Accordingly, the motivation to establish a sense of one’s own uniqueness is a strong and continuous psychological force. Although the feeling of a certain uniqueness is generally essential to individuals’ well-being (Lynn & Snyder, 2002), people differ in the magnitude of their NfU. Thus, for example, individuals who chronically have a high NfU tend to exhibit an unusual style of interpersonal interaction (e.g., Maslach, Stapp, & Santee, 1985). They would also acquire, utilize, and display consumer products that are unusual or even unpopular, because entities perceived “as being outside the norm may serve as recognizable symbols of uniqueness and specialness” (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001, p. 50; see Lynn & Snyder, 2002, for a review). NfU as a personal disposition has been measured by questionnaires (e.g., Synder & Fromkin, 1977), such as the Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale (SANU; Lynn & Harris, 1997; Lynn & Snyder, 2002).

However, the NfU must be conceptualized not only as a trait in which individuals differ but as a temporary motivation as well. That is, situational conditions can give individuals the feeling that they are too similar to or too different from others. Both conditions will motivate the individual to engage into compensatory actions (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). According to Fromkin (1972), too little uniqueness leads to action aimed at increasing one’s uniqueness, whereas too much uniqueness leads to action aimed at decreasing that uniqueness (satisfaction of the need for individuation and motivation to attain a more distinct and dissimilarity (see also Fromkin, 1970). Similar effects have been reported in the literature on deindividuation, in which individuals are being deprived of a personal identity to prevent them from being identified as distinct from others (Zimbardo & Zimbardo, 1960) may “motivate the person to demonstrate what he believes is unique about himself” (Zimbardo, 1969, p. 305). Similarly, the theory of optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Roccas, 2001) postulated that groups that are too large fail to satisfy the need for differentiation and motivate the individual to regain individuation by strategies such as mentally shrinking in-group size (Pickett, Silver, & Brewer, 2002) or identifying with more distinct groups (e.g., Brewer & Pickett, 1999; for a review, see Hornsey & Jetten, 2004).

The theoretical and empirical relations between the concepts of uniqueness, deindividuation, and differentiation are presently not well understood and hardly discussed in the literature. These distinct lines of research, however, converge to the conclusions that (a) there exist conditions where individuals experience a need to be unique or different from others and (b) this need will motivate individuals to regain uniqueness. As agreeing with what everybody else says, that is, agreeing with the majority, cannot satisfy the need to be different from others, it seems only a small step to assume that majority influence will be blocked under conditions of high NfU. Adding to the literature on social influence, we propose that a high NfU will motivate individuals to agree less with a high consensus position. In a state of deprived uniqueness, individuals will avoid further deprivation in that they adopt a nonconformist position. One way to reduce the feeling of deprived uniqueness—among others—may be to even agree more with the alternative minority position on the issue under consideration. The studies described below tested these assumptions.

**STUDY 1**

**Method**

**Overview.** Participants received a text including the results of an alleged opinion poll in which consensus information was manipulated. The main dependent variable was their attitude toward the issue referred to in the opinion poll. Participants then received a questionnaire that included the four items of the SANU (Lynn & Snyder, 2002). We expected that participants with a high NfU would agree more with the low-consensus position, whereas participants low in NfU would agree more with the high-consensus position. At the conclusion of the experiment, participants answered an open-ended suspicion probe. They were then thoroughly debriefed and paid €2 for their participation. Materials were presented in appropriate German translations of the following descriptions.

**Participants and design.** Participants were 44 students (17 female, 27 male; mean age 22.2) of various majors at the Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany. They volunteered for a study on “text comprehension.” Students were randomly assigned to one of the two influence conditions (minority vs. majority influence). NfU was assessed by a questionnaire including the SANU at the end of the experimental session.

**Manipulation of minority and majority influence.** Participants received a text on an exhibition on the history of “eating and drinking in the German railway.” Attached to the text, the sheet presented a diagram showing the alleged results of an opinion poll on the question of whether dining cars should be disestablished in the German railway. The diagram displayed that, depending on the condition, either 79% (majority) or 21% (minority) agreed. Operationalizations were chosen to prevent participants from (a) identifying with the influence group and (b) processing message arguments. Thus, (a) no information was given as to what sample or how many individuals had been polled, and (b) the text neither referred to the diagram nor presented...
Obviously, a high-consensus position appeared unattractive to high-NfU recipients. The results of this study therefore support the hypothesis that majority influence can be undermined under high NfU. Still, the proposed motivational nature of the proposed effect has not yet been demonstrated. We therefore conducted a third study as a further test of our assumptions. We reasoned that the impetus of majority influence under high NfU would disappear if the motivation to regain uniqueness was satisfied with a different means. Moreover, it appeared desirable to replicate the effect observed in Study 1 and 2 with different material.

STUDY 3

We have argued that a high NfU motivated participants in Studies 1 and 2 to resist majority influence. A major assumption common to all well-established accounts of human motivation is that a perceived discrepancy between a desired and an existing state motivates activities to eliminate it (e.g., Higgins, 1987; Kruglanski, 1996). Another important motivation principle is that a desired state can be achieved through different means (Heider, 1958). Different means can be functionally equivalent and hence can substitute each other. Thus, given that the pattern of attitudes in Study 1 was predicted.

Manipulation of NfU. The manipulation of NfU was identical to that in Study 2. Then participants were told that they would take part in a short study meant to develop testing materials. One half of the high-NfU participants received a sheet that read “Project for Self-Concept Research” and were asked to name three aspects that made them “different from others” and that characterized them as an “individual personality.” To think of three such aspects was pretested as a relatively easy task to accomplish within the given 5 min. This created the regain-uniqueness condition. The other half of the high-NfU group and the control group received a sheet titled “Project for Knowledge-Concept Research” and were asked to answer knowledge questions on geography (e.g., “Name the member states of former Yugoslavia.”). Knowledge questions were chosen because they likely prevented any unusual or unique remarks that might help to regain uniqueness. Pretests showed that it took about 5 min to write down the answers.

Manipulation of majority-minority influence. Participants received written instructions that their task was to read a text and form a “general impression.” The headline read, “A majority (minority) of respondents from the district of Rhein-Sieg argue for a new Rhine tunnel, next to Königswinter.” The message stated that local residents had been interviewed via phone in the context of a survey on the currently debated project.

Overview. Study 3 followed Study 2 in most respects. However, one further condition was added that was presumed to satisfy a high NfU prior to the influence setting. In addition to the control group and the high-NfU group (as in Study 2), a third group was created that received the high-NfU manipulation but then was given an alternative means to regain uniqueness. Furthermore, the persuasive setting was changed to replicate the findings from Study 2 with a different topic and a different influence group.

Participants and design. A total of 161 students (52 female and 109 male; mean age 23.1 years) of various majors at the University of Bonn, Germany, volunteered in exchange for €3 or partial course credit. The design was a 3 (control vs. high NfU vs. high NfU plus regain uniqueness) × 2 (majority vs. minority influence) between-subjects factorial. Students were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions and participated in groups of up to 8.

Method

After that, participants were asked to estimate the percentage of respondents in favor of the tunnel (manipulation check). They then reported their age, gender,