

**Overlapping Disadvantages and the Racial/Ethnic Graduation Gap among
Students Attending Selective Institutions***

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Abstract

Using a configurational approach, I examine the extent to which the intersection between background attributes can account for racial and ethnic gaps in graduation likelihood among students attending elite institutions in the United States. The results, which are based on the College & Beyond database, demonstrate the compounding effect of multiple disadvantages on students' graduation likelihood, above and beyond the unique hardship associated with each background characteristic. Under-represented minority students are more likely to suffer from overlapping disadvantages than whites and Asians, but given similar constellations of disadvantages most minority students perform as well as whites. However, black students with overlapping disadvantages are slightly less likely to graduate than their white configuration-counterparts. About third of the overall race gap is attributed to the compounding effect of overlapping disadvantages on blacks' achievement. That black male students with overlapping disadvantages are the most vulnerable group of all reveals an intersection between gender, race and class.

KEYWORDS: Graduation Gap, Overlapping Disadvantages, Intersectionality, Elite Institutions, Gender Gap, Feminist theory, Double Disadvantage, Configurations, Minorities