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Accentuation theory revisited: Tajfel's legacy for the study of extremism

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Henri Tajfel's accentuation theory, which he summarized in a brilliant essay in 1969, was a momentous contribution to the study of social perception. The theory was grounded in principles of sense perception and categorization; Tajfel understood and laid out the implications for social perception. Within a decade, accentuation theory was superseded by social-identity theory and, in time, by that theory's many offshoots. Some key insights of accentuation theory were appropriated, while others were transmuted or dropped altogether. In this chapter, I trace the history of these developments, along with my own efforts (and the efforts of colleagues) to revise accentuation theory, expand it, and to restore it to prominence. This review will comprise a survey of key findings as well as – in all likelihood – some illustrative quantitative derivations and simulations. I will demonstrate and discuss the implications of accentuation theory for the psychology of extremism.

145 words

Relevant publications from my pen:

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Krueger, J. (1996a). Personal beliefs and cultural stereotypes about racial characteristics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 536-548.

Krueger, J. (1996b). Probabilistic national stereotypes. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26, 961-980.

Krueger, J. (2001). The psychology of social categorization. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (Vol. 21, pp. 14219-14223). Elsevier

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Krueger, J., & Clement, R. W. (1997). Consensus estimates by majorities and minorities: The case for social projection. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 1, 299-319.

Krueger, J. I., & DiDonato, T. E. (2008). Social categorization and the perception of groups and group differences. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass: Group Processes*, 2, 733-750.

Krueger, J. I., Grüning, D. J., Heck, P. R., & Freestone, D. (2024). Inductive reasoning model. *Psychological Inquiry, resume*, 11-25.