

# Revisiting Du Bois: The Relationship Between African American Double Consciousness and Beliefs About Racial and National Group Experiences

Mikhail Lyubansky

*Kenyon College*

Roy J. Eidelson

*University of Pennsylvania*

*This study revisits Du Bois's concept of double consciousness by examining the relationship between racial and mainstream acculturation and African Americans' beliefs about their racial and national groups. Surveys completed by 100 prospective Black jurors at a municipal courthouse approximately 6 months after 9/11 revealed that they perceived their racial group as more unjustly treated and more helpless than their national group but believed their national group was more vulnerable and more in need of maintaining a distrustful posture than their racial group. In addition, beliefs about racial group vulnerability, unjust treatment, and superiority were stronger for those respondents more deeply immersed in Black culture, whereas engagement with mainstream culture was unrelated to the strength of these convictions. In contrast, both racial and mainstream acculturation tended to predict beliefs about the American national group in the domains of vulnerability, injustice, distrust, and superiority.*

**Keywords:** *acculturation; beliefs; racial; national; double consciousness; vulnerability; injustice; distrust; superiority; helplessness*

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It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. . . . One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body. . . . The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing . . . to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world.

—W. E. B. Du Bois  
(1903/1989, p. 3)

When Du Bois first described the Black experience of double consciousness 100 years ago, he clearly captured how alienation and disenfranchisement blended one identity that seemed inescapable with another that appeared unattainable. His words received immediate national and international attention and inspired several classic African American novels, including Zola Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (Rath, 1997). However, not surprisingly given the prevailing attitudes of the times, the predominantly White academic community was less than impressed. Many scholars simply found the concept of a dual identity incomprehensible, whereas others pathologized the phenomenon, assuming that it was dysfunctional because of its sharp contrast to the unidimensional personality structure presumed to be characteristic of the dominant White culture. Fifty years later, Gordon Allport's assertions about Black defensiveness in *The Nature of Prejudice* provided clear evidence that mainstream psychologists were still not ready for a multidimensional conceptualization of the Black experience (Gaines & Reed, 1995). It has taken the better part of another 50 years, but today the notion of multiple identities is not only widely accepted by psychologists but is fully ingrained in many aspects of our society.

Although Du Bois placed the origin of "double consciousness" in a repressive White culture, which forced Blacks to see themselves through the eyes of the dominant White society, he not only considered the ability to constantly negotiate multiple identities to be virtuous but thought the rest of the world would do well to acquire it (Rath, 1997). Nonetheless, prior to the research reported here, relatively little was known about how such double consciousness may be reflected in Blacks' core beliefs about their racial and national groups.

In this light, it is of considerable interest to understand how the double consciousness of African Americans has developed, as Blacks have taken significant but incomplete steps toward equal footing with other groups that

collectively constitute the American people today. Not surprisingly, the new terrain, especially since the landmark rulings and legislation on education and voting rights in the 1950s and 1960s, has conjured up new questions regarding how Blacks reconcile their racial and national identities and how these dual identities shape individuals' perceptions of their racial and national groups. Indeed, in many ways the greater opportunities to embrace and participate in mainstream America may have paradoxically intensified the challenges posed for Black Americans navigating between the identities of "Black" and "American."

In this article, we report on an empirical study designed to explore some of the important psychological manifestations of this double consciousness. In particular, we were interested in (a) the extent to which African Americans hold different beliefs about their racial group and their national group and (b) the extent to which individual differences in these beliefs can be explained by racial and mainstream acculturation. We use "Black" and "African American" interchangeably throughout the article to refer to a socially constructed racial group or identity and recognize that this group, like all other racial groups in the United States, is ethnically heterogeneous (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998).

#### **CORE BELIEFS GROUP MEMBERS HOLD ABOUT THEIR GROUP**

An important arena where dual identities are likely to find expression is in African Americans' beliefs about the two groups in which they hold simultaneous membership—namely, their racial group and their national group. In this context, Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) have identified five belief domains—vulnerability, injustice, distrust, superiority, and helplessness—as meriting special attention because they focus on issues of direct relevance to a group member's perception of the in-group's circumstances and his or her willingness to take action on behalf of the group, even at the risk or cost of intergroup conflict.

The *vulnerability* belief reflects the member's view that the group stands in harm's way, the collective target of pervasive threat and potential catastrophe. The tendency to focus on the likelihood of dire outcomes may originate in perceptions of the group's history as one of misery and oppression. Although fears may therefore find expression in exaggerated concerns over subjugation or annihilation, worries about assimilation and the loss of group distinctiveness may predominate as vulnerability themes instead (e.g., Brewer, 1991), as can, at the other end of the spectrum, deep-seated concerns over alienation and estrangement from the larger world.

The *injustice* belief highlights the in-group as the victim of unjust treatment by other groups. Such grievances are often based on the individual's belief that in-group members receive substandard outcomes due not to their own inadequacies but because some other, more powerful out-group has created a biased or rigged system (e.g., Horowitz, 1985). Such perceptions typically heighten the identification and allegiance that members feel toward their group (Brewer & Brown, 1998). Indeed, shared grievances against another group can mobilize powerful and violent collective insurgencies (e.g., Staub, 1989; Tetlock, 1998; van Evera, 1997).

The *distrust* belief focuses on the presumed hostility and malicious intent of other groups. The conviction that outsiders harbor malevolent designs toward the in-group is sufficiently widespread that "dishonest" and "untrustworthy" are considered to be central elements in the universal stereotype of out-groups (Campbell, 1967; LeVine & Campbell, 1972). As with the other domains described here, the distrust belief may, to varying degrees, reflect an accurate and functional assessment of the world of intergroup relations. For example, an in-group member's suspiciousness of out-groups can result in part from a history of negative interactions or a rational recognition that other groups have opposing interests and are in competition for scarce resources (e.g., Hardin, 1995). In its more extreme manifestations, however, this mind-set can border on paranoia, leading to hypervigilant social information processing and exaggerated perceptions of conspiracy (Kramer & Messick, 1998).

The *superiority* belief revolves around the conviction that the in-group is morally superior, chosen, entitled, or destined for greatness—and the corresponding view of the out-group as contemptible, immoral, and inferior (e.g., LeVine & Campbell, 1972). This mind-set can be used to explain, legitimize, and ruthlessly enforce in-group status advantages (e.g., Sidanius, 1993) or to push the claim that current relative deprivations are temporary and inappropriate for the very same reasons. Evidence of chosen status in particular or of superiority in general is often found in a selective recounting of a group's history. Even when the objective historical record fails to provide supporting documentation for such accounts, embellished narratives of accomplishments are readily created and then transmitted from one generation to the next, and thereafter available for political entrepreneurs to call upon in their efforts to mobilize support for a groupcentric agenda (Brown, 1997; Crawford, 1998).

Finally, the *helplessness* belief (e.g., Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Buchanan & Seligman, 1995) refers here to the individual's conviction that the in-group is unable to favorably influence or control events and out-

comes through political or economic means. When group members perceive their in-group to be helpless to alter its circumstances, organized political mobilization is severely hampered. An effective insurgency movement depends upon the promise of some reasonable likelihood of success given the risks undertaken (e.g., Brewer & Brown, 1998; Gamson, 1992; Homer-Dixon, 1999). As Bandura (1997) has suggested in his discussion of collective efficacy, "The psychological barriers created by beliefs of collective powerlessness are especially pernicious because they are more demoralizing and debilitating than external impediments" (p. 524). Thus, whereas the first four beliefs are arguably potential triggers for intergroup conflict, this fifth belief is more likely to serve as a constraint on collective action. For example, in a survey of Americans approximately 6 months after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Eidelson (2003) found that beliefs about the national group in the vulnerability, injustice, distrust, and superiority domains were positively correlated with support for military action in Afghanistan, whereas beliefs about national group helplessness were negatively correlated with support for the military intervention.

#### ACCULTURATION

Although the realities of contemporary Black and White experience may make significant differences in perceptions between members of these two groups inevitable, the well-documented heterogeneity of identity and experience found in U.S. racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993) suggests that meaningful differences in beliefs among members of the same identity group are also likely. We have therefore adopted acculturation theory (e.g., Berry, 1980; Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992)—with its emphasis on the individual's unique adjustment to competing influences from alternative group memberships—as a framework for investigating the sources of anticipated within-group variability in members' convictions about their group circumstances.

Although first developed to explain the impact of migration on both immigrants and members of the host society, acculturation models have more recently been applied to the experiences of nonimmigrant groups, including both African Americans and Native peoples who were born in the United States but whose ancestors similarly did not initially choose to establish contact with the mainstream American culture (Berry et al., 1992). Originally conceptualized to examine group-level changes (e.g., in political organization), more recent scholarship has focused on individual-level changes (e.g.,

in identity, attitudes, and values) in members of migrant groups, such as immigrants and refugees (Berry et al., 1992). For these purposes, acculturation is generally defined as changes (in behaviors, attitudes, etc.) that result from continuous, firsthand contact with a different culture (Berry, 1980; Berry et al., 1992).

Multiple models of acculturation exist (e.g., Pettigrew, 1988; Triandis, Kashima, Shimada, & Villareal, 1986), but Berry's (1980) model has received the most attention. In this framework, individuals occupy a space defined by the intersection of two issues: cultural maintenance (i.e., Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's cultural identity and characteristics?) and cultural contact (i.e., Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with the dominant society?) (Berry & Sam, 1997). These two questions are conceptualized (and usually operationalized) along a continuum, in which the ends of the two dimensions (i.e., yes and no) form a conceptual framework that posits four acculturation styles. Thus, *assimilation* is defined as a lack of interest in maintaining one's own cultural identity (no to Question 1) combined with a desire to maintain relationships with other groups (yes to Question 2), whereas *separation* is characterized by an investment in maintaining one's cultural identity (yes to Question 1) and a lack of interest in maintaining relationships with other groups (no to Question 2). Similarly, *integration* is defined as an investment in both preserving one's cultural identity and maintaining relationships with other groups (yes to both questions), whereas *marginalization* is characterized by a lack of interest in both cultural maintenance (sometimes due to societal pressures to relinquish cultural practices) and the development of relationships with other groups (often due to discrimination and exclusion) (Berry, 1980; Berry & Sam, 1997).

These four styles represent a useful theoretical framework, but as Berry and Sam (2003, p. 66) cautioned, acculturation involves "complexity, uncertainty, and ambivalence" due to both individual and social factors, such as family pressures and socioeconomic opportunity. Moreover, preferences for one style are known to vary depending on context (Berry & Sam, 1997). Thus, people may employ one style within their ethnic or racial community and another in public domains such as the workplace. Moreover, shifting racial and national social pressures increase the desirability of some styles, while making others virtually taboo. For example, our current mainstream zeitgeist makes it somewhat fashionable for Whites to adopt certain aspects of Black culture (we do recognize that many communities of color consider the use of Black slang and other such practices of appropriation to be expressions of cultural dominance), whereas Blacks who adopt White cultural prac-

tices of speech and/or dress are typically given less respect by both Black neighbors and Black scholars (e.g., Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991).

The complexity and transitory nature of this construct suggests that it is neither practical nor desirable to attempt to classify Black Americans into one of the four acculturation styles. Instead, a simultaneous assessment of the two dimensions of cultural maintenance (i.e., engagement with the Black community) and cultural contact (i.e., engagement with the mainstream society) may better capture the complex interaction between social pressures and individual attitudes that may make acculturation a vital component for understanding African Americans' beliefs about their racial and national groups and provide insights into these beliefs that racial and national group membership alone cannot.

#### HYPOTHESES

Based on Du Bois's double consciousness (i.e., simultaneous racial and national group identities), as well as more contemporary scholarship on acculturation and Black identity (e.g., the analysis of racial salience and centrality provided by Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998), we examined the following series of hypotheses about acculturation, beliefs, and satisfaction in a survey study of African Americans:

1. Respondents would be more acculturated to their racial group (Black) than their national group (American).
2. Respondents would report *stronger* beliefs about their racial group than their national group in regard to vulnerability, injustice, distrust, superiority, and helplessness.
3. Respondents would report *lower* satisfaction with the circumstances of their racial group than their national group.
4. Greater racial acculturation (i.e., engagement with the Black community) would be associated with stronger beliefs about the racial group's vulnerability, injustice, distrust, and superiority and lower satisfaction with the racial group's current circumstances, whereas mainstream acculturation (i.e., engagement with mainstream society) would be unrelated to these measures.
5. Greater racial and mainstream acculturation would both be uniquely associated with stronger beliefs about the national group's vulnerability, injustice, distrust, and superiority, whereas satisfaction with the national group's circumstances would be *negatively* associated with racial acculturation and *positively* associated with mainstream acculturation.

## METHOD

### PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Surveys were completed in April 2002 by prospective jurors awaiting possible impaneling at a metropolitan municipal courthouse. The required jurors for each day are randomly selected by computer from a combined list of registered voters and adult licensed drivers. On four occasions over the course of a month, volunteers were recruited in a large courthouse waiting room and were invited to anonymously fill out a 20-minute survey for which each respondent received a candy bar as a token of appreciation for his or her participation. Approximately one half of those present each day agreed to participate, yielding an initial sample of 248. Of these, 232 submitted completed surveys, with a total of 100 respondents identifying their racial/ethnic group as "African American/Black" and their national group as "American." These 100 self-identified Black Americans (29% male and 71% female) were included in the data analyses and compose this study's sample. Their average age was 40.53 years ( $SD = 12.49$ ). The distribution on highest educational level attained for the participants was 18% graduate work, 17% college degree, 35% some college, 29% high school, and 1% no formal education. Family income distribution was 21% greater than \$75,000, 52% between \$30,000 and \$75,000, and 27% less than \$30,000. Apart from the male/female ratio, these demographics are consistent with national census data for African Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

### SURVEY MEASURES

The survey instrument developed for this study included four sections. In the first section, the respondents answered a series of items regarding their beliefs about their personal world. The second section comprised three parts: (a) identifying their racial/ethnic group, (b) completing a set of items about beliefs regarding this group, and (c) answering a separate set of items designed to measure their level of acculturation to this group. The third section of the questionnaire paralleled the second section but instead focused the participants on their American national group (in contrast to their racial/ethnic group). The final section of the survey instrument included demographic questions. Each of these measures is described below.

*Racial/ethnic acculturation and mainstream acculturation.* To measure levels of acculturation to racial/ethnic group culture and to mainstream American culture, we adapted the abridged version of the General Ethnicity



Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by Tsai, Ying, and Lee (2000). The original GEQ consists of two sets of 75 items (one for each cultural identity) and was designed specifically to provide a multidimensional measure of acculturation, which could be easily modified for different reference cultures. Most studies that have used the GEQ have used the abridged version, which is identical in structure and design to the original but consists of two sets of 37 items (Tsai et al., 2000). After eliminating all items pertaining to language use and fluency and two other items not relevant to Black Americans, we formed two parallel 22-item scales such that one assessed acculturation to one's racial/ethnic group whereas the second scale assessed acculturation to mainstream American society using identical items with "mainstream America" replacing "my racial/ethnic group." For each of these scales, items left blank by the respondents were replaced by the mean sample value for those items; such replacements were made for 12 participants.

Cronbach's alphas in the current sample were .85 for the racial/ethnic version and .91 for the mainstream American version. These are consistent with alphas of .92 reported by Tsai, Ying, and Lee (2001) for a sample of Chinese American students. Although we were unable to find validity data for the GEQ for African Americans, studies with other minority groups have shown that the GEQ adequately predicts group exposure (e.g., "When I was growing up, I was exposed to the culture of my racial/ethnic group"), affiliation (e.g., "I would prefer to live in a community made up of members of my racial/ethnic group"), and participation (e.g., "I listen to music created by my racial/ethnic group"), which, along with language, constitute the primary factors of the GEQ (Tsai et al., 2000).

*Beliefs about the personal world and about racial/ethnic and national groups.* We used a subset of items adapted from the Individual-Group Belief Inventory (IGBI) (Eidelson, 2003) to measure the respondents' personal beliefs about their personal world and about their racial/ethnic and national groups in regard to issues of vulnerability, injustice, distrust, superiority, and helplessness. The full IGBI measures each of these five belief domains at three different levels—beliefs about the personal world (e.g., "Other people are often unfair to me"), beliefs about the in-group (e.g., "I believe other groups are often unfair to my group"), and personal perceptions of the in-group's shared beliefs about itself (e.g., "My group believes that other groups are often unfair to it"). Only the items at the first two levels were administered.

Sample items from each three-item scale measuring beliefs about the group include "I believe my (racial/ethnic or national) group's safety and security are uncertain" (Vulnerability), "I believe my (racial/ethnic or national) group is

criticized by other groups more than it should be" (Injustice), "I believe that other groups will try to deceive my (racial/ethnic or national) group if given the chance" (Distrust), "I believe that my (racial/ethnic or national) group is superior to other groups in many ways" (Superiority), and "I believe that my (racial/ethnic or national) group has very little control over its future" (Helplessness). The five three-item scales are endorsed on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 5. The respondent's score for each belief scale is the arithmetic sum of the three items measuring that belief.

In a previous study with an American national group sample (Eidelson, 2003), a confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that a five-factor belief model with correlated factors provided an adequate and better fit to the data than alternative models with fewer factors. The internal reliabilities of the five three-item scales at each level of analysis in that study were found to be acceptable. In this study, the Cronbach's alphas for the Vulnerability, Injustice, Distrust, Superiority, and Helplessness scales, respectively, were .57, .66, .65, .60, and .55 for the personal-world scales; .58, .67, .65, .55, and .68 for the racial/ethnic group scales; and .69, .73, .73, .72, and .61 for the national group scales. These modest alphas are not unexpected given the brevity of the scales employed.

*Satisfaction with group circumstances.* Each of the three sets of IGBI items—personal world, racial/ethnic group, and national group—were followed by three items adapted from the five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). As examples, these three items for the racial/ethnic group were "I believe that in most ways my racial/ethnic group's current circumstances are close to ideal," "I believe that so far my racial/ethnic group has gotten the important things it wants," and "I believe that my racial/ethnic group's current situation is excellent." Parallel items made up the personal-world satisfaction and national group satisfaction measures. The Cronbach's alphas for the personal world, racial/ethnic group, and national group were .79, .81 and .75, respectively.

*Demographics.* The final section of the administered questionnaire included a series of demographic questions. Included as well were questions asking the respondents about their level of religiosity ("How religious are you, if at all?") and their political orientation ("Politically, where would you place yourself on the following scale?" with the scale ranging from "liberal" to "conservative"). Both of these measures used 7-point rating scales.

## RESULTS

Prior to conducting any analyses, we evaluated all the variables in the model for assumptions of normality and linearity. All of the variables were normally distributed. Similarly, there was no theoretical argument or empirical evidence to suggest a lack of linearity, making transformation of the variables unnecessary (Tabachnick, & Fidell, 1996). Table 1 presents the correlations among variables for the study sample. As indicated by the table, the five belief domain scales were significantly intercorrelated at the personal-world, racial group, and national group levels. We also examined the correlations between several demographic variables and our variables of interest. Neither age nor gender was correlated with our independent or dependent variables, but significant correlations did emerge for level of formal education, political ideology, and religiosity. These three variables were, therefore, included as covariates in the regression analyses. Finally, because of the unbalanced gender groups in our sample, we used independent sample *t* tests to determine whether men and women differed on any other demographic variables. No significant gender differences were found for any of the variables (*p*s ranging from .14 to .49).

### DIFFERENCES AMONG PERSONAL-WORLD, RACIAL-GROUP, AND NATIONAL-GROUP BELIEFS AND SATISFACTION

A paired-sample *t* test confirmed our hypothesis that the respondents would report significantly greater acculturation to their racial group than their national group,  $t(98) = 6.18, p < .001$ . Repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to examine the relative strengths of beliefs in each domain across the three levels of responses (i.e., personal world, racial group, and national group). These findings are summarized in Table 2. For most of the domains, significant differences were found between the strengths of the participants' racial group versus national group beliefs. However, these differences were not all in the hypothesized direction. Respondents reported stronger beliefs about their racial group than their national group on the Injustice ( $p < .001$ ) and Helplessness ( $p = .008$ ) scales, but they revealed stronger beliefs regarding their national group than their racial group for Vulnerability ( $p = .017$ ) and Distrust ( $p = .022$ ). There was no difference in reference to Superiority ( $p = .190$ ). As hypothesized, Blacks reported substantially lower satisfaction with their racial group's circumstances than with conditions of their national group ( $p < .001$ ).

TABLE 1  
Correlation Matrix and Cronbach Alphas

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1 V-p																					
2 I-p	39																				
3 D-p	34	39																			
4 S-p	34	39	50																		
5 H-p	18	15	23	09	24	41	15	33	06	17	31	38	28	26	00	08					
6 Sat-p	-20	23	14	36	22	40	09	-01	06	04	04	18	-14	-07	-09						
7 V-rg	-05	-15	-15	65	52	50	49	01	40	07	17	07	-10	15	-03	02					
8 I-rg	65	47	42	43	-09	42	25	24	20	16	-00	38	03								
9 D-rg	47	44	54	17	18	20	24	15	28	-02	20	03									
10 S-rg		40	11	10	34	20	25	39	01	23	08										
11 H-rg			08	11	12	07	07	53	-16	10	-07										
12. Sat-rg				19	30	33	39	33	40	-12	29										
13 V-ng					36	60	51	25	03	40	28										
14 I-ng						48	58	43	09	41	40										
15 D-ng							65	32	14	33	27										
16 S-ng								30	34	30	44										
17 H-ng									-03	11	06										
18 Sat-ng																					
19 Acc-rg																					
20 Acc-ng																					35
Cronbach $\alpha$	57	66	65	60	55	79	58	67	65	55	68	81	69	73	73	72	61	75	85	85	91

NOTE: Decimal places are omitted. V = Vulnerability, I = Injustice, D = Distrust, S = Superiority, H = Helplessness, Sat = Satisfaction, Acc = Acculturation, p = personal, rg = racial group, ng = national group. For  $r > .19, p < .05$ ; for  $r > .26, p < .01$ ; for  $r > .31, p < .001$ .

**TABLE 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics for Personal-World, Racial Group, and National Group Measures**

	<i>Personal World</i>		<i>Racial Group</i>		<i>National Group</i>	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Acculturation	NA	NA	77.91 <sup>b</sup>	11.25	69.13 <sup>c</sup>	13.04
Vulnerability	8.81 <sup>a</sup>	2.61	10.42 <sup>b</sup>	2.59	11.11 <sup>c</sup>	2.61
Injustice	7.30 <sup>a</sup>	2.58	11.72 <sup>b</sup>	2.39	9.46 <sup>c</sup>	2.89
Distrust	8.29 <sup>a</sup>	2.57	9.48 <sup>b</sup>	2.29	10.18 <sup>c</sup>	2.57
Superiority	7.49 <sup>a</sup>	2.45	8.92 <sup>b</sup>	2.49	9.35 <sup>b</sup>	2.84
Helplessness	5.56 <sup>a</sup>	1.98	8.01 <sup>b</sup>	2.82	7.30 <sup>c</sup>	2.50
Satisfaction	9.26 <sup>a</sup>	2.67	6.35 <sup>b</sup>	2.58	8.58 <sup>a</sup>	2.65

NOTE: NA = not applicable. For each row, means with different superscripts differ significantly from each other ( $p < .05$ ).

#### **RACIAL AND MAINSTREAM ACCULTURATION AS EXPLANATORY VARIABLES**

We conducted a series of regression analyses to test our hypotheses regarding the extent to which individual differences in racial and mainstream acculturation explain variation in the respondents' beliefs and level of satisfaction with their group circumstances. In all of these models we also included three demographic-related variables—level of formal education, political orientation, and religiosity—that had demonstrated significant simple correlations with at least two of the criterion measures. In addition, to control for the possible confounding effects of personal-world beliefs or personal-world satisfaction on our group-level variables (as Table 1 indicates, these personal-world scales tended *not* to be significantly correlated with either of our acculturation measures), we included each “matching” personal-world scale as a predictor where appropriate. Thus, for example, the personal-world Injustice scale was included in the regression models predicting beliefs about racial group and national group injustice (but not in any other models). Finally, because it is possible for racial acculturation to have different outcomes depending on one's mainstream acculturation (and vice versa), in all of the regression models we also tested the interaction between the two acculturation measures using racial and mainstream acculturation scores centered around their respective means. If the interaction term was not significant, we reported results with the interaction term omitted from the model. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 3. In addition to

TABLE 3  
**Regression Analysis Summaries and Effect Sizes for  
 Models Predicting Racial and National Group Beliefs and Satisfaction**

Predictor	Vulnerability		Injustice		Distrust		Superiority		Helplessness		Satisfaction	
	Racial	National	Racial	National	Racial	National	Racial	National	Racial	National	Racial	National
Covariates												
Education $\beta$	.04 (.00)	-.03 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.09 (.01)	.04 (.00)	-.15 (.03)	.09 (.01)	-.17 (.04)	.05 (.00)	-.14 (.02)	-.20* (.05)	.04 (.00)
Politics $\beta$	-.14 (.02)	-.07 (.01)	-.19 (.04)	.20 (.05)	.01 (.00)	.02 (.00)	.11 (.02)	.08 (.01)	.01 (.00)	.20 (.04)	.25* (.07)	-.12 (.02)
Religiosity $\beta$	-.12 (.01)	-.00 (.00)	-.10 (.01)	-.01 (.00)	-.13 (.02)	-.12 (.01)	-.05 (.00)	-.02 (.00)	-.17* (.03)	-.05 (.00)	-.23* (.06)	.01 (.00)
Personal beliefs $\beta$	.23* (.06)	.24* (.07)	.09 (.01)	.20* (.05)	.34*** (.12)	.30** (.11)	.39*** (.16)	.41*** (.21)	.40*** (.16)	.21* (.05)	.06 (.01)	.13 (.02)
Acculturation variables												
Racial (R)	.35* (.34)	.31** (.09)	.36*** (.12)	.34*** (.12)	.14 (.02)	.25* (.06)	.25* (.06)	.18 (.04)	.11 (.01)	.14 (.02)	-.29** (.09)	-.20* (.04)
Mainstream (M)	-.16 (.23)	.19 (.03)	-.10 (.01)	.34** (.11)	-.02 (.00)	.26* (.07)	-.10 (.01)	.40*** (.18)	-.13 (.02)	.04 (.00)	.49*** (.20)	.50*** (.22)
R $\times$ M interaction $\beta$	<i>ns</i>	-.33*** (.12)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
<i>F</i>	4.81	6.01	3.80	6.52	3.03	5.16	4.48	10.28	4.65	1.75	5.53	5.36
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.25***	.33***	.20**	.31***	.17**	.26***	.23***	.41***	.24***	.11	.27***	.27***

NOTE: Effect sizes (partial  $\eta^2$ ) are in parentheses. Politics = political orientation.  
 \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

reporting the statistical significance of standardized regression weights, the table also provides estimates of effect sizes (i.e., partial eta-squared values) for each predictor variable.

*Beliefs about the racial group.* Examining the racial group belief measures first, as hypothesized, racial acculturation was found to be a significant predictor of the respondents' beliefs about their racial group in regard to Vulnerability, Injustice, and Superiority, but not for either distrust or helplessness. In each of these three domains, greater racial acculturation was associated with stronger beliefs. Also as predicted, mainstream acculturation was not significantly linked with any of the five beliefs about the racial group. Neither education nor political orientation was a significant predictor in any of these models. Religiosity was significant only in reference to Helplessness, with more religious Blacks perceiving their racial group as less helpless. With the exception of the Injustice domain, the personal-world beliefs were significantly positively associated with their parallel racial-group beliefs.

*Beliefs about the national group.* Turning to the national group belief measures, as hypothesized, *both* racial and mainstream acculturation were significant positive predictors of beliefs about the national group in reference to Vulnerability, Injustice, and Distrust. For the Superiority domain, mainstream acculturation was significant but racial acculturation fell just short of statistical significance ( $p = .051$ ). In the case of the Vulnerability model, the acculturation interaction term was also statistically significant, indicating that mainstream acculturation was a positive predictor of the criterion measure when racial acculturation was low,  $F(1, 35) = 9.77, p = .004$ , but was nonsignificant ( $p = .870$ ) when racial acculturation was high. Neither acculturation variable contributed to predicting beliefs about national group Helplessness. None of the three demographic predictors was significant in any of the belief domain models. For all five belief domains, the personal-world beliefs were significantly positively associated with their parallel national group beliefs.

*Racial and national group satisfaction.* Contrary to our hypothesis, not only racial acculturation but also mainstream acculturation was a significant predictor of the respondents' perceptions of their racial group's circumstances (as measured by the adapted Satisfaction with Life Scale). More specifically, racial acculturation was negatively linked and mainstream acculturation was positively linked with assessments of the racial group's well-being, with the more racially acculturated and less mainstream-acculturated respondents viewing their racial group's circumstances most

unfavorably. In addition, education and religiosity were significant negative predictors and political orientation was a significant positive predictor of perceived group circumstances. That is, respondents tended to perceive the racial group's situation as less favorable if they were more educated, more religious, and more liberal. The regression model for perceived well-being of the national group also yielded two significant acculturation predictors. As hypothesized, racial acculturation was negatively associated and mainstream acculturation was positively associated with assessments of national group circumstances. None of the three demographic variables contributed significantly to this model. Personal-world satisfaction was not a significant predictor in either of these two models.

## DISCUSSION

We selected the five belief domains of Vulnerability, Injustice, Distrust, Superiority, and Helplessness because of their potential importance in defining individual and collective worldviews and in triggering or constraining group mobilization (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). As such, these beliefs bear directly on race relations in the United States, as well as on relations between the United States and other nations, particularly in the wake of September 11. Not surprisingly, we found that our participants perceived their racial group's circumstances as being significantly less favorable than the conditions of their American national group. However, contrary to our initial expectations, the pattern of findings regarding the specific beliefs we examined was more complex and did not simply reflect a global mind-set in which Black Americans consistently held stronger beliefs about their racial group than about their national group across all domains. In particular, although the respondents saw their racial group as being treated more unjustly and as more helpless than their national group, they viewed their national group as more vulnerable and as requiring a more distrustful stance than their racial group (the Superiority domain revealed no differences).

In hindsight, it is not difficult to speculate about why this pattern of differences emerged, given the context of contemporary race relations in the United States combined with the salience of the "war on terrorism" in the post-9/11 period (recall that these data were collected approximately 6 months after the attacks). More specifically, issues of national security and preparedness achieved prominence in the American national consciousness following September 11, and these concerns are well described in part by heightened worries about collective vulnerability and keen doubts about



whether other groups or nations (or *which* other groups or nations) should be trusted. Blacks, as fellow members of the American national group, presumably shared these reactions, and the intensity of the perceived national threat may well have overshadowed any longer standing parallel concerns of the Black participants regarding racial group vulnerability and distrust.

The contrasting difference in the Injustice domain—with Blacks seeing their racial group as much more a victim of unfair treatment than their national group—was consistent with our prediction. Despite the injustice discourse that gained prominence following 9/11, in which the United States and its citizens were viewed in many quarters as entirely undeserving of the violence directed against them, the long and profound history of racial oppression and discrimination in this country clearly remained more salient for our participants. Finally, the discrepancy observed in Blacks' stronger beliefs about the helplessness of their racial group compared to their national group might actually have been exacerbated by post-9/11 events. That is, the national response to the terrorist attacks, including military action against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, was likely viewed (at least initially) by the majority of U. S. citizens—regardless of race—as a demonstration of American power and agency, the antithesis of defenselessness or inability to affect outcomes (e.g., Eidelson & Plummer, 2003). At the same time, Black Americans may have remained acutely aware of their racial group's comparative failure and relative impotence in its own collective efforts to fully bridge the divide that still separates Blacks from Whites in privilege and standing.

The results of our acculturation regression analyses in which the impact of different variables was statistically controlled also help to clarify the dual identity dynamics experienced by Black Americans. Racial acculturation was significantly associated with the Black participants' beliefs about their racial group (in regard to Vulnerability, Injustice, and Superiority, but not Distrust or Helplessness), with those individuals most deeply immersed in Black culture holding these beliefs most strongly. In contrast, none of the racial group beliefs was related to the Black participants' degree of mainstream acculturation. That is, the extent to which Blacks viewed their racial group as vulnerable, unjustly treated, and so forth, was not directly linked to the extent of their involvement with the White-dominant society. In short, in these arenas racial acculturation often mattered and mainstream acculturation did not. For Blacks, these important beliefs about their racial group appear to emerge from their engagement in Black culture, and these convictions are neither heightened nor diminished by contact with the broader culture within the United States.

But when we turn from Black Americans' beliefs about their racial group to beliefs about their American national group, we find that the latter tended

to be linked to both racial and mainstream acculturation. With the marginal exception of superiority, whenever degree of mainstream acculturation was positively associated with strength of national group beliefs, the extent of racial acculturation was also a significant and positive contributor in the regression analysis (for Vulnerability, the interaction was also significant). In other words, individual differences in Blacks' beliefs about their national group (specifically in regard to vulnerability, injustice, and distrust) were tied to their level of immersion in both Black and mainstream culture. So the Black respondents who believed the American national group to be most vulnerable, most unjustly treated, and most in need of a distrustful posture were those participants who were most engaged in both Black and mainstream culture simultaneously. It appears that both forms of acculturation experience support these beliefs, and they do so in different ways that do not fully overlap.

As an important generalization from our full set of analyses examining acculturation and beliefs, in almost all cases where racial or mainstream acculturation was related to respondents' beliefs about either their racial or national group (the exception was Helplessness), the direction of this association was positive. That is, acculturation was consistently linked with more strongly held beliefs about the in-group. This no doubt reflects the strong influence that group membership can exert on beliefs. In particular, beliefs consistently validated and reinforced by other group members (e.g., regarding group vulnerability, injustice, etc.) are likely to be held more strongly by those individuals more immersed in that communal network. Thus, more racially acculturated African Americans can be expected to more fully embrace the collective worldviews of the Black community. A parallel process would similarly contribute to the positive relationship between mainstream cultural involvement and stronger beliefs about the national group.

This pattern suggests that it may be broadly true that cultural involvement strengthens the very beliefs identified as potential triggers of intergroup conflict (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). Whether there are groups in which acculturation does not bring with it heightened concerns over group vulnerability, injustice, and distrust, along with in-group bias reflected in convictions of superiority, is an interesting empirical question. To the extent that these four beliefs foster group identification, cohesiveness, and mobilization against perceived out-group threat, it seems that acculturation processes would also serve in part to achieve these group-preservation goals. However, we should emphasize here that it is not our intention to suggest that the Black community is monolithic in its beliefs. To the contrary, the purpose of this article is to show how beliefs about one's racial and national group are shaped by cultural involvement. Nonetheless, we do believe that individuals are more likely to

receive validation and support for beliefs about racial injustice, vulnerability, and related domains from the Black community than from anywhere else.

A final and intriguing perspective on Black Americans' double consciousness is provided by our investigation of how mainstream and racial acculturation are linked to personal assessments of group well-being. Here, our key findings were comparable in regard to both national group and racial group satisfaction. The degree of mainstream acculturation was positively associated and the extent of racial acculturation was negatively linked with the Black participants' perception of their groups' circumstances, after controlling for other variables. That is, Blacks who were more involved in broader American culture tended to feel better about their racial group and national group circumstances than less mainstream-engaged Blacks, whereas Blacks who were more involved in Black culture tended to reach less favorable judgments about the conditions facing both their racial and national groups.

On one hand, this pattern is a testament to the strength of the American component of Black identity in that those who are able (e.g., due to an adequate income) to participate in the mainstream culture see such participation as a positive for both themselves and their racial group. However, it also indicates that racial and mainstream acculturation may work in opposite directions for Black Americans, and it further suggests that these divergent influences can be problematic for efforts to achieve equality for Blacks in the United States while preserving multiple cultural identities. If we consider the two extremes, our results indicate that Black "assimilationists"—having embraced mainstream culture and simultaneously rejected focused engagement in the Black community—are most likely to see both their national and racial group's circumstances favorably. In contrast, the Black "separatists"—having rejected mainstream culture while embracing engagement in Black culture—are most likely to hold negative assessments regarding the conditions of both their national and racial groups.

On a speculative basis, this would seem to suggest that Blacks can feel better about the situation faced by their racial group if they distance themselves from the Black community and nurture their unhyphenated American identities—perhaps because such steps diminish personal alienation from White-dominated culture and reduce awareness of the problems confronting Blacks as a group. Because this path apparently leads to more favorable assessments of the nation's collective circumstances as well, the combined result may plausibly lead Black assimilationists to greater support for the status quo in areas of social and economic policy as well as to weaker allegiance to efforts aimed at narrowing the racial divide in this country. Further research is obviously needed to substantiate this provocative thesis, particularly because there is evidence that despite its seemingly optimistic outlook,

this Black subgroup is actually at higher risk for depression and other mental health problems than Blacks who are more involved with Black culture (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995).

Although we believe the results reported here are intriguing and of considerable social import, several limitations that have implications for generalizability should be highlighted. First, our sample was deliberately limited to African Americans only. Clearly, there are many other visible “ethnic” groups (e.g., Arabs and Chicanos) that are commonly both racialized and marginalized. The concept of double consciousness may well be equally applicable to these other groups, and even to those White Americans who have developed a racial awareness and identity (either racist or nonracist). Moreover, an increasing number of individuals prefer a biracial or multiracial identity, and even the Black community, often considered to be more homogeneous than other groups, is becoming increasingly diversified by recent immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean (Hu-DeHart, 2001).

Taken together, these observations may suggest that the “Black” racial category used in our investigation no longer adequately represents today’s pluralistic society and, therefore, is no longer useful. We are sympathetic with the first part of this argument but reject the second. We recognize the fuzzy (often imaginary) boundaries of contemporary racial groups and regret that a system of analysis that addresses the heterogeneous identities in the Black community was beyond the scope of this study. On the other hand, we believe that the Black/African American category continues to be a meaningful one, not only because of the shared history of oppression but also because Black-White relations and conflicts continue to have tremendous emotional meaning for members of both groups. The public’s intense interest in the O. J. Simpson trial and its furor following the police brutality of Rodney King, the shooting of Amadou Diallo, and the publication of *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) are all relatively recent reminders of just how meaningful the Black-White categories still are.

Although our respondents were quite diverse on a wide range of demographic measures, it is unclear exactly how representative they are of the African American community. Having access to prospective jurors at a municipal courthouse enabled us to recruit from a quasi-random sample of Black adults in a large metropolitan area. But despite the reasonably high participation rate, we clearly had no control over who responded to the summons for jury duty or who declined to participate in our survey. In this context, the underrepresentation of men in our sample (29%) is particularly evident. However, as noted earlier, statistical comparisons across independent, dependent, and demographic variables failed to reveal any gender differences. It is less clear whether other demographic categories were underrepresented as

well, but it should be noted that individuals must be either registered voters or licensed drivers to receive a jury summons, and that those who are incarcerated, who had been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for more than 1 year, and who cannot physically or mentally perform the functions of a juror do not meet the eligibility requirements to serve.

It is also important to acknowledge the substantial intercorrelations among some of our dependent variables (see Table 1). The decision not to combine these measures into broader composite scales was based on the theoretical distinctions among the constructs of interest (e.g., the five belief domains). At this early stage of empirical testing we deemed it preferable to evaluate the data for each variable despite the increased risk of Type I error. This view was supported by the different patterns of results that were obtained. In this regard, the directional variation in the findings for different belief domains (see means in Table 2) also argues against the impact of potential response bias in our survey measures.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of this study can create the false impression that the beliefs we measured and the respondents' level of acculturation are rigid and immutable. There is no evidence for this view, and we do not subscribe to it. Although politically relevant beliefs do tend to be somewhat stable in adults, it is also true that individuals continue to grow and change, often in profound ways throughout their lifetime. Thus, although our beliefs about our racial identity and attitudes about acculturation may seem unlikely to change at any given point, both have been shown to shift considerably over time (e.g., Berry & Sam, 1997; Parham, 1989). Indeed, although we deliberately conceptualized the acculturation variables as the agents of change, it is important to remember that the correlational nature of this study precludes us from making any conclusions regarding causality. It is quite possible that the relationship between acculturation and beliefs is reciprocal, or even caused by a third variable. Certainly, both are susceptible to change, necessitating that researchers be continuously aware of the contemporary social and political context—including current world events—when attempting to understand the relationships that emerge from their analysis. We have tried to do that here, particularly in light of the 9/11 attacks 6 months before our data collection.

Thanks largely to the multicultural movement, Du Bois's notion of a double consciousness has gained widespread acceptance in the scientific community and growing support from the general public. Although many White Americans continue to insist on a single national identity (e.g., "Why can't we all just be 'Americans?'"), there is generally at least a grudging recognition that members of minority groups will identify with their own group, as well as with the national group. Black Americans today are similarly more

likely to acknowledge their dual identities and loyalties, and both groups may be moving toward greater comfort with multiple identities such that it is becoming increasingly uncommon for Black Americans to be explicitly forced to choose one identity over another. We believe that as with migrant groups, acculturation beliefs can provide insight into both minority and majority group members' family functioning, education achievement, mental health, and a variety of other domains where race-group differences have previously been identified. We hope other scholars join us in exploring these relationships, as insights into these issues may provide new opportunities for both healing and understanding.

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