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# GIFTED CHILD TODAY

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# Academically Gifted Black Males



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# GIFTED CHILD TODAY

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## FROM THE GUEST EDITOR



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FROM THE GUEST EDITORS

# Academically Gifted Black Males

## An Intersectional Focus on Achievement Across the P-12 Spectrum

Fred A. Bonner II, EdD[1] and Ramon B. Goings, EdD[2]

As the Guest Editors for this special issue of *Gifted Child Today, Academically Gifted Black Males: An Intersectional Focus on Achievement Across the P-12 Spectrum*, we are excited about the focus of this issue on the engagements of academically gifted African American males in P-12 education contexts. The extant literature that has underscored the experiences of this cohort is quite clear on the challenges as well as the opportunities these students face in school settings (Bonner, 2014; Bonner & Jennings, 2007; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Goings & Ford, 2018; Sewell & Goings, 2019). According to Bonner (2010), "Just as under-identification is connected to an array of factors found deleterious to the progression of African American males in gifted education, so too is underachievement—the two serve as concomitants" (p. 149).

This special issue will focus on key thematic areas and their influence on the achievement and success of academically gifted African American males in P-12 education contexts. These thematic areas include (a) definitions of giftedness, (b) teacher nominations, (c) masculinity, (d) identity, (e) mentoring, and (f) peer support.

> "This special issue will focus on key thematic areas and their influence on the achievement and success of academically gifted African American males."

*Intersectionality* is the theoretical framework that will undergird this issue. Intersectionality provides the opportunity to explore and examine multiple categories of social identity and how these dimensions of identity influence experience (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). For this issue, intersectionality provides authors with an opportunity to understand these academically gifted Black males as whole beings, not just as a collection of disjointed identity statuses. Thus, the purpose of this edition is to move past the treatment of being academically gifted and Black as being mutually exclusive. Authors will seek to explore the six thematic areas above while thinking about the population under investigation not as being academically gifted, Black, and male but as an academically gifted Black male.

The authors in this edition bring together scholarly and practitioner-focused data to provide administrators, curriculum specialists, gifted education coordinators, teachers, and parents with critical insights on how to foreground successful schooling experiences for academically gifted Black males.

In the first piece, Flowers and Banda examine the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) identities of Black males who participated in advanced placement math and science courses. The authors put forth cogent recommendations on how to support the STEM identity development of gifted Black males, and urge readers to envision new conceptions of the futures for Black males in STEM disciplines. In a complimentary article, Davis, Anderson, and Parker specifically focus on gifted Black males in advanced mathematics courses. The authors argue the important role that family, teachers, school administrators, and school counselors play in Black males not only gaining access to specialized mathematics courses, but also thriving in their respective academic settings.

While the aforementioned articles focused on Black males in STEM-related disciplines, Robinson's article investigates the impact of critical literacy on Black boys' reading identity. The author introduces the notion of representational intersectionality and then provides practical examples for

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educators to use in their classrooms when teaching Black boys. In their article, Mayes, Hines, Bibbs, and Rodman build on Robinson's work and explore the role that school counselors and psychologists have played in support of gifted Black males with disabilities. The authors contend that this stakeholder group can work in tandem to dismantle systemic barriers that impact the academic trajectory of gifted Black males with disabilities.

In conclusion, we anticipate that this special issue will not only provide a lens through which to view the engagements of academically gifted Black males in P-12 school settings, but will also offer critical theory-to-practice insight on how to meet the needs and ensure the success of this population from an intersectional perspective. Given that gifted Black boys are not a monolith, it is our hope that this special issue contributes to the growing body of work that examines the nuanced experiences of this population.

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## Bios

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FEATURE

# An Investigation of Black Males in Advanced Placement Math and Science Courses and Their Perceptions of Identity Related to STEM Possibilities

Alonzo M. Flowers III, PhD[1] and Rosa M. Banda, PhD[2]

**Abstract:** Given the need to increase Black males' participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), this study employed a multiple case studies approach to investigate the perceptions of identity to STEM possibilities of Black males who participated in advanced placement and math and science courses. A conceptual framework of self-efficacy and science identity was utilized to examine their perceptions. Three themes that emerged from data analysis included the following: *Establishing the Possibilities of a STEM Identity, Self-Efficacy: Conflicting Self-Identity Formation*, and *Community Support Integral to Positive Self-Identity*. The authors offer three recommendations for practitioners to cultivate Black males' STEM identity and, subsequently, STEM possibilities in the future.

**Keywords:** Black males, advanced placement courses, STEM identity

> "THE MORE EDUCATION YOU HAVE THE BETTER OFF YOU WILL BE. THOSE ARE THE VALUES THAT HAVE BEEN INSTILLED WITHIN ME FOR MY LIFE."

Because the United States is projected to be a majority-minority country by 2043 (National Science Board, 2015), the urgency to increase the success of minorities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields has been noted to be one of national interests (Museus, Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2011; President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, 2010). Among many other strategies, ample empirical research (Ackerman, Kanfer, & Calderwood, 2013; Avery, Gurantz, Hurwitz, & Smith, 2017; Mattern, Shaw, & Ewing, 2011; Tai, Liu, Almarode, & Fan, 2010) has established a positive relationship between participation in advanced placement (AP) courses and STEM degree completion in college. On a practical level, AP coursework can help prepare students for what to expect in college and award college credit if students pass exam (College Board, 2015). However, the Education Trust (2013) reported that males (43.5%) are less likely to take the AP exam than females (56.5%). With further disaggregation of data, the researchers also noted that only 6% of Black students took the AP exam as compared with 11.9% of White students (The Education Trust, 2013). On a larger scale, gaps in successful completion of AP courses by minoritized populations (e.g., Black males) result in what economists refer to as a "permanent national recession" (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). Such a recession limits access to attain middle-class status, which subsequently impedes full participation in a democratic society as it pertains to health and financial contributions to larger society (McKinsey & Company, 2009). Given the broad societal ramifications of AP success, particularly in subjects such as science and mathematics and their importance to STEM possibilities in college, further exploration is warranted when it comes to Black male participation. Although the purpose of this study focuses on Black males, we do not negate the realization that further research on Black females as well as other minoritized populations is also warranted. Specifically, this article focuses on the role of AP courses in high school as a possible conduit for STEM possibilities for Black males and the

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courses' ability to cultivate a perception of STEM self-efficacy and science identity within college-going focused environments.

## Literature Review

Because STEM education in the United States remains predominantly White and male-dominated, programs that focus on increasing the participation of minoritized students have been of great interest to organizations, universities, and national agencies (e.g., National Science Foundation) alike. For example, the National Science Foundation (2014) reported that underrepresented minoritized males, defined here as Hispanic, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, were awarded only 10%, 6%, and 0.4% of all science and engineering bachelor's degrees in 2014, respectively. Several methods to increase minoritized students' interest, participation, matriculation, and completion of STEM undergraduate degrees have been discussed throughout the scholarly community—from primary to postsecondary school officials and researchers. To be sure, there is a multitude of programmatic ventures that have sought to mitigate the increasing gap in STEM degree attainment between minorities and nonminorities. AP courses are one effort that seeks to expand the STEM possibilities of high school students as they begin to map their postsecondary trajectory.

AP courses date back to 1955 and were designed with the intent to provide students an opportunity to take courses at the college level (Casement, 2003). The College Board noted patterns between minoritized and low-income populations as less likely to attain a high school diploma, attend college, and graduate with a college degree when compared with White and middle-class families (Sadler, Sonnert, Tai, & Klopfenstein, 2010). As such, AP courses, despite their intent to create some equity in achievement across racial categories and income levels, minority and low-income students' access and pass rates on AP exams, remain discouraging (Lichten, 2007). Sadler et al. (2010) further noted that although participation in AP courses continue to increase among all groups, program expansion has not corrected the gaps for participation based on race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status. The College Board (2015) reported that 56% of Whites comprised the AP population, while Hispanics comprised 18%, Asians 10%, and Blacks 9% of the AP population. These statistics, in other words, suggest that inequity exists in access to and successful completion of AP courses by minoritized students or by students whose families are low-income.

The inequities that exist in regard to access and successful completion of AP courses are particularly relevant for increasing the percentage of STEM participation at a social level. Smith, Jagesic, Wyatt, and Ewing (2018) note that increasing the rigor of P-12 STEM education is integral to improving STEM success at a postsecondary level. Research has found that students were more likely to declare a major in fields such as mathematics, computer science, physical science, and biological sciences if they had taken an AP exam in a related field in high school (Mattern et al., 2011). Similarly, Tai et al. (2010), using a national sample, found that students who took AP exams in mathematics and science were more likely to pursue and complete a science-related undergraduate degree. Similarly, students who declared a physical science or mathematics major in high school and who took three or more AP exams were indeed pursuing such degree as juniors in college (Shaw & Barbuti, 2010). Further research by Ackerman et al. (2013) found that earning AP calculus credit and taking three or more AP exams in STEM-related areas in high school were important predictors to their persistence in STEM at the postsecondary level. These studies suggest that the role of AP courses is integral to students' intent to pursue and persist in STEM disciplines once in college.

Although these studies note a significant relationship between AP courses and overall STEM participation in college, there is limited research on whether similar relationships exist for underrepresented minoritized populations (e.g., Blacks, Hispanics, first-generation, women; Morgan & Klaric, 2007). To address the nuances in the relationship between AP courses and interest, intent, and persistence to degree attainment in STEM at a postsecondary level, Morgan and Klaric (2007) utilized descriptive statistics to examine whether any subgroup differences exist. In regard to both gender and race, they found that these subgroups of students who had taken an AP exam attained a STEM degree at a higher proportion than the same subgroup of students who did not take an AP exam in high school. As there is a positive relationship between successful completion of mathematics and science AP exams and the increased likelihood of the intent to pursue and persist in STEM disciplines at a postsecondary level, we wanted to further examine this relationship as it relates to Black males.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is taken from two bodies of literature of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) and science identity (Carlone & Johnson, 2007). Bandura's (1986) work on self-efficacy posits that bidirectional interaction between personal factors, behavior, and external environment are paramount to achievement. More specifically, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief about his or her ability to perform a specific task within a particular domain (Bandura, 1986, 1997). An individual, for instance, can be efficacious about her or his confidence in math or science (e.g., biology, physics). Self-efficacy, more importantly, refers to individuals' ability to structure and execute the necessary actions to achieve a specific goal (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Rittmayer and Beier (2009) assert individuals with higher self-efficacy are more apt to not only set more challenging goals but are also more committed to attaining set goals.

Self-efficacy beliefs are rudimentary in four primary sources of information: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological reaction (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Pajares, 2005). Mastery experience refers to task performance in past experience pertinent to an individual's ability to be

FEATURE

# Identifying and Supporting Black Male Students in Advanced Mathematics Courses Throughout the K-12 Pipeline

Julius Davis, EdD[1], Christian Anderson, EdD[2], and Wil Parker, EdD[1]

**Abstract:** Black male students are underrepresented in advanced mathematics programs and courses. White adults and students are the primary beneficiaries of these specialized mathematics options, thereby making them White institutional spaces. There has been a call to focus on the underrepresentation of Black male students in advanced mathematics courses. This article examines the scholarly literature about Black male students' mathematical experiences. We conclude by providing recommendations for increasing Black male students' representation in specialized mathematics spaces and how to use the knowledge to transform their lives and community.

**Keywords:** Black males, mathematics, gifted education, advanced courses

Educators and the general public are bombarded with reports about Black male students' low performance on standardized tests in mathematics (Davis, 2014). These reports tend to compare Black male students' performance with that of their White male peers, resulting in discourse about the so-called racial achievement gap (Davis, 2014). Martin (2009) argued that this so-called racial achievement gap supports the notion that some groups, mainly Whites and Asians, possess higher mathematical ability and represent the standard of competency. In contrast, Black male students are perceived as incapable and lacking the natural ability, capacity, or interest to learn and perform at the same level as White male students and at high levels in mathematics. Martin (2009) described this ranking system as the racial hierarchy of mathematical ability, which positions Black students at the bottom and White students at the top. Davis and Martin (2008) argued that standardized testing in mathematics, the racial hierarchy of mathematical ability, and the ranking system are an integral part of the United States's long history of using intelligence testing to justify racist assumptions about Blacks' intellectual and mathematics abilities.

> "Supporting Black male students' acquisition of advanced mathematical knowledge must be about the collective upliftment of the global Black community."

Davis (2018) argues that the racial hierarchy of mathematical ability also applies to Black students' participation and achievement in advanced mathematics courses, in which they are underrepresented. He contends that the ranking system supports the notion that few Black students possess the mathematical ability needed to participate in advanced classes. The current definitions of success and high achievement for Black students are based on test performance and grade point averages, which are static data points and represent a Eurocentric/White notion of achievement. The test scores and grades of White students are typically positioned as the standard for how Black students' success and high achievement are evaluated and judged.

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FEATURE

# Critical Literacy and Its Impact on African American Boys' Reading Identity

Shawn Anthony Robinson, PhD[1]

**Abstract:** Literature on twice exceptional African American boys who are gifted academically and have a learning disability neglects to emphasize contributing factors relating to the reading gap and lack of effective reading interventions and curriculum. Although the demographics of special education classrooms are shifting to mirror more diverse students, it remains a question as to how critical literacy impacts African American boys' reading identity based on a representational intersectionality approach to learning, leaving unanswered questions about proper academic support services. This article begins with definitions, followed by key factors in language and literacy development. Next, the article will highlight the urgent importance of critical literacy and its impact on reading identity, concluding with a discussion that focuses on a representational intersectionality approach to learning that includes applying Sweet and Snow's model. The article will culminate with a call for action for classroom practice.

**Keywords:** critical literacy, reading identify, representational intersectionality, culturally responsive pedagogy

> "CRITICAL LITERACY ALLOWS STUDENTS TO MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH AN AUTHOR AND, IN TURN, BRINGS THEIR RICH, LIVED EXPERIENCES INTO THE CLASSROOM."

## Introduction

In today's PreK-12 Special Education classrooms are African American boys who not only exhibit characteristics of the twice exceptional (2e) learner with a rich knowledge base of sociocultural experiences, but are also looking to build a reader identity (Baldwin, Omdal, & Pereles, 2015; Mayes & Moore, 2016). A reader's identity becomes shaped by the intersection of factors that are both inherent and neurologically based, and factors that arise as a result of one's home and academic environment (Anderson & Sadler, 2009; Hoyles & Hoyles, 2010; Mayes, Hines, & Harris, 2014). This article will consider the inherent factors of race for African American boys building a reader's identity in the PreK-12 setting as well as factors specific for the 2e learner (Owens, Ford, Lisbon, & Owens, 2016).

Emerging readers are influenced not only by the pedagogy used in reading instruction, but also by the relevance of the content in that instruction (Aud et al., 2012). PreK-12 educators can understand how the lived experiences and sense of self for the African American boy meet the outer structure of reading instruction and reading content. This point of intersection binds the reading instruction and content with the inner, lived experiences of the individual (Robinson, 2016). Reading instruction must be pedagogically sound as well as culturally relevant to strengthen the reader's identity and capacity for critical thinking (Flowers, 2007). The meeting of the content-based pedagogy and the personal experience of the 2e African American boy can be viewed through this Intersectionality Framework as formulated by Sweet and Snow (2003).

## Purpose

With the classroom demographics of special education shifting to mirror more diversity among students, PreK-12 teachers may want to examine how critical literacy impacts African American boys' reading identity with an emphasis on a representational intersectionality approach to learning. Thus, this article begins with definitions, followed by literacy and language

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FEATURE

# Counselors and Psychologists Mentoring Gifted Black Males With Disabilities to Foster College and Career Readiness

Renae D. Mayes, PhD[1], Erik M. Hines, PhD[2], Deidra L. Bibbs, BA[1], and Jennifer Rodman, BS[1]

**Abstract:** Despite greater emphasis on college and career readiness in PK-12 education, gifted Black males with disabilities still encounter various barriers in making successful transitions to postsecondary educational opportunities. These barriers include negative educational experiences, deficit ideologies, and limited opportunities for positive identity development, which all, in turn, impact their college and career readiness. Provided these experiences, it is imperative that educational stakeholders, including school counselors and school psychologists, work together to address systemic barriers while utilizing mentorship and peer support to foster positive college and career readiness.

**Keywords:** mentoring, college and career readiness, twice exceptional, Black males

> "With regard to identity, race, ability, and gender, identities may provide an important lens as to the experiences and contingencies around each of the components of college and career readiness"

A consistently growing consensus is that students in the United States need to be prepared to compete in a world that demands more advanced education and training. As the value of high school diplomas decreases, youths are confronted with life and career choices that increasingly demand knowledge and skills requiring postsecondary education. Currently, it is estimated that 62% of the jobs in the United States demand a college education, with over half of those jobs requiring a 4-year degree (Martinez, Baker, & Young, 2017). However, today, approximately one third of American students need compensatory educational services when they enter college, and current college-degree attainment rates are not keeping pace with the country's projected workforce needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Students from historically underrepresented groups often face academic, accessibility, and affordability barriers that impede CCR. The promise of educational attainment has been intangible and arduous to achieve for many first-generation students, low-income students, and students of color, especially Black males. Further exploring this issue, the U.S. Department of Education's (2011) report showed that students of color are underrepresented in college-readiness benchmarks including graduation rates, gifted and talented identification rates, and Advanced Placement enrollment rates. In 2010, the Obama Administration's Blueprint for revising the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) resulted in a drastic increase in CCR programming. However, one major concern continues to be unimpeded. Obstinate and mounting educational inequity, evident throughout all levels of education, continues to hinder underserved students. Furthermore, even after accounting for family income, Black students often continue to lag behind their White and Asian peers in CCR. The pervasiveness of social inequity is so overwhelmingly present in some states that students' college readiness is directly connected to their race/ethnicity (Castro, 2013). It is imperative to reform the standard so that every

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COLUMN

# Are We Differentiating Effectively for the Gifted or Not?

## A Commentary on Differentiated Curriculum Use in Schools

Joyce VanTassel-Baska, EdD[1]

**Abstract:** After reviewing curriculum materials and observing instructional practices, the author identified trends and issues in school districts related to the implementation of differentiated curriculum and stakeholders' views. Although primary stakeholders hold positive views of a differentiated curriculum, limited differentiation is being used in the regular curriculum. When teachers used differentiated curriculum, they were quite effective in the fidelity of implementation. However, principals appeared to be disinterested in differentiating the general curriculum and left its implementation to the discretion of teachers and the gifted coordinator, and superintendents were more focused on differentiation strategies for all learners and the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the gifted program. Moreover, the implementation of differentiation was influenced by the type of grouping and concerns about student performance on the state test. The author concluded with a discussion of remedies to administrative perceptions about gifted curriculum and grouping models.

**Keywords:** differentiated curriculum, gifted education, evaluation, trends and issues

At the dawn of a new decade, it is timely to reflect on what we know about the trends and issues that are occurring in school districts regarding curriculum for the gifted. As an evaluator of several gifted programs over the past decade, I have reviewed curriculum materials and observed instruction related to that curriculum in teachers' classrooms. I have also run focus groups and held interviews with all relevant stakeholders in the districts evaluated. The following curriculum commentary is derived from a reflection on that work.

> "WE MUST INSIST THAT GIFTED STUDENTS ARE SERVED IN CURRICULUM MODELS THAT WORK, DELIVERED BY TRAINED TEACHERS . . ."

1. Primary stakeholders held positive views of differentiated curriculum.

Across all of the districts evaluated, both teachers and students were positively disposed toward the curriculum being implemented in the gifted program. Students found the curriculum to be stimulating and challenging in comparison with the regular curriculum. Teachers felt it was more rigorous and student centered. When parents were aware of the curriculum, their view was positive as well, often noting that it provided opportunities for their child to think and problem-solve in ways not typical from other curricular fare. Unfortunately, in many cases, their knowledge of the curriculum was not sufficiently high to rate or comment on perceptions of its effectiveness.

2. Evaluator reviews of curriculum materials documented limited differentiation being used in the regular curriculum.

Most of the districts used a combination of curriculum materials for their gifted programs. Differentiated materials were

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COLUMN

# Two Grandmothers, Two Valedictorians, and Four Gifted Grandchildren

## The Importance of Context, Personal Narratives, and Opportunity in Talent Development

Tracy L. Cross, PhD[1]

**Abstract:** This article narrates the stories of two females who were born in the United States at about the same time in the early twentieth century and the influence of context in their talent development. The author points out the importance of providing educational opportunities and information to gifted students from diverse backgrounds.

**Keywords:** talent development, gifted, equity, context

> I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy. My sons ought to study Mathematicks and Philosophy, Geography, natural History, Naval Architecture, navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry and Porcelaine.
>
> —John Adams, May 12, 1780

> "THE COLLEGE EDUCATION CAST HER INTO CIRCLES IN HIGHER EDUCATION THAT ENCOURAGED AND ASSISTED HER AS SHE APPLIED FOR AND RECEIVED A FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP TO THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA."

Approximately 90 years ago, two females were born in the United States; Ava[1] to a proud set of parents who owned a modest farm in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains in East Tennessee, and Joann to recent Scottish immigrants who had settled down in Chicago, Illinois. Ava attended very small rural schools and worked on the family farm, and Joann attended very large schools in our nation's third largest city. Years later, they both graduated as the valedictorian of their respective high schools. This column shares their stories as they intersect, as their adult children marry, and Ava and Joann share four gifted grandchildren. More specifically, it tells the story of their lives relative to context, personal narratives, and the subsequent opportunities for talent development.

Ava was the second of three daughters born to two hard-working farmers in Blount County, Tennessee. Her parents were also raised in this part of the state. Neither graduated from high school, and although their farm was modest, it yielded a wonderful bounty of vegetables and meat items for every family meal. As a young girl, Ava yearned for the day when she could leave the farm and taste some of the more modern types of foods she had heard about from her friends who visited the big city of Knoxville, Tennessee, which, circa 1950 had about 100,000 residents.

During a typical weekday, Ava walked to her tiny school (Porter High School) with her two sisters and spent the entire day being unchallenged academically. She dreamed of life in the big city and then walked home and worked on the farm. Life on the farm taught her to work hard. Ava liked to learn and, over time, became an avid reader. Her parents were quite strict, raising their daughters as conservative Southern Baptists. As Ava moved into high school, her older sister graduated and moved away. Her sister was married at age 18. The next year, Ava and her younger sister walked to school. On one average school day, Ava was called into the principal's office. This had never

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## Game Changers





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**TOM'S GUIDE REVIEWS: HP ENVY 13T**
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