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Title

[Toward a Psychological Understanding of the Effects of Changes in Group Status on Intergroup Relations](#)

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Abstract

Societies undergoing drastic transformation are often inundated with intergroup strife, particularly, when the transformation is accompanied by drastic shifts in groups' status (e.g., Bettelheim & Janowitz, 1964). The present dissertation project aimed to begin understanding the effects of such changes in group status on intergroup outcomes, and to identify psychological processes that may underlie these effects. To achieve these goals, two studies examined perceived dimensions of status change (*magnitude*, *direction*, and *speed*) in relation to outgroup-specific outcomes (*unity* and *threat*) and general diversity-related outcomes (*attitudes toward equity*, *openness to diversity*, and *ethnocentrism*). Study 1 was conducted with university students in Ukraine, and revealed that, although dimensions of status change did not predict general diversity-related outcomes, direction and speed interacted in predicting outgroup-specific outcomes among participants who perceived small status change; for these participants, perceptions of faster gains were associated with less unity and more threat. Study 2, conducted with an older and more diverse sample of Ukrainian citizens, replicated these patterns, but also found significant relationships between dimensions of status change and general diversity-related outcomes. Specifically, in addition to predicting less unity and more threat, perceptions of fast small gains also predicted less positive attitudes toward equity, less openness to diversity, and more ethnocentrism. Study 2 also tested threat and relative deprivation as psychological processes that may help explain these relationships. When threat and relative deprivation were included as mediators, fast small gains no longer negatively predicted intergroup outcomes; in fact, in the mediated model, faster gains, both small and large, were associated with more unity, more positive attitudes toward equity, more openness to diversity, and less ethnocentrism. The implications of these findings and avenues for future research are discussed.

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