

# Two-ness?: Leveraging Du Bois to Explore a Future of Black Male College Athlete Empowerment

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## Abstract

W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/2007) underscored the reality of being Black in a white-dominated society. Du Bois's (1903/2007) notion of double consciousness is a state where "one ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (p. 8). The American represents proximity to whiteness (i.e., non-Black), while being a Negro represents a racial struggle in an oppressive system. This perspective sets a foundation for inquiry related to Black male college athletes who embody the mentioned dilemmas.

Their two-ness—Black, an athlete; two representations of the stark contrast in realities and humanity. Being Black in a racialized society brings forth experiences of dehumanization linked to racism, such as exploitation, discrimination, stereotypes, and villainization (Dumas & ross, 2016). However, holding the title of a college athlete without factoring in race provides many benefits, such as access and personal and professional development. When race and athlete status are viewed together, oppressive actions come back into the fold. Thus, Black male college athletes exist in a system that devalues their humanity (as individuals, students, and athletes) yet has the potential to provide economic, professional, and (psycho)social benefits (Singer, 2008).

Grounded in a critical epistemological approach, this presentation will explore a future of Black male college athlete empowerment via multiple stakeholders. Empowering the Black male college athlete requires effort outside of the athlete themselves (Howe & Johnston-Guerrero, 2021). Faculty, athletic staff members, and external stakeholders (e.g., donors and community partners) also play an influential role in combatting the exploitative nature of the college athletic environment and maximizing the benefits for Black male college athletes.