

About F.A.C.E.: Increasing the Identification of African American Males with Dual Exceptionalities

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African American males are under-represented in high-ability groups and academic programs at all educational levels. Those with special education labels are typically enrolled in the lowest ability groups/programs and drop out of high school and/or college at higher rates than their White counterparts. When an African American male has dual exceptionalities, the education received may not be conducive to his needs, which may lead to the disintegration of his gifts and talents. This article will discuss factors (e.g., cultural mismatch, deficit thinking, and cool pose) that affect the identification of African American males with dual exceptionalities, more specifically, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and giftedness. A conceptual framework was developed using the acronym F.A.C.E., which means, Find African American males with dual exceptionalities who are successful and willing to share their story (F), Acknowledge personal biases (A), Cultivate culturally competent teachers (C), and Engage students in activities that will cater to their strengths (E) to provide recommendations needed to achieve a successful and fulfilling academic experience.

Keywords: African-American, Males, dual exceptionalities, twice-exceptional, gifted, ADHD, cool pose

Introduction

Achievement and cognitive assessments are used to identify students who demonstrate the capability of high achievement. If data from the aforementioned assessments indicates the need for additional services or activities outside of the classroom setting to fully develop their capabilities, students are identified as gifted and talented (NCLB, 2001). Some students identified as having a disability are also capable of high performance and/or possess an outstanding gift or talent (Weinfeld, Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, & Shevitz, 2006). However, due to their disability, some teachers view these students through a deficit lens, and when they exhibit characteristics that are not thought to be a 'good fit' for the gifted education classroom, teachers often overlook the evidence provided, and focus on the areas that are seen as deficient (Trotman Scott, 2014).

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When cultural and gender differences are taken into account, many behaviors and characteristics are misinterpreted may lead to the under-identification and in some cases, the misidentification of students. This could be attributed to the cultural mismatch between the home culture of the African American male and that of the dominant culture of the classroom setting (New Jersey Education Association, 2011). This article discusses how a cultural mismatch may lead to deficit thinking, which in turn, may lead to the underrepresentation of African American males with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) being identified as having a dual exceptionality (e.g., twice exceptional).

The author makes connections to “cool pose”, a term coined to define some of the behaviors and characteristics of African American males (See Majors & Billson, 1992). Characteristics of gifted students and African American students are shared, followed by a merger of the two to shed light on the characteristics of gifted African American students. The characteristics of ADHD is discussed and juxtaposed with similarities of African American male students who have ADHD. Finally, recommendations are shared using the acronym F.A.C.E., which means; Find African American males with dual exceptionalities who are successful and willing to share their story (**F**), Acknowledge personal biases (**A**), Cultivate culturally competent teachers (**C**), and Engage students in activities that will cater to their strengths (**E**); a conceptual framework, developed by the author, which can be used to meet the needs of gifted African American males with ADHD. Conceptually, this is shown in Figure 1.

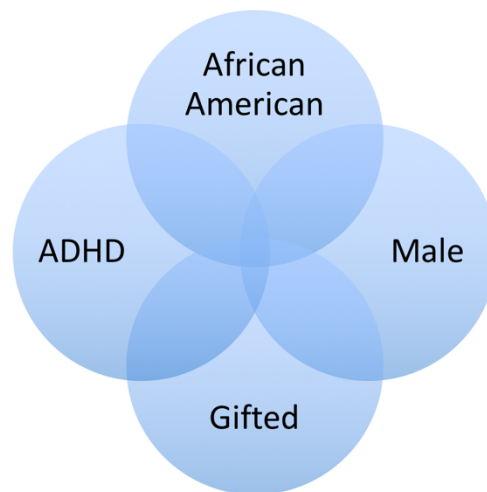


Figure 1: *Schema of Four Characteristics for African American Males Who Are Gifted with ADHD*

Looking Through the Deficit Lens

Deficit Thinking

The deficit-thinking phenomenon occurs when a teacher's perception of a student focuses on that which is negative or when others view a student in a negative manner (Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Frazier Trotman, 2002; Valencia, 2010). Negative thoughts yield negative results; in other words, when teachers perceive the behaviors of African American students in a negative fashion, the likelihood of them being identified as gifted decreases (Ford, 2011). This same philosophy can be applied to African American males with ADHD – when their behaviors are only viewed through a negative lens, their gifts and talents may be overlooked and missed.

Data show that approximately 75% of the teaching population is comprised of White females (U. S. Department of Education, 2013), many of whom completed a teacher preparation program that required a superficial amount of understanding or minimal information about and/or interactions with African American students. This lack of preparation may lead to educator bias and lack of understanding, which in turn can lead to misdiagnosis, misidentification, or in the case of gifted education, the 'missed' identification and of African American students.

In the case of some African American males, their behaviors are often viewed as disruptive or distracting, and are perceived in a more exacerbated manner by their teachers (Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010; Webb- Johnson, 2002). Behaviors exhibited by African American males that may be culturally embraced in one environment may be viewed as inappropriate in another (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Trotman Scott & Moss-Bouldin, 2014). In the case of some African American males, their behaviors are often viewed as disruptive or distracting, and are perceived in a more exacerbated manner by their teachers (Lynn et al., 2010; Webb- Johnson).

Behaviors exhibited by African American males that may be culturally embraced in one environment may be viewed as inappropriate in another (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Trotman Scott & Moss-Bouldin, 2014). For example, in the home of some African American males, it is typical for people to speak out of turn, respond while someone else is talking, and/or finish the sentence of others. But, if the aforementioned behavior is exhibited in a classroom setting, it may be seen as disrespectful or rude. This type of behavior is common in day-to-day communications for some African American males, but, if a cross-cultural or multicultural classroom environment does not exist, teachers may misinterpret the behavior as rude and/or use a punitive approach to force African American male students to assimilate to the dominant culture. Moreover, misinterpretation may lead to unwarranted disciplinary action against the African American male.

Deficit Discipline

The perceptions and attitudes possessed by some teachers toward African American males have a great impact on their ability to remain in school and be academically successful. Educators using a deficit lens often misunderstand how African American males use body language to communicate (Cartledge & Dukes, 2010) and their lack of understanding in conjunction with their deficit views of culture lead to a larger number of disciplinary referrals and suspension for African American males (Bernard & Hernandez-Brereton, 2010; Bradshaw,

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Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Kaufman, Jaser, Vaughan, Reynolds, Di Donato; Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011). For example, African American males are more likely to be referred to administrators and school counselors for problem behaviors at a much higher rate (2 to 3 times) than their White counterparts (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, & Moore-Thomas, 2012). Being African American and male also increases the likelihood of longer suspension terms and even school expulsion, as noted by several authors in this special issue.

Many teachers consciously or unconsciously uphold stereotypical beliefs about African American males' behavior (Drakeford & Ebanks, 2013). Their deficit views of AA male students cause them to misinterpret their behaviors as being negative and detrimental to the learning environment; this includes believing that White cultural styles are superior to all other cultural styles (Bernard & Hernandez-Brereton, 2010; Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Enwemeka, 2014; Kaufman, Jaser, Vaughan, Reynolds, Di Donato; Skiba et al., 2011; Vincent, Tobin, Hawken, & Frank, 2012). Unfortunately, both solely and combined, misinterpretation, ethnocentric thought processes, and misunderstandings lead to a significant number of African American males being suspended or expelled.

It is difficult for African American males to learn school-based and state-specified standards if they are not in class. Their removal from the classroom setting and school environment decreases social and academic opportunities. Their lack of exposure can and often does lead to lower levels of academic achievement and special education (mis)referrals. The lack of classroom interaction with same-aged peers also impedes students' ability to develop the transferable and pro-social skills needed for both school and the world of work.

Deficit Thinking and Special Education Implications

Identification

Data indicate that boys receive special education services two to three times more than girls (Child Trends Databank, 2012) and if the student is African American *and* male, the statistics are even higher. The subjective identification practices discussed earlier and by other authors in this special issue contributes to African American male students being identified more than all other students as having a special need in high- incidence disabilities areas (Coutinho & Oswald, 2005; Ferri & Connor, 2005). Subjectivity is a critical factor in misidentification. For example, it is estimated that more than 20,000 African American male students have been misidentified as having a cognitive disability (Holzman, 2006), meaning that they are being mis-educated and their academic success is being thwarted. They are being referred for their cultural differences, which are misinterpreted as deficits.

Deficit Thinking and Least Restrictive Environment

A difference in educational placement for African American males with special needs also exists. Federal law mandates that students diagnosed with a disability are educated in least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate for success (IDEA, 2004). Typically, educational placement is utilized to relate specifically to the disability need and severity of need for each student; however, in the case of African American males being served in special education classrooms, an even greater bias may be at play. When the diagnosis data of African American

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and White students with identical diagnoses were examined, Skiba et al., (2006) found that African American students were inequitably placed in a more restrictive educational environment (e.g., separate classroom, separate school, institution).

Others (see Artiles et al., 2010; Cartledge & Dukes, 2010; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2006) also found that African American male students were disproportionately placed in more restrictive, low-ability classes while their White male counterparts with similar needs were more likely to be placed in more inclusive settings, such as the general education classroom. These led to court litigation and the legal outcomes showed that African American children were indeed being placed in special education based on racially and culturally biased practices, such as standardized assessments (see *Larry P. v. Riles* and *Blunt v. Lower Merion School District*; Yell, 2012). In sum, deficit thought processes are detrimental and have damaging consequences; deficit thinking has contributed to miseducation, misidentification, unfair placement, and more punitive punishment practices for African American males.

Misunderstood African American Males

Three factors have been found to affect the achievement gap: (1) school factors (e.g., fear and lack of feeling safe in school, low curricular rigor, less teacher preparation, low teacher experience, high teacher absence and turnover, large class sizes, and low instructional technology); (2) health factors (e.g., low birth weight, high hunger and poor nutrition, environment damage); and (3) home factors (e.g., less parent participation, high parent-pupil ratio, less talking and reading in the home, excessive TV watching, frequent school changing, and high summer achievement loss) (Barton & Coley, 2009). That said, many African American males find themselves in a cultural mismatch or situations that differ from the social, behavioral, and cultural adjustments needed for success.

The responses and behaviors of African American males served in culturally mismatched environments may cause teachers to focus on that which is deemed negative and overlook their areas of strength, giftedness, and talents. Identifying and properly interpreting the characteristics of the African American male can be complex, especially when one has minimal knowledge about his culture. “Cool Pose”, a term coined by Majors and Billson (1992), has been defined as a coping mechanism utilized by African American males to help them deal with societal incidents and misunderstandings and the term has been used to describe the characteristics of African American males. A description of the “cool pose” character traits are discussed, along with how the behaviors may lead to the mis-identification and mis-education of African American males with dual exceptionalities.

Cool Pose: African American Males in Survival Mode.

The treatment that many African American males receive make it difficult for them to adhere to the ‘status quo’ - or in some cases, be acknowledge for doing so. Cool pose is a “ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control” (Majors & Billison, 1992, p. 4). African American males utilizing this mechanism do so to “counter the low sense of inner control, lack of inner strength, absence of

stability, damaged pride, shattered confidence, and fragile social competence that come from living on the edge of society” (Majors & Billson, p. 8).

Often times, African American males have to combat the negative stereotypes and perceptions (i.e., irresponsible, bad, lazy, servile, acting White, angry, barbaric, subhuman, oversexed, violent, not interested in education) that the dominant culture portrays upon him. He does so by embodying a style that he considers distinctive to him. He expresses himself by how he looks, the way he walks, talks, dresses, and wears his hair (Majors & Billson, 1992). The appearance of every African American male is unique and it is the one thing that he may be able to control. Therefore, he places an emphasis on that which is seen and may be judged by others – his appearance.

For some African American males, his appearance is a way of survival. The clothes, shoes and other accessories that he chooses to wear, and/or with the way that he styles his hair, allows him to create something that is ‘his own’. In a society where he may have been denied the opportunity for success, the cool pose turns the tables and empowers some African American males. It builds him up, and downplays the fact that he must deal with blocked opportunities often on, a daily basis. A male utilizing the cool pose epitomizes the control, strength, and pride of a man.

He has the ability to (a) change his performance to meet the expectations of a particular situation or audience and (b) manage the impression he communicates to others through masks, acts, and façades. He is always on stage and can never completely relax and, thus, finds it essential to perform; he exhibits restrained masculinity -- emotionless, stoic, and unflinching. All of this is designed to boost his ego, to show that he is proud of himself, to exude competence, high self-esteem, control, and inner strength ...while masking self-doubt, insecurity, and inner turmoil. Some African American males also find themselves functioning in a survival mode due to the high mortality levels, levels of incarceration, and the educational factors that affect their success as identified by Barton and Coley (2009).

Unfortunately, for many African American males, this “cool pose” is in direct conflict with school requirements and may hinder him from achieving academic excellence. In other words, African American males are forced to live in a ‘mode of survival’ as a means to endure a system of oppression in the area of education. While some maintain a cool pose to preserve a sense of control and confidence, his approach to life may cause a hindrance and prevent him from asking for help, strain relationships, and/or hide true feelings from himself (Majors & Billson, 1992).

The Face of Giftedness

Exceptional children have existed since the beginning of time. The historical Marland Report (1972), provided a formal definition for gifted children and identification regulations. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination: General intellectual ability; Specific academic aptitude; Creative or productive thinking; Leadership ability; Visual and performing arts; and/or Psychomotor ability. Subsequent federal definitions deleted psychomotor ability. This section discusses some characteristics of gifted students, African American students, and gifted students who are African American in an effort to share areas that contribute to the behavioral and cultural misinterpretations, special education misidentification of African American males and why they may be overlooked for gifted education.

Characteristics of Gifted Students

In general, no two gifted children score, behave, or perform alike because they differ from one another in a multitude of ways. Decades ago, Lovecky (1993) identified divergent thinking, excitability, sensitivity, perceptiveness, and entelechy, as five traits that may lead to both inter-and intra-personal conflicts within gifted children. Gifted children possessing the divergent thinking trait typically use original, creative, or sometimes unusual responses as opposed to those who have a high level of energy and respond with emotional intensity and reactivity. A passion for and commitment to people, issues, and ideas are also traits often exhibited by gifted students who are sensitive, while those who have the perceptive trait have a keen sense of justice and empathy. Gifted students who are perceptive may experience conflicts with adults, including teachers, when for instance, they point out injustices and unfairness.

Lovecky's (1993) pioneer study also found that the entelechy trait may lead to 'gifted student burnout' because they are "used" often due to their level of reliability as identified by their teachers and peers. The self-worth of gifted students may also fluctuate between that of extremely positive and/or special (valued) and extremely negative and/or alienated (devalued). Such students are often preoccupied with own thoughts (daydreamer); have highly developed curiosity - asks probing questions, interested in experimenting and taking risks; have a keen and unusual sense of humor; and/or they desire to organize people or things through games; (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007; see National Association for Gifted Children website for additional characteristics).

Characteristics of African American Students

Every person is unique - and while cultural similarities exist, some characteristics are more prevalent in some cultures than others, especially since many of these characteristics are developed as a child is nurtured within their familial and communal contexts. Results of studies conducted by Boykin (1994; Boykin & Noguera, 2011) indicate that through the nurturing process, many African American students have one or more of at least eight cultural characteristics. These characteristics often emerge in educational settings and call for teachers to adapt their teaching styles to accommodate learning styles (Boykin, 1994; Ford & Kea, 2009): (1) harmony (may maintain a high sensitivity to rhythm); (2) affect (often sensitive to emotional cues and feelings); (3) movement (the desire to move or be physically engaged); (4) verve (a high level of energy and enjoy activities that are lively); (5) oral tradition (prefer oral modes of communication, storytelling); (6) communalism (a strong commitment to social connectedness); (7) expressive individualism (seek and develop distinctive personalities that denote a uniqueness of personal style expressive individualism); and (8) social time perspective (consider the event and present more important than the time and the future). Below, I connect the styles of African American students to the characteristics of gifted African American students.

Characteristics of Gifted African American Students

Ford (2010, 2011) utilized Boykin's cultural styles to define characteristics of gifted African American students (see Table 1), and although Ford's application only focused on gifted African American students, it is my belief that Ford's characteristic definitions can be applied to

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describe African American students in general. Ford’s (2010, 2011) applications indicate that gifted African American students have a tendency to know when one does not particularly care for them and may react in an emotional way that may be deemed inappropriate (affect), enjoy simultaneously working and/or singing or humming a tune (harmony) and lively and energetic interactions with peers and teachers (verve).

Table 1: Performing, Movement, Harmony, Gifted, ADHD, Deficit, and Implications

Cool Pose: Performing			
<u>Ford/Boykin</u>	<u>Gifted</u>	<u>ADHD</u>	<u>Deficit Lens</u>
<p>F: Prefer kinesthetic (hands-on) learning styles as well as possess psychomotor intelligence.</p> <p>B: Movement; Harmony</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated • Tactile • Kinesthetic • Strong in visual and performing arts. • Interest in experimenting and doing things differently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often runs about or climbs when and where it is not viewed as appropriate (adolescents or adults may feel very restless). • Often fidgets with hands or feet, or squirms in seat • Often gets up from seat when remaining in seat is expected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chooses to teach in other modes of teaching and does not allow students to use the style of learning most comfortable. • Students are considered to be over-excitable, off-task
Academic Implication			
Student learning may be stifled and lead to academic failure.			

Gifted African American students also demonstrate elaborate and exaggerated language, storytelling, and telling jokes and use the direct blunt and metaphorically colorful use of language are treated as performances (oral tradition), prefer hands-on activities to remain engaged in the learning process (movement), have a need for affiliation and social acceptance/approval, so their communal connection and conscientiousness surpass their individual privileges (communalism), possess a colorful use of language and dress as a display of creativity and risk taking (expressive individualism), and treat time as a social phenomenon – a beginning and an end do not exist (social time perspective) (Ford, 2010, 2011). When the aforementioned characteristics are viewed in a deficit manner, African American students are more likely to be overlooked as those who possess a gift or talent (Ford, 2010) and instead, many may be placed on the radar of one in need of academic, behavioral, or emotional intervention, which could, in some cases, lead to a special education mis-referral/mis-placement.

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Ford (2010, 2011) also identified additional characteristics that were more specific to African American students than that of Whites (e.g., perfectionism, fear of success, asynchronous and dysynchronous development, underachievement, introversion, non-conformity, heightened self-awareness and feeling different, idealism; justice, concern over world problems, empathy). However, as it pertains to understanding the characteristics of African American male students and issues that hinder their identification, I will discuss fear of success, underachievement, non-conformity, and justice.

Many African American male students who are gifted are also communal and possess the need to 'fit in' and be connected with others (Boykin, 1994; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Ford, 2010, 2011). However, some may *fear success*, because they believe that success would equate to the sacrifice of the social relationships. As a result, many choose to perform poorly, or in some instances fail. Their need for affiliation and peer acceptance supersedes what they fear may happen - rejection, alienation, or isolation from their peers. The desire of acceptance may cause many gifted African American students, to choose to underachieve and 'mask' their intelligence as a mechanism to feel similar to their peers (Ford, 2011).

Some African American gifted male students may also choose to rebel against adults who know that they can perform better than what they choose to display. Instead of performing at the level on which they are capable, some use a minimal amount of effort and *underachieve* as a way to gain attention. As a result, some may develop poor study skills while others may experience tests and/or evaluation anxiety, hopelessness, have a negative self-image about and/or harbor negative feelings against themselves, and/or feel unmotivated to achieve (Ford, 2011).

Numerous African American gifted students also choose to 'go against the grain' or decide not to stick to the 'status quo'. That is, they are *non-conformist* who enjoy their freedom and do not like staying within that which has been planned or developed. As a result, they question and resist rules and authority, which may cause them to be viewed as stubborn and disruptive. This perception usually isolates them from peers and in some cases, their teachers (Ford, 2011). Some gifted African American students are also negatively affected by how they and others are treated. Therefore, many *seek equity, justness, and truth*, in an attempt to put things into place. Often times, their approach is unrealistic because they lack the ability to make a difference. In turn, they may feel frustrated, angry and depressed, and may feel guilty because they have survived and/or are receiving adequate accommodations (Ford, 2010) while others are not.

ADHD Characteristics

Many teachers may be familiar with the characteristics of ADHD, but may lack the knowledge of characteristics associated with African American students. Teachers who are not culturally competent may focus on the negative traits of African American students and in this case, African American male students. Their lack of knowledge and use of deficit thought processes may cause them to lower the expectations of African American male students which may lead to the negative academic outcomes, especially if teachers do not give their students the opportunity to utilize additional and/or alternative activities to display their strengths.

Some of the characteristics used as descriptors for ADHD are similar to those identified as characteristics of African American students. Using a deficit lens to view the behaviors of African American students will make their behaviors appear to be in conflict with traditional

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academic environments. For example, students who exhibit *inattentive* ADHD behaviors may not give close attention to details or may make careless mistakes in schoolwork.

They may also have trouble attending to tasks or play activities, seem as if they are not listening when they are being spoken to directly, may have difficulty following instructions and/or fail to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace. Students with inattentive ADHD also may have trouble organizing activities, or they may avoid, dislike, or not want to engage in things that require a lot of mental effort for extended periods of time (such as schoolwork or homework). Students with ADHD also lose things needed for tasks and activities (e.g., school assignments, pencils, books, or tools) may be easily distracted and are often forgetful in daily activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Students who are diagnosed as being *hyperactive* often fidget with their hands or feet, may squirm in their seat, leave their seat (although they are expected to remain seated), run about or climb when and where it is not appropriate, may experience trouble with playing or enjoying leisure activities quietly, is often “on the go” or often acts as if “driven by a motor”, and/or talks excessively. It has also been found that children who are impulsive often blurt out answers before questions have been finished, or may have trouble waiting one’s turn, interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., interrupts conversations or games) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

African American males whose behaviors that persist in this manner will undoubtedly lead to his academic failure and teachers’, whose career may depend on student success, may begin to focus on the areas of weakness and not give an equal amount of attention to the strengths of their African American male students. Both needs must be addressed as a means to provide African American males with dual exceptionalities (gifts and talents and ADHD) with the opportunity to reach potential.

Misinterpreting the Behaviors of African American Males

As identified by Ford’s (2010) application of Boykin’s characteristics (Boykin, 1994; Boykin & Noguera, 2011), some characteristics of ADHD are closely similar to the characteristics of African American students. Regrettably, if African American males continue to be viewed in a deficit manner by their teachers, behaviors that are typical of their culture will appear to conflict within the traditional academic environment (The cultural mismatch, coupled with deficit thinking may lead to student failure, unnecessary special education referrals, and/or a constant push for African American students to assimilate to the dominant culture via monocultural traditional academic expectations (Spradlin, 2011).

Trotman Scott (2014) identified for comparison, the common characteristics of African American students (Boykin, 1994; Boykin & Noguera, 2011), gifted students (Ford, 2010; 2011), and students who are being assessed for ADHD (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) to illustrate how a limited amount of cultural competence and understanding could (and does) lead to the under-representation of African American students with dual exceptionalities in gifted education, especially since many of the characteristics of African American children are similar to those of gifted and ADHD. I have adapted a from the aforementioned reference to infuse characteristics of “cool pose” to further illustrate how cool pose could be in direct conflict with the educational environment and deficit thoughts of teachers, and the possible academic implications if deficit thinking is used to interpret the behaviors of school aged African American males. Remaining in “the pose”, albeit a coping mechanism could be the beginning of

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a difficult academic road for African American males, many of whom are viewed in a deficit manner. It may also be difficult because the behaviors that they exhibit are accepted within their community and home culture, but will appear to conflict within the traditional academic environment (Ford & Trotman, 2001).

Table 2: Always On, Verve, Gifted, ADHD, Deficit, & Implications

Cool Pose: Always On; Unable to Fully Relax

<u>Ford/Boykin</u>	<u>Gifted</u>	<u>ADHD</u>	<u>Deficit Lens</u>
F: Lively and energetic interactions with peers and teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High energy level• Excitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is often “on the go” or often acts as if “driven by a motor.”• Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games). Often has trouble waiting one’s turn.• Often blurts out answers before questions have been finished.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Considers African American students loud and even obnoxious rude, off-task, lazy and/or unmotivated when they remain unresponsive to lecture-typed teaching.
B: Verve			

Academic Implication

New and reviewed information is presented in a way considered boring which leads to perpetual unresponsiveness and academic failure.

Table 3: Emotionless/6th Sense, Affect, Gifted, ADHD, Deficit, & Implications

Cool Pose: Emotionless; Sixth Sense of Rejection

<u>Ford/Boykin</u>	<u>Gifted</u>	<u>ADHD</u>	<u>Deficit Lens</u>
<p>F: Have a tendency to know when one does not particularly care for them and may react in an emotional way that may be deemed inappropriate.</p> <p>B: Affect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptive • Insightful • Intuitive • Idealism and sense of justice • Highly sensitive • Deep intense feelings and reactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very emotional and sensitive. • Impulsive. • Immediate gratification, short-term goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher may consider student's response as in-subordinate.

Academic Implication

The child may be sent out of the classroom and may reiterate the students' belief that the teacher dislikes them.

Table 4: Non Conforming, Communalism, Gifted, ADHD, Deficit, & Implications

Cool Pose: Does Not Conform; Wants to be “IN” not “OUT”

<u>Ford/Boykin</u>	<u>Gifted</u>	<u>ADHD</u>	<u>Deficit Lens</u>
<p>F: Have a need for affiliation and social acceptance/approval and because of this their communal connections and conscientiousness surpass their individual privileges.</p> <p>B: Communalism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to people, issues, and ideas. • Extraverted, social, interdependent • Empathetic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dislikes independent work. • Prefers to work with others; prefers to help others. • Socially dependent and needy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May assume that the student is not capable of achieving independent of others.

Academic Implication

Assumption: decreased opportunities for students to ‘show what they know’ and reduced likely of exposure to more rigorous curricula.

Table 5: Self-Image, Expressive Individualism, Gifted, ADHD, Deficit, & Implications

Cool Pose: Walk, Talk, Clothing, Hair Style

Ford/Boykin	Gifted	ADHD	Deficit Lens
<p>F: Colorful use of language (metaphors, clichés, and idioms) and dress; display of creativity and risk taking.</p> <p>B: Expressive Individualism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative • Dares to be different • Independent • Large vocabulary for age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressive, demonstrative. • Unique, clever, innovative in personal style. • Create own rules; resist following rules. • Resourceful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May consider student as impulsive, eccentric or as attention seekers.

Academic Implication

Misinterpretation: student may feel ostracized from peers and teachers may respond in an emotional manner; student may be removed from the classroom and have missed opportunities to learn.

Table 6: Aloof, Social Time Perspective, Gifted, ADHD, Deficit, & Implications

Cool Pose: Aloof

Ford/Boykin	Gifted	ADHD	Deficit Lens
<p>F: Treat time as a social phenomenon_ there is not beginning or end; may miss deadlines.</p> <p>B: Social Time Perspective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult time organizing things including thoughts, feelings, and materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often forgetful in daily activities. • Often do not give close attention to details; make careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student doesn't care about deadlines and is not capable of turning assignments in on time.

Academic Implication

Late assignments: points deducted, lower grades, and academic failure

Table 7: Dozens, Oral Tradition, Gifted, ADHD, Deficit, & Implications

Cool Pose: The Dozens			
Ford/Boykin	Gifted	ADHD	Deficit Lens
F: Enjoy the use of elaborate and exaggerated language, storytelling and telling jokes. The direct, blunt and metaphorically colorful use of language both spoken and auditory is treated as performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys speaking • Strong oral skills • Linguistically intelligent • Picks up languages with ease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often talk excessively; talkative. • Blunt, direct, forthright. • Prefer to speak rather than write. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May become frustrated with the joking and embellishments and may mis-interpret it as a form disrespect or impolite-ness.
B: Oral Tradition			
Academic Implication			
Misinterpretation: student may be removed from the classroom and miss opportunities to learn.			

As the tables show, there are many similarities between the Cool Pose, Gifted, ADHD, and African American student characteristics. The tables also show how the characteristics may be viewed by teachers using a deficit lens and the academic implications of the deficit thought process, which may tempt them to discuss a trip to the pediatrician for an ADHD consult with parents instead of referring them for gifted services (Trotman Scott & Moss-Bouldin, 2014).

F.A.C.E.: Increasing the Equitable Identification of African American Males With Dual Exceptionalities

African American males are an intricate part of society. Although many of them mask their intelligence and talents, strategies can be used to reveal that which is hidden. This can be done utilizing the, the F.A.C.E. method, a conceptual framework developed by the author. The acronym F.A.C.E. represents; Find African American males with dual exceptionalities who are successful and willing to share their story (**F**), Acknowledge personal biases (**A**), Cultivate culturally competent teachers (**C**), and Engage students in activities that will cater to their strengths (**E**). This conceptual framework was developed via the modification of concepts utilized by non-profit community, faith-based, and educational organizations, as well the concepts used in research based studies.

Find African American males with dual exceptionalities who are successful and willing to share their story (F)

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The issue of African American males with dual exceptionalities is not new, meaning, there are African American males who have persevered and successfully made it through pre-K–12 whether they were identified as such or not. Contact faith based institutions/organizations, fraternities, and mentoring programs such as Big Brothers to request an African American male who is willing to share their road to success. This shared information will be important whether their road was rough or smooth (Frazier Trotman, 2001). These programs typically include an outer component and consist of African American males who willingly volunteer their time to mentor and interact with youth of all ages. School-aged African American males who are able to interact with and/or hear the story of African American males who were able to successfully navigate the school system will be able to see that success is possible and that there are a multitude of things for which they can strive.

Acknowledge personal biases (A)

Everyone has biases that are derived from how we were raised, stories heard, personal experiences, and/or the culture of the community in which we live. The first step to barrier removal includes self-reflection. Once one deals with their own biases, fears, mistakes, and misunderstandings, they will be prepared to change the way that they think, speak and interact with all people, including African American males, a group that has been oppressed for centuries (Spradlin, 2011).

Cultivate culturally competent teachers (C)

Culturally competent teachers are aware of the cultural characteristics of African American males and are able to recognize the differences between what is cultural and what is a disability. Culturally competent teachers use a dynamic lens to view and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of their students and will refer students for gifted services, even if they do not “fit the mold.” Disability characteristics can also guide teaching strategies that are culturally responsive and complimentary to the strengths of their students.

Increasing the number of culturally competent teachers within the teaching force via adequate teacher preparation programs may also reduce the number of African American males mislabeled as having a disability (which contributes to their over-representation of in special education) (Cartledge & Dukes, 2010). This is especially important because many teachers that teach African American males are culturally different. However, if the teachers are culturally competent, they will be aware of the beliefs and practices that occur within the cultural settings from which their students come. Their level of awareness will reduce the misinterpretation of African American males’ behaviors as that of disrespect, insubordination, and/or lack of knowledge. It will also reduce the belief that African American students may have a disability because of their differing cultural and academic beliefs (from the dominant culture) (Trotman Scott, 2014; Trotman Scott & Ford, 2013).

Engage students in activities that will cater to their strengths (E)

Boykin’s (1994; Boykin & Noguera, 2011) research indicates that many African American students engage when instruction is energetic and lively. Activities that are kinesthetic, tactile, and incorporates frequent breaks, allow students to work in ‘chunks’ of time. Kinesthetic

and tactile activities are essential. Strength-based academic engagement that support movement and verve give African American males the opportunity to be mobile and to even maintain their “cool pose” via their performance (Majors & Billson, 1992).

As noted by Ford, (2011), in the eyes of some African American students (males with dual exceptionalities), time is a social phenomenon that does not have a beginning or an end, which could cause them to miss assignment deadlines. But, deadlines may be met when hands-on activities with a definite beginning and end are assigned within a “time-chunk” and when he knows that he will receive a break at the end of a specified amount of time that will allow them to rest, speak, or participate in another teacher approved activity. African American male students will most likely focus on the material presented during a predetermined period of time, which will decrease the likelihood of them missing deadlines or forgetting what is needed to compete the assignment.

Group work will also provide African American males with dual exceptionalities the opportunity to learn in a communal setting, which is key since many African American males have a strong commitment to social connectedness and bonds (Boykin, 1994; Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Further, group work provides opportunities to socialize with and help others, as well as receive support. He will most likely be able to comfortably engage in the learning process while exhibiting behaviors that are natural, and in this format, acceptable.

Conclusion

The under-representation of African American males with dual exceptionalities in gifted education is an issue that is not uncommon in school districts across the country. Some factors that contribute to this phenomenon range from the deficit thought processes of teachers, inadequate amount of preparation teachers receive to teach students from culturally different backgrounds, cultural competence levels possessed by the teaching population, and the cool pose mechanism used by African American males to help them deal with the incidents that take place on a daily basis. Many African American males maintain their ‘cool pose’ to combat the negative perceptions and stereotypes of society.

Providing African American male students with opportunities to interact with successful African American males will help them realize their potential to thrive. Also, teachers must seek out professional development opportunities to increase cultural awareness, while also realizing that their biases are barriers for African American males who are twice exceptional. When teachers’ biases are owned, a reduction of the number of African American males pigeonholed in special education classrooms will occur. Finally, finding what works and catering to the needs of students will enhance the learning process everyone, but more specifically, African American males who are twice exceptional and who are also at a higher risk of being suspended, expelled, and failing school.

Once teachers begin to view their African American male student through a dynamic lens, they will see that they too are brilliant beings, waiting to be identified and waiting to be served. In essence, these young men are waiting for someone to tap him on his shoulder and inform him that they he no longer needs to pose, but make an about face and embrace the level of learning on which he is capable of achieving.

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