Do the Source and Motivation of DEI Statements Matter?

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INTRODUCTION

Background
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) interventions improve students' sense of belonging[1], motivation[1], trust[2], utility value[3], and academic engagement[4].
- While understudied, feeling respected by a teacher increases students' academic confidence and self-concept[5].
- Many educators and universities have advocated for using DEI statements in syllabi
  - DEI statement: a declaration or commitment by an institution or faculty member to furthering the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Research question
- Does the inclusion of a DEI statement in a course syllabus increase students' expectations of respect from their professor?

Study design
- 2 (Authorship: Professor vs. University) x 2 (Motivation: Internal vs. External) between-subjects randomized experiment
- Dependent Variable
  - Perceived Faculty-Student Respect (FSR)
    - E.g., "Based off the transcript, how likely is it that the professor would: (1) Treat students with respect, (2) Be responsive when I have questions or need assistance, (3) Care about the students... (4) ... (10)

Hypotheses
H1: FSR will be greatest for internally motivated DEI statements written by professors.
H2: FSR will be greater for internally motivated DEI statements.
H3: FSR will be greater for DEI statements authored by professors.

METHODS

Participants
- N = 553 (48% men, 47% women, 5% non-binary; 70% Whites, 12% Asian, 6.5% Blacks; mean age = 24.78 years, age range = 18–67)

Procedures
- Participants randomly assigned to one of four manipulation conditions (see below) and imagined the professor reading the syllabus to them on the first day of class.
- After the manipulation, participants completed a set of measures for classroom motivation, academic belonging, and professor authenticity.

2 (Authorship) x 2 (Motivation) Experimental Design

	Internal Motivation	External Motivation
Professor Authorship	I included the following DEI statement, which I wrote, specifically because I find it imperative that classes be a place where everyone is included and can succeed as who they are.	I included the following DEI statement, which I wrote, specifically because the University finds it imperative that classes be a place where everyone is included and can succeed as who they are.
University Authorship	I included the following DEI statement written by the University's DEI office specifically because I find it imperative that classes be a place where everyone is included and can succeed as who they are.	I included the following DEI statement written by the University's DEI office specifically because the University finds it imperative that classes be a place where everyone is included and can succeed as who they are.

RESULTS

As predicted:
1. **Participants reported the greatest FSR when DEI statements were internally motivated and authored by professors** (F(1,549) = 5.97, p = 0.01, MSe = 0.74)
2. **Participants reported greater FSR when DEI statements were internally motivated** (F(1,549) = 11.03, p<.001)
3. **Participants reported greater FSR when DEI statements were written by professors** (F(1, 549) = 40.14, p<.001)

Figure 1. Plot of Interaction Effect for Perceived Respect (Authorship x Motivation)
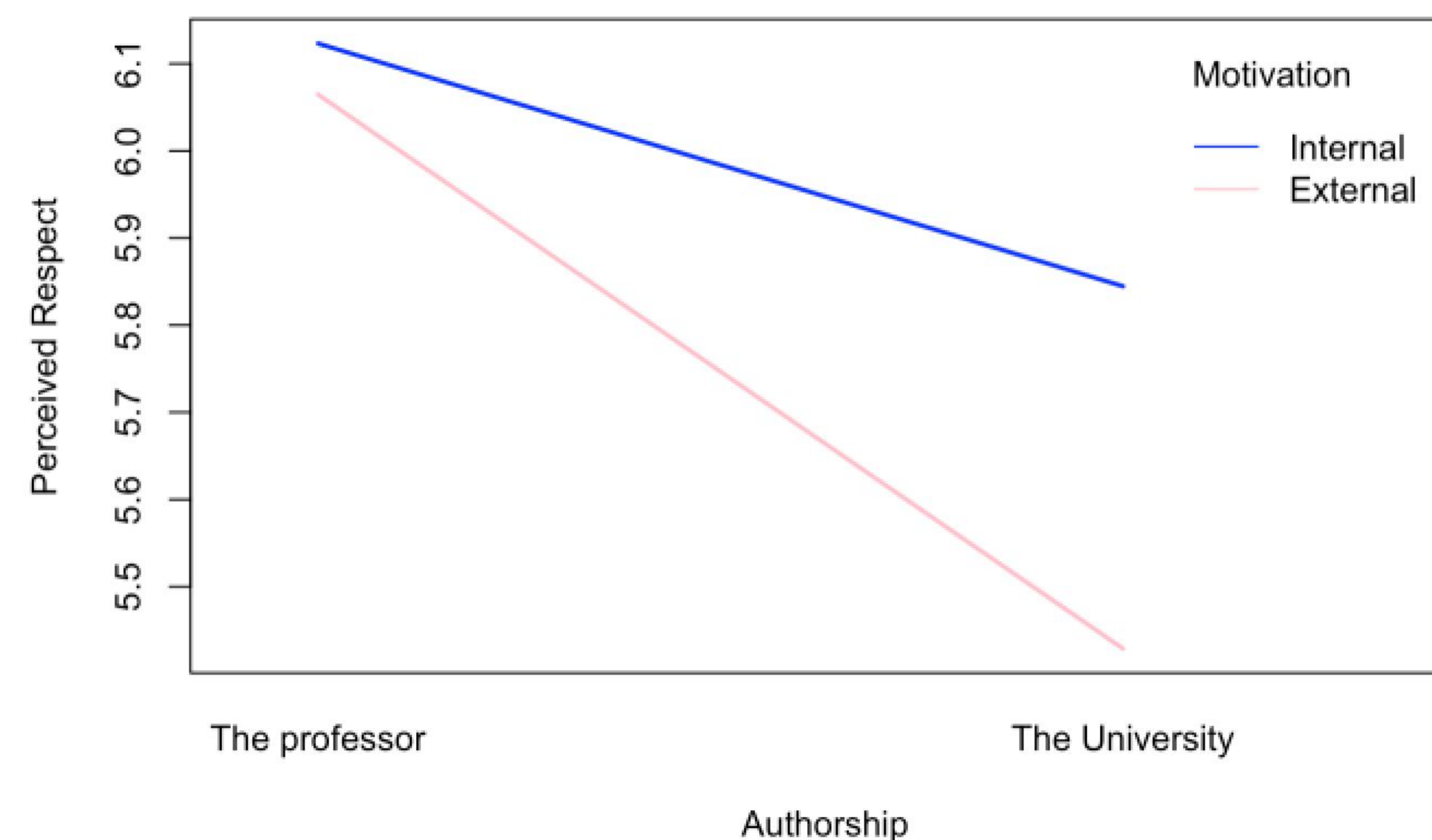
F-test (ANOVA) Results :
- Professor-authored (F(1,549) = 11.83 , p<.001) and internally-motivated (F(1,549) = 4.37 , p<.05) statements individually increase students' <u>in-class motivation</u>
- Professor-authored (F(1,549) = 28.24, p<.001) and internally-motivated (F(1,549) = 15.64, p<.001) statements individually increase students' <u>feelings of comfort</u>
- Professor-authored (F(1,549) = 5.02, p<.05) and internally-motivated (F(1,549) = 7.79, p<.001) statements individually increase students' <u>sense of belonging</u>
- Students perceived professors as <u>most authentic</u> when statements were professor-authored and internally-motivated (F(1,549) = 9.13, p = 0.003, MSe = 0.45)

DISCUSSION

- When professors **write their own** diversity statements in their course syllabi out of **intrinsic motivation**, this leads to **more positive learning outcomes**: students feel higher levels of respect, as well as more comfort, belonging, and motivation in the classroom.

DEI statements are likely to foster a positive learning environment where students feel respected and supported when they feel like it is an authentic, personal statement about the professor's beliefs of the classroom environment.

Limitations
- Online recruitment included participants who were not college students, and thus might be less representative of the population of interest

Future Directions
- Determine if greater perceived professor authenticity mediated the effect of internally motivated statements on FSR.
  - Use better measure of authenticity
- Compare written to in-person presentation

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