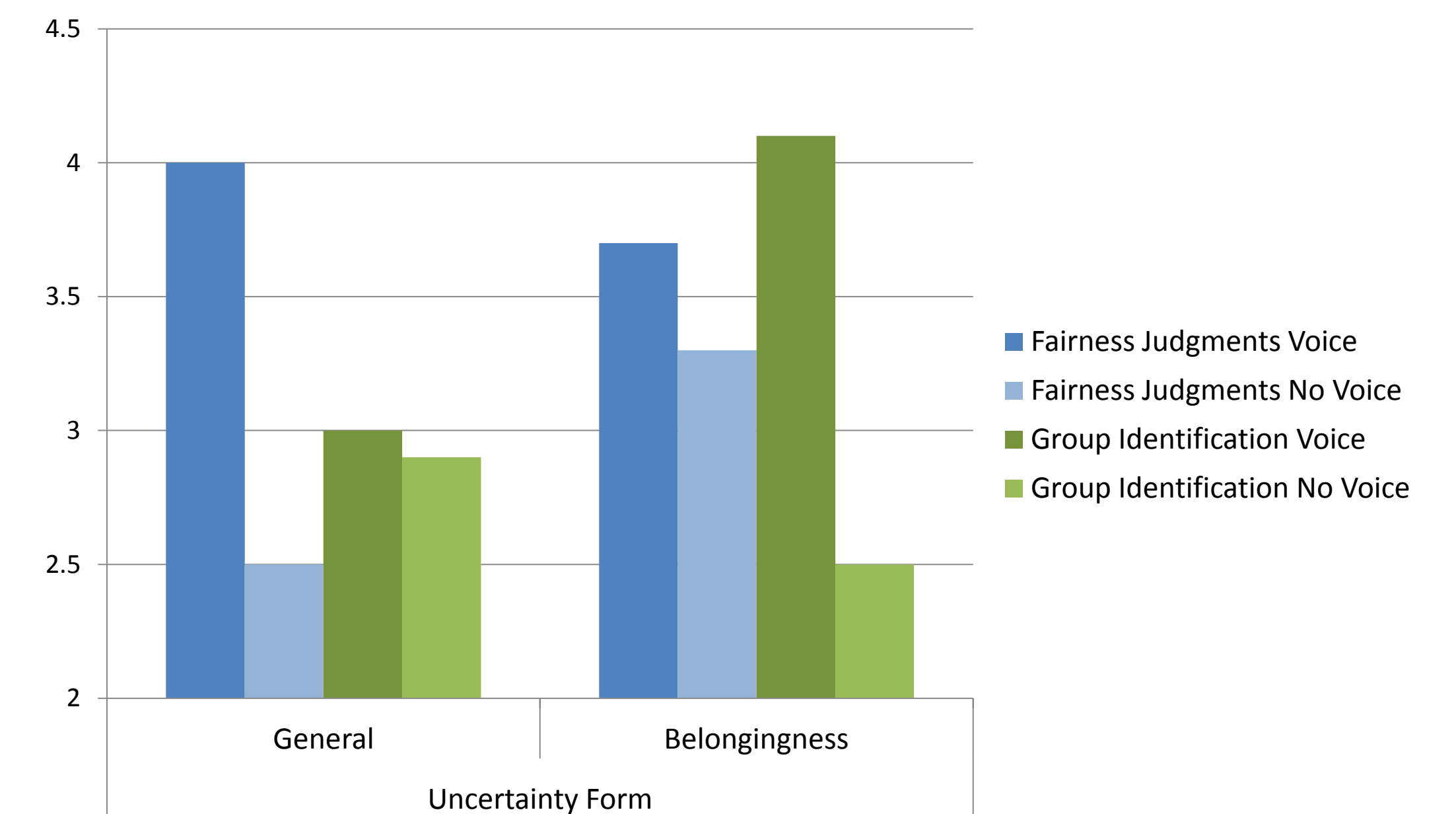
Key Differences:

• **UMM** takes a more cognitive approach to managing uncertainty, whereby fairness communicates that the world is an ordered, predictable and reliable place

• **UIT** focuses on managing uncertainty via identification with a group, thereby acquiring a validated social identity and prescriptions for normative, shared attitudes and actions

TYPES OF UNCERTAINTY AND IMPLICATIONS

Research conducted by D. Cremer, Brebels and Sedikides, has found that under conditions of general uncertainty individuals use fairness judgments to manage uncertainty, while under conditions of belongingness uncertainty individuals use group identification.



© De Cremer, D., Brebels, L., & Sedikides, C. (2008)

CONCLUSIONS

While both models are clearly effective in explaining uncertainty management, their effects depend on context.

The De Cremer et al. article demonstrates that justice and Social Identity Theory based theories of uncertainty management are distinct. However, in Hogg's initial work his claim was that people are attracted to groups that are highly cohesive and entitative *because* they reduce uncertainty through the prescription of norms for behavior and attitudes.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

We propose a more direct comparison of UMM and UIT by manipulating General Uncertainty and Moral Uncertainty, in other words uncertainty about the right or wrong thing to do in a moral dilemma. We expect to find a similar pattern of results as De Cremer et al., specifically that justice judgments will be more important under General Uncertainty and Group Identification will be more important under conditions of Moral Uncertainty.

“Although our intellect always longs for clarity and certainty, our nature often finds uncertainty fascinating” - Carl Von Clausewitz

“So what do we do? Anything. Something. So long as we just don't sit there..” - Lee Iacocca