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**Developing Development: Fostering Culturally Relevant Player  
Development in Basketball Culture through Adaptable Pedagogy and  
Responsive Teaching.**

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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to my amazing wife Morgan. I thank God for the many ways she enhances my life every day, and for giving me the many kicks in the butt I needed to write this thesis and complete my Master's.

To my parents Kendall and Pam, sister Rhaven, and the rest of my family, for always being everything I need and more and going out of their way to make sure I am never without their love and support.

To both Dr. Anthony L. Brown and Dr. Keffrelyn D. Brown, for seeing something in me that I do not yet fully see in myself and pushing me to not only complete this thesis but find ways to impact those around me better.

And lastly, any coach that I've ever had that has played a role in my athletic success and my personal development. Special shoutouts to my Dad, Coach J, Coach T, Coach P, and finally, Coach U for being instrumental in my ability to find ways to impact basketball culture positively.

## **Abstract**

# **Developing Development: Fostering Culturally Relevant Player Development in Basketball Culture through Adaptable Pedagogy and Responsive Teaching.**

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My thesis highlights the limited attention given to culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching in basketball player development. Culture impacts behavior and attitudes toward learning and success. By addressing this oversight in literature, we can integrate essential cultural elements into the overall development of basketball players. Five crucial categories emerge in the literature on basketball player development: the linear trajectory of development, the transactional nature of development, the critical traits of successful development, the pivotal role of the teacher/coach, and the need to further develop development. Although I gained valuable insights from the literature regarding theories, methodologies, questions, concerns, and results related to basketball player development, I found that guidance on incorporating culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy needs to be improved. By better understanding and implementing these elements, we can positively impact basketball culture and bring out the best in all participants.

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# **INTRODUCTION OF THE PROBLEM**

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

“Teaching,” according to dictionary.com, conveys knowledge or skill and gives instruction. The same website defines “coaching” as giving instruction or advice in the capacity of a coach to instruct. To “train” is to develop or form the habits, thoughts, or behaviors by discipline and instruction; to make proficient by instruction and practice, as in some art, profession, or work. While the verbiage describing these three actions is somewhat different, the one constant we see in all three is that of instructing. When the cultural context surrounding these actions is altered, the foundation of instructing is also changed. I write this thesis from the perspective of a basketball player who has experienced both the good and bad of not only receiving instruction but giving instruction as it relates to the player development, teaching, and training of basketball players. In basketball, especially in training and player development, culture greatly affects the teacher and learner experience. It contributes heavily to meeting the requirements for a successful, culturally relevant exchange between the teacher and student. My parents said I started playing basketball when I had enough coordination to stand and shoot a ball on a Fisher-Price goal without falling. I started partaking in what would be considered my first basketball instruction shortly after. While I trained and received lessons from different people with different basketball backgrounds from time to time until middle school, most of the basketball instruction I received came from my dad. My dad grew up in rural Louisiana, where he played varsity basketball as an eighth grader. After playing five years of high school basketball, he earned a Division 1 basketball scholarship to a mid-major college in Louisiana, then transferred to a smaller college in Austin for two years.

We would go to the gym at least five days a week for several hours despite my commitment to academic excellence and the long hours of his job. Most days, we would work on various skills he thought were needed to succeed at the “next level.” At the time, he was the only person in my life I was consistently trained by that played at the college level, and he was my dad, so his word was the law when it came to anything basketball. This is also where my foundation for basketball culture started to form. Outside of just skill development, I began to learn other things that I couldn’t yet describe as an adolescent, but things that were said to better my chances of navigating this space successfully; things like the learning of technical and cultural rules and regulations, a cultural code of conduct conducted towards not only my dad but other players and coaches who were to be involved in his space in the future, the implementation of a baseline of what coaching and training is. Once I got to middle school, everything surrounding my development as a basketball player started to change. Three days a week, my dad and I would stay true to our normal routine of countless shots and way too many hours in the gym by ourselves. The rest of the week began to look different, however. For the next six years or so, my dad relinquished responsibility on the court to people he trusted. We trained with just about everybody we could think of in the greater Austin area in hopes that I would gain a competitive advantage when playing in both games for the school I went to and AAU games on the weekend. High school coaches, college assistant coaches, local “trainers,” friends of my dad who “knew basketball.” You name it; we tried it. I wasn’t sure what it was then, but I could start to feel even as an adolescent when I was getting better as a player versus when somebody was putting me through drills.

Certain cultural requirements for successful exchanges in this space were becoming clearer to me and my dad, who, for the most part, was responsible for me being in these types of spaces in the first place. After much trial and error, my dad, my AAU

coach, Coach J, an ex-NBA player, and my dad's golf buddy, who had just retired from the NBA, Coach T, were responsible for most of my early on-court development. It was only appropriate that my dad pre-qualified the coaches he felt had the content knowledge to help me get to where they had already been, the "highest level" (Gay, 2002). Utilizing this training and development system started yielding the results we sought. I not only started to become a much better basketball player, but as I got older, I began to pinpoint different aspects of culture within the basketball space that best contributed to my development. For example, I realized I preferred working out with Coach T and Coach J more than my dad because the workouts would be more relaxed, better structured from a technical standpoint, and they made me less anxious about messing up, even though my dad was always watching and commenting on things I should have done better. I also noticed I preferred teachers who explained to me why we were doing certain things in our workouts, as opposed to someone just telling me that their particular curriculum implemented in their way was "needed" to be successful. I found myself getting the most out of these experiences in environments where the students and teachers emphasized group positivity, high-level learning, and mastery of technical concepts, leaving mistakes in the workout and not taking them home for constant scrutiny and analysis. As I matured physically, technically, and psychologically with age, I had many offers to play in college by my senior year in high school. I would eventually accept a basketball scholarship to Arkansas-Little Rock and play three years there before completing my final year at the University of Texas. While I still preserved many of the non-stop extra work habits I established with my dad, my development in college started to become more specific. Instead of just going to the gym for hours working on some of everything, my college coaches intervened and helped guide my training sessions and overall development. Now that I had to play a particular role on the team, the goal of my workouts switched from

overall improvement to honing in on and mastering what the team needed from me while also finding that balance of working on my weaknesses enough to where our opponents could not easily exploit them. This process always started with considerable film study with my coaches. Being able to see what they needed me to do, where I was excelling, and what I needed to work on within the context of us winning games allowed us to put together more efficient training plans that would not only get the best out of me within the greater team context but also keep my body from breaking down due to excessive, physical workloads. This process started to bleed into my summer workouts back home with Coach T, Coach J, and my dad. This newfound strategy of incorporating the hard work we would put in anyway, with the guided coaching and training based on film study, helped me finish my college career a much better player in many ways than when I started. I grew a few inches, got physically stronger, and used this new way of working out to increase my on-court production. I didn't know then, but I noticed culture in other important areas that affected my production individually and our team's success. Coaches like to use the term "energy" quite a bit in college. I realized the best workouts I've ever done and the most successful teams I've been on harnessed energy in more positive ways than negative. The players who made the most individual improvement during their time in college always brought good "energy" (physical and emotional) to get the most out of their workouts, film sessions, weight room lifts, etc., and made improvements for the betterment of the team their focus, as opposed to prioritizing their success. The more successful teams I've been on did everything right: schedule meaningful practices, ensure players internalize team concepts instead of giving up on them, elite level on-court communication, and the willingness to make adjustments, etc. The coaches on good teams ran a tight ship but were fair and genuinely cared about players being their best. Eventually, everybody got along better off the court than on it, which allowed for

meaningful dialogue in various ways throughout the seasons that brought everyone closer together. Much accountability for play and actions off the court came from players instead of coaches. This was the culture at one of the highest levels of team basketball. After this experience, I sought ways to contribute to these environments whenever and however I could. Five years of college and three surgeries later, I was ready for professional basketball. At the end of my college career 2017, I noticed an uptick in trainers and player development “coaches” everywhere. More videos of drills and people explaining them were popping up on social media. Popular player development coaches and “NBA trainers” gained international notoriety in basketball. Acquaintances of mine on my college teams and back home, who in the past would regularly go to the gym on their own or with a family member or friend and workout, now all had trainers and coaches tasked with “getting them to the next level.” I knew I had a good foundation back home, but once Coach T and Coach J got different jobs out of town and grew sick of going to the gym with Dad, I was left looking for answers. While I did most of my training myself using techniques I had learned from Dad and previous coaches, I tried every type of training/player development program that would give me a chance to have a good rookie season as a professional.

After a somewhat successful 1<sup>st</sup> season, I knew I needed more structure and stability in how I got better in the offseason. I started training exclusively with Coach U, one of my assistant coaches from my rookie season, who just so happened to also live in Austin, and Coach P, an up-and-coming holistic strength and conditioning coach. I’d finally found the appropriate teachers and the right training system that I strongly felt would maximize my potential as a player. From a development standpoint, these guys were the pinnacle of any training or coaching I’d received up to this point. Not only did I find it to be the most technical and advanced way to harness my particular basketball

strengths and further develop my deficiencies, but they always provided the necessary culture to get the best out of whoever decided to train in a way that showed up in the player's development on and off the court. I thought all my experiences up to this point were preparing me for a long career playing at "the highest level," but something entirely different happened. Not only did Coach U and Coach P help me navigate my 5-year professional basketball career as a player, but they also gave me the foundation to teach and instruct at a high level. Receiving the high-level instruction that made me a successful player at that next level, and now learning the intricacies of teaching from guys who have not only proven they can help people succeed at the highest level but who also have enough humility to be open to learning and improving their techniques and methodologies, really opened my eyes to the lack of culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally responsive teachers in the basketball training/player development space.

#### **CURRENT LIMITATIONS OF BASKETBALL TRAINING**

I am uniquely positioned to speak on the limitations of basketball training and coaching. I have experienced firsthand how ignoring aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy in basketball can affect the ability to give and receive meaningful instruction efficiently. I have received what would be considered good training, where my trainer teaches in a way that blends the actual education with the necessary cultural aspects surrounding said lesson, allowing my skills to translate over to games seamlessly and efficiently. I have received lousy training, where although I am participating in a workout as best I can physically, I can feel how the cultural aspects involving the teacher, the curriculum, the environment in which I'm training, or any combination of the three is keeping me from efficiently acquiring the necessary skills to be "successful." I have

given out what I now know to be culturally ignorant, misinformed, disorganized, and inefficient basketball instruction to players who relied on my expertise to get them to what they thought was their “next level.”

#### **IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL INCLUSION IN PLAYER DEVELOPMENT**

Conversely, I have administered culturally relevant workouts that have gotten high praise from elite-level players, coaches, and parents alike, where important characteristics of culturally responsive teaching are adequately utilized to create an optimal learning environment. Elements of culturally responsive teaching and how they are integrated into curricula concerning the development of basketball players on and off the court have significant implications on both the teaching and learning experience. Most times, when I noticed the workouts were lacking in any way, some sort of cultural disconnect was present, which affected the lesson either directly or indirectly. This keeps the player from fully absorbing, conceptualizing, and utilizing the lessons they are receiving. This keeps coaches and trainers from realizing that they are unknowingly (sometimes even knowingly) giving out insincere or incomplete instruction, or it drastically hinders the instructor’s ability to properly communicate what could potentially be a good lesson. Responsible instructors being able to connect the necessary principles of comprehensive learning with a deep understanding and appreciation for culture is a significant component of culturally relevant pedagogy, as it directly affects the ability of those who are receiving instruction to take responsibility for, yet still maintain a deep interest in the administration of their curriculum and their overall education (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

## **Chapter 2: Advancing Argument for Cultural Relevance**

In this thesis, I am advancing the theoretical argument that the values of the culture as it pertains to the culturally relevant pedagogy and the culturally responsive teaching needed in the training of basketball players and their development on and off the court have not been fully conceptualized in the literature. Culture influences the behaviors, values, and attitudes of those learning and instructing and plays a significant part in defining and attaining success. While only partially nonexistent, the empirical evidence supporting the importance of culture, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally relevant pedagogy in this space is sporadic at best. Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as utilizing different cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of whoever is learning as conduits for teaching them more effectively. This idea is founded on the belief that when pertinent knowledge and skills are situated within what the students believe to be accurate based on their cultural filter, the information is more meaningful and appealing and learned more efficiently and comprehensively (Gay, 2000). For these learning spaces rooted in culturally relevant pedagogy to exist, it starts with instructors having a mastery of the knowledge and pedagogical skills needed to administer instruction effectively and efficiently. This is just as important to basketball coaches and trainers trying to develop their players as it is to teachers teaching students in a classroom, as the importance of implementation of necessary qualifications and effective instructing should be synonymous in both situations. In this context of the thesis, trainers and coaches must understand that they must be educated on how to design culturally relevant criteria, how to demonstrate and build communities of critical caring, and how to continue to add to their mastery of the subject they are teaching to effectively instruct and communicate with any and everybody



that enters their particular learning environment (Gay, 2000). Teachers who need to be sufficiently prepared to be culturally responsive will not be able to adequately pinpoint the elements of culture and everyday participation necessary to combat student underachievement fully. Basketball's theoretical model of culturally relevant pedagogy falls apart without properly equipped instructors. Suppose the coach/trainer needs to put students/players in situations that positively impact how they learn. In that case, their cultural competence in the area, or their critical consciousness, then both the instructor and learner are doing a disservice. The players' ability to reason and problem solve while displaying intellectual, moral, and technical (skill, physical, etc.) growth, then using these skills to identify, analyze, and solve problems on and off the court while at the same time appreciating and never compromising elements of their own culture while simultaneously furthering their understanding of other cultures around them should take precedence in how coaches and trainers administer their curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Too often, what coaches, trainers, players, parents, researchers, etc., want to accomplish, or what they define as success and failure in the basketball player development space, is too limited and often incomplete.

### **Chapter 3: The Significance of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

. Gay and Ladson-Billings argue the significance of culture in environments centered around quality instruction and student achievement, along with the lack of inclusion of culture being studied and applied in the real world. What exactly is being done to make sure trainers and coaches have, or even desire to obtain, the mastery required to adequately present content knowledge to players and potential learners of the game (Gay, 2002)? So many people half-heartedly justify why they are qualified to jump into this space and immediately begin giving instructions. The coaches and trainers putting the players through workouts are just as important as the workouts themselves. What are our trainers doing to look reflexively at their practice? Do they desire to obtain the communication competency needed to build the proper learning communities to implement and administer meaningful curricula effectively? In this space, the cultural norm is that the player (and their guardian a lot of the time) is supposed to come to the trainer or coach and that trainer or coach is supposed to make that player a better basketball player. Period. We need to hear about the trainers and coaches wanting to improve their understanding, hoping to be better teachers and communicators, and players in environments where respectfully challenging their trainers and coaches are not frowned upon, which begs the question; do the players see themselves as students and the trainers and coaches as teachers? If so, what are the participation protocols in discourse? Do the interactions follow the typical passive-receptive communication style where the players adopt a more passive role in their learning experience (Gay, 2002)?

Players having the knowledge and opportunity to ask about why the curriculum is the way it is and how it is supposed to make them better is an essential part of the culturally relevant pedagogy that should be occurring between instructor and learner. It will also help better define what “success” looks like. It is imperative that both the instructor and learner figure out which problems on and off the court require the most attention to maximize everyone’s experience (Ladson-Billings, 1995). How can we, as trainers, coaches, instructors, “experts,” and teachers, better develop these aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy and more to avoid the equivalent of *classroom death* on the basketball court (Ladson-Billings, 2014)? This occurs when instructors lose interest in reaching every learner. The learners give up, which can lead to underachievement in a variety of ways: did not get to the “next level,” being labeled as not a good player, being a bad teammate, having a low talent level, few, if any translatable life skills, no responsibility from yourself or anybody in your basketball circle, etc. As this space continues to evolve, the absence of culturally responsive teachers and culturally relevant pedagogy makes the possibility of outcomes like *classroom death* occurring in the basketball space more likely than they have to be. Everyone involved in this culture must acknowledge the cultural aspects and their effects on the desired results, then do what they can to make the *culture* better first. Once the overshadowing of basketball culture in the literature is addressed, those involved can start to formulate a plan to better identify and implement the relevant aspects of culture in basketball training and player development needed to accumulate the desired results, thus giving everybody a chance to get to the next level.

## **REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE**

### **Chapter 4: Methods for Conducting Research**

Regarding the corresponding literature review criteria, I decided to only incorporate research material published in the last twenty years. I just turned 29 a few weeks ago, corresponding with my earliest memories of experiencing coaching and consistent player development. This was the time in my life when my Dad was my primary basketball instructor. This specific period is also essential to the context of this thesis. Firstly, I received my official introduction to various technical basketball skills and my understanding of basketball culture. Secondly, this was before a significant shift in basketball culture regarding training, coaching, and player development. For example, players like LeBron James (6'9) and Carmelo Anthony (6'8) had just been drafted into the NBA in 2003. College recruiters and professional scouts around the world were shifting their interest to more extensive, taller players who could not only hold their own physically/defensively against other larger and imposing players but had a variety of skills with the ball in their hands on the perimeter, and were not limited to solely playing one position. Different aspects of basketball training and player development culture began to change, as curriculum exclusively meant for guards in the past was now being implemented in the workouts and play style of much larger players. This 2003 NBA draft class also saw players like Kirk Hinrich, Boris Diaw, Matt Bonner, Mo Williams, and Kyle Korver have great success for a long time in the NBA for one main reason; they were all elite 3pt shooters. Before the renaissance of Steph Curry and Klay Thompson, these "3pt Specialists" were considered diamonds in the rough at the time. They were

finding guys who could make multiple three-pointers every game while maintaining a good shooting percentage, revolutionizing how teams constructed their rosters and put their offensive systems together. The ability to “spread the floor” and have three-point shooters around a physical force who could always get inside the three-point line (i.e., Lebron James) started becoming crucial in running an efficient offense in the NBA. This philosophy trickled down from the pros to college, high school, and even to the grassroots level. The ability to shoot three-pointers at a high percentage allowed kids who may not have been the most athletic a chance to show their value on their high school and college teams. Trainers and player development coaches like my dad then picked up on the importance of this culture shift in the basketball world. Developing the ability to make three-pointers consistently became an integral part of the curriculum in general training sessions, especially in mine. If you could make multiple three-pointers a game efficiently, the hope was that having this skill would help get kids chances to play at the “next level.” This time was also a few years before when many basketball players in the highly competitive space “needed” to have trainers and player development coaches to help them get to the next level. In the literature, we get to see the different types of studies conducted over the last two decades. Considering all of the other methods, tests, surveys, and experiments over the years, the idea of culture in basketball was consistently and sometimes indirectly pushed to the back, while different “advancements” in technical development and contextual methodologies moved more to the front.

Looking for articles to complete my literature review took much work. As far as finding articles related to culture in basketball training and player development, I had to

stick to searches about general basketball training and more technical player development techniques to find any relevant information observing the effects of different types of training and player development and how “success” in this space was interpreted and measured. Research on various culturally relevant pedagogical aspects and their effects on successful basketball training were minimal compared to the thousands of articles we found about the former. The literature acquired to complete this thesis provides several generalities about training in the basketball space. A lot of the studies about how basketball training and player development sessions are conducted and studied, and what we know about the final results of these studies can be broken down into five categories: development is linear, development is transactional, what successful development should look like, successful development relies on the teacher/trainer/coach, and the need for further developing player development curriculum.

## **Chapter 5: Generalities about Current Player Development**

### **DEVELOPMENT IS LINEAR**

Parts of the literature suggest that given the right formula, the development of basketball players should progress from one phase to the next in a sequential series of steps. Gál-Pottyondy and Petró (2021) suggest testing various athletic skills and anthropometric measures to help trainers and scouts determine which skills can be valuable indicators of talented players. The literature studied the application of reliable testing protocol that objectively provides a picture of an athlete's performance, in which the "trainer eyes" of coaches, trainers, and researchers involved with the study combined well-planned testing protocol provides relevant results (Gál-Pottyondy & Petró, 2021). These results indicate better a player's appropriate playing position and support data implying the appropriate competition level. If determining the appropriate competition increases congruently as athletic skill improves, there will be a lot of underlying factors missed in capable players who may or may not be given a fair opportunity to compete at their appropriate level. Similarly, in the article by Teramoto et al. (2017), researchers investigate the predictive validity of principal component analysis to quantify athletic ability and basketball skills to predict the future performance of prospective players in the NBA Draft combines. The study examines the on-court performance of a player's first three years and their NBA combine numbers. The anthropometric and power-testing measurements predict future performance and determine which players deserve the most comprehensive development programs and opportunities for playing time on NBA teams. Part of the selection process in the NBA draft relies on speculation that determines a player's potential level of development and when their possible plateau might occur after years of play based on their measurements (Teramoto et al., 2012). Even at the highest

level of basketball evaluation, players' quality and rate of development, and value are looked at from more of a technical, sequential lens than a more comprehensive and cultural one. On the more technical side of basketball training and player development, Okazaki, Rodacki, & Satern (2015) concluded that they identified clear-cut movement variables critical to successfully shooting a successful jump shot. Their research showed that factors of a successful shot are ball trajectory, segmental movement organization, and variables that influence shooting performance, and coaches and teachers should consider said variables when instructing their players on optimizing shooting performance (Okazaki et al., 2015). As someone who once got paid to shoot a basketball for a living, I will confirm that the ball trajectory and segmental movement organization factors are, more or less, correct. This notion that "variables that influence shooting performance" do not have their fifty-page section is just another example of how the development of such a complex and important action in the basketball space, like shooting, can be interpreted by those not in the know as linear without the appropriate culturally relevant pedagogy. Guimarães, Baxter-Jones & Williams (2021) tried to see if tracking developmental trajectories of technical skills in adolescents over time would help identify their "consistency," hoping to profile players to see who has the best chance of becoming more skillful. Even though Guimarães, Baxter-Jones & Williams (2021) claimed they had the only published study in any sport at the time that assessed how technical skills unfold over time, the results ended up similar to the research of both Teramoto et al. (2017) and Gál-Pottyondy and Petró (2021), where a superior physical feature, in this case a growth-motor performance profile, correlates to developing and maintaining higher levels skills over time. Lastly, Csataljay et al. (2009) use statistical analysis to identify the most important performance indicators that separate winning and losing matches. While still no mention of culture specifically, this study does indirectly



include elements of developing culturally relevant curricula, as knowing these indicators will better allow coaches to create instructional strategies for players and generate effective strategies that will give them a better chance to win close games (Gay, 2002; Csataljay et al., 2009). While incorporating this information may sequentially help win games, being on winning teams and winning games requires culturally relevant pedagogy not mentioned in this article. This grouping of articles shows us that, on the surface, development may seem linear. However, cultural and contextual factors play into the results rather than a proper evaluation or something more tangible, like points scored in a game. In most situations, especially concerning the development of a person (player or coach), there is rarely a linear path to get to the desired results. A proper culturally relevant transaction could also be required to attain the level of development needed for success.

#### **DEVELOPMENT IS TRANSACTIONAL**

A transaction is an exchange between one thing or person and another, where something is received while something is given in return. The literature in this section shows us that basketball player development requires a lot of give and take between everyone involved. If elements of culture are lacking, however, the exchanges between those involved in the space will not be as exhaustive as they could be. Harrist and Witt (2015) study the motivation for participation in competitive youth female basketball players and the transactional nature between participation in the sport and its effect on either aiding their development or functioning as enemies of enjoyment. The authors imply that social interactions and player experiences within the proper context of the competitive basketball space are the best way to get players to describe their experience relevant to that culture. Although “contextual elements” replace “culture” in this study,

the authors agree that incorporating elements necessary for culturally relevant learning environments is required to combat ever-increasing scrutiny and accountability now linked to youth sports. Providing a safe space within the world of youth competitive sports for athletes to give their opinion will then allow coaches and program developers to develop a culturally relevant curriculum, which gives the athletes the best chance to receive a positive experience back (Harrist & Witt, 2015; Gay, 2002). Sánchez-Romero et al. (2020) study on the verbal behavior of families of youth athletes in grassroots team sports analyzes and categorizes positive, negative, and neutral comments made by the families of adolescent athletes to study potential sociodemographic and sport-related differences and how these comments and behaviors affect the well-being, development, and predicting performance of these athletes. The emotional transaction between family and athletes is a delicate element of basketball culture. Parents assume that giving their opinions on certain situations within the basketball space will change an external variable, or spark an internal shift within the athlete, in hopes that they perform better so they may achieve “success.” The results of the Sánchez-Romero et al. (2020) study and my own experiences, unfortunately, characterize the reality for a lot of younger athletes showing that most comments observed in a basketball setting (51% positive; 96% neutral; 76% negative) were perceived as negative, which can lead to the derailment of on and off the court development and negative effects on performance and attitude without incorporating aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy to combat it (Sánchez-Romero et al., 2020). In most cases, unfortunately, no one ends up benefitting from this transaction. On the other hand, research by Folle and Nascimento (2018) shows us how moderate levels of positive involvement (financial support, encouragement, etc.) from social actors close to the child athlete (parents, guardians, siblings, friends, teachers, etc.) contribute to the formation of environments favorable to positive development and

favorable transactions between those involved. The study by Tompsett and Knoester (2022) investigates a different type of transaction that affects everyone in the basketball space in one way or another. They find that families and athletes of higher socioeconomic status are linked to better quality player development, athletic participation, and achievement, thus giving the athlete a better chance to succeed than those of lower socioeconomic status. While sustained participation, development, tangible ability, and academic expectation and achievement can better predict the athlete's chances of playing in college, the study shows individuals from low socioeconomic families' pathway to social mobility through playing sports in college is, unfortunately, more of myth, on average (Tompsett & Knoester, 2022). In basketball culture, because the likelihood of being a college athlete is low, playing on a college team is seen as a symbol of significant achievement that highlights athletic meritocratic ability and talent and is more times than not reserved for those who have benefited from different socioeconomic factors (Tompsett & Knoester, 2022). In these situations, the athlete and their families give everything (time, resources, physical and emotional energy, etc.) in hopes of receiving something that society says is near impossible for them to attain. If culture is not present, the athlete and their families could perceive that they received nothing for all their hard work, leading to an entirely different set of issues for everyone involved. In the final study of this section, Croft and Paulson (2023) explore the need for better player development among Division 1 basketball coaches. Within this transactional component of basketball development, Division 1 coaches give players scholarships, then "instruction," and receive either praise/notoriety when the team does well. This article argues that coaches need to grow in the teaching and development of their athletes because while recruiting is important, players matter more than the coaches, as most coaches do not significantly change their players' productivity. However, some findings

failed to show why players who played for specific “successful” coaches demonstrated better development and productivity (Croft & Paulson, 2023). After the meeting, conversing with, and studying one of those specific coaches mentioned, I can without a doubt say one big reason why both he and his players experienced “success” at a high level is that, as a Division 1 head basketball, he exhibits many aspects of culturally responsive teaching

### **TRAITS OF “SUCCESSFUL” DEVELOPMENT**

After an elongated search, the most fitting definition for success came from the current definition on Wikipedia, of all places. Success is meeting a defined range of expectations, dependent upon context, the relativity of a particular observer, or a belief system. Because of the different types of studies, methodologies, and research on successful development within basketball, it ultimately becomes difficult to define and communicate without culturally relevant pedagogy. We see in the study done by Bruner, Hall, and Côté (2011) how task and outcome interdependence associated with the developmental experiences of athletes can help those close to the athlete (parents, coaches, teachers, etc.) foster richer learning environments that lead to more positive developmental experiences. The successful development of positively interdependent sport settings help coaches define athlete goals in a way that correlates the athlete’s success to the success of others; the success of the athlete is largely determined by their coaches’ ability to either positively or negatively affect their athletic experience (Bruner et al., 2011). Though mentioning culture specifically is absent in this study, determining success contains culturally relevant elements. Post et al. (2021) use the results of their study to describe different factors that contributed to the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs athletes, and their parents have regarding specializing in basketball at an early age in

hopes of being better equipped to obtain the elusive college basketball scholarship. When parents and athletes do not receive and internalize pertinent culturally relevant information about the likelihood of receiving a college basketball scholarship, the parents, then subsequently the athlete, maneuver in this space with a basic and incomplete expectation of what success is if they do not get it, which could then negatively affect life outside of basketball. The literature also gives us an example of when the measurement of success can be overwhelmingly linear. Trunic and Mladenovic (2014) give us a peek into the process of selecting top basketball players in Serbia. Success for coaches and evaluators in this environment involves timely talent identification, implementing the correct training technology and player development plans (and its possible corrections), and diagnosing potential to create strategically accurate profiles for future successful basketball players. Success for players in this setting also has multiple requirements based on those evaluating them: being genetically predisposed to advantageous anthropological abilities to better execute complex abilities (talent, basketball IQ, speed of tactical thinking, etc.), along with having an acceptable psychological and muscular characteristic assessment, while simultaneously passing several tests that analyze their potential for competing and excelling against senior competition despite the physical and psychological demands (Trunic & Mladenovic, 2014). While it may seem impossible to live up to the high standards of linear and technical success, it may seem just as insurmountable to achieve cultural and communal/societal success based on the reality of one's surroundings. Ogden and Hilt (2003) examine why the African American culture shifted to basketball and away from baseball and how collective identity played a part in this process. The visibility of basketball through mass media and the transmission of culture not only encourages the self-expression, empowerment, and social mobility of black youths, but for our

community, basketball represents an escape from the pressures of life and embodies dreams of success (Ogden & Hilt, 2003). The need for culture in this particular scenario is very profound because whether one is playing basketball recreationally, training with a coach to get better with hopes to try and make it out, or playing competitively in either organized settings or pick-up games within the community, the cultural success in finding accessible recreation, entertainment, and stimulation for underprivileged blacks can rival that of obtaining the college scholarship or pro contract that society never meant for us have anyway (Ogden & Hilt, 2003). In congruence, the findings of Dubrow and Adams (2010) exemplify how the intersection of different culturally relevant factors influences the relationship between race and sport and theoretical occupational attainment, specifically making it to the NBA. Determined to navigate the highly racialized social environment of the NBA and its influence on the public perceptions of African-Americans, Dubrow, and Adams (2010) hope to one day eliminate the myth that having a successful professional basketball career is the only way out of the low socioeconomic situations. Success, as it pertains to player and personal development under these circumstances, should not solely be limited to acquiring skills and achievements in basketball. Success can also mean maximizing any opportunity to participate in basketball at the highest level possible for each participant, then using culturally relevant pedagogy to position oneself to be successful on or off the court. This is where the need for culturally responsive teachers comes in, as they can help those in this basketball space properly define and then attain success.

### **TEACHER/COACH IMPORTANCE TO DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS**

While culture was still scarcely mentioned in this section's literature, some authors highlighted the need for culturally responsive teaching to ensure coaches and

trainers were better equipped to maximize an athlete's player development while improving different aspects of their coaching. Huang et al. (2017) felt it necessary to identify the effects of cooperative learning, concept mapping, and practice style on students to help students nurture their potential to think critically and develop their basketball skills. Instructors and coaches must also practice deciphering and internalizing knowledge in hopes of better-providing solutions that further facilitate motor skill performance in basketball players. Cañadas et al. (2018) focus more on the intricacies of properly putting together comprehensive workouts based on the different stages young athletes evolve, acquire and develop skills. Sometimes the strategic acquisition and analysis of empirical knowledge about properly instructing in the basketball space, using pedagogical and educational variables that define particular tasks, is an integral part of how coaches assess and adjust their performance. One study focuses on coaches' different interactions with learning styles, and the other highlights the importance of guided instruction about its potential effectiveness to the athlete and their current level of development. While culture nor any version of culturally responsive teaching was mentioned in either of the articles, the literature does examine how effective teaching/training requires a mastery of whatever pedagogical tools teachers/trainers decide to use, but also an eagerness from the instructor to be at their best to maximize a players/learners' development experience. Suppose athletes are to continue trusting coaches with their developmental success. In that case, coaches should take it upon themselves to put themselves in environments where they can develop their methodologies and techniques and learn how to learn. Koh, Mallett, and Wang (2011) highlight important activities critical to growing Singapore's high-performance basketball coaches. Their findings linked coach development to: coaches having accessibility to relevant and specific coaching education programs, being conscious about providing a

positive sports experience for athletes you are responsible for developing, and the importance of collecting relevant and contextual data from coaches and players to be able to comprehensively self-reflect on how to better problem solve and promote growth. The better coaches continue to get, the better they will be able to combine their methodologies with the pedagogical concepts of others in the space needed to create optimal learning environments. Examining youth basketball players' functional performance and psychological characteristics, Lima et al. (2020) focus on how deliberate athletes' motivation and enjoyment impact practice and expertise attainment. Coaches need to know how to adjust and refine the pedagogical strategy to best account for their athletes' many physical, psychological, and anthropological changes over time. If done intentionally, coaches will be better equipped to provide positive environments suitable for maximum player development and excellence attainment (Lima et al., 2020). Once the domain is in place, coaches will be better able to connect pedagogical variables to more technical ones. Leite et al. (2009) studied the importance that coaches give to specific drills during player development sessions. Because, in theory, this ideal learning environment between teacher and student is already in place, coaches and players can work together to find creative and appropriate solutions to combat game-related concerns, the improving of weaknesses, and the proper adjustment of specific elements of player development (Leite et al., 2009). When everyone involved takes accountability for their basketball space during these interactions, the chances for a positive experience containing adequate cross-cultural communication increases. Now, all parties involved can more clearly determine the relative effectiveness of the actual basketball development itself (Gay, 2000).



## **NEED FOR DEVELOPING**

Although there is minimal mention of culture specifically, the literature consistently acknowledges the need for what we would consider a culturally relevant curriculum. Researchers articulated that many variables needed to be tried and tested that could positively impact the world of basketball player development, variables that we know to be different aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy. One way to help combat this is to have help from the top, as Difiori et al. (2018) examine the NBA and USA basketball's issued guidelines and recommendations developed to promote positive and healthy experiences for young basketball players. The findings highlight the importance of positive youth sport participation and how it is fundamental to leading a healthier lifestyle as an adult, but also how the overemphasis on competitive success as an adolescent limits the players' ability to develop in ways that would allow them to both maximize their experience by becoming the best player they can be, and receiving the sociocultural benefits of participation. In a committed effort to bring about positive change in youth basketball, the NBA and USA basketball's guidelines are being universally implemented in their youth programming. Several programs that cover many aspects of basketball culture (ranging from how experts think the game should be taught and played coaching and trainer education programs, and making sure the guidelines appropriately exemplify the positive youth basketball experience) is an integral part of how they plan to better basketball culture (Difiori et al., 2018). Another way to further advance the basketball player development curriculum and better the space is to find ways to impact from within positively. Falcão, Bloom, and Gilbert (2012) investigate youth sports coaches' perceptions of different coach-led programs' impact on youth player development. The research team used various methods to collect data from coaches related to youth development, youth coaching literature, and coach training. The

results not only indicate the benefits coaches reported for themselves, their athletes, and their teams but guide how to create training programs for coaches to assess better and contribute to athlete, team, and coach outcomes in a way that positively promotes youth development (Falcão et al.,2012). Studies were also done where the goal was to advance the more technical side of training (i.e., the picking and implementing drills on the basketball court). One way we see this is in the case study done by Cañadas, Ibáñez, and Leite (2015) on how a novice basketball coach of adolescent athletes implemented technical and tactical components of basketball training over two basketball seasons, in hopes of advancing the types of educational tools and professional development needed for coaches to acquire the necessary knowledge to improve the development plans they implement. Another related example is the study completed by Leite, Coelho, and Sampaio (2011), which examines and compares the importance of specific drills and training contents by basketball coaches with different experience levels. This article, in particular, stood out to me because it indirectly touched on several culturally relevant components of administering effective on-court workouts, even though they were labeled as something else. Ultimately, the results of this study emphasize the need to equip better coaches who participate in basketball athletes' technical, tactical, and physical development with the information needed to nurture efficient development from both the athlete and the coach (Leite et al., 2011). Another interesting way we see researchers' trying to develop development is in Reis, Morales, and Gomes's (2021) study about the construct validation of instruments created to quantify tactical knowledge in basketball. Construct validation makes it possible to determine if these instruments accurately measure what they should. For athletes to develop high-quality decision-making capabilities, coaches' and trainers' ability to implement the necessary tactical knowledge through teaching, learning, and training is imperative. Consequently, this study was done

to advance the testing of these instruments through construct validity, guiding coaches' and trainers' decision-making in picking the most effective and efficient activities that will best cultivate basketball development (Reis et al.,2012). This information, combined with, for example, the research from Branquinho et al. (2022) on how coaches can better identify specific differences in athletes' maturational status that guide the selection and application of long-term player development programs, would be extremely beneficial in helping the novice and intermediate level coaches and trainers better select and implement high-quality player development programs that could potentially better help athletes maximize their chances for success both in and outside of basketball culture. Incorporating and cooperation with different types of information focused on improving player development within basketball culture can help steer this entire space in the right direction, where the teaching and learning required for successful player development have a culturally relevant pedagogical foundation

## **Chapter 6: What was Absent?**

As far as culture is concerned, I noticed several things missing in the literature. Firstly, when I got to the end of an article (whether its mentioned in the literature review or it did not make the cut), and read about certain variables that were either not taken into effect in the acquiring of results, or should be considered for further testing in the future, culture, if it was even mentioned at all, was usually found there. Phrases that took the place of what could have been categorized as elements of culturally relevant pedagogy included multi-dimensional studies needed; mediating variables should be included, sociocultural and proper required societal context; other factors necessary for more comprehensive results, etc., downplay and invalidate impactful elements of culture needed to navigate this space better. Because culture is barely mentioned specifically, both researchers and consumers of this information alike who are not privy to the importance of formulating theoretical models of culturally relevant pedagogy as it relates to specific aspects of basketball training and player development only partially understand how to interpret and effectively apply the information presented in the literature (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Articles and studies that took the time to mention culture in any detail, let alone define it and explain how it could impact any results on player development, were virtually nonexistent. It was tough to find articles within the selected period that took into account how significant aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy, like the importance of cultural identity and the more complex teacher-student interactions and expectations, played a part in how the literature was conducted,

analyzed, and related to the culture of basketball player development (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

While the literature did provide me with much information about the theories, methodologies, questions, concerns, and results from experts and researchers who also wish to understand better and positively impact the development of basketball players, it did not provide sufficient information on how better my understanding or how to implement essential elements of culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy in hopes of being a better catalyst of basketball culture. While there was some information on how the demonstrating of care and the building of learning communities positively impacted player development, elements such as how the delivery of instruction should vary to respond to diversity or how to develop a culturally diverse knowledge base within the space effectively was not made clear (Gay, 2002). I also noticed many articles that attempted to include elements of culture in their research, and findings still needed to be done in the United States. While basketball is a sport and those that participate in the basketball culture will be more likely to agree on certain pedagogical aspects within the context of the sport, the differences in and lack of acknowledgment of the different cultures off the court and the various implications on teaching and learning that come with each of them, make it more challenging to navigate all of the factors that consequently relate to culture as it pertains to the sport (Gay, 2002). Because of the literature's different categorical focuses and how information was presented within these specific categories, I think the culturally relevant pedagogy surrounding player development in basketball could use a remix (Ladson-Billings, 2014). For example, the

incorporation of culturally sustaining pedagogy from coaches and trainers and its ability to prepare athletes for high-stakes assessments and performance evaluation while maintaining the community and types of cultural interactions for both coaches and players to be their best would ease some of the pressures of the linear and transactional natures of development because there would be a more culturally relevant understanding about progression and results that benefit the culture as a whole (Ladson-Billings, 2014). The section regarding success brought about questions as well. While some of the findings about what constitutes success within basketball culture were valid and comprehensive, I wondered if the ones conducting the studies had any level of mastery of the content knowledge or pedagogical skills necessary to be able clearly to present the findings of a culture that if I had to guess, they mainly were observing, and not fully immersed in themselves, and how that could have potentially changed the information presented (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014). On a positive note, however, when I was compiling the articles for the literature review, I noticed theoretical propositions about pedagogy in the literature, mentioning ways to educate our teachers/coaches better so they could more effectively advance curriculum in ways that are more culturally relevant, which was promising (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Ultimately, if left unchanged, the culturally pertinent pedagogy missing about the culture of player development in basketball would only continue to perpetuate questions asked and studies done that are not *multicultural* (Gay, 2002). Those conducting research and presenting information without a more outright understanding of the culture and its workings will continue asking questions that only improve certain development parts. When culture is not

missing, the dialogue around how to positively impact the culture can commence, thus allowing everybody in the space to benefit from the findings (Ladson-Billings, 1995)

## **FRAMING MY ARGUMENT FOR CULTURALLY RELEVANT DEVELOPMENT**

To advance our theory, culture's values regarding culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching are needed for basketball player development culture to bring out the best in whoever decides to participate. The organization of the sections that follow is done purposefully. In the first part of each lettered section, I will introduce what I consider a pedagogical observation relevant to basketball player development culture. I've spent most of my life submersed in basketball culture. I will relate some of the more common occurrences I have experienced as a teacher and learner with anecdotal accounts and analytical observations. After, I will explain how researchers could perceive these observations and which of the generalities made about the literature this observation could fall under without fully integrating culture into said occurrence. Finally, I will feature different aspects of culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy to guide navigating and improving each culturally relevant pedagogical observation.



## **Chapter 7: Intricacies of Technique Improvement**

### **IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL ELEMENT**

One observation I've made as a participator and observer of this space is how delicate the process of improving a single technique is. This seemingly simple observation without culturally relevant context can make for confusing interactions for all involved, which subsequently will get in the way of development. For example, after a period of frustration caused by inconsistent shooting in games, the athlete and their parents agree to go see a local basketball trainer, who guarantees that if this athlete continuously shows up to workouts and does what they say, they will "make them a better shooter." The trainer is now responsible for getting the athlete's shooting ability to a level that both the athlete and parents deem acceptable. The parents pay for what they think is a sufficient number of weekly workouts for the trainer to improve their child's shooting technique, which should translate into better game results. In this scenario, everybody is being put in a less-than-ideal position concerning the athlete's development. The trainer, who may not fully understand the intricacies of shooting, is being paid by the athlete's parents to garner specific results. Those results are now at the discretion of the athlete and the parents. Without some interjection of culture involved in these interactions, I have seen situations where the main objective of developing a technical basketball skill that could give the athlete a better chance for "success" turns into something different entirely. If the athlete is not making what they think is enough improvement in an unidentified amount of time, they become frustrated. Parents are upset when the athlete is frustrated and not succeeding according to standards that have not been identified. The parents could be upset with the athlete because they feel the athlete is not living up to their potential (which then leads to an entirely different set of

problems). The parents could also be upset with the trainer they are paying, who guaranteed results. Now because the trainer is upset, he tells the parents they did not bring the athlete to training enough, or that the athlete does not work hard enough, etc. The underlying issue of the child not being able to shoot the ball at a satisfactory rate is still there. Still, several other culturally relevant variables must be overcome before addressing the technical problem appropriately. We see in this example how development is not solely linear or transactional but can be navigated more effectively if elements of culture are involved

#### **SUPPORT FROM LITERATURE**

The literature tells us that empirical knowledge about pedagogical variables that help define a task can broaden our understanding of the understanding and development of technique (Cañadas et al., 2018). The technical factors of shooting an “effective” jump shot, according to Okazaki et al. (2015), are ball trajectory, segmental movement organization, and other “variables” that affect shooting performance and success. This process seems simple enough. However, without the “added value” expert coaches contribute to technical development, different variables, and factors can impede the athlete’s development of that skill (Liete et al., 2011)

#### **CULTURALLY RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

Consider the same scenario and include different aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy. The parents can access a learning community of culturally relevant basketball coaches in their area and find a shooting coach (Gay, 2002). This coach was known as a good shooter in college and has been coaching ever since. The athlete and their parents tell this coach they want the athlete to shoot more efficiently in game situations. Before

the first workout, the coach asks the athlete what they think is wrong with their shot and what shots they shoot the most in games. Because the coach has a mastery of relevant content knowledge, he quickly designs culturally relevant curricula to see precisely where the athlete is at with their shot for himself (Gay, 2002). The first half of the workout could be better regarding results; the athlete still misses shots at a high rate. The only thing the coach cares about is the athlete finding “success” before their hour-long workout ends. The coach switches from traditional shooting drills to drills that address the athlete’s technique, and the athlete starts to make a few more shots. Through culturally relevant teaching, the coach explains to the athlete that something in his technique was the only thing keeping him from making shots consistently, which excites the athlete because the athlete feels like the ailment can be fixed (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The athlete does not make many more shots during the workout, but enough for the movement to feel like a success because the athlete was given information on how to combat his problem potentially. The coach tells the athlete to do the same drill on his own time before their next session together. Two days later, at their next session, the athlete and the coach make the same routine, and the coach comments on how many more shots the athlete is making this time, which helps keep the entire interaction positive. The parents tell the coach after the second workout concluded that because the athlete felt that drill was beneficial to their shooting development, they took it upon themselves to practice at home because the athlete appreciated the advice and found it compelling (Ladson-Billings, 2014). There is trust between all parties involved in this interaction; whether the athlete immediately makes more shots in games is less important. The coach now has the time to develop the proper long-term plan for the athlete to develop this skill comprehensively. The coach’s investment and culturally responsive caring, combined with the bridge of cross-cultural communication between all parties

involved, will allow the athlete to develop and hopefully find success (Gay, 2002). The importance of culture can show up in even the most minor details of player development, so the wide-ranging implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in basketball training is imperative. Both scenarios are based on the true story of the same athlete, me. Fortunately, I ended up in an environment where my coaches acted more as teachers. As their student, I could take different aspects of my learning and apply them in culturally relevant ways that positively impacted my development.

## **Chapter 8: Resemblances to Teachers & Students**

### **IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL ELEMENT**

In most pedagogical situations where some teaching and learning is taking place, there appears to be this inherent structure that corresponds. The person learning has some mastery of their subject and the necessary qualifications and certifications to give instructions. They understand that assessing their effectiveness as an instructor is based on how well the people learning from them understand and apply the information that is evaluated in their effectiveness as an instructor is based on how well the people learning from them understand and apply the knowledge they have been taught. The person learning understands coming into this exchange that they will be taught information directly related to the mastery of the subject of the instructor (i.e., students in the school know, walking into what is labeled a math class, that they probably will not be taught about history). The learner also understands that the instructor has been placed in this position to lead because of the passing of some cultural or societal benchmark that has deemed them qualified to teach. Learners usually have a good idea of what they expect to know at the end of the interaction/exchange with their instructor. I find very few coaches and trainers who act as teachers regarding this inherent teaching and learning structure and how it relates to basketball culture. Many coaches do not have nor seek the information or qualifications necessary to teach this effectively. When it comes to coaches and trainers, there seems to be a caveat (coach has better access to facilities, coaches and trainers are being put in charge of player development by people who do not understand the culture of player development, a parent or figure in the community who seems the most connected to the culture is allowed to coach, the person who gets to coach/train has more of mastery in marketing, and gets people to show up and pay

consistently, etc.) as to why they are allowed to instruct, as opposed to just being a culturally responsive teacher. Many times, too, unfortunately, most athletes are not put in an environment where I would consider them students. They arrive at a facility where their basketball development is supposed to be cultivated and trust that the drills and information given to them by whoever is “coaching/training” that day will help their development. Most times, the environment is not set up for athletes to develop at their pace or get culturally relevant answers to questions they may or may not be allowed to ask, as most training and development sessions are time-sensitive. Often, instead of being taught the more minor intricacies of specific techniques, skills, and reads the athletes need to be successful, coaches think they are doing the athletes a service by having them repeat an action until it becomes “muscle memory.” This is equivalent to a classroom teacher assigning homework and other mundane assignments to get students to remember something long enough to pass a standardized test. Within basketball culture, those in the space must highlight things we can do on a larger scale to help coaches see themselves as teachers and athletes as students.

#### **SUPPORT FROM LITERATURE**

One of the ways the literature calls for the development of development is to make sure our coaches are educated enough to comprehend that what they are doing is, in fact, teaching. The coach’s ability to teach, which in turn affects the athlete’s ability to learn, is directly affected by the coach’s willingness to understand, accept, and grow in their part of the teaching-learning process, as the athlete’s long-term development is dependent upon this willingness (Branquinho et al., 2022). The authors highlight that the pedagogical knowledge of the coach gained through professional development is an integral part of coaches acquiring the skills to properly plan, structure, and teach

instructional activities that maximize the athlete's ability to learn through their basketball development process (Cañadas et al., 2018; Reis, 2021)—ultimately, influencing an athlete's ability to see themselves as a student starts with the coach taking accountability for wanting to learn to teach. Coaches must find ways to gain the experience necessary to increase players' willingness to learn declarative, precedential, and strategic knowledge to maximize skill development and decision-making (Leite, 2009). Researchers note incorporating more activities critical to coaching development and teaching ability (Koh et al., 2011). When done so implicitly, basketball culture will start to see results like those of Falcão et al. (2012), where training coaches to change certain behaviors and attitudes taught them how to stimulate many areas of overall youth development through sport. This is an essential step in addressing this widespread hole in basketball culture.

#### **CULTURALLY RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

I have noticed that this inherent structure of teaching and learning within basketball culture is reserved for a small number. Regarding youth development, those with the resources to locate and afford proper teachers/coaches benefit from this structure. We also see qualified teachers/coaches who take it upon themselves to insert themselves into the development of elite athletes with the most “potential.” Very rarely do we see teachers address the inadequacies of their knowledge base by finding ways to understand better multicultural theory, research, and scholarship related to their field (Gay, 2002). Building a better learning community starts with culturally responsive caring, where coaches care enough to attain the mastery of content knowledge needed to assist in athlete transcendence (Gay, 2002). Now with coaches effectively teaching, athletes can become students because the culture embedded in the delivery of instruction now matches the learning styles of the athletes, giving athletes a better chance to learn,

develop, and succeed (Gay, 2002). When the athletes feel they have grown within the culture, the coach is deemed “successful.”



## **Chapter 9: “Successful” Coaches**

### **IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL ELEMENT**

Most coaches do not effectively teach because, even within the culture, what it means to be a “successful” coach does not always involve elements of culturally effective teaching. Without any culturally relevant context, a “successful” coach/trainer should garner specific results: does this coach’s players affect winning games, and how does this coach’s player produce stats in games at a level that is deemed adequate for winning games, does this coach bring about efficient and effective technical improvement and skill development in their training to allow athletes to produce these stats, how much better at the necessary elements of these training have the athletes gotten since they started working with this coach/trainer, etc. With or without any culturally relevant pedagogical context, if a coach/trainer can consistently generate these results from their athletes, they should be considered “successful” within the overall premises of basketball culture. What is tricky about this situation is what coaches who lack understanding of the elements of culturally relevant pedagogy within the culture consider to be “results,” which directly impacts their perceived notions about success. Either directly or indirectly, most coaches wish to produce the results mentioned above because that has always been the baseline for coaching success as defined by those participating in basketball culture. However, I have observed other potentially harmful elements within basketball culture that correlate with “successful” coaches. Some coaches associate “success” with getting players to show up. Their parents/guardians to continuously pay whether development is happening or not, coaches/trainers’ ability to make players and people in their social circle feel like they are being “pushed” from a physical and psychological point of view whether it is positively impacting their development or not, the notoriety or “prestige”

that comes with what those outside the culture could see as successful like having any affiliation with NBA players or those seen as the pinnacle of culture or receiving a significant amount of views and likes from social media posts about your training, etc. Those qualified within the space must start to take accountability for how “successful” coaches within the area are defined to ensure that those in charge of training and development first keep the athlete's growth from a culturally relevant pedagogical standpoint.

#### **SUPPORT FROM LITERATURE**

The literature shows us that defining a successful coach without culture can be challenging. Beneficial traits like long-term skill tracking, having efficient talent identification, selection, and analysis capabilities, and other skills that directly relate to performance and the development of elite skill and athletic ability play an essential part in being a successful coach, as these things are necessary when acquiring mastery of content knowledge (Guimarães et al., 2021; Trunic & Mladenovic, 2014; Tompsett & Knoester, 2022; Gay, 2002). Croft and Paulson (2023) tell us that even coaches who are considered “successful” often don’t considerably enhance the productivity and development of players. Before giving the successful title to coaches, we as a culture must ensure that specific culturally relevant pedagogical standards are met. However, without direct mention of culture, the researchers depict some of the culturally pertinent characteristics of successful coaches: coaches that yearn to grow as teachers so they are better equipped to implement strategies, principles, and norms that empower youth athletes by including their ideas into curriculum, coaches that define goals and build

healthy environments based on both individual and communal success, coaches that find ways to effectively develop and lead any group of athletes to be successful, etc. (Falcão et al., 2012; Bruner et al., 2011; Croft & Paulson., 2023).

### **CULTURALLY RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

One way we can help coaches who lack an understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy is to show them that their knowledge of success in the field is superficial, distorted, and incomplete (Gay, 2002). Those in charge of educating coaches must help them navigate through the elements of the societal curriculum that could be straying them from traditionally culturally relevant pedagogical practices and give them the tools to shift and link teaching principles of learning with a deep understanding of culture (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Successful teachers/coaches understand when and how to advance their philosophy and practice so that they are doing right by those appointed to learn from them (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Once coaches understand and incorporate elements of culturally relevant pedagogy into their practice, their focus can shift from what they used to define success to ensuring they correctly identify and cultivate the necessary results/progress/development for the athlete to succeed

## **Chapter 10: Determination of Progress/Results**

### **IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL ELEMENT**

When I start training someone new, I ask, “What are we here to work on today, and where do we want to see long-term improvement?” With culture, coaches can find creative ways to turn progress into something more subjective regarding that athlete. As culturally relevant coaches/teachers need to explain what we believe progress/results should look like, then find ways to align with what the athlete/learner thinks they should look like before we begin. Once common ground is attained about what progress could look like, the next critical element of this exchange is time. Without elements of culturally responsive teaching and meaningful cross-cultural communication, athletes and their parents expect to see some progress immediately, for the most part, which does not benefit anyone involved (Gay, 2002). Coaches who lack critical caring also want to see results somewhat quickly before they give up on the athlete; these coaches perceive the athlete's lack of results as a negative reflection on themselves to others in the space.

### **SUPPORT FROM LITERATURE**

The literature shows us that without culture, there are many interpretations about what results look like and how “progress” should be measured. Developing development is essential in this scenario; development success and results should be quantified linearly to keep those in the space from thinking. We see in Guimarães et al. (2021) study on tracking technical skill development use methodologies like analyzing skill and talent indicators supplemented with the tracking of developmental trajectories over the time used to track the “progress” and the consistency of certain specific results (Trunic & Mladenovic, 2014). Even with this type of information, it would still require someone with “trainer's eyes” to evaluate these types of field and laboratory tests to get an

objective picture of how subjectively measured skill and ability correlate to predetermined measures of progress (Pottyondy & Petró, 2021). Even potentially useful ideas like using the maturational levels of athletes at different points of long-term development programs to prepare for high levels of performance with increasing age are still subjected to significant technical, physiological, and psychological variables related to culture (Branquinho et al., 2022). It would be helpful if the education of coaches included the ability to highlight which factors affect the development process through the training environment, thus allowing coaches to assess progress better (Cañadas et al., 2015). This would better qualify coaches to comprehensively identify and express what results and progress can look like to athletes and their parents with cultural context, thus keeping them from hanging on to their unrealistic versions of success (Post et al., 2021). Harrist and Witt (2015) show us that we as coaches cannot get lost in looking for ways to bring about results and cultivate progress that is lacking in culture; when players enjoy developing as players and people while playing their sport while also feeling like they are serving a greater purpose, then we as coaches are contributing to making progress.

#### **CULTURALLY RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

Culturally responsive teaching, as it relates to identifying and cultivating athlete progress through the athlete's cultural filters, requires essential reciprocal and cooperative problem-solving pedagogy between coaches and athletes (Gay, 2002). When assessing how to help athletes, I train "progress" while listening to the athletes' answers to the "What are we here to work on today" and "Where do we want to see long-term improvement in" questions, I am simultaneously asking myself different versions of culturally relevant pedagogical questions to formulate a theoretical model of what progress could look like for this particular athlete: am I prepared as a teacher to help

bring about improvement in this one-hour workout right now, or do I use this time to mine for potential answers?, what would constitute results/progress for this particular athlete, and how long could that take?, how can my pedagogical practices bring about the kind of progress that could help this athlete better navigate basketball culture, even if this is my only ever one-hour workout with them?, how can I use my expertise to qualify myself and the upcoming curriculum to the athlete in a way that will allow us to have a positive experience? (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Because this assessing of knowledge is the product of dialogue between myself and the athlete, before the workout even begins, there is already a culturally sustaining pedagogical environment being formed, which puts both the coach and athlete in a position to be sources of knowledge for each other (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 2104). In this position as a coach, I can combine meaningful pieces of quantitative and qualitative information based on my interaction with the athlete, giving me the best chance to put a comprehensive plan together (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

## **Chapter 11: No Plan = Grind**

### **IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL ELEMENT**

Culturally responsive player development coaches must be able to design culturally relevant curricula for the athletes they are responsible for. Developing and executing a good plan can help athletes avoid a common form of academic death related to basketball culture, “burnout.” When there is no culturally relevant plan in place, I have noticed (and experienced) how coaches, parents, and athletes get caught in this thought process that to develop and bring about success, the athlete has to “grind.” I adopted this “grind 24/7” very early as an athlete and have noticed that it is still very prevalent in basketball culture today. My dad and I did not always have a plan as to how we were going to attack our daily gym workouts. We only knew we had to “outwork everyone else,” even if that meant sacrificing physical and psychological rest. This can harm the culturally relevant pedagogical elements that directly affect the development of the athlete and the coach. For various reasons, I have seen many coaches and parents implement this “grind all the time” mindset in young athletes. One reason, just like my dad, is that they may not have known better. This notion of “working as hard as you can until your dream come true” has been and is still very prevalent in society, especially amongst low socioeconomic status groups. Somehow working so hard that you risk physical injury and possible psychological and emotional issues down the road from not healthily experiencing life is still seen as the only hope for disadvantaged families like my own, that think athletics is the ticket out of low socioeconomic status. One day in high school, I was sore from working out all week and wanted to stay home and play video games. My dad told me I could stay home and play video games. However, in two years, if I did not earn a college scholarship, the only way I could afford a college

education would be to enroll in the army because neither he nor my mom could pay for a college education. I went to the gym. Another reason I have also seen coaches use this “grind” mentality in their teachings and environments of learning is because of their lack of want to and ability to develop a comprehensive, culturally relevant teaching model that garners developmental results. I have seen the selfish desires and pride of “successful” coaches guilt trip athletes into overworking. Coaches who make much money on the sheer fact that they get athletes and their parents to pay and show up do this all the time consistently. If an athlete ends up being “successful,” the coach will take credit and use their success to get more athletes to show up, forgetting to mention many other culturally relevant variables that could have attributed to the athlete's success. According to these coaches, if the athlete is unsuccessful, they did not work hard or “grind enough” to deserve that “success

#### **SUPPORT FROM LITERATURE**

This literature gives us examples of the dangers of the “grind” culture but also provides us with ways coaches put together development plans that could aid everyone in the space in moving away from this toxic mentality, even without fully integrating culturally relevant pedagogy. The first example highlights the importance of a developmental plan in a team setting, where athletes must utilize the skills they have been developing. The research results from Csataljay et al. (2009) show us how distinguishing between different performance indicators and studied elements of winning teams, coaches can better prepare individual and team-oriented development plans that best impact winning. Conversely, coaches in a team setting that fail to develop comprehensive game plans for team success tend to over-practice. Coaches justify this over-practicing as being in better shape, hoping to “wear down” or “out-tough” their opponents to win



games. Another way we see the literature highlight the importance of designing culturally relevant curricula is by addressing this need through better coaching education. If what we know to be culturally relevant coaching education is put in place to help coaches focus on why certain pedagogical elements like inclusive learning communities and deliberate plans for performance development are essential to progress versus just showing them what elements are “needed” and how to use these pre-determined elements, neglected areas of coaching education like problem-solving and decision-making can be enhanced for the betterment of the culture (Liete et al., 2011; Lima et al., 2020). Coaches that are better educated in this area can formulate effective and efficient development plans for high-performance athletes. Experienced, culturally responsive coaches understand the importance of manufacturing plans that develop necessary anticipatory decision-making stimuli, as having the tactical knowledge to make good decisions greatly benefits the development of successful athletes (Csataljay et al., 2009; Reis et al., 2021). The literature also shows us how structured, long-term planning that incorporates necessary recommendations for young athletes, like rest and time off and delayed specialization, will be more beneficial to an athlete’s development than the applying of a de-culturalized list of training techniques (DiFiori et al., 2018; Branquinho et al., 2022). Contrarywise, the literature also highlights the dangers of the “grind,” specifically referring to African American athletes and families of low socioeconomic status. Everyone involved in basketball culture understands that sustained athletic participation and the development of high-level skills and ability is necessary for any chance of upward social mobility in sport; unfortunately for athletes and their families of lower socioeconomic status where necessary information about sport specialization and succeeding through basketball has not been effectively communicated, the non-stop hard work “grind” mentality increases the athlete injury risks. It makes them more likely to

suffer from physical, psychological, or emotional “burnout” whether the desired results are achieved (Dubrow & Adams, 2010; Post et al., 2021; Tompsett & Knoester, 2022). Those who defend the “grind” in basketball culture justify their stance using the late Kobe Bryant’s “Mamba Mentality.” Mamba Mentality is the idea of doing whatever it takes to achieve a related goal, whether working out five times a day in basketball, playing through injury, etc. Kobe Bryant was notorious for his unmatched work ethic throughout his NBA career, and athletes, coaches, parents, fans, etc., involved in basketball culture took this to mean doing whatever it took to achieve a goal no matter what. This was harmful to the basketball community because it allowed coaches, parents, and athletes lacking an understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy to justify this unrealistic work ethic. The major flaw in Mamba Mentality is the availability of resources (Bryant et al., 2018). Kobe Bryant’s dad played in the NBA, and Kobe Bryant was drafted right out of high school, meaning he was of higher socioeconomic status. Kobe could work out five times a day for however many years, but he also had adequate access to gym space and high-level coaches, making those workouts efficient. He also had the necessary tools (chef-made meals, athletic trainers, time to rest, access to doctors for treatment and body analysis, top-level strength and conditioning coaches, etc.) to make sure he was recovering physically every time, and the millions of dollars he made took probably took away any financial worries he may have had. If an athlete of higher socioeconomic status does not work as hard (or, in this case, works harder than everyone else) and is given the proper resources to thrive in basketball culture, they are more likely to receive the development, guidance, and opportunities needed to be successful than those who do not receive the same resources (Tompsett & Knoester, 2022).

## **CULTURALLY RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

When I was an active player, I learned about how the essential elements of a good plan directly correlate to culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching. The guidance I received from Coach U and Coach P gave me a chance to not only undo some of the effects of physical injury I sustained after two decades of living the “grind” mentality and get back to a healthy playing career but also learn how to put together, alter, and implement culturally relevant curricula for other athletes. When I went to Coach U and Coach P to help me fix my shooting, they did not give me a pre-determined list of training techniques they thought would work to improve my shot, then told me to “grind it out” with these techniques until I was better. After sticking to my culturally relevant plan for development, I found out later that the “grind” mentality played a significant role in my attaining the injury in the first place. The first step of significance to fixing this issue was figuring out which elements of the problem were the most significant to have solved (Ladson-Billings, 1995). After thorough film study and much in-person technical assessment, the necessary information learned was woven into a culturally responsive plan using multicultural instructional strategies from everyone involved (Gay, 2002). They understood my previous patterns of task engagement, so the first item of this plan was to stop this “grind” mentality I had been accustomed to (Gay, 2002). They knew how much I cared about fixing the ailments related to my shooting, so the deal we made was that they would stop helping me if I was caught behaving under this same “grind” thought pattern, which ended up being one of the best things to happen to my development. Because of the level of technical and cultural knowledge and strategic thinking that went into devising my development plan, even though it took two years, I got healthy and became a productive player and shooter in game situations (Gay, 2002). I had minimal experience training other people before this situation. Still, after I

saw the effect this type of plan had on my shooting, I wanted to learn the complexities and tools for developing better solutions to help athletes avoid the “grind” as best I could (Ladson-Billings, 2014). While some athletes need specific, culturally relevant elements of this grind mentality to be successful, we, as coaches, have to do a better job of deciphering the needs of our athletes and adjusting our plans accordingly. This requires integrating essential, culturally relevant pedagogical communication elements to relay critical information concerning their development

## **Chapter 12: Adaptive Teaching Styles**

### **IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL ELEMENT**

Just because the work was done to assemble a culturally relevant curriculum and a corresponding plan does not mean the work stops. If a coach/teacher has a plan but cannot use elements of cultural pedagogy pertinent to get the learner to buy into the project and absorb the curriculum, then the program does not matter. Successful coaches who apply elements of culturally responsive teaching to affect athlete development positively also find ways to adapt their teaching styles based on the recipients of the information. Coach U is the best development coach I know for teaching and developing the ability to shoot a basketball. He has a knack for finding culturally relevant pedagogical ways to give and have the learning athlete retain fundamental information throughout this process. This level of communication is essential for technical player development related to basketball skills and building the necessary trust between coach and athlete (and parent) to get the most out of the development experience. As the confidence builds between coach and athlete, the exchanges between the two begin to evolve. What was once a coach constantly giving a player instruction can turn into a coach finding a balance between always giving instruction and letting the player start to ask internal questions in figuring out solutions related to the applicable areas of development. Any development is valuable when the learner feels they have the tools to find answers independently. In the cultural context of basketball training, this value helps the coach better adapt the curriculum to the athlete's understanding and application abilities. This also gives the athlete a better chance to make decisions and effectively problem-solve on and off the court. The literature provides us with examples of why

effective coaches must be able to build trust with their athletes, which will, in turn, allow them to adapt to what the learner needs to develop best (Falcão et al., 2012).

#### **SUPPORT FROM LITERATURE**

Culturally responsive coaches build trust with athletes through their communication style. When players believe in their coaches and trust that their best interests inside and outside of basketball culture are the coach's priority, Croft and Paulson (2023) highlight how the coach, in turn, has a much better chance of positively impacting the development of the athlete's ability and their outlook on their potential career trajectory. These special groups of coaches that engender winning and success from everyone they coach are elite-level communicators and understand how negative comments and interactions cause negative feelings in athletes that lead to reduced development and performance (Sánchez-Romero et al., 2020; Croft & Paulson, 2023). The noticeable increase in the confidence of athletes through positive interactions with peers and coaches should inspire coaches to evaluate their communication styles, thus improving their ability to promote essential life skills better and better attend to players' needs through simply knowing more about the athlete learning in their space (Falcão et al., 2012) On a more technical level, the improvement of coaching education can also give coaches the necessary tools to be able to adapt to the needs of their athletes. Competences of successful coaching such as spotting specific individual differences in athletes' responsiveness to development, identifying athletes' differences in "trainability," and problem-solving to make the best decisions regarding athletes' stories based on this information is another way build trust and positively affect player development culture (Liete et al., 2011; Guimarães, 2021). Culturally responsive coaches should seek the ability to consistently relay pertinent and practical information on the

development of skills that give successful athletes the tools to find creative and appropriate ways to make better decisions quickly to beat opponents in spaces of high-level competition (Liete et al., 2009, 2011).

### **CULTURALLY RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

There are essential elements of culturally relevant pedagogy necessary for coaches to be able to adapt our teaching styles in hopes of building trust with the athlete to better the development experience. I learned this from Coach U when he taught me how to be a culturally responsive coach. We first built a database containing essential information about the content we taught and how we taught it. This idea of cultural synchronization having to exist between the two of us was imperative to get on the same page to maximize not only my learning in how to be a successful coach but our collective learning in bettering our curriculum and pedagogical techniques to be better culturally responsive coaches (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally responsive caring is one pedagogical emphasis that plays a significant part in the culturally relevant pedagogy related to our coaching style. Coach U explained to me that in this new coaching space, because of my past and how I look, athletes and their families were going to be more inclined to believe what I told them about player development, so I owed everybody that trusted me with their development the best answer I was able to give every time (Ladson-Billings, 1995). We as coaches strive to partake in a level of culturally responsive caring that translates into wanting to find solutions in every scenario so that any athlete, no matter how many times they trust us with aspects of their development, always feels like they improved in an hour workout with us (Gay, 2002). This requires mastery of content knowledge, and coaches do extra to ensure they have the tools to solve various pedagogical problems by reflexively examining their practice (Lasdon-Billings, 1995;

Gay, 2002). For us, that includes assessing critical components of the internal structure of different styles as it relates to basketball culture that, include: reverse mechanical breakdowns and deconstructing of technical skills and abilities to relay necessary information better, extensive film study, creating development plans based on analysis of athlete play style and the type of system athletes play in, studying what level of play is expected of athletes at their current level and their “next level” and finding out what progress and success best looks like convincing ourselves as coaches to stay the course and keep finding ways to advance for the sake of the development of the athlete as all hope for “results” will not come linearly, finding ways to teach and hold athletes accountable while also giving grace, figuring out what it means to understand athletes and the best way to teach as it correlates to how they best learn, etc. (Gay, 2002). After partaking in this kind of cultural reflexivity of pedagogical practice and many discussions and encounters working for Coach U in an assistant role, I earned enough trust over time to start running workouts and development sessions under Coach U’s supervision. At first, he would watch and give feedback until he did not. I was then put in situations where he trusted me to problem solve based on the culturally relevant curriculum we pull from and find ways to best utilize this cultural congruity in instruction for myself and deliver relevant multi-culturalism information to athletes (Gay, 2002). My dad always used to tell me, “You do not know what you do not know until you do.” I had no idea what that meant until I started running development workouts myself. Although I approached development as a culturally responsive coach in what I believed to be the right way, went into every workout with a written plan, and did my best to create optimal learning environments, I still did not know what to do in certain situations, until I was put in those situations on a habitual basis (Gay, 2002). One moment let me know that the hard work was starting to put me off. I was the only coach with twelve players and only



two basketball goals to use. This scenario was usually no problem, but the participating athletes' athletic ability and skill levels were everywhere for whatever reason. It ranged from two adolescent girls who showed up in jeans because it was only their second time ever playing basketball to one player who had trained with us for some time and was getting ready to play Division 1 basketball. The circumstances suddenly did not matter. I threw my plan in the trash and made the necessary adaptative adjustments to ensure everyone got the most out of their development experience. The best part was speaking to the parents of the adolescent girls after. They said that once they saw the group, they considered leaving not to burden the group's overall development, as everyone else had much more basketball experience than them. Their reason for staying was my willingness at the beginning of the workout to ensure everyone felt included in the development experience, despite the differences in ability (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Coaches that take pride in the work to be done understand that sometimes not knowing while still pushing forward in pedagogical advancement is a great tool and motivator to do more and better (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Once our mastery of pedagogical skills and relevant content knowledge has been applied to build trust, the next responsibility of the culturally responsive coach is to figure out how to best connect the athlete's strengths and weaknesses to facets of their overall development.

## **Chapter 13: Accounting for Perceived Strengths & Weaknesses**

### **IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL ELEMENT**

As a coach, I find this development aspect one of the most challenging. How can we, as coaches, put the athletes in a position best to utilize technical, physiological, and psychological strengths while also balancing how much we work on the weaknesses to try and turn them into strengths? To get to this point of athletes even to start athlete's development, many elements of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching must come into effect to consider this part of the development process fully. I am always trying to study different approaches successful culturally responsive coaches utilize to figure this out. I have incorporated some of those elements with the various aspects of my coaches in the past to help best the athletes I am now responsible for. The first thing I try and do as a coach when we get to this level of development is to identify a strength in the athlete's ability or strength related to the athlete's development process and try and incorporate that into the culturally relevant curricula as much as possible at first without them noticing. Once the athlete and I have gotten past the initial fundamental interactions, for a time at the beginning of our development journey, I think it is essential for the athletes to experience success. I incorporate drills or challenges primarily based on the athlete's strengths that have been measured through various forms of culturally relevant pedagogy. Then I will slowly start incorporating elements into our encounter that the athlete is not very good at. In this, my goal is to have the athlete begin to ask questions as to why different elements of their development are more challenging than before so that way; I can use characteristics of culturally relevant teaching and cultural critique to get athletes to start to critically engage and begin to look for answers themselves about parts of their development, that need a product (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Positively and constructively, the athlete and I examine what we can do to pinpoint weaknesses related to the execution of ability and development and look for ways to combat the issues. Lastly, I try and find a way to get the athlete to decipher for themselves in high-pressure situations like games or evaluative workouts in front of coaches that could decide their upward mobility through the sport of basketball, when and how to use their strengths to their advantage and minimize weaknesses until we have had time to turn some of those into strengths. Even without the necessary application of culture, the literature does talk about the importance of finding ways to give athletes the knowledge to know when and how to apply certain pedagogical aspects related to their developmental strengths and success to bring about success best.

#### **SUPPORT FROM LITERATURE**

Researchers suggest we address this with better evaluation techniques and pedagogical strategies (Lima et al., 2020). Evaluators and coaches in these instances must continue to come up with creative ways the athlete can be evaluated with culturally relevant pedagogical methods that not only help with potential development but also put the athlete in the best learning environments at that moment to highlight strengths and show value in different avenues in the space (Csataljay et al., 2009; Branquinho et al., 2022). Coach behavior is another essential element for developing developmental success through athletes' strengths. Because in this space, the athlete and coach can spend a significant amount of time together, the research links coaches so that athletes feel better to understand and interact with them behaviorally with to better understanding of how to get pedagogical success to translate to meaningful development (Falcão et al., 2012; Croft & Paulson, 2023). The literature also addresses the need for “experienced” culturally responsive coaches that better understand the intricacies of development to

play a more significant role in developing culturally relevant curricula, i.e., technical development plans and coach education models (Liete et al., 2011). To implement specific diagnostic measures that help detect weakness and monitor responses to training and competitive potential in basketball selection, basketball player development culture require effective, culturally responsive teachers and coaches who are qualified to make these types of decisions competently (Gay, 2002; Trunic & Mladenovic, 2014).

### **CULTURALLY RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

How culturally responsive teachers incorporate ways best fit for considering learners' strengths and weaknesses should be included in the coach's education of navigating this matter. Culturally relevant teachers understand in their never-ending search for the “right answer,” that knowledge is not static and that they must always be considering possible changes to improve the overall quality while also accounting for the strengths and weaknesses of multicultural curriculum design (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2002). Suppose coaches constantly look for ways to constructively improve weaknesses while highlighting the values of the athlete's strengths. In that case, it will make status equalization in basketball culture easier to avoid, thus giving athletes better chances to succeed in finding their place in this space (Ladson-Billings, 2014). When a coach equips their athlete with the necessary pedagogical tools to make decisions, solve problems, and ultimately succeed in basketball culture, the athlete will begin to take responsibility for their own development and become more invested in it. This shift in responsibility allows the coach to focus on elements that may impede their progress, such as the athlete's surrounding culture and environment. A coach who is culturally responsive and cares for their athlete can help them navigate these obstacles and reach their full potential. (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Coaches must continue

cultivating a culturally compatible environment that best supports the athlete physically and psychologically while maintaining the necessary motivation for a culturally relevant version of success (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

## **Chapter 14: Cultural & Environmental Effects on Development**

### **IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL ELEMENT**

As an adolescent, I always remember Coach J telling me, “When the way you play in a pick-up game is the same as the way you play in a real game, then you have made it.” I only understood what he was saying many years later. With culturally relevant pedagogical context, this quote means, “Whenever you learn what elements of culture and environment are at times negatively affecting your technical and psychological performance in high-stakes situations, that is not affecting technical and psychological performance when you are doing development workouts or playing in pick-up games that are not being critically scrutinized and evaluated, will you get to see the full potential of your personal and athletic development.” What is always hard to account for is how the environment and culture surrounding the athlete will affect their performance. Culturally responsive coaches who care must identify these elements of the environment and culture that affect the athlete’s attitude about their success and development in any way. If our athletes are allegedly being given all the technical, athletic, and psychological tools necessary for success in the space but do not consistently produce results corresponding to the capabilities and potential of their abilities, a great deal of responsibility should still fall back on the coach to find these elements of the culturally sustaining pedagogical environment and culture that could be hindering the athlete from complete transcendence (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014). In the real world, yes, the athlete does share in some of the responsibility for their basketball development's effectiveness or lack thereof. However, since coaches, evaluators, and more authoritative figures in the current state of basketball culture are ultimately the ones that get to decide what “development,” “progress,” and “success” means, they should also find ways to consider the cultural and

environmental factors that affect whatever goes into those evaluative decisions and analysis.

#### **SUPPORT FROM LITERATURE**

The literature has shown us different quantitative and qualitative data on athletes' development. It continuously needed help to show us how elements of culture and environment could not be accounted for, thus skewing whatever objective results researchers thought they found. For example, Lima et al. (2020) convey the importance of positive training environments and certain pedagogical coaching qualities on performance and psychological characteristics such as motivation and sports enjoyment when studying the specialization, expertise attainment, and development of athletes in youth sports. Another element that needs to be accounted for is parental involvement and expectation in the teaching-learning-training process (Folle & Nascimento, 2018). Coaches and parents, according to Bruner et al. (2011), and the type of environment they foster affects young athletes' development either positively or negatively depending on the outcome of the experience. Harrist and Witt (2015) observe parental involvement and previous coach experiences as two of the three components athletes listed as detractors of athletic enjoyment, which, according to Sánchez-Romero (2020), increase the probability of athletes reacting to negative comments that could cause negative psychosocial emotions like increased pressure and anxiety. These psychological and emotional responses to culturally relevant stimuli directly relate to Okazaki et al. (2015) variables that could potentially impact shooting performance. Athlete outcomes, or what coaches felt their athletes acquired as a result of Falcão's et al. (2012) coaching training program, included increased competency in the social and academic domain, elements needed to combat what Dubrow and Adams (2010) describe as the environment's negative impact

on the public perception of disadvantaged African American youth athletes. To create culturally sustaining pedagogical environments that enhance motivation, encourage positive emotions, attitudes, and behaviors, and open the door for constructive criticism through culturally responsive caring, consistent, beneficial transactions between athlete and coach concerning learning and development in a positive learning community must take place (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Croft & Paulson, 2023)

### **CULTURALLY RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

While there is not yet a clear-cut action plan for identifying these elements that directly affect the environment and culture of athlete development, we can still do things as culturally responsive coaches that will best serve our athletes until there is one. A vital step culturally responsive coaches must take is fine-tuning the learning environment they are responsible for in whatever way they can. Sometimes that may make necessary changes to everyday participation structures to bridge gaps between the learning environment and home (Ladson-Billings, 1995). If coaches can identify and remove unnatural cultural conditions from the learning space, it will give them a better means to improve athletic and personal development (Gay, 2002). Another way coaches can fine-tune our learning environments to best benefit athletes is to alter protocols of participation in discourse (Gay, 2002). In Harrist and Witt's (2015) study on developmental outcomes in basketball, it was noted that when athletes were expected to engage in opportunities to use their voice in spaces of athlete development, the feedback and debriefing from athletes allowed the coach to structure culturally relevant curriculum more effectively and better reflect on the comprehensive development experience of the



athlete (Gay, 2002). When the coach and athlete both enter and leave the space, the coach has to assess whether the necessary social transaction was made, where not only is teaching and learning occurring, but everyone involved is leaving the others in the environment with the tools to potentially improve their next interaction for the sake of bettering culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

I gave a workout recently to a young athlete who was curious if they liked basketball yet, that had with them a very involved father. While going through my regular technical progressions of administering a workout, the primary concern of mine in this workout was the environment. After we concluded, the athlete said they had fun and learned much. The father approached me and said he enjoyed watching and learning during the workout, but one thing he made sure to thank me for was for being patient. When they walked in before, I was helping Coach U train a high-level NBA client. The father expressed concerns about if this type of teaching needed to be revised for the athlete at this present moment. But even so, including elements of culturally responsive teaching with the purposeful implementation of a positive learning environment, accompanied by something as simple as patience, was enough to contribute to a productive development experience. To avoid all that comes with what Ladson-Billings (2014) refers to as academic death, as it pertains to the athletes we are responsible for helping, culturally responsive coaches have to find ways to keep advancing culturally responsive teachings and developing these culturally sustaining pedagogical environments in ways that address the complexities of ever-changing basketball culture, so we can best cater to the athletic and personal development needs of athletes (Ladson-

Billings, 2014). Culturally responsive coaches are responsible for deciphering how to bring about widespread understanding, acceptance, and implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy to the culture

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS & WORDS OF ACTION**

Culture should be a tangible and clear-cut component in basketball player development. Player development is not just the training and coaching of motor skills and athletic ability; it has all the elements of culturally responsive teaching. The same things that benefit the highest levels of classroom learning should also be present in the comprehensive player development of athletes. As I progressed through my argument, I started subtly using the words coaching and teaching more than I did “training.” When discussing the pedagogical development of basketball players and coaches, the overall cultural discourse must shift away from trainers and training to develop better and positively impact athletes on and off the court.

Pay attention to the athletes in this space, ask questions, and fully engage in the developmental experience (athletically, emotionally, psychologically, and physiologically). Culturally relevant coaches can supply you with the answers and guidance when seeking to navigate all realms of basketball culture successfully. Figure out the level of success you wish to attain and ask for help in acquiring the necessary means of achieving it. It is ok if you do not reach the athletic success you want; most people don't. Your identity is tied to your character, not your jump shot. If you achieve the highest level of success you set for yourself, be proud and grateful. Like anything else, money, status, health, and any other privilege given to you by basketball culture, can be taken away in the blink of an eye. This is still just a game, so enjoy the opportunity to participate and do your best. You owe it to yourself to use every positive attribute you gain from this space to help you successfully navigate life's journey. Any player in this

space must know that as culturally responsive player development coaches, we will do whatever we can to maximize your potential skills and abilities to harness any chance of upward social mobility in sport. With everything else happening around us, we know that culturally responsive coaches utilize the pedagogical elements of high-level learning and caring environments to build trust and provide a physical, psychological, and emotional haven.

To the parents, family, and close social circle members of these athletes, the developmental experience of the athlete is not about you. Learn what it means to find balance as it pertains to the athlete's rate of development. Learn when and how to push in a positive way. Learn when to back off, let go, and be a parent. Learn about other avenues the athlete might see success for themselves in. Learn how best to use your words because they impact the athlete more than you. Learn how to separate your goals from that of the athlete. Learn how to communicate after good and bad experiences in the space effectively. Learn how to separate love, care, and affection from your expectations of athletic performance. Learn how to respect the specific wishes of the athlete as it pertains to your involvement; you are hurting more than you are helping. Learn how to be a fan and encourage. Understand that this journey is arduous for everybody at times, and the best way for every one successfully maneuver is by offering unwavering love and support.

To my fellow coaches and instructors, it is not about you or how good of a coach/trainer you think you are. Your role in this exchange is to acquire the tools necessary to deconstruct this stigma around basketball training's place in the culture and

reconstruct it with the culturally relevant pedagogy required to demonstrate the importance and necessity of the exhaustive development of athletes. We are given quite the responsibility in this space and need to start taking accountability for our importance in athlete development in today's culture. We are in a time now where everyone wanting to succeed within basketball culture is looking for a player development coach who can help them achieve that, so there is no more room for trainers who are not fully bought into players' success both on and off the court. There must be a level of humility amongst coaches in the space to admit when you do not have the necessary tools to help the athlete achieve a certain level of success. Culturally responsive coaches must use their resources to put that athletes in the best situation to maximize their developmental experience. Coaches, remember to be patient during this process, as the need for producing hasty and incomplete results does not equate to success. We must take pride in the fact that we are in a position of leading, instructing, teaching, guiding, adapting, and supporting. Genuinely care and build a relationship with this athlete and their family that trusts you for a significant time in their lives, whether they succeed on the court or not. Culturally responsive coaches know that they do not know everything, so never have too much pride to ask questions, learn, and grow, as it will only help the athletes you are responsible for do the same. Culturally responsive coaches come into this exchange with an athlete knowing that everybody will not play Division 1 college basketball or make it to the NBA. Still, you put forth maximum effort in every exchange anyway, knowing that you will help the athlete succeed in one way or another.

It is our responsibility as protectors of culturally relevant pedagogy in this space to convey to everyone involved in basketball culture that an athlete's ability or lack thereof to shoot a ball, make a team, or have a skill translate to a game, does not define them or their capabilities for success; however their character development, based largely in part on the environments and interactions that we as coaches, family, trainers, evaluators, friends, and teammates have subjected them to, which has silently been shaping what kinds of teammates, employees, spouses, friends, parents, etc. they become outside of basketball culture, just might.

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