

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND UNIQUENESS SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Colleen Ashleigh Law

MA (Psychology)

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Magister Artium in Clinical Psychology at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus

Supervisor: Dr KFH Botha

Assistant Supervisor: Mrs M Larney

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Since your kindness

I spent my days

Searching for a hundred words

To say only two

I wanted them to be bigger

As big as you were

I wanted their brightness

To be worth a thousand pictures

If they were small

You might not notice them as much

And they might disappear into time

But I can't find a hundred as complete

So I will give you these

And hope their wings

Are strong enough to carry my charge

Thank you

SUMMARY

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND UNIQUENESS SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

(Key words: Psychological well-being, uniqueness seeking, consumers, and students)

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking behaviour. Early research in psychology has primarily followed a pathogenic approach, focusing on the way in which stressful life events predispose an individual to negative health outcomes. More recently a number of theorists and researchers have adopted a salutogenic approach, which refers to the origins of physical and mental health and explores the factors that assist individuals to maintain psychological and physical well-being in the face of stressful situations (Antonovsky, 1979 & 1987; Pallant & Lae, 2002). Uniqueness seeking is a relatively new construct that seems to be part of the repertoire of strengths an individual uses to improve psychological well-being. Theorists postulate that moderate needs for uniqueness are experienced more positively than extremely high or extremely low needs for uniqueness. (Lynn & Snyder, 2002 and Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

The study aims to determine the difference in psychological well-being in individuals with varying needs for uniqueness; to explore the perceptions and subjective experience of uniqueness seeking; and to explore the role uniqueness seeking plays in consumer behaviour. The psychometric properties of two scales measuring uniqueness will also be investigated, as they have not previously been used in a South African sample. To achieve these aims an availability sample of 187 students completed self-report measures of psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking behaviour namely, the Orientation to Life Scale (Antonovsky, 1987), the Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale (Lynn and Harris, 1997b) and the Desire for Unique Consumer Products Scale (Lynn and Harris, 1997a). Sixteen of these students participated in focus groups in order to explore

the participants' subjective experience of being unique. A further 13 participants took part in focus groups in order to explore the role uniqueness seeking plays in consumer behaviour.

The measures were found to be reliable in this particular group and the means and standard deviations calculated were comparable with those mentioned in literature. No direct relationship between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking was found, nor was it found that differences in psychological well-being exist between individuals with a moderate sense of uniqueness and individuals with a high or low sense of uniqueness. Individuals perceive uniqueness to be a quality that emerges naturally through the expression of the self and that actively seeking to be unique or not is rather due to a poor self-image. It was further found that individuals would go to some length to protect their sense of uniqueness, that most individuals preferred a sense of moderate uniqueness to either extremely high or extremely low sense of uniqueness, and that most individuals are satisfied with their level of uniqueness. Individuals described feeling happy and more confident when they perceived themselves to be unique. These individuals believe that the stage of life they are in and significant others play a role in determining the way in which uniqueness will have meaningful expression for them. Uniqueness seeking does not play as big a role in consumer behaviour as was expected, however, it does influence the consumption of consumer goods to a certain extent.

It is therefore concluded that uniqueness seeking influences psychological well-being indirectly by the relationship it has with self-image, self-identity, self-confidence, group identifications, and subjective happiness. These findings have implications for future research in that the need for a valid and reliable instrument measuring uniqueness for use in South African samples is highlighted. The findings further clarify the uniqueness seeking construct thus contributing to the literary database of constructs that play a role in psychological well-being.

OPSOMMING

(Sleutelwoorde: Psigologiese welstand, uniekheid, verbruikers en studente)

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die verhouding tussen psigologiese welstand en uniekheid te ondersoek. Vroeë navorsing in sielkunde het primêr 'n patogene benadering gevolg, waar die fokus is op hoe stresvolle lewensgebeurtenisse 'n individu vatbaar maak vir negatiewe gesondheidsgevolge. Latere navorsers het 'n salutogene benadering aangeneem, wat verwys na die oorsprong van fisiese en psigiese gesondheid. Hierdie benadering verken ook die faktore wat individue help om fisiese en psigiese gesondheid tydens stresvolle situasies te handhaaf (Antonovsky, 1979 & 1987; Pallant & Lae, 2002). Uniekheid is 'n relatiewe nuwe konstruksie wat dalk deel is van die repertoire sterktes wat 'n individu gebruik om psigologiese welstand te verbeter. Navorsers dui aan dat matige vlakke van uniekheid meer positief ervaar word as baie hoë of lae vlakke van uniekheid. (Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

Die studie poog om die verskille in psigologiese welstand tussen individue met matige vlakke van uniekheid en individue met baie hoë of lae vlakke van uniekheid, te ondersoek. Die studie poog ook om persepsies en subjektiewe ervaring van uniekheid, asook die rol wat uniekheid in verbruikersgedrag speel, te verken. Twee skale wat uniekheid meet word in hierdie studie vir die eerste keer in 'n Suid Afrikaanse steekproef gebruik en hulle psigometriese eienskappe is dus ook ondersoek. Om hierdie doelwitte te bereik het 'n beskikbaarheidssteekproef van 187 studente die Orientation to Life Scale (Antonovsky, 1987), die Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale (Lynn and Harris, 1997b) en die Desire for Unique Consumer Products Scale (Lynn and Harris, 1997a), voltooi. Sestien van hierdie studente het deelgeneem in fokusgroepe om persepsies en subjektiewe ervaring van uniekheid te verken. 'n Verdere 13 verbruikers het vrywillig deelgeneem in fokusgroepe om die rol wat uniekheid in verbruikersgedrag speel, te eksploreer.

Die betroubaarheid van die meetinstrumente was aanvaarbaar vir gebruik in hierdie groep en die rekenkundige gemiddeldes en standaard afwykings bereken, was vergelykbaar met dié vermeld

in die literatuur vir dieselfde indekse. Geen direkte verband is gevind tussen psigologiese welstand en uniekheid nie. Daar het ook geen verskil in psigologiese welstand tussen individue met 'n matige behoefte aan uniekheid en individue met 'n baie hoë of lae behoefte aan uniekheid, geblyk nie. Individue beskou uniekheid as 'n eienskap wat vanselfsprekend na vore tree deur uiting te gee aan die self. Dië individue beskou die daadwerklike strewe na uniekheid eerder as gevolg van 'n swak selfbeeld. Daar is verder bevind dat individue alles in hulle vermoë sal doen om hul sin van uniekheid te beskerm, dat die meeste individue 'n matige sin vir uniekheid verkies bo 'n baie hoë of lae sin vir uniekheid, en dat die meeste individue tevrede is met hul vlak van uniekheid. Uniekheid speel nie so 'n groot rol in verbruikersgedag as wat verwag is nie, alhoewel dit die aankope van verbruikersgoedere tot 'n sekere mate beïnvloed.

Daar word dus tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat uniekheid 'n impak het op komponente van psigologiese welstand soos selfbeeld, selfvertroue, self-identiteit, groepsidentifikasies en subjektiewe geluk. Hierdie bevindings het implikasies vir toekomstige navorsing omdat dit die nood vir 'n geldige en betroubare instrument wat uniekheid meet vir gebruik in Suid Afrikaanse steekproewe uitwys. Die bevindings verklaar uniekheid as konstruk verder en dra daarom by tot die literêre databasis van konstrunkte wat verband hou met psigologiese welstand.

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT THIS ARTICLE FOR EXAMINATION PURPOSES

We, the supervisors, hereby declare that the input and effort of CA Law, in writing this article, reflects research done by her on this topic. We hereby grant permission that she may submit this article for examination purposes in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in Clinical Psychology.

Signed on this day.....at the North-West University.

.....

Dr Karel Botha

Supervisor

.....

Mrs Ment Larney

Assistant Supervisor

INTENDED JOURNAL AND GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

This dissertation will be submitted to the South African Journal of Psychology to be considered for publication. Attached please find a copy of the guidelines for prospective authors as set out by the South African Journal of Psychology.



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PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND UNIQUENESS SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

CA Law

Private Bag X1605

Barberton

1300

Dr KFH Botha*

School of Psycho-Social Behavioural Sciences

North-West University, Potchefstroom

Telephone number: (018) 299 1735

Email: psgkfhb@puk.ac.za

Mrs M Larney

Consumer Sciences

North-West University, Potchefstroom

Telephone number: (018) 299 2479

Dr E Kempen

Consumer Sciences

North-West University, Potchefstroom

Telephone number: (018) 299 2483

*To whom correspondence should be addressed

Running head: PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND UNIQUENESS SEEKING
BEHAVIOUR

Psychological Well-Being and Uniqueness Seeking Behaviour

Colleen Ashleigh Law, Karel Botha, Ment Larney, and Elizabeth Kempen

North-West University

Potchefstroom, South Africa

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking behaviour in a group of students at a South African university and a group of consumers in Potchefstroom. An availability sample of 187 students completed self-report measures of psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking behaviour. Sixteen of these students participated in focus groups in order to explore the subjective experience of being unique. A further 13 participants took part in focus groups in order to explore the role uniqueness seeking plays in consumer behaviour. The measures were found to be reliable in this particular group and the means and standard deviations calculated were comparable with those mentioned in literature. It was further found that no direct relationship between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking exists in this sample. Nor were any differences in psychological well being evident in individuals with a moderate sense of uniqueness and individuals with an extremely high or low sense of uniqueness for participants in this study. Uniqueness seeking does not play as big a role in consumer behaviour as was expected, however, it does influence the consumption of consumer goods to a certain extent. It is concluded that although uniqueness seeking does not play a direct role in psychological well-being, it does influence psychological well-being indirectly by the relationship it has with components of psychological well-being such as self-image, self-identity, self-confidence, group identifications, and subjective happiness. Practical implications of the findings are indicated.

Key words: (Psychological well-being, uniqueness seeking, consumers, and students)

Psychological Well-Being and Uniqueness Seeking Behaviour

This study explores the nature of uniqueness seeking and the role it plays in psychological well-being. Over the last few decades, a shift has occurred in the focus of research in the area of psychology. Early research primarily followed a pathogenic approach, focusing on the way in which stressful life events predispose an individual to negative health outcomes. More recently, a number of theorists and researchers have adopted a salutogenic approach, which refers to the origins of physical and mental health and explores the factors that assist individuals to maintain psychological and physical well-being in the face of stressful situations (Antonovsky, 1979 & 1987; Pallant & Lae, 2002). Salutogenesis forms part of the *positive psychology* approach, which is based on the World Health Organization's (WHO, 1948) definition of health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Positive psychology focuses on an individual's repertoire of strengths instead of the traditional focus on weakness. Constructs that have been identified as psychological strengths include: happiness (Seligman, 2002); hope (Snyder, 2000); optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985 and Seligman, 1998); emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1993); and a positive self (Carr, 2004).

Uniqueness seeking is a new addition to the positive psychology nomenclature. Lynn and Snyder (2002) define it as the establishment and maintenance of a sense of moderate self-distinctiveness. Snyder and Fromkin (1980) posited a theory of uniqueness seeking that addresses an individual's emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses to information about their similarity to others. Lynn and Snyder (2002) claim that individuals experience both a need to be distinctive (which contributes to self-identity, attracts attention and enhances self-esteem and social status) and a need for similarity (which contributes to a feeling of affiliation, belief validation, emotional security, empathy, helping, liking and social influence). It is obvious that these needs oppose each other. Lynn and Snyder's (2002) investigation reveals that individuals find a compromise position of intermediate distinctiveness more satisfying than either extreme similarity or extreme

dissimilarity relative to other individuals. Their investigation supports results found by Snyder and Fromkin (1980) showing that individuals seek to establish and maintain a sense of moderate self-distinctiveness because perceptions of either extreme similarity or extreme dissimilarity to others are experienced as unpleasant. Snyder and Fromkin (1980) believe that individuals are happiest when they perceive that they are moderately different relative to others.

Individuals attempt to reach and maintain acceptable levels of self-distinctiveness in various ways. One is by discounting information that implies that the individual is less unique than he/she wants to be or by recalling and focusing on available uniqueness-affirming information. Another way is by increasing the distinctiveness of their attitudes and behaviours. There are many dimensions on which people can pursue self-uniqueness, however the two sources of a sense of uniqueness that have received the most research attention are consumer behaviour and group identifications. Tepper and Hoyle (1996) claim that individuals attempt to increase their sense of self-distinctiveness by consuming products that are perceived to be unique or rare and by identifying with groups that they perceive to be composed of individuals that are distinctive to them. Individuals also decrease their self-distinctiveness by identifying with groups that they perceive to be composed of individuals similar to themselves (Baron & Byrne, 2000). Berger, Heath and Ho (2005) report that when individuals perceive a high sense of similarity relative to others, this drives them to take steps to decrease perceived similarity. These authors found that when people feel similar they increase their perceived level of uniqueness by focusing on differences between themselves and those who seem similar; misremembering actual levels of similarity; providing lower similarity ratings; seating themselves further away from those who seem similar; generating more unique uses for ordinary objects; and placing higher value on scarce future options.

According to Lynn and Snyder (2002), the establishment of a sense of uniqueness is not only emotionally satisfying but also necessary for psychological well-being. Snyder and Fromkin (1980) theorize that uniqueness is an identity dimension onto which self-attributes are coded. They

believe that this encoding process requires the individual to engage in conceptual leaps that represent abstractions from self-perceptions to interpretive or evaluative dimensions. They also believe that similarity or uniqueness becomes salient as a result of the social comparison process. The perceived degree of uniqueness therefore becomes part of a self-concept which is acceptable to the individual and which the individual attempts to protect. Berger, Heath and Ho (2005) agree to a certain extent and propose a signalling identity approach to uniqueness seeking. Rather than focusing on individual drives for uniqueness, they focus on how meanings are constructed and diluted as collections of people interact at the social level. Different types of people diverge in an effort to maintain clear signals of identity. Believing that people cannot construct meaning on their own, Berger, Heath and Ho (2005), feel that individuals must join with other individuals of a similar type to create a signal that is imbued with meaning. This signal becomes diluted when other types of individuals adopt it and the first group must seek a new way to signal their similarity to each other as well as their distinctiveness from others.

According to Ryff and Singer (1998), features of selfhood such as self-love, self-esteem, self-respect, and self-acceptance are necessary for psychological well-being. They believe well-being is best construed as a multidimensional dynamic process that is ultimately an issue of engagement in living, involving expression of a broad range of human potentialities, including intellectual, social, emotional, and physical. Uniqueness can be sought by an individual along the entire range of human expression in a constantly changing manner as varying degrees of similarity become acceptable to the individual. It is evident that people do seek to be unique through various ways and that varying degrees of uniqueness are experienced either positively or negatively. However, the relationship between uniqueness seeking and psychological well-being has not been sufficiently researched. It is therefore the current researcher's intention to clarify the nature of uniqueness seeking and the role it plays in psychological well-being by investigating the ways in which individuals seek uniqueness and their perceptions and subjective experience of being unique.

The researcher intends for this study to add to the literary database of constructs that play a role in psychological well-being.

AIMS

The general aim of this study is to explore and clarify the uniqueness seeking construct and its' relation to psychological well-being in a South African sample. Specific aims are to determine the difference in psychological well-being in individuals with varying needs for uniqueness; to explore the perceptions and subjective experience of uniqueness seeking; and to explore the role uniqueness seeking plays in consumer behaviour. Two of the scales used in this study, namely the Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale (Lynn and Harris, 1997a) and the Desire for Unique Consumer Products Scale (Lynn and Harris, 1997b) have not previously been used in a South African sample and therefore their psychometric properties will be investigated.

METHOD

Participants

The study consisted of three groups of participants. The first group was an availability sample of 187 participants, obtained to investigate the differences in psychological well-being in individuals with a moderate need for uniqueness and individuals with a high or low need for uniqueness. This group comprised of undergraduate psychology students from the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. Of these participants, 85% were female; while 95% were Afrikaans speaking, 3.5% English speaking, 1% Tswana speaking and 0.5% German speaking. The mean age was 21, the youngest respondent being 20 years old and the eldest being 28 years old. Secondly, sixteen of these students also participated in focus group discussions to explore their perceptions and subjective experience of uniqueness seeking. Sixty nine percent of these participants were female, 81% were Afrikaans speaking, while the mean age was 21, the youngest participant being 20 years old and the eldest being 28 years old. Thirdly, a group of 13 consumers participated in

focus groups exploring the role uniqueness seeking plays in their consumer behaviour. Of these participants, 80% were female, while 97% were Afrikaans speaking. The mean age was 25, with the youngest participant being 21 years old and the oldest participant being 38 years old.

Data Generation

a) Measuring Scales

The use of the measuring scales (participant group 1) was aimed at determining differences in psychological well-being in individuals with varying needs for uniqueness and investigating the psychometric properties of the two scales measuring uniqueness.

The Orientation to Life Scale (SOC) (Antonovsky, 1987) is a 29-item scale that evaluates an individual's sense of coherence, defined as a global orientation to perceive one's life as *comprehensible* in that it is structured, predictable and explicable; *manageable* because resources are available to meet the demands posed by life; and that these demands are *meaningful* challenges, worthy of investment and engagement (Antonovsky, 1987). Even though there are three factors, Antonovsky (1987 & 1993) strongly recommended that the SOC be used as a unitary (1-factor) scale, indicating total sense of coherence. Higher scores are indicative of a strong sense of coherence and therefore a higher level of psychological well-being (cf: Antonovsky, 1979 & 1992 and van Eeden, 1996). Test-retest reliabilities range from 0.76 to 0.86 for a one-year interval and Cronbach alpha coefficients range from 0.83 to 0.95 (Antonovsky, 1987).

The Self-Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale (SANU) (Lynn & Harris, 1997a) is a 4-item scale, which evaluates an individual's perception of his or her own need for uniqueness. Higher scores are indicative of a higher need for uniqueness. Lynn and Harris (1997a) obtained a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.80.

The Desire for Unique Consumer Products (DUCP) (Lynn & Harris, 1997b) is an 8-item scale that evaluates an individual's desire to own or buy consumer products that are unique or rare. Higher

scores are indicative of a higher desire for unique consumer products. Lynn and Harris (1997b) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.78.

b) Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted with participant groups 2 (students) and 3 (consumers) to explore the perceptions and subjective experience of uniqueness seeking. According to Edmunds (1999), focus groups allow researchers to capture subjective comments and evaluate them with the intent to provide an understanding of perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and motivations. Morgan (1997) adds that focus group discussions provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences.

- The procedure entailed gathering and seating the group in a circle; making introductions between the researcher and the participants; and establishing ground rules, e.g. talking one at a time, maintaining confidentiality through the use of assigned numbers when referring to oneself or another group member, and stressing the importance of talking only for oneself.

The student focus groups were asked the following questions:

What is uniqueness?

This question was asked to explore what idea of uniqueness each participant held to ensure that all participants would be discussing the same concept.

In what ways are you unique?

The purpose of the question was to explore the different ways that individuals expressed their uniqueness or sought uniqueness through the carrying out of various behaviours.

Describe your reaction should your expression of uniqueness be severely restricted

In attempt to establish that uniqueness seeking contributed to self-image and subjective happiness which are integral components of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 1996 & 1998; van Eeden, 1996; Walker, 1999; and Wissing & van Eeden, 2002), participants were

asked to envisage themselves in a situation in which the expression of the self through uniqueness was restricted.

What do you gain from being unique?

This question was asked to explore what positive or negative consequences each individual experienced from expressing or seeking uniqueness.

What influences the way you are unique?

The purpose of the question was to explore which important influences played a role in the development and expression of each respondents need for uniqueness.

The consumer focus groups were asked questions relating to their strategy when buying clothes. This was done because research indicates that people maintain or engage in uniqueness seeking especially through the consumption of goods (Lynn & Harris, 1997b; Lynn & Snyder, 2002; and Tepper & Hoyle, 1996). The researcher did not mention uniqueness, or uniqueness seeking at all, the aim being to determine if the theme would emerge spontaneously and if so, the role it played in their consumer behaviour. The following question was asked:

What plays a role in your decision to buy certain clothes and not others?

This question was asked to explore the importance of uniqueness seeking within the preconceived criteria that each participant used to make decisions about buying clothes

Procedure and ethical issues

The study consisted of three phases. Firstly, a pilot study was done with a group of students to ensure trustworthiness of data generation. In phase two the measuring scales were administered to an availability sample of 187 students to investigate the differences in psychological well-being in individuals with a moderate need for uniqueness and individuals with a high or low need for uniqueness. The three measures were bound in a booklet and handed out during classes. Students were requested to participate voluntarily and were thoroughly informed of the aims and procedures

of the research and how the information would be utilised. The questionnaires were completed under the supervision of the first author and taken in immediately after completion. During phase three, focus group discussions were conducted with sixteen participants from the student group who responded to the request to participate voluntarily in the focus group discussions. The first researcher scheduled five sessions for the discussions and each participant was contacted and offered the choice of which focus group discussion they wanted to participate in. During phase four, thirteen participants for the consumer focus groups were identified by approaching consumers in clothing stores in Potchefstroom and asking them if they would be interested in participating. Contact numbers of those consumers who wanted to participate were taken and discussions were scheduled in the same way as for the student focus groups.

Ethical considerations as laid down by the Medical, Dental and Health Professions council concerning research and data gathered for research was adhered to (Medical, Dental and supplementary Health Service Professions Act, 1956 of 1974 and Health Service Professions Amendment Act, 1998). Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (Project number 04K11) and informed consent was obtained from all participants to use the data anonymously.

Analysis of data

a) Statistical Analysis

Analysis was carried out by means of the Statistica program (Statsoft, 2003). Confirmatory Maximum Likelihood Factor analysis was performed on each instrument to determine validity and Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the reliability of the instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means and standard deviations) were used to analyse the data. Spearman's rank order correlations were used to determine the relationships between the variables. According to Ellis and Steyn (2003) a correlation coefficient larger than 0.36 indicates a

practically significant correlation with a medium effect, therefore, correlation coefficients larger than 0.36 are considered acceptable in this study. Significant correlations between the SANU and the DUCP scales are theoretically expected and point to the convergent validity of these scales and the constructs that they operationalize.

The participants were then divided into two groups, those who indicated a moderate need for uniqueness by scoring between the mean and one standard deviation above the mean on both the SANU and the DUCP and those whose scores on the SANU and the DUCP were both either lower than one standard deviation below the mean or higher than one standard deviation above the mean. For the purpose of this analysis, those participants whose scores fell between the mean and one standard deviation below the mean were discarded, as this did not indicate either a moderate need for uniqueness or a particularly high or low need for uniqueness. Those participants whose scores on the SANU and the DUCP contradicted each other were also discarded in order to exclude extraneous variables affecting the data. Student's t-tests were then performed to investigate the difference in psychological well-being between the two groups.

b) Content Analysis

Content Analysis was used in this study to evaluate the focus group discussions. A transcription of the discussion was completed immediately after each focus group discussion was recorded. These transcriptions were then supplemented with notes from the researcher's observations of the participants during the focus group sessions. Each transcription was read several times to identify dimensions consisting of words, phrases, or sentences used by the participants to articulate their responses. These dimensions were then analysed by the researchers to determine in which ways they could be grouped together to form themes. According to Weber (1990), this form of coding preserves important information and provides a means of distinguishing between sentences that have the same words in a different order, giving it a different meaning. Holsti (1963 & 1969)

maintains that although this form of coding is labour intensive, it leads to more detailed and sophisticated comparisons. A diagram (see figure 1) was also drawn to investigate the dynamics between the themes. The themes and dimensions were then ranked according to their relative importance as indicated by frequency and meaning attached to them by the participants.

Trustworthiness of the qualitative investigation

Reliability was established on two levels. Firstly, by performing the pilot study during which questions were formulated and adapted to ensure that the aims of the study would be obtainable; asking the same questions in the same order during each focus group; continuing with focus group discussions until data saturation was obtained; listening to the recordings of the focus groups several times; and by reading the transcripts of these recordings several times.

Secondly, inter-coder reliability and trustworthiness was ensured by the second author performing a reliability check, which entailed an assessment of the way in which the data was coded by the first author. Stability was obtained by the first author repeating the coding process two weeks after the first coding session to determine if the coding would generate the same themes and dimensions. A level of 85% agreement was established.

The authors evaluated the questions to determine whether they related to the aims of the study in order to ensure face validity. Content validity was ensured by how the aims of the focus group discussions related to the content of the literature review. The first author also checked with each member of the focus group to ensure that the participant's response was correctly interpreted and encouraged elaboration. At the end of each focus group discussion, the answers were summarized and the participants were given an opportunity to add to the conclusion. Construct validity was established through triangulation, using self-report measures of uniqueness seeking and psychological well-being ensuring the generalizability of the construct across methods of data gathering and analysis. Hypothesis validity as reflected in the correspondence among

variables and theory, is evident in that it was expected that participants would seek uniqueness through the consumption of goods, group identifications, and self-identity (Lynn & Harris, 1997a&b; Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; and Tepper & Hoyle, 1996). It was also expected that acceptable levels of perceived uniqueness would generate positive emotions and strengthened self-image (Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Ryff & Singer, 1998; and Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). This can be seen by the presence of these themes after content analysis was performed and the relative importance attached to them by the respondents. Finally, semantic validity was established by the first and second author examining the coded units and agreeing that the words, phrases, and sentences have similar meanings and connotations.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and psychometric properties of the measuring scales

The means, standard deviations, range of scores, Cronbach Alpha coefficients and the percentage of variance explained by the factor analysis for the measuring instruments are presented in Table 1.

[Insert table 1 here]

The Orientation to Life Scale (SOC) (Antonovsky, 1987)

The mean score of 137.87 obtained in this study is comparable to the score of 137.52 obtained in Walker's (1999) study of well-being in a South African sample and 136.50 in Antonovsky (1993) study in a Jewish sample. It falls within the midrange of mean scores as reported by Antonovsky (1993) of between 117 – 152.6 for 26 studies. Standard deviations are also similar.

The alpha coefficient for the SOC as shown in Table 1 is 0.89 for the total score. The present study's reliability indices are thus comparable to those reported by Jorgensen, Frankowski

and Carey (1999) of 0.91 and those found in South African samples by Walker (1999) who obtained a score of 0.88 and Wissing and Van Eeden (2002) who obtained a score of 0.85. The SOC thus seems reliable for use in this research group.

Factor analysis obtained one factor, which explained 25% of the variance indicating weak validity. According to Ellis and Steyn (2003), a minimum of 50% of the variance should be explained by the factor analysis to obtain optimal validity.

Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale (SANU) (Lynn and Harris, 1997a)

The mean score of 12.7 obtained in this study compares well to Lynn and Harris' (1997a) study of MBA students (11.9). Standard deviations are also similar.

As indicated in Table 1 the alpha coefficient for the SANU is 0.69. The scale performed relatively well in accordance with Lynn and Harris' (1997a) study, which obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.80. The SANU therefore seems to be a reliable scale for use in this group.

Factor analysis obtained one factor, which explained 36% of the variance indicating weak validity. Lynn and Harris (1997a) however, found one factor indicating self-attributed need for uniqueness, to be valid and reliable. No literature regarding the use of this scale in a South African sample was found, making it difficult to compare the scale's performance in this study. The scale did however perform well in international studies of student and non-student samples (Lynn & Harris, 1997a).

Desire for Unique Consumer Products Scale (Lynn and Harris, 1997b)

The total groups' mean score of 26 is comparable to scores obtained in Lynn and Harris' (1997b) study of airline employees (26.2). Standard deviations are also similar.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient found for the DUCP scale in this study was 0.82. This is comparable to Lynn and Harris' (1997b) study, which obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.78. The DUCP can therefore be assumed to be a reliable instrument for use in this group.

Factor analysis obtained one factor, indicating an overall desire for unique consumer products, explaining 38% of the variance. Based on the guidelines provided by Ellis and Steyn (2003) it can be assumed that that DUCP obtains only partial validity for use in this study. No literature concerning the reliability and validity of the DUCP in other South African studies was available in order to compare these results.

In the light of the above, it can be concluded that the mean scores and standard deviations reported in Table 1 for the psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking indices compare favourably with scores reported in literature. The measuring instruments also display acceptable reliability indices according to the criteria of Smit (1991). The results and conclusions obtained in this study can thus be assumed to have a reliable basis. However, all three scales obtained weak validity for use in this group.

The relationship between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking behaviour

The Spearman correlations that were used to investigate the linear relationships between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking behaviour are shown in Table 2.

[Insert table 2 here]

It is evident that no significant correlations exist between psychological well-being as operationalized by the SOC and self attributed uniqueness seeking or the desire for unique consumer products in this sample. However, these findings should be cautiously interpreted due to the poor validity obtained by the scales in the current study.

The results of the t-tests, investigating differences in psychological well-being in those participants who reported moderate need for uniqueness and those who reported a high or low need for uniqueness are shown in Table 3.

[Insert table 3 here]

From table 3 it can be seen that 31 participants indicated a moderate need for uniqueness, as shown by scoring between the mean and one standard deviation above the mean on both the SANU and the DUCP. While 33 participants indicated either a high or low need for uniqueness, those whose scores on the SANU and the DUCP were both either lower than one standard deviation below the mean or higher than one standard deviation above the mean. For the purpose of this analysis, those participants whose scores fell between the mean and one standard deviation below the mean were discarded, as this did not indicate either a moderate need for uniqueness or a particularly high or low need for uniqueness. Those participants whose scores on the SANU and the DUCP contradicted each other were also discarded in order to exclude extraneous variables affecting the data. No meaningful statistical differences between the groups in this sample were found, confirming the results obtained by the Spearman correlations. No results investigating the relationship between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking behaviour were found in existing literature, making it difficult to compare the results found in this study.

Qualitative data

The perception and subjective experience of uniqueness

Figure 1 depicts the themes that emerged from the focus group discussions in which the perceptions and subjective experience of uniqueness was explored.

[Insert figure 1 here]

From the figure, it can be seen that the following themes emerged:

WHAT UNIQUENESS IS:

Participants perceived uniqueness as something that occurred naturally through the expression of the self and that behaviour could not be construed as uniqueness or uniqueness seeking if the motive of the behaviour was to gain attention.

- **‘Uniqueness is behaving in a natural way’**

Sixty nine percent of the focus group participants felt that uniqueness was not consciously sought but something that occurred naturally when they were aware of whom they were and acted in a congruent manner. For example, a participant said, *“I just try to get to know myself as best as I can and just to be authentic to myself because I believe then if you just live that way, you will be unique”* and another participant agreed, *“I don’t think I am striving to be unique on purpose, I just think it’s something that I am. I am not sitting in my room thinking, ‘well, today I am going to do this to be unique.’”*

- **‘Uniqueness is expressed through individual character traits or personality’**

Of the participants, 69% indicated that they expressed their uniqueness through individual character traits or aspects of their personality. They found it difficult to separate uniqueness from personality and agreed that they were unique through their way of being. Some of these participants felt that uniqueness could be seen in a characteristic that was stronger than others. In this regard, a participant claimed, *“A characteristic that can be linked to you, e.g. mine is to laugh a lot and very loudly, I think that makes me unique”* and another participant also said, *“I think uniqueness is*

about a dominating characteristic, e.g. I am very soft-hearted, my family say they have never seen anyone cry so much”

- **‘Uniqueness is not behaviour motivated by attention seeking’**

When asked what they perceived uniqueness to be, 31% of the participants felt that behaviour could not be identified as uniqueness seeking if the motive of the behaviour was to draw attention to oneself instead of living out an expression of yourself. One such participant maintains, *“I don’t think it is if you make a statement, you are wearing pink socks, I don’t think that’s uniqueness, isn’t that maybe you want to draw attention to yourself, you want attention.”*

WAYS OF BEING UNIQUE:

Participants sought uniqueness through the consumption of consumer goods; the ways in which they identify and interact with others; and engagement in activities that were of particular interest to them.

- **‘Being unique through the consumption of consumer goods’**

Of the participants, 63% expressed uniqueness through the consumption of consumer goods, particularly clothes. These participants sought out clothing or goods that were different from those that people in the same environment possessed and if they discovered that a piece of clothing, for example, was also owned by others, they discarded that item. For example, a participant¹ said, *“I will wear other clothes in a different way, or I will make something for myself to wear in order to be different”* and another participant² also said, *“I will often dress very weirdly, like sporty, I do it because I wake up in the morning and think that today I really don’t want to look ordinary”*

- **‘Being unique through relations with others’**

Participants also sought uniqueness in their relations with others through identifying with different groups and by interacting with others in various ways.

¹ Actual words: Ek sal byvoorbeeld ander kleredrag aantrek, ek sal iets op ‘n ander manier doen as ander mense, ek sal byvoorbeeld iets vir myself maak om anders te wees.

² Actual words: So ek sal baie keer soos “weird” aantrek...soos “sporty” maar ek doen dit soos staan net die oggend op, “jis ek wil nie vandag ordinary lyk nie.”

- **‘Group identification’**

Fifty six percent of the participants claimed that they identify with groups that seek uniqueness in the same way they do. This increased their sense of uniqueness by comparing this group to other different groups. However, this identification also lead to an increased sense of similarity and support by being able to share values and beliefs with members of the group that they had identified with. In this regard a participant said, *“I think to a certain extent everybody conforms to a group because that is just the way we were made, for instance, if you are very eccentric or weird, you usually have a group of friends who are maybe not weird, but usually are strange or unique, that’s why they like being friends with you”* and another agreed, *“I think that people do that to get a support system, to feel good about who they are and they share the same beliefs and ideas and the same uniqueness.”*

- **‘Interpersonal interactions’**

Of the participants, 31% identified the way they interact with other people to be something that makes them unique. One participant claimed that in a queue she did not hesitate to talk to people in front of or behind her and she felt that this behaviour was unique to her. She³ claims, *“I speak to people in a queue, behind and in front of me because I am not shy and I like to build interpersonal relationships quickly”* and according to another participant, *“I think just by the way I handle people in a certain way that makes me unique”*.

- **‘Being unique through individual interests’**

Sixty three percent of the participants indicated that individual interests, talents, and values made them unique. These could encompass the following: sense of humour, academic responsibility, leadership and various talents and interests e.g., a participant⁴ claimed, *“I talk a lot of nonsense and I make a lot of jokes and I think that makes me unique”*; while another participant said, *“I identify all my strong points and all my God given talents and I try to develop them because in that lies my*

³ Actual words: Ek praat met mense voor en agter my in ‘n tou want ek is nie skaam nie en ek “like” dit om interpersoonlike verhoudings vinnig aan te kweek

⁴ Actual words: Ek praat baie strooi en ek is baie grapperig en ek dink dit maak my uniek

uniqueness” and a third participant⁵ maintained, *“I would say my sense of responsibility makes me unique.”*

INFLUENCES ON EXPRESSION OF UNIQUENESS SEEKING:

Participants felt that the stage of life that they were in; friends and family; and self-image influenced the ways in which they would express or seek uniqueness.

- **‘Stage of life’**

Of the participants, 44% felt that age and the environment they were in had an influence on the type of uniqueness seeking behaviour they would engage in. Participants claimed that as they grew older, they became more comfortable with their way of expressing uniqueness; they also felt that it was easier to express uniqueness in an environment that was less constrictive, for example, university rather than a work environment. One participant⁶ clearly illustrated this, *“As I became more mature, I found myself more in the norm, and I realised that I am unique within myself without trying to be different.”*

- **‘Role others play in the development and expression of uniqueness’**

Forty four percent of the focus group participants felt that others could play a role in the development and expression of uniqueness seeking behaviour in two ways. Firstly, family and friends could inspire or restrict uniqueness seeking through the level of acceptance and encouragement they give. Secondly, the way in which you seek to be unique could be influenced by activities and interests that are given value in the family and friendship contexts. According to one participant, *“I think the role that other people play is they can either inspire you to be more unique or they can try to take it away from you”* and another participant said, *“In my house, we grew up with sport and the high school was rugby crazy. My dad and sister love sport. In that I found my uniqueness more easily in sport than in drama.”*

⁵ Actual words: Ek sal sê dit is my sin vir verantwoordelikheid wat my uniek maak

⁶ Actual words: Toe ek maar later meer volwasse geword het, het ek myself meer gevind en in die norme van die mense, toe kom ek agter ek is eintlik uniek in myself sonder dat ek probeer anders wees.

- **'Self-image'**

Of the participants, 25% indicated that self-image played a role in the development of uniqueness seeking behaviour. A poor self-image could cause some participants to engage in uniqueness seeking behaviour that was clearly visible to others in order to compensate for their poor self-image by gaining attention. A poor self-image could also cause some participants to engage in little to no uniqueness seeking behaviour in order to remain as invisible as possible, preferring to be part of a group. In this regard a participant⁷ said, *"I think self-image determines how your personality is formed and it can negatively affect uniqueness...people with a poor self-image will probably try to fit into the norm or they will try to stand out as much as they can because they get attention"*

CONSEQUENCES OF UNIQUENESS SEEKING BEHAVIOUR:

Most participants felt that the perception and experience of themselves as unique resulted in happiness and/or increased self-confidence.

- **'Feeling happy'**

When asked what they gained from being unique, 44% of the participants felt happier if they identified themselves as unique and were able to express their uniqueness. For some participants, feeling happy with their level of uniqueness had a positive impact on self-acceptance. According to one such participant⁸, *"That is what my uniqueness does for me; it makes me feel happy, satisfied with myself, I can look at the person in the mirror looking back at me and say I like you"*

- **'Self-confidence'**

Twenty five percent of the participants gained self-confidence from engaging in uniqueness seeking behaviour. They gained the confidence to express uniqueness in future and this had a positive impact on self-image and self-acceptance. According to one such participant, *"For the future,*

⁷ Actual words: Ek dink selfbeeld veroorsaak dat jy, hoe jou persoonlikheid gevorm word en waar dit dalk negatief kan raak, raak dit jou uniekheid...mense met lae selfbeeld sal in die norm probeer aanpas of hulle wil juis uitstyg want dis dalk al waar hulle aandag kry.

⁸ Actual words: Dit is wat my uniekheid vir my doen, gelukkig voel. dit laat my tevrede met myself, ek kan na die persoon wat in die spieël vir my terug kyk sê, "ek hou van jou."

confidence, because lots of times you are afraid somebody is going to disagree or not like you, the more times you just go with what you think when you look to the future, you are more confident to do that again”

REACTION TO RESTRICTION OF EXPRESSION OF UNIQUENESS:

Participants reacted to situations in which the expression of their uniqueness was restricted in one of two ways: either by conforming to the restrictions even though this made them unhappy or by conforming to the restrictions but seeking expression of uniqueness in other situations.

- **‘Unhappily conform to restrictions’**

Of the participants, 56% claimed that although they would be able to conform or adapt to restrictions placed on them that would prevent expression or seeking of uniqueness, they would be unhappy doing so. For example, a participant⁹ said, *“I will probably adapt, but I will be very unhappy”* and another¹⁰ also said, *“I agree, I will be very unhappy.”*

- **‘Express uniqueness in other ways’**

Fifty percent of the participants agreed that they would be able to adapt to an environment in which their uniqueness was restricted but that they would find acceptable ways of expressing their uniqueness in that environment. These ways included non-visual expression, e.g. wearing weird socks underneath their clothes or waiting until an appropriate time or opportunity presented itself, in order to do something different. One such participant¹¹ claims, *“I will do something to get rid of what I wanted to do on that day”* and another such participant¹² agreed, *“I adapt easily, but I think you will still be able to find your uniqueness, even if it means that you have to wear your socks inside out so that no one sees, I think you will find a way to be unique”*

⁹ Actual words: Ag, ek sal seker aanpas, maar ek sal baie ongelukkig wees

¹⁰ Actual words: Ek stem saam, ek sal baie ongelukkig wees

¹¹ Actual words: Ek sal iets anders doen wat sal ontslae raak van wat ek wou doen daai dag.

¹² Actual words: Ek is redelik aanpasbaar, maar ek dink selfs in dit sal jy jou uniekheid kry, al beteken dit nou jy dra jou sokkies onderstebo dat niemand dit sien nie, jy doen dit ek dink, ek glo jy sal op 'n manier kry om uniek te wees.

UNIQUENESS AS MOTIVATION FOR CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

When asked to describe their criteria for buying clothes, the most important criterion mentioned were factors related to clothes, which included quality; colour; comfortability; aesthetics; and washing instructions given on the label. The second most important criterion referred to practical aspects, which included the specific shops preferred by individual participants; money available; and the reason for buying the item. The third most important criterion was the opinions of friends and family. The final criterion referred to the self and included mood; personality; life stage; perceived self-appearance; and uniqueness seeking. Regardless of the extent to which the participants perceived themselves as unique, they did not actively seek clothing items that would increase or decrease their uniqueness. However, most of the participants were unhappy if another person owned or wore an identical clothing item. The participants claimed that they did not like to stand out too much but they would like to differentiate themselves from others. According to one participant¹³, *“I was at a dance a few days ago and I had exactly the same top on as another woman. I don’t like her at all and I did not want to be compared to her so it was not very nice...I don’t want to stand out like a sore thumb, so uniqueness is important to me, but blending in to a certain extent is also important.”*

DISCUSSION

The key objective in this study was to explore and clarify the uniqueness seeking construct and its relation to psychological well-being. This was investigated chiefly through the exploration of the subjective experience of being unique. However, a quantitative investigation was performed to: determine differences in psychological well-being in individuals with varying needs for uniqueness; determine the psychometric properties of the scales; and to ensure data triangulation.

¹³ Actual words: 1.1.9. Ek het nou die dag by ‘n dans presies dieselfde top aan as iemand anders en ek hou glad nie van daai ander vrou nie, ek wou nie met haar vereenselwig word nie, so dit was nie nice nie...ek wil tog nie soos ‘n seer duim uitstaan nie, so uniek is vir my belangrik, maar blending in to a certain extent is ook belangrik.

All the scales show good reliability indices for use in this sample and these findings are comparable with those found in literature. (Antonovsky, 1987 & 1993; Jorgensen, Frankowski & Carey, 1999; Walker, 1999; Wissing & van Eeden, 2002; and Lynn & Harris, 1997 a&b). However, all the scales obtained poor validity. The partial validity of the SOC found in this study is surprising in the light of the extensive research that has been done with the SOC in South Africa with comparable and diverse groups, where the validity of the scale was hardly ever questioned. In terms of the SANU and the DUCP, little research exists regarding their use in international samples and no literature could be found concerning their use in South African studies. It is speculated that, as in the case of the SOC, group-specific characteristics are responsible. The homogeneity of the sample could have played a role in the poor validity obtained by the scales. Most of the participants were white, Afrikaans speaking, 21 years old, female third year psychology students. Most of them were hoping to be selected for the honours course in psychology for 2006 and even though anonymity and confidentiality was assured, this might have caused them to inhibit their answers.

No significant correlations were found between psychological well-being as operationalized by the SOC and uniqueness seeking behaviour in this sample. It was also found that no significant differences in psychological well-being in individuals with a moderate need for uniqueness and individuals with high or low need for uniqueness, exists for participants in this study. This is surprising as according to Lynn and Snyder (2002), the establishment of a moderate sense of uniqueness is not only emotionally satisfying but also necessary for psychological well-being. In addition Snyder and Fromkin (1980), found that individuals experience negative emotions when they perceive themselves to be either extremely similar or extremely dissimilar to other individuals. Berger, Heath and Ho, (2005); Lynn and Snyder (2002); Snyder (1992); and Taylor and Brown (1994) replicated these findings. It is possible that the homogeneity of the sample resulted in little to no differences in psychological well-being in the two groups. However, the way in which uniqueness seeking was assessed could also have played a role. It could be that it is not the level of uniqueness seeking or need for uniqueness but satisfaction with that level or need that improves

psychological well-being. The reason that no difference in psychological well-being exists between individuals with a moderate need for uniqueness and individuals with a high or low need for uniqueness can be explained by the fact that it appears as if participants in this sample are satisfied with their level of uniqueness.

The results of the content analysis indicate that uniqueness is perceived as behaving in a natural way and that this is done through individual character traits or personality. This is in concordance with self-theory, in which Snyder and Fromkin (1980) and Snyder (1992) proposed that uniqueness is an identity dimension onto which self-attributes are coded. Self-theory reflects the appraisal the person holds of him or herself on important identity dimensions. Ryff and Singer (1998) claim that features of selfhood are necessary for psychological well-being. They believe well-being is best construed as a multidimensional dynamic process that is ultimately an issue of engagement in living, involving expression of a broad range of human potentialities, including intellectual, social, emotional, and physical. The dimensions on which self-theories are formed vary from person to person but will tend to be similar to the extent that a society reinforces self-attributes (e.g., attractiveness). Snyder and Fromkin (1980) and Snyder (1992) believe that people often define their self-theories in terms of having a sense of specialness.

Participants who identified themselves with certain groups and not others felt that this identification gave them a sense of being different from others but at the same time also a sense of sharing beliefs and receiving support. This finding is concurrent with Berger, Heath and Ho's (2005) belief that individuals create a distinct identity, which sets them apart from certain groups and identifies them with others. When this identity is threatened, they re-assess their strategies used to signal their identity. Therefore, individuals engage in uniqueness seeking behaviour in order to establish an identity that is distinctive, or engage in uniqueness seeking behaviour to enhance or confirm an already established identity, however, the purpose of the identity is also to signal membership of certain groups and not others. In this way, it is evident that the focus group participants in this study did not wish to be identified as either extremely similar or extremely

dissimilar but preferred a moderate sense of uniqueness that was decreased through group identification and increased through individual characteristics or personality. It has already been well established that a stable sense of identity of the self is essential for psychological well-being. (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987, 1990, 1992 & 1993; Baron & Byrne, 2003; Ryff & Singer, 1996 & 1998; van Eeden, 1996; Walker, 1999; and Wissing & van Eeden, 2002). Individuals feel happy and gain self-confidence by seeking uniqueness through individual interests and by conforming to character traits and personality. These positive consequences encouraged individuals to engage in uniqueness seeking behaviour and re-affirmed self-image. A poor self-image would cause them to participate in uniqueness seeking behaviour that was either obvious to others or to seek uniqueness as little as possible. It would seem that this is done to compensate for a poor self-image by gaining attention or by remaining as invisible as possible. Although, this behaviour could not be considered as uniqueness or uniqueness seeking, because the motive was to gain attention and not the expression of an already distinctive self-image.

It further emerged that individuals seek uniqueness through the consumption of consumer goods, for example, clothes. Participants valued clothing or goods that were scarce and different from those that individuals in the same environment possessed. Once the item was no longer scarce or different, it was discarded in favour of more unique or rare consumer products. Berger, Heath and Ho (2005) argue that individuals do not seek uniqueness through the consumption of any item, but suggest that items that are highly visible, have little functional value and cost a lot in terms of resources or effort to obtain are expected to indicate uniqueness better than items that are hardly ever on display, serve a purpose or are easy to obtain. Snyder and Fromkin (1980) and Tepper and Hoyle (1996) suggest that the collection of distinctive material possessions serves as a means to enhance self-image. Lynn and Harris (1997b) agree that a higher need for uniqueness seeking increases the desire to own and consume unique consumer products. Interestingly, Lynn and Snyder (2002) believe that material possessions are often extensions of the self. Therefore, it would seem that individuals re-affirm self-image through the consumption of unique consumer products as

well as through group identification and individual characteristics or personality. This could be because of the high visibility of possessions and the high importance placed on material possessions in today's society.

It would appear that restrictions placed on the expression of uniqueness seeking lead to unhappiness, therefore, it could be concluded that uniqueness seeking and the experience of being unique contributes to psychological well-being. It would also appear that participants in this study attempt to maintain a sense of uniqueness and protect their self-image as far as possible. It is therefore possible that uniqueness seeking does not contribute directly to psychological well-being but rather indirectly by the influence it has on certain components of psychological well-being such as self-image, self-identity, self-confidence, group identifications, and subjective happiness. This could explain the lack of correlations found between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking in the quantitative investigation, during which a direct relationship was investigated.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the relationship between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking behaviour in a group of students and a group of consumers in a South African sample was investigated. The measuring instruments used proved to have acceptable reliability indices; however results suggest weak validity for use in this group. The mean scores and standard deviations obtained were mostly similar to those reported in literature.

No direct relationship between psychological well-being and uniqueness seeking was found, nor was it found that differences in psychological well-being and individuals with a moderate sense of uniqueness and individuals with a high or low sense of uniqueness exist. Individuals perceive uniqueness to be a quality that emerges naturally through the expression of the self and that actively seeking to be unique or not is rather due to a poor self-image. It was further found that individuals would go to some length to protect their sense of uniqueness, that most individuals preferred a sense

of moderate uniqueness to either an extremely high or extremely low sense of uniqueness, and that most individuals are satisfied with their level of uniqueness. Individuals described feeling happy and more confident when they perceived themselves to be unique. These individuals believe that the stage of life they are in and significant others play a role in determining the way in which uniqueness will have meaningful expression for them. Uniqueness seeking does not play as big a role in consumer behaviour as was expected, however, it does influence the consumption of consumer goods to a certain extent. It is therefore concluded that uniqueness seeking influences psychological well-being indirectly by the relationship it has with self-image, self-identity, self-confidence, group identifications, and subjective happiness.

Limitations of this study must be taken into account in interpreting the results of this investigation. Firstly, the measuring instruments did not obtain satisfactory validity. Therefore, findings generated from the empirical investigation should be interpreted cautiously. Secondly, definitive evidence of causality can be obtained only by manipulative experimental or quasi-experimental methods. Therefore, further work is needed that statistically examines changes in uniqueness seeking behaviours following induced changes in aspects of psychological well-being or vice versa. Thirdly, levels of uniqueness seeking and need for uniqueness was measured instead of satisfaction thereof. It could be that an individual's satisfaction with his or her need for uniqueness plays a more important role in psychological well-being than the actual level of uniqueness seeking. Other limitations of this study that must be taken into account are that the use of a non-probability sample limits the generalisation of the findings to other settings and that the validity of the results may be affected due to the exclusive use of self-report measures.

Despite the limitations of the study, important information regarding the role uniqueness seeking plays in psychological well-being has been obtained. The relatively new construct requires much more research to investigate and clarify this role further. The psychometric properties of the SANU and DUCP for use in the South African samples should be further investigated to determine whether group-specific characteristics were responsible for their weak validity in the current study.

It is possible that the two scales are not valid for use in the South African context. In which case, research efforts could be made to develop or validate uniqueness seeking measures that would be reliable and valid for use in South Africa.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics and reliability indices: Total Group (N = 187)

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Cronbach Alpha	Variance explained
SOC	137.87	20.82	87	188	0.89	25%
SANU	12.73	2.50	5	19	0.69	36%
DUCP	26.37	5.69	8	40	0.82	38%

Note: SOC – Sense of Coherence Scale; SANU – Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale; DUCP – Desire for Unique Consumer Products Scale

Table 2. Spearman Rank Order correlations for all scales used

Scales	SOC	SANU	DUCP
SOC	1.00	0.03	0.04
SANU	0.03	1.00	0.37
DUCP	0.04	0.37	1.00

Note: SOC – Sense of Coherence Scale; SANU – Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale; DUCP – Desire for Unique Consumer Products Scale

Table 3: Differences in psychological well-being between individuals with a moderate need for uniqueness and individuals with a high or low need for uniqueness as investigated by t-tests

	SOC mean	Valid N	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	p	F-ratio variance	P variance
Moderate need for uniqueness	134.65	31	18.28	0.60	62	0.55	1.74	0.13
High & low need for uniqueness	137.85	33	24.13					

Note 1: SOC – Sense of Coherence Scale; Moderate need for uniqueness - respondents whose score on both the SANU and the DUCP fell between the mean and one standard deviation above the mean; High & low need for uniqueness - respondents whose scores on the SANU and the DUCP were both either lower than the mean or higher than one standard deviation above the mean.

Note 2: It can be seen that 31 participants indicated a moderate need for uniqueness, as shown by scoring between the mean and one standard deviation above the mean on both the SANU and the DUCP. While 33 participants indicated either a high or low need for uniqueness, those whose scores on the SANU and the DUCP were both either lower than one standard deviation below the mean or higher than one standard deviation above the mean. For the purpose of this analysis, those participants whose scores fell between the mean and one standard deviation below the mean were discarded, as this did not indicate either a moderate need for uniqueness or a particularly high or low need for uniqueness. Those participants who whose scores on the SANU and the DUCP contradicted each other were also discarded in order to exclude extraneous variables affecting the data.

FIGURE 1: THEMES EMERGING FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

