

# Is Self-Uncertainty Associated with Established Affective and Emotional States?

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## Abstract

The purpose of the current work was to examine if self-uncertainty impacts the affective states of people. Participants ( $N_1=130$ ) in the first study were randomly assigned to one of four writing tasks (high/low self-uncertainty, fear, or disgust) and then completed the PANAS-X. Results from the first study indicated that there were significant differences between the emotion conditions and self-uncertainty conditions, and further significant differences between the high/low self-uncertainty conditions.

The second study ( $N_2=201$ ) focused on the affective states activated by self-uncertainty using the writing task prime and PANAS-X. Participants in the high self-uncertainty condition in both studies were lower in serenity and related emotions (i.e., at ease, calm, relaxed) compared to the low self-uncertainty condition.

## Introduction

- Uncertainty is aversive, motivating people to reduce the uncertainty.

- The drive to reduce self-uncertainty is especially motivating to identify with groups.

- However, uncertainty-identity theory does not explain *why* uncertainty leads to identification.

- We propose integrating research on emotions and affect with uncertainty-identity theory to explain why uncertainty leads to identification.

- The purpose of the current work was to examine if self-uncertainty impacts affect/emotions.

## Methods

### Study 1

- Participants ( $N_1=130$ ) were randomly assigned to one of four writing tasks (high/low self-uncertainty, fear, or disgust) and then completed the PANAS-X.

### Study 2

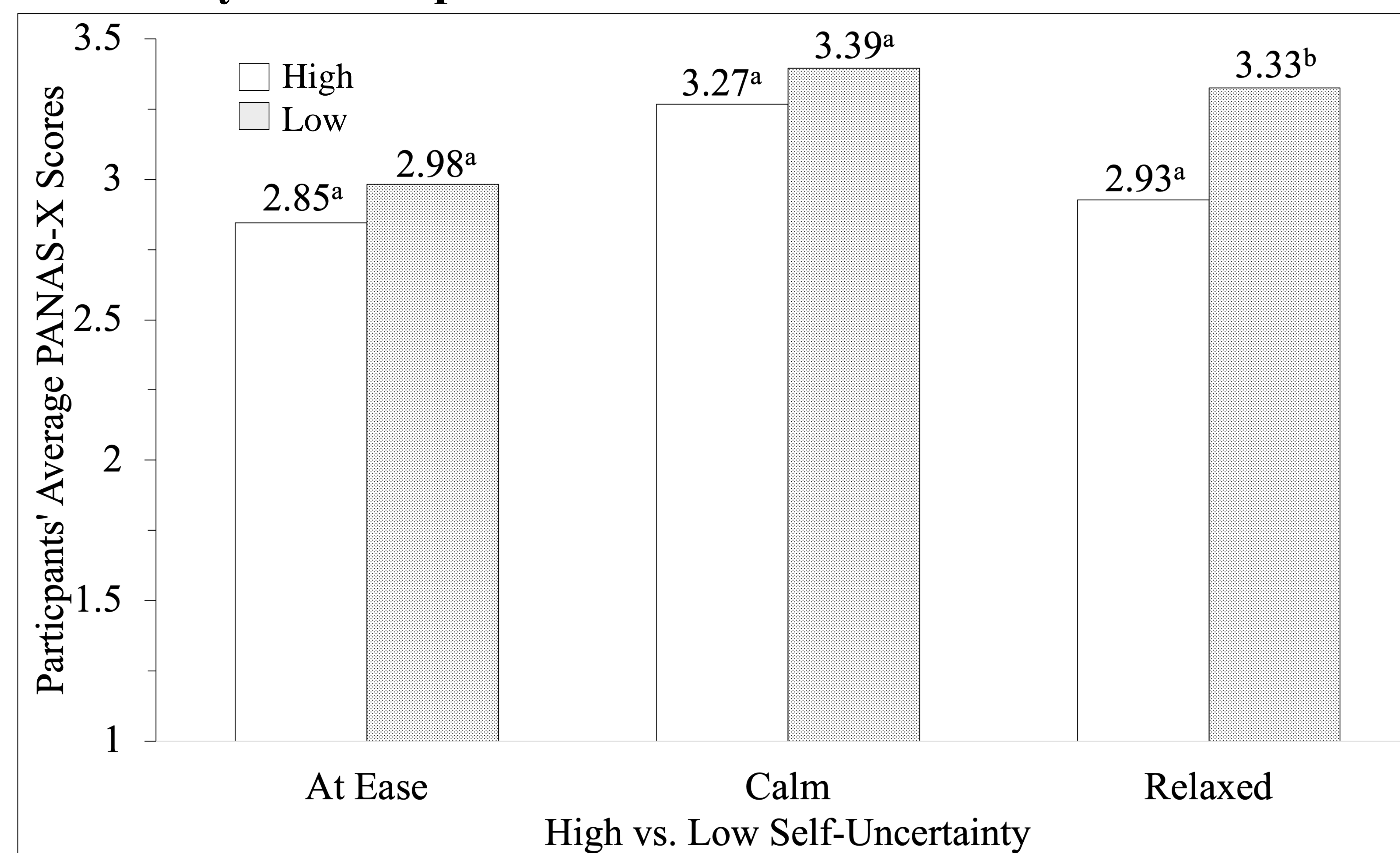
- Participants ( $N_2=201$ ) were randomly assigned to an high/low self-uncertainty writing task and then completed the serenity and self-assurance PANAS-X subscales.

## Study 1 Participants' Scores on Items from the PANAS-X

	Uncertainty	Certainty	Fear	Disgust
Serenity	8.81 (2.33) <sup>a</sup>	10.51 (2.46) <sup>b</sup>	9.92 (2.55) <sup>b,c</sup>	9.38 (2.65) <sup>a,c</sup>
At Ease	2.79 (1.02) <sup>a,b</sup>	3.19 (1.03) <sup>a,b</sup>	3.08 (1.08) <sup>a,b</sup>	2.70 (1.15) <sup>a</sup>
Calm	3.07 (0.92) <sup>a</sup>	3.72 (1.01) <sup>b</sup>	3.50 (0.80) <sup>b</sup>	3.46 (0.90) <sup>a,b</sup>
Relaxed	2.95 (1.01) <sup>a</sup>	3.60 (0.98) <sup>b</sup>	3.34 (1.05) <sup>a,b</sup>	3.22 (1.06) <sup>a,b</sup>

Note. Study 1: Participants' average scores on PANAS-X items and the serenity subscale with *SD* in parentheses. Conditions not sharing the same letter differ at  $p < .05$ .

## Study 2 Participants' Scores on Items from the PANAS-X



Note. Study 2: Participants' average scores on PANAS-X items from the serenity subscale. Conditions not sharing the same letter differ at  $p < .05$ . A between-groups ANOVA indicated that high self-uncertainty participants were significantly less relaxed than low self-uncertainty participants ( $F [1,199]=6.04, p=.015$ ).

## Results

### Study 1

- Participants in the high self-uncertainty condition were lower in serenity ( $M=8.81, M=10.52, p=.002$ ) compared to the low self-uncertainty condition.

- Within the serenity item composite participants in the high self-uncertainty conditions were significantly less calm ( $M=3.07, M=3.72, p=.001$ ) and less relaxed ( $M=2.95, M=3.61, p=.054$ ) compared to the low self-certainty condition.

### Study 2.

- Participants in the high self-uncertainty condition were less relaxed ( $M=2.93, M=3.33, F[1, 199]=6.04, p=.015$ ) than participants in the low self-uncertainty condition.

## Discussion

- Self-uncertainty was associated with a less relaxed, lower serenity, and less calm emotional state.

- Implications: These findings demonstrate an emotional effect associated with self-uncertainty, which suggests potential mechanisms for *why* self-uncertainty leads to group identification.

- Limitations: We only used the PANAS-X to measure affective states. We also did not measure identification.

- Future Directions: Identify further mechanisms linking self-uncertainty to group identification and measure affective states with multiple affective measures.

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