

A UNIQUE TOOL FOR CLOSING THE GAP

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The "gap" in the educational performance between African American and White students continues to be a troublesome issue in our nation's schools. Literature on culturally competent teaching shows a mismatch between methodologies used that reflect White/Anglo values and preferred learning patterns and cognitive styles of many African Americans. Similarly, when examining literature on the Process Communication Model®, a mismatch is evident between the personality styles of most teachers and those students who tend to have problems in school. These cultural and personality disparities in our schools have similar elements. Knowledge of the Process Communication Model® can help teachers reach not only more African American students, but also students of all races who exhibit learning and behavioral differences in the classroom.

DISPARITY IN ACHIEVEMENT

No student enters school wanting to do poorly. However, statistics show that a preponderance of African Americans, especially males, are "lagging behind their white classmates in every measure of academic success: grade-point average, standardized test scores, and enrollment in advanced-placement courses" (Duffey, 2003). Furthermore, a disproportionate number of African Americans, especially males, end up in special education (Berlak, 2005; Council for Exceptional Children, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Landsman, 2005; Osher, Woodruff & Sims, 2002). In fact, African Americans make up about 15% of the public school population but over 25% of the students who are labeled emotionally or behaviorally disturbed, most of them being males (US Department of Education, 2000). Educational systems across the country have been addressing this issue in a variety of ways, but great disparities still exist.

There are many reasons cited for this gap. One that is frequently mentioned is poverty, however, African American students who do not live in poverty continue to score lower on standardized tests and receive lower grades than Euro and Asian Americans from the same economic group (Berlak, 2001; Ogbu, 2003). Institutional racism is a factor that must be considered (Shade, Kelly & Oberg, 2004). Some African American students often develop an oppositional identity to the lack of Black academic role models in both the people who teach them and the materials that are used in most schools. In many classrooms the literature students have to read has nothing to do with their lives so they reject it (Delpit, 1995). Delpit further states, "To agree to learn from a stranger who does not respect your integrity causes a major loss of self. The only alternative is to not learn and reject the stranger's world" (p. 160).

If we look carefully at the cognitive and learning patterns of students with various backgrounds and cultures, and simultaneously contrast them with the teaching styles of our mostly white, middle class (mostly female) teaching force, an incompatibility becomes apparent. Landsman (2004) states, "Principals have told me

about teachers who say openly that black boys are impossible to work with because they are hyperactive and uncontrollable” (p. 28). Students who act contrary to or talk in ways that are different than the teacher is used to and that do not support her/his behavioral expectations, are more often referred for disciplinary action. Moreover, it has been documented that “teachers tend to recommend students for special education placements who are racially dissimilar from themselves” (Polite & Davis, 1999, p. 45) resulting in an over-representation of African Americans to special education and to classes for students who are emotionally and behaviorally disturbed. Furthermore, some educators and researchers are pondering the possibility that current teacher behaviors could be inadvertently contributing to and in some cases “creating” the disabilities for which students are referred to special education (McIntyre, 1996; Polite & Davis, 1999).

However, these very behaviors for which students are referred for special education can be seen very differently when viewed through a lens that helps White teachers understand patterns in the African American culture. For instance many African Americans have an expressive style often referred to as “frankness of manner” that includes tones, gestures, looks, and other body language that is frequently seen by Euro-Americans as confrontational (Shade et al., 2004). African American students often demonstrate involvement in the curriculum through vocal response, physical movement and verve which are accepted and encouraged in African American group settings such as religious and family gatherings. However, Euro-American teachers tend to see these behaviors as disruptive to their classes. Cultural differences are being interpreted as cultural and educational deficits (Polite & Davis, 1999).

EXAMINING THE CULTURES

“Much of typical classroom practice is anachronistic and favors one cultural group at the expense of others” (McIntyre, 1996, p. 11). As can be seen in Figure 1, the preferred learning patterns of Euro-Americans tend to focus on individuality and competitiveness. Being at the top of the class and superior school achievement are major family goals in many Euro-American households. Their children learn from an early age to sit still and passively receive information in school. Further, instruction is aimed at accumulating information and producing projects in order to receive good grades and do well on standardized tests.

The structure and methodologies used in most classrooms in the United States reflect the European American cultural group and often conflict with the preferred way of learning of other cultural groups. The task-oriented, individualistic style of the Euro American teachers matches well with Euro-American and Asian American students who often prefer to work alone on assignments and projects. Figure 1 points out that other youngsters, especially those of color, tend to be more group oriented and less competitive (McIntyre, 1996). Add to this the higher levels of

vocal response, physical movement and verve (preference for high levels of physical stimulation) demonstrated by many African American students, and communication and learning gaps are likely.

Boykin and Bailey (2000) point out that in many African American homes, emphasis is placed on the interdependence and support of family members rather than competitiveness often found in Euro-centric homes and classrooms. They further point out the importance of movement and verve to the African American way of life, and indicated that African American students preferred instruction that

FIGURE 1. Contrast of preferred learning styles of Euro-Americans with those of African Americans

Preferred Learning Styles of Euro-Americans	Preferred Learning Styles of African Americans
<p>Value Individuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus is on personal, individual achievement • School achievement & success are primary goals • Learning materials help root Euro-identity 	<p>Value Communalism/Group Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value social aspects of the classroom • Influenced by need for affiliation over achievement • Learning often conflicts with personal & family loyalty, integrity & identity • Interdependence & group loyalty valued by family • Peer pressure not to achieve in school • Events & people are more important than time • Peer/social content, humor, fantasy, call & response are best ways to learn • Sensitivity to emotional cues & body language • Need to form positive relationships with the teacher
<p>Time Oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling is important • Being on time is valued 	<p>React With Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong appreciation for visual & performing arts • Preference for dynamic & kinesthetic activities • Exhibit high degree of physicality & interaction • Respond via physical movement
<p>Work and Achievement Oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task-oriented • Have learned to sit still, not fiddle & pay attention • Passively receive information • Prefer theoretical & conceptual learning • Family pressure to achieve in school • School achievement is in line with family goals 	<p>Need Verve/Action/Excitement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous • Important to develop distinctive personality • High degree of emotional expressiveness • Respond via vocal exuberance • Multi-task well • Respond to tangible rewards
<p>Competitiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition is encouraged • Winning is valued • Instruction & motivation is aimed at grades & test results • Peer & family pressure to be "the best" 	<p>Relevancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to see total context of information • Prefer practice & experimentation • Respond well to creativity • Respond to direct statements

(Information from: Boykin, 1994; Boykin & Bailey, 2000; McIntyre, 1996; Shade, Kelly & Oberg, 2004).

included communalism (sharing knowledge and materials; working and studying together) movement and music, and high energy learning strategies. In his book *Urban Blues*, Keil (1966) discusses characteristics of African American students that indicate they are more physically and socially active than Euro-American children. When this is contrasted with expectations to listen to lectures, competitiveness, individuality and quietness demanded in most of today's classrooms, it is evident that instructional methods being used in schools are often incompatible with the cognitive styles of many African American students (Anderson 1998; McIntyre 1996). Student behaviors that do not conform to the teacher's expectations are frequently viewed as deficits rather than as differences. "When cultural gaps exist between teachers and students, teachers can misinterpret students' intents, abilities and aptitudes" (Montgomery County Public Schools Office of Staff Development, 2004, p. 1).

EXAMINING PERSONALITY TYPES - THE PROCESS COMMUNICATION MODEL®

There is a striking resemblance between the mismatch described above and the one that has been identified in the literature on The Process Communication Model® (PCM) of personality typing. The stark demarcation found between the ways in which curriculum is currently delivered and the learning patterns of many African American students also exists for students of certain personality types.

The Process Communication Model® (PCM) identifies six personality types in which people have various amounts of energy. Bradley, Pauley and Pauley (2006) point out that certain personality types tend to do well in school while others struggle with the ways in which traditional classrooms are managed and curriculum is delivered. A brief description of each personality type is offered below: (Bradley, et al., 2006; Pauley, et al., 2002).

1. **Reactors** are sensitive, compassionate and warm. They filter their experiences through their emotions. This type likes people and wants to be liked in return. They enjoy nurturing others.
2. **Workaholics** are responsible, organized and logical and perceive the world through thoughts and facts. They collect and dispense a good deal of information. It is important to them to do a good job.
3. **Persisters** are conscientious, dedicated and observant. They have strong opinions on almost every subject. They have high standards and want everyone to achieve to their full potential.
4. **Dreamers** are imaginative, reflective and calm and conceptualize things in a thoughtful and insightful way. They do not act immediately and often need clear and specific directions to carry out a task. They are often very bright but do not readily share information.

5. **Rebels** are spontaneous, creative and playful. They tend to have instantaneous reactions and exude energy. They enjoy hands-on subjects such as music, art, technology and extracurricular activities. They get the most out of active learning, and respond positively to humor.
6. **Promoters** are charming, resourceful and adaptable. They learn best through experiential activities. They are very direct and are motivated by a classroom with action and excitement (Pauley, Bradley & Pauley, 2002).

Those found in the teaching profession are predominantly of the first three types--Reactors, Workaholics and Persisters. Those who aspire to curriculum developers, superintendents, school board members and other educational policy-setters tend to have their highest energy in Workaholic and Persister. The Euro-American school system reflects the values of Persisters and Workaholics—work hard, school is serious, work before play, aspire for rewards such as good grades and high test scores, be the best and do your own work. Not surprisingly, Rebels and Promoters (and often Dreamers) represent the highest number of students with poor grades, students in special education classes such as those for Learning Disabilities and Emotional Disturbance, students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and those who drop out of school.

Pauley et al. (2002) explain that a mismatch frequently occurs between Workaholic and Persister teachers and their Rebel and Promoter students. As can be seen in Figure 2, Workaholics and Persisters value hard work, individuality, achievement and competitiveness. These teachers emphasize structure, hard work, grades and test scores hoping to produce students who will be successful in life.

However, to students who have high energy in Rebel and Promoter, grades and test scores have a low priority. Their need for socialization during the school day is often the reason that they choose relationships over grades and school progress. As can be seen in Figure 2, they learn better in groups, when they can move around, and when they are actively involved with the material. They prefer to learn through drama, art and music and need to see the relevancy of what they are learning to the real world. They have trouble sitting for long periods of time and can become so distressed in classrooms that are structured for mostly lecture and auditory learning that they act out and are often removed to the office, special education or other alternative settings.

FIGURE 2. Contrast of preferred learning styles of Workaholics and Persisters with those of Rebels and Promoters

Preferred Learning Styles of Workaholics & Persisters	Preferred Learning Styles of Rebels & Promoters
<p>Value Individuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on personal, individual achievement • Enjoy working on individual projects & reports • Need respect for individual beliefs & opinions 	<p>Value Communalism/Group Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need socialization during the school day • Relationships have priority over grades and school progress • Learn better in groups • Social group is of major importance in school • Need to have a positive relationship with the teacher
<p>Time Oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to keep to a schedule; time structure is important • Value being on time • Prefer established routines 	<p>React With Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to learn through drama, art, music • Prefer energetic to sedentary activities • Prefer to work in areas other than their desk
<p>Work and Achievement Oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work comes before play • Take school seriously; see it as a means to a goal • Enjoy academic challenges & hard work • Low tolerance for “meaningless” activity • Need academic accomplishments acknowledged • Like their best work displayed 	<p>Need Verve/Action/Excitement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need action and excitement during the day • Prefer simultaneous activities; can easily multi-task • Are spontaneous; look for opportunities to have fun and play • Respond well to humor • Enjoy being center-stage • Respond to tangible, intermittent rewards
<p>Competitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values grades and test score results • School achievement is goal; put pressure on themselves to be the best • Enjoy debate 	<p>Relevancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to see big picture • Respond to thought-provoking, challenging, creative assignments • Need real-life connections and examples • Learn best through hands-on activities • Learn through stories, metaphors & analogies

(Information from: Bradley, Pauley & Pauley, 2006; Pauley, Bradley & Pauley, 2002).

CULTURAL PATTERNS AND PERSONALITY TYPES

There have been no studies done to determine if the percentages of certain personality types are higher or lower among Euro-Americans and African Americans. However, we do know that the history of most African Americans in this country includes being “involuntary immigrants,” that is, they did not choose to immigrate here but were transported against their will. This historical perspective in combination with their subsequent treatment has produced resistance to certain aspects of White American mainstream culture (Ogbu, 1992). For example, conforming to school standards and doing well in school is sometimes interpreted as “acting White,” setting up an encouraged resistance to learning as it exists in most schools. On the other hand, most white immigrants came to this country voluntarily with

the belief that if they worked hard and got a good education they could achieve individual success. These beliefs continue to pervade the White Anglo culture in our country.

The literature on PCM as well as the literature on cultural patterns point out similarities between the teaching styles of Euro-Americans and Workaholics and Persisters (see Figure 3). Moreover, the learning styles of African Americans and Rebels and Promoters are strikingly similar (see Figure 4). Therefore, an examination of what works pedagogically with each group is warranted.

The key factor is that the teaching practices found in most American school systems are not tapping into the potential of many African American students.

FIGURE 3. Comparison of preferred learning styles of Euro americans to those of Workaholics and Persisters.

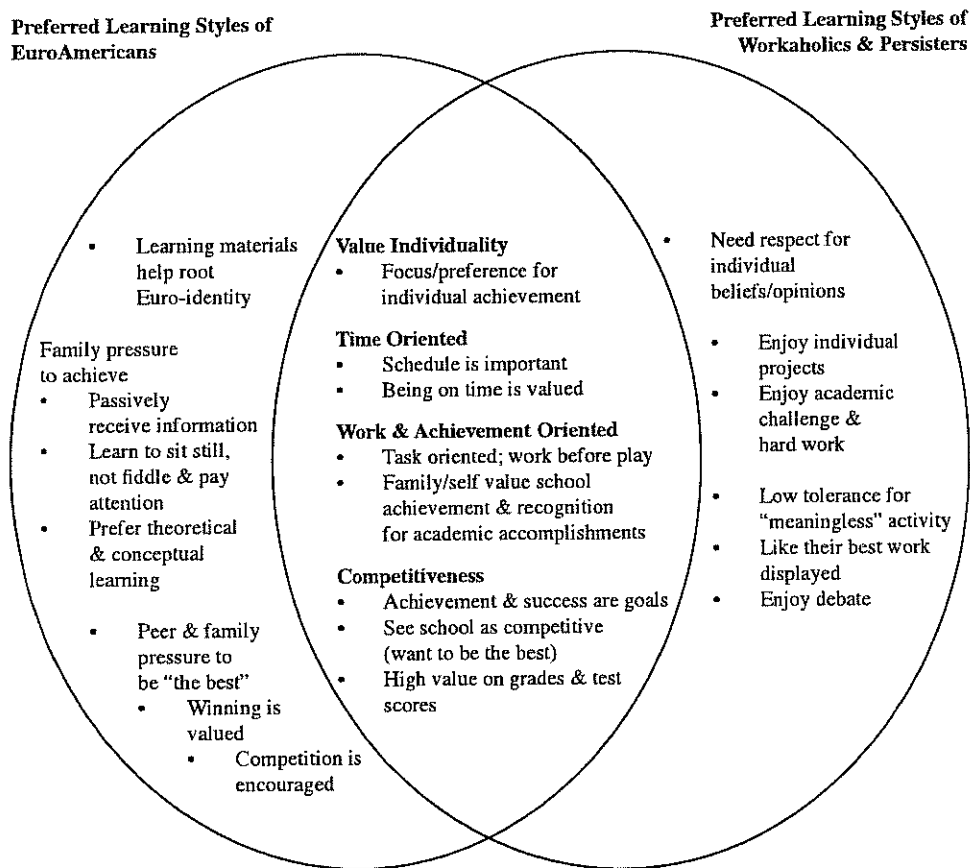
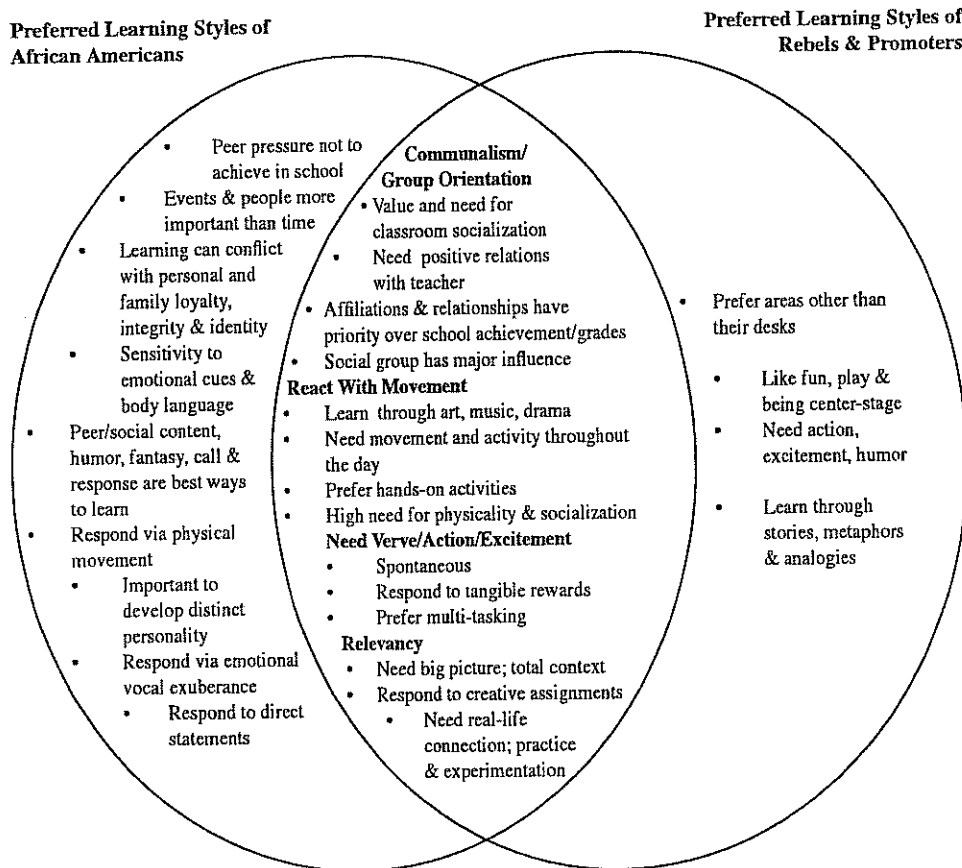


FIGURE 4. Comparison of preferred learning styles of African Americans to those of Rebels and Promoters.



In *Here's How to Reach Me: Matching Instruction to Personality Types*, Pauley et al. (2002) recommend incorporating the following teaching strategies for Rebels and Promoters:

1. Provide movement and multi-sensory approaches such as
 - Giving students opportunities to change seats during the period
 - Letting students stand up in class if they are more comfortable
 - Structuring activities so that students are moving around
2. Provide opportunities for students to have fun such as:
 - Teaching with humor and through play
 - Giving students the option to write songs or poems about academic material

- Re-enforcing concepts through games
3. Provide experiential learning such as:
 - Learning through sports and music
 - Going on field trips
 - Teaching in concrete terms by tying lessons to real-life experiences
 - Telling stories that instruct
 - Using analogies from real-life that relate to academic material
 - Presenting the big picture first and then moving to the details
 - Showing the practical application of the lesson
 4. Provide opportunities for group interaction such as
 - Using group activities and cooperative learning
 - Letting students socialize throughout the day

Instructional methodologies that reflect opportunities for students to work together, to be active, to interact with the curriculum and to see the real-life workings of what they are learning appear over and over in the literature on using PCM. Teachers who use these techniques in their classroom on a consistent basis tend to reach all students, especially Rebels and Promoters (Bradley et al., 2006; Bradley & Smith, 1999; Gilbert, 1992; Gilbert & Bailey, 2000; Jackson & Pauley, 1999; Pauley et al., 2002).

Shioj (2004) conducted a study in classes with high numbers of Rebels and Promoters in which she devised lesson plans that included strategies such as guest speakers, technology, and group work. She found that motivation and grades improved for all students in the class. Another teacher (who is a Persister) incorporated movement, games and role-play into her teaching and saw dramatic changes for her students with behavioral and emotional disabilities, especially a potential drop-out Promoter in her class. Still another team of teachers worked with a student who was about to be referred to special education. As a pre-referral intervention strategy, they decided to try some of the strategies they had learned in a PCM workshop. They incorporated music, acting out literature, hands-on experiments and song-writing into their lessons. The student became more focused, his attitude changed and his grades improved. Bradley et al. (2006) cite many additional examples of students whose motivation and progress in school improved after their teachers employed the strategies of PCM.

The literature is replete with strategies that are considered culturally competent and have proven to work well with African American students. These strategies bear a striking resemblance to those that have proven effective with Rebel and Promoter students. However, there seems to be a resistance to incorporating these methodologies into Euro-centric classrooms.

McIntyre (1996) cites studies in which students of various cultures had higher achievement and learned best when the teacher incorporated social discussions, cooperative learning activities and humor into the lessons. In addition, he suggests actively involving students, presenting in an enthusiastic manner and using music performances, as well as sports and other aspects of youth culture. Gay (1975) and Kunjufu (1984) recommend that teachers put group activities, discussion, spontaneity, audience participation, performance and movement into their lessons if their classes have “active learners” in them. Shade et al. (2004) suggest using strategies that encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and the learning of their peers (such as cooperative learning) as well as dance, drama and *visual* arts.

Many students of color find that practice and experimentation before the theory or concept is presented, helps them to understand it better (McIntyre, 1996). Studies have confirmed that African American students prefer instruction that includes sharing knowledge and materials, working and studying together so that all members can learn the material, movement, music, and high energy learning strategies (Boykin & Bailey, 2000). Polite and Davis (1999) remind us that instructional practices that tend to reach African American male students are those that involve learning through action, community building and social interaction with peers. Delpit (1995) states, “A classroom that allows for greater movement and interaction will better facilitate the learning and social styles of African American boys while one that disallows such activity will unduly penalize them” (p. 169). African American teachers have noted that teachers from any culture who use humor, rap music and tangible, interesting items for students to examine have had success with their African American students.

CONCLUSIONS

Although we cannot make sweeping generalizations about the way that students of various races, cultures and personality types learn, certain patterns do exist. The Euro-centric school appears to be an excellent place for Persister and Workaholic students to function and excel. On the other hand, the literature on culturally competent instruction, which is vastly similar to the literature on recommended instructional strategies for Rebel and Promoter students, points out that currently, the delivery of instruction in most of our schools does not seem to fit with the learning patterns of many ethnic, racial and personality groups. “When instructional methods compliment cultural styles, students at all levels become more motivated to learn, and perform better academically” (McIntyre, 1996 p. 7). “It is evident that when teachers use their knowledge of the personalities and preferences of their students, student motivation increases, behavior improves and achievement is higher” (Bradley et al, 2006, p. 125).

When instruction is not adapted to fit the needs of all students, behavioral and academic problems can and do result. This disparity is preventing many African

Americans, as well as Rebels and Promoters of all races, from learning to their full potential. African American youngsters have the added disadvantages of a peer group that often pressures them not to achieve in school as well as a history of institutionalized racism including a dearth of instructional materials depicting accurate Black history and role models with whom they can identify (Delpit, 1995; Howard, 2006).

Teachers who implement the constructs of culturally competent instruction, including the incorporation of educational materials that positively reflect and are relevant to the African American community, in conjunction with the use of The Process Communication Model® which addresses the use of instructional strategies congruent with a variety of personality styles irrespective of gender or race, will certainly reach more students in America's classrooms. In addition, employing these practices will help us begin to close the gap that keeps students whose learning patterns differ from their teachers, from achieving in school.

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BIOGRAPHY

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