

Peer Review

Review of: "Does Teacher Feedback Potentiate a Positive Feedback Loop That Underlies the "Achievement Gap"? The Role of Race and Gender in the Interrelations Between Self-Perceptions, Teacher Feedback, and Academic Performance at West Point"

Changwu Wei¹

1. Hezhou University, Hunan, China

This study, set in the context of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, tracked data from 8,612 cadets over four years to systematically examine the dynamic interplay between teacher evaluations, self-evaluations, and GPA. It offers significant value for understanding racial and gender achievement gaps in military educational environments. The research design is rigorous, the sample size is sufficient, and the use of the RI-CLPM model to disentangle stable between-person traits from within-person dynamic changes reflects methodological sophistication. Theoretically, the authors integrate frameworks such as "educational debt," "stereotype threat," and "positive feedback loops," demonstrating a strong grasp of the literature. However, the following suggestions could further enhance the paper's quality.

1. Abstract

The authors clearly report the sample size, specific statistical methods (RI-CLPM), and matching strategy—a level of detail uncommon in psychological research, highlighting their commitment to methodological rigor.

However, the abstract could be more structured, following a "Background–Method–Results–Conclusion" format. It is recommended to: begin with the research gap ("Although teacher feedback is believed to exacerbate educational inequality, its longitudinal dynamics remain unclear"); briefly describe the

method in the second sentence ("This study tracked four-year data from 8,612 cadets at West Point"); immediately present the key finding in the third sentence ("Teacher evaluations predicted subsequent GPA more strongly for Black cadets than for White cadets, creating a 'low evaluation–low performance' positive feedback loop"); and conclude with evidence of specificity and policy implications. Additionally, including effect size ranges (e.g., $\beta = 0.033$ vs. 0.012) would improve evaluability.

2. Results

The authors explicitly limit the "positive feedback loop" to the bidirectional relationship between GPA and teacher evaluations, excluding self-evaluations ("solidified in Year 2"). However, this approach creates theoretical tension:

- a. The title and introduction emphasize the central role of "self-perceptions," yet in the results, self-evaluations function only as stable background variables and do not participate in the dynamic loop.
- b. The authors do not fully explain why self-evaluations "solidified" in the second year—does this reflect the unique environment of West Point (e.g., military hierarchy suppressing self-reflection) or issues with the measurement tool?
- c. Grounded in self-efficacy theory, the absence of self-evaluations in this positive feedback loop is notable, as self-evaluations are closely related to self-efficacy. Could self-evaluations serve as a mediator in the relationship between teacher evaluations and GPA?

It is recommended that the authors clearly define what constitutes the positive feedback loop in the results and analyze the dynamic relationships among the three variables across different time points.

3. Citation formats are inconsistently used in the text, increasing the reader's burden. For example, in the first paragraph: "Despite explicit and implicit racism (among other biases) decreasing since the mid-2000s (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022), the achievement gap has continued to, if anything, widen (Hanushek et al., 2019) and likely was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, mostly due to socioeconomic factors [5]." A single citation format should be consistently applied.

Attachments: available at <https://doi.org/10.32388/KXPE3F>

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.