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How autonomy support and ethical value alignment influences attitudes towards diversity in English police

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ABSTRACT

Antagonism towards diversity, an attitude reflecting low egalitarian ethical values, has been a topic within policing that has received increasing attention in the last decade. Using two-wave data and applying self-determination theory, we investigated how autonomy support versus autonomy frustration, ways of being motivated either through encouraging one's sense of volition, or otherwise, coercing and imposing pressures, can improve diversity attitudes through its relation with ethical values. Study 1 ($n=$ 398 police officers and staff) found that autonomy-supportive communications fostered ethical values, and hence was negatively related to diversity antagonism. Study 2 ($n=$ 859 police officers and staff) indicated that motivation to overcome prejudice mediates the relationship between ethical values and diversity antagonism. Perceptions of workplace culture as lacking in autonomy support acted as a boundary condition for the ethical values and diversity antagonism relationship; no relationship was present when autonomy support was low.

Organizational values explicitly recognized as part of an organization's philosophy or culture (Chatman, 1989) influence employee attitudes and behavior in a myriad of ways. Yet, the impact of these values on attitudes and behavior depends on the extent they are accepted or endorsed by employees of the organization, or the employees' *values alignment* with those of the organization. Alignment between an employee's held values and those of the organization, also known as individual-organization values fit or congruence, has been shown to improve employee attitudes and behavior at work (Ambrose, Arnaud, & Schminke, 2008; Chatman, 1989). Prior research has shown that individual-organization values alignment is positively associated with employee organizational identification, feeling involved with the broader mission of the organization and discretionary effort (Cable & DeRue, 2002), work effectiveness (Chen, Sparrow, & Cooper, 2016), and job satisfaction (Hoffman, Bynum, Piccolo, & Sutton, 2011). Although much is known about the outcomes of values alignment, existing studies have not placed much emphasis on how values alignment can be achieved. Informed by the theoretical framework of self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000), we argue that values alignment is more likely to take place to the extent the organizational culture helps employees to accept or internalize desired values through supporting employee

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autonomy, or a sense of volition and self-congruence in one's actions, rather than an autonomy-frustrating, or controlling, environment, motivating employees to change attitudes through pressure and coercion.

Policing is an ideal organizational context for understanding values alignment in the *ethical values domain*, in part, because officers and staff in the organization are guided by a stated ethical code for professional conduct. The policing Code of Ethics (College of Policing, 2014) sets out the standards of professional behavior expected of police officers and staff within England and Wales. The code is underpinned by the values police officers and staff are encouraged to adopt to inform their decision-making when performing their duties. Honesty, integrity, impartiality, and fairness are all highlighted as ethical values that should guide officers and staff (p. 4–5) in their decision-making. While some of the values within the Code of Ethics may be easier to accept as a valued way of life within policing (e.g., honesty; Delattre, 2002), others may be more difficult. For example, despite the Code of Ethics stating the values of fairness and impartiality, and having clear behavioral standards that officers and staff are required to follow to not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly against others (p. 7), prejudice in part expressed as antagonism towards individuals from diverse backgrounds, and in particular minority ethnicities, persists as a problem within policing (Bury, Pullerits, Edwards, Davies, & DeMarco, 2018).

Diversity antagonism—antagonistic attitudes toward diverse individuals and groups—can be evident in both subtle and blatant behaviors. For example, previous evidence suggests that individuals from minority groups are more often subjected to 'stop and search' (used when police suspect a member of the community may have committed, or is about to commit an offence), and are arrested more frequently than white majority individuals (Bowling & Phillips, 2007; Bradford & Loader, 2016). Police officers in England and Wales may also use excessive force disproportionately against minority individuals (IPCC, 2015–2016). Furthermore, in a recent study of police officers in England, negative stereotypes concerning ethnic minorities, in this case Muslims, influenced investigative decision-making that can impact outcomes of criminal investigations (Minhas & Walsh, 2018). In the media, attention and criticism has been drawn to the antagonism police officers show towards minority groups (Lammy, 2017). As such, a major challenge facing policing, which reflects the challenge of organizations more broadly, is how to bring about change in employee personal ethical values relating to diversity so that they are aligned with those desired by the organization—as explicitly expressed in policing in the professional code of conduct of the Code of Ethics—and in so doing reduce antagonism towards individuals from diverse groups and its detrimental behavioral correlates.

SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) provides a useful framework for examining how social environments influence individual-organizational values alignment and its attitudinal correlates. SDT argues that individuals benefit when they can make decisions and undertake actions that are consistent with their self, actions that feel personally important and meaningful. Furthermore, the social support for acting in line with one's self-experiences fosters this feeling of volition, self-concordance, and self-endorsement of one's behavior (Assor, 2017).

While social contexts can support autonomy, they can alternatively undermine it when autonomy-frustrating environments compel, coerce, or pressure individuals into

action. Such autonomy-frustrating social contexts fail to give individuals the opportunity to explore and endorse, and thus ultimately feel autonomous in, their own actions because they necessitate that individuals act to conform to external motivational pulls (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, when individuals are in social contexts in which their autonomy is supported, they can more easily find their own path to accepting or *internalizing* new information, ideas, and experiences, and integrate those into their existing values and beliefs, whereas in autonomy-frustrating contexts individuals may be more inclined to behave just to avoid negative consequences imposed by the self (e.g., shame), or by others in the controlling context (e.g., punishment) (Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2013).

In line with these views and understood within the context of internalizing *values*, previous research has shown autonomy-supportive environments help nurture and internalize ethical values, with implications for behavior change (Assor, 2017; Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & de Hoogh, 2013), while motivating through pressuring or guilt have shown opposite effects such as reactance or rebellion (Van Petegem, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Beyers, 2015), and ultimately less ethical behaviors, such as antisocial behaviors (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011). Even more relevant to the current work, in the context of internalization of the value of non-prejudice, autonomy-supportive versus autonomy-frustrating climates have been shown to encourage *internal motivation* to reduce one's own prejudice because it is felt to be personally important and rewarding, and reduce *external* motivation to reduce prejudice driven by the desire to avoid such self-imposed or externally imposed consequences such as shame or punishment (Legault, Green-Demers, & Eadie, 2009). In the context of diversity antagonism and policing values, this approach would then suggest that to the extent the organization can support employee autonomy rather than imposing an autonomy-frustrating motivational climate, police officers and staff might be better able to internalize and come to personally value ethical norms that are held by the organization. Hence, we conceptualize autonomy in two different ways; that of autonomy-supportive communications for prejudice reduction and secondly, as a general autonomy experienced as part of the broader workplace, both of which may be effective in assisting ethical value alignment.

Current research

In two studies, each using two-wave data collected from police officers and staff in English police forces, we tested two complementary conceptual models describing how autonomy-supportive motivational contexts can shape the ways in which individuals internalize or accept the organization's held ethical values, and the implications for their motivation. In Study 1, we investigated whether autonomy support relates to ethical values within police force employees; in this case, we investigated whether police officers and staff would identify more closely with the Code of Ethics under autonomy-supportive conditions, leading to less diversity antagonism as an indicator of egalitarianism—an important, but difficult attitude encouraged by the Code of Ethics (Hypothesis 1). In Study 2, we investigated whether two different motivations to be nonprejudiced mediated the relationship between individuals' Code of Ethics values alignment and their diversity antagonism. We tested both internal motivation (arising from internalized and personally important beliefs and values) and external motivation

(arising from reward or punishment to comply with nonprejudiced norms) as potential mediators and hypothesized they would both independently mediate effects (Hypothesis 2). Additionally, we investigated whether an autonomy-frustrating, non-autonomous environment would moderate the relationship between individual-Code of Ethics (**individual-COE)** values alignment and these two different motivations to be nonprejudiced as well as diversity antagonism (Hypothesis 3).

Study 1: the benefit of autonomy support for individual ethical values, job satisfaction and diversity attitudes

In Study 1, using two-wave data collected from police officers and staff we investigated whether as hypothesized, officers and staff who perceive their work environment to be more autonomy-supportive when communicating the importance of non-prejudice would report lower diversity antagonism and higher job satisfaction. Additionally, we tested whether alignment of police officers' and staff personal values with those of the Code of Ethics (COE) would mediate this effect as depicted in Figure 1.

Method

Sample and procedures

We invited police officers and staff from three English police forces to participate in this study. At Time 1, 2538 respondents provided ratings of the levels of autonomy support received from the force and of their level of values alignment with the Code of Ethics. Four weeks later, we asked respondents to rate their levels of diversity antagonism (Time 2). Responses were matched using an anonymous code. In total, 398 participants provided responses at both Time 1 and Time 2.

Of these 393 respondents, 49.4% were male, and 50.6% female. Forty-nine percent were police officers, and 51% were police staff. Participants ranged in age: 2.3% were aged from 18 to 24 years, 17.7% were 25 to 34 years, 29.9% were 35 to 44 years, 38.2% were 45 to 54 years, and 11.9% were aged above 55 years. Our sample was further comprised of participants that had been in policing for some time: 2.3% had worked in policing for less than 1 year, 13% had worked for 1–5 years, 14% had worked for 6–10 years, 44.4% had worked for 11–20 years, and 26.2% had worked for more than 20 years in policing.

Covariates. Past research suggests that demographic variables may influence employees' work attitudes and behaviors (Vandenberghe et al., 2007; Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2005). Thus, we accounted for respondents' gender (0 = male, 1 = female), age (0 = 18–24 years old, 1 = 25–34 years old, 2 = 35–44 years old, 3 = 45–54 years old, 4 = above 55 years old), job roles (0 = police officer, 1 = police staff),

Figure 1. Conceptual model for Study 1.

The conceptual model does not include all paths of the empirically tested models.

and tenure in policing (0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1–5 years, 2 = 6–10 years, 3 = 11–20 years, 4 = more than 20 years). Additionally, we controlled for respondents' levels of social desirability in the analysis (described below).

Measures

All items were rated on a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Autonomy support to reduce bias. Participants responded to a 15-item scale measuring motivational climate in this context: The Autonomy Support to Reduce Bias scale (Weinstein, Legate, & Graham, 2019). This scale has five dimensions: choice (e.g., 'At work I have a sense of choice about what I can feel about individuals from diverse groups, even when the force encourages me to act with impartiality'), rationale (e.g., 'The force has clearly communicated the reasons and need for treating individuals from diverse groups in a non-biased manner'), perspective-taking (e.g., 'When explaining new rules for behaving in an impartial manner to individuals from diverse groups, others at work understand my views and feelings'), supportive structure (e.g., 'The force helps me understand how to act without bias towards individuals from diverse groups'), and pressure and guilt (e.g., 'My workplace would make me feel guilty for failing to behave with impartiality towards individuals from diverse groups '). The 15 items of the full scale were highly interrelated with a Cronbach's Alpha of .85.

Individual-code of ethics (individual-COE) values alignment. Participants responded to a three-item scale (Graham, Zheng, Epitropaki, & Caveney, 2019) adapted from the scale of Cable and DeRue (2002) which originally measured person-organization values congruence. An example item is 'my personal values match the Code of Ethics' values and ideals' (α = .95).

Diversity antagonism. Diversity antagonism was measured at Time 2 with three items, adapted from existing scales evaluating prejudice (Ekehammar, Akrami, & Araya, 2000; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) and tested in a policing context (Weinstein et al., 2019). Participants responded to the questions: 'the force puts too much emphasis on issues faced by individuals from diverse groups', 'individuals from diverse groups demand too much from the force', and 'over the past few years the force has paid more attention to individuals from diverse groups than they deserve' (α = .90).

Social desirability. Previous research shows that socially desirable responding may bias individuals' ratings on self-reported attitudes (Fisher, 1993; Randall & Fernandes, 1991). Social desirability was measured with one item taken from the Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960): 'If I don't know something, then I don't mind admitting it'.

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between variables are presented in Table 1. As expected, autonomy support is positively correlated with Individual-COE values

Table 1. Variable, means, standard deviations, and correlations in Study 1.

Variables	Means	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	.50	.50							
2. Age	3.40	.99	−.01						
3. Job role	.50	.50	.33**	.22**					
4. Tenure in policing	3.78	1.06	−.08	.56**	−.19**				
5. Social desirability	6.25	.72	.02	.02	−.04	.02			
6. Autonomy support	4.21	.76	.12*	−.05	.10	.01	.02		
7. Individual-COE values alignment	5.85	.92	.15**	−.06	−.04	−.01	.16**	.24**	
8. Diversity antagonism	3.24	1.15	−.23**	.10*	−.12*	.10*	−.02	−.34**	−.25**

$N = 393$; Gender was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female. Age was coded as 0 = 18–24 years, 1 = 25–34 years, 2 = 35–44 years, 3 = 45–54 years. 4 = 55 years and above. Job role was coded as 0 = police officer, 1 = police staff. Tenure in policing was coded as 0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1–5 years, 2 = 6–10 years, 3 = 11–20 years, 4 = more than 20 years.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

alignment ($r = .24$, $p < .01$), and ethical values are negatively correlated with diversity antagonism ($r = −.23$, $p < .01$).

Hypotheses testing

To test Hypothesis 1, we used linear regression to regress individual-COE ethical values on autonomy support, then further regressed diversity antagonism on both autonomy support and values alignment. Control variables were used to predict ethical values and diversity antagonism. As shown in Table 2, autonomy support was positively related to individual-COE values alignment (Model 2a: $b = .27$, $p < .001$), and values alignment was negatively related to diversity antagonism (Model 2b: $b = −.23$, $p < .01$) when accounting for the variability accounted for by autonomy support. These results provided support for the hypothesis that individual-COE values alignment would mediate the relation between autonomy support and lower antagonism.

In order to test the indirect effect of individual-COE values alignment linking autonomy support with diversity antagonism, we used a bootstrapping procedure tested in the SPSS macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2012). Following 10,000 bootstrap resampling, this analysis showed that individual-COE values alignment has a significant indirect effect on the relationship between autonomy support and diversity antagonism, as indicated by the

Table 2. SPSS linear regression results for hypotheses in Study 1.

	Individual-COE Values Alignment		Diversity Antagonism	
	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 1b	Model 2b
Control variables				
Gender	.32**	.29**	−.52***	−.45***
Age	−.04	−.01	.06	.06
Job role	−.15	−.20	−.08	−.13
Tenure in policing	.01	−.02	.09	.09
Social desirability	.20**	.19**	.04	.08
Independent variable				
Autonomy Support		.27***	−.57***	−.51***
Mediator				
Individual-COE values alignment				−.23**
R^2	.06	.11	.15	.17

$N = 393$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. COE refers to Code of Ethics. Autonomy support and individual-COE values alignment were measured at Time1. Diversity antagonism was measured at Time2, 4 weeks after Time1.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

95% confidence interval (CI) (*effect index* = −.06, [−.119, −.020]). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Discussion

Study 1 findings supported our theorized model (Figure 1). Results identified that autonomy-supportive communications to reduce bias related to higher individual-COE values alignment, and this ethical values alignment further related to outcomes of lower diversity antagonism. We found that police officers and staff who reported more autonomy-supportive communications regarding reducing their prejudice at Time 1 exhibited lower diversity antagonism at Time 2. We also found a mediation effect, wherein individual-COE values alignment, the ethical congruence between police officers and staff values and those of the Code of Ethics, mediated the relation between autonomy-supportive communications and diversity antagonism. In short, Study 1 findings suggest that individual-COE values alignment could be encouraged by autonomy-supportive communications to reduce prejudice, and that this, in turn, has positive implications for attitudes toward diversity.

Study 2: the impact of ethical values on diversity attitudes: a moderated mediation model of motivation and autonomy frustration

In Study 2, we tested a complementing model of how autonomy support might link to individual-COE values alignment. Specifically, we explored how feeling oneself to be autonomy frustrated, or lacking in autonomy support, influences the strength of the association between individual-COE values alignment and lower diversity antagonism. Thus, in Study 2, we expand our understanding of domain-specific motivating influences (in Study 1, autonomy-supportive *communications* to reduce prejudice were linked to a prejudiced attitude), to understanding how feeling a lack of autonomy support in work, more generally, influences how ethical value alignment relates to an ethical attitude

Table 3. Variable, means, standard deviations, and correlations in Study 2.

Variables	Means	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	.45	.50									
2. Age	2.23	1.03	−.06								
3. Job role	.47	.50	.32**	.20**							
4. Tenure in policing	2.71	1.13	−.18**	.53**	−.19**						
5. Social desirability	6.27	.84	.06	.07*	.03	−.01					
6. Individual-COE values alignment	5.87	.97	.07*	.03	.06	.00	.15**				
7. Autonomy frustration	3.80	1.36	−.15**	−.05	−.24**	.12**	−.05	−.15**			
8. Internal motivation to overcome prejudice	6.16	.78	.11**	.04	.10**	−.08*	.21**	.33**	−.08*		
9. External motivation to overcome prejudice	3.17	1.49	−.05	−.04	−.11**	.01	−.09*	−.19**	.16**	−.27**	
10. Diversity antagonism	3.68	1.26	−.13**	−.02	−.15**	.04	−.07*	−.28**	.19**	−.34**	.34**

Gender was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female. Age was coded as 0 = 18–24 years, 1 = 25–34 years, 2 = 35–44 years, 3 = 45–54 years. 4 = 55 years and above. Job role was coded as 0 = police officer, 1 = police staff. Tenure in policing was coded as 0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1–5 years, 2 = 6–10 years, 3 = 11–20 years, 4 = more than 20 years. COE = Code of Ethics.

*p < .05, **p < .01.

Table 4. SPSS linear regression results for hypotheses in Study 2.

	Internal motivation to overcome prejudice		External motivation to overcome prejudice		Diversity Antagonism	
	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 1c	Model 2c
Control variables						
Gender	.08	.09	−.01	.00	−.17*	−.15
Age	.05	.06*	−.01	.00	.02	.03
Job role	.05	.05	−.30**	−.24*	−.19*	−.15
Tenure in policing	−.07*	−.07*	−.01	−.02	−.01	−.03
Social desirability	.14***	.14***	−.10	−.09	.03	.03
Independent variable						
Individual-COE values alignment	.23***	.25***	−.27***	−.27***	−.20***	−.17***
Moderator						
Autonomy frustration		.01		.16**		.13**
Two-way interaction						
Individual-COE values alignment x Autonomy frustration		−.08**		.07		−.03
Mediators						
Internal motivation to overcome prejudice					−.34***	.35***
External motivation to overcome prejudice					.20***	.19***
R^2	.15	.16	.05	.06	.21	.22

$N = 876$. Individual-COE values alignment and autonomy frustration were mean-centered. Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. COE refers to Code of Ethics. Individual-COE values alignment, autonomy frustration, internal motivation to overcome prejudice, and external motivation to overcome prejudice were measured at Time1. Diversity antagonism was measured at Time2, 4 weeks after Time1.
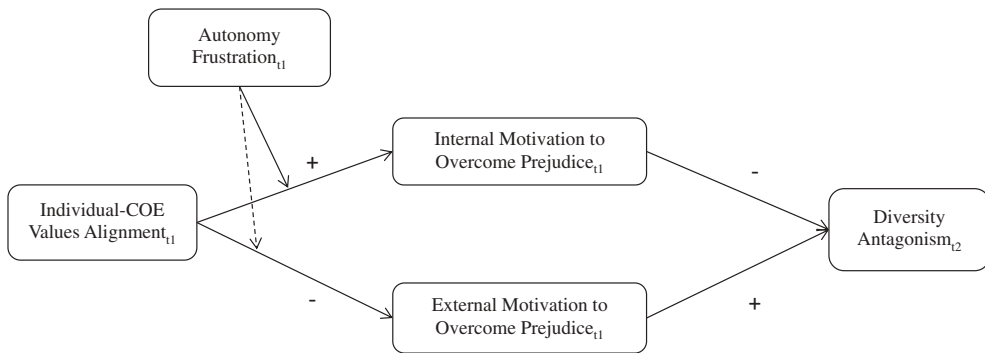$*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

Figure 2. Conceptual model for Study 2.

The conceptual model does not include all paths of the empirically tested models.

(namely, diversity antagonism). Further, as depicted in Figure 2, we tested whether the links between ethical values alignment and attitudes would be mediated by higher internal motivation, and lower external motivation, to be non-prejudiced. We anticipated that, since individual-COE values alignment reflects better internalization of ethical values within policing, including having more egalitarian attitudes, this values alignment would relate to more internal and less external motivation to be non-prejudiced, which in turn would relate to less diversity antagonism. However, we also expected that this indirect effect would be moderated: the effect of individual-COE values alignment on lowered diversity antagonism would be suppressed from autonomy frustration which undermines internalization (Figure 2).

Method

Sample and procedures

Questionnaires were administrated to police officers and staff at a different police force to those in Study 1. Data were again collected at two time points. At Time 1, respondents were asked to rate their levels of individual-COE values alignment, internal/external motivation to overcome prejudice, and autonomy frustration. Four weeks later (Time 2), we asked each respondent to rate their levels of diversity antagonism. We followed the same procedure to collect data as that of Study 1. At Time 1, 2600 valid responses were received, and the final sample of matched responses across the two time points achieved was 876.

Of the 876 respondents, 54.1% were male, and 45.7% female and 2% selected other. Fifty-two percent were police officers, and 48% were police staff. In terms of age, 3.6% were aged from 18 to 24 years old, 21.6% were 25 to 34 years old, 32.8% were 35 to 44 years old, 29.9% were 45 to 54 years old, and 12.1% were aged above 55 years old. In terms of tenure, 6% had worked in policing for less than 1 year, 10.8% had worked for 1–5 years, 15.8% had worked for 6–10 years, 42.0% had worked for 11–20 years, and 25.4% had worked for more than 20 years.

Covariates. As in Study 1, we accounted for respondents' gender, age, job roles, and tenure in policing in the analyses. As previously, we also controlled for respondents' levels of social desirability in the analysis.

Measures

As in Study 1, all items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Individual-COE values alignment was assessed using the same scale as in Study 1 (α = .97). Social desirability was also assessed and controlled for using the same item.

Internal and external motivation to overcome prejudice. We assessed participants' motivations for reducing prejudice by adapting Plant and Devine's (1998) internal and external motivation to respond without prejudice scales. Five items assessed internal motivation (e.g., 'It is in accordance with my personal values to be non-prejudiced;' α = .90), and five items assessed external motivation (e.g., 'I try not to appear prejudiced in order to avoid disapproval from others;' α = .90). We followed prior studies (e.g., Legault, Gutsell, & Inzlicht, 2011) and used internal and external motivations as separate subscales.

Autonomy frustration. We assessed individuals' feelings of being controlled using four items from the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction scale (Chen et al., 2015). Items were asked in terms of feelings at work. Sample items include 'Most of the things I do feel like "I have to"', and 'I feel forced to do many things I wouldn't choose to do' (α = .84).

Diversity antagonism. Following Study 1, diversity antagonism was again measured at Time 2 with two items.[1] Participants responded to the questions: 'the force puts too much emphasis on issues faced by individuals from diverse groups' and 'over the past few years the force has paid more attention to individuals from diverse groups than they deserve' (α = .72).

Results

Table 3 demonstrates descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all variables in Study 2.

Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 2 predicts that internal/external motivation to overcome prejudice would mediate the relationship between individual-COE values alignment and diversity antagonism. We followed the same procedure as in Study 1. Regression results are presented in Table 4. As expected, individual-COE values alignment was positively related to internal motivation to overcome prejudice (Model 1a: $b = .23$, $p < .001$), and negatively related to external motivation (Model 1b: $b = -.27$, $p < .001$). In addition, internal motivation has a negative relationship (Model 1c: $b = -.34$, $p < .001$), while external motivation has a positive relationship with diversity antagonism (Model 1c: $b = .20$, $p < .001$). Similar to Study 1, we conducted our mediation analyses in SPSS Process with 10,000 bootstrap resampling, and found that individual-COE values alignment had an indirect effect on diversity antagonism via internal motivation to overcome prejudice (*effect index* = −.08,
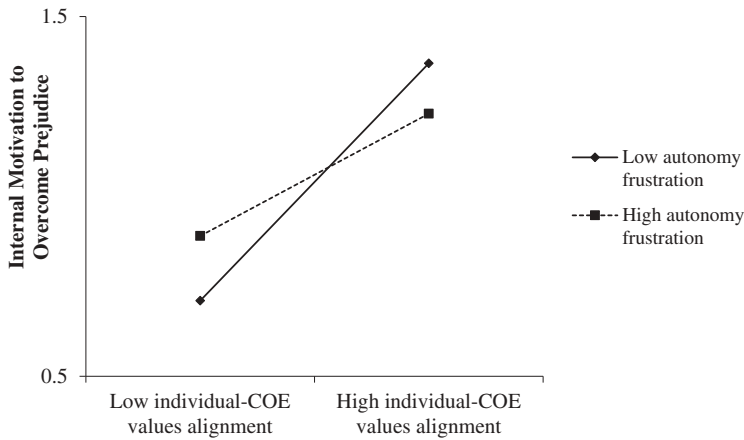
Figure 3. The relationship between individual-COE values alignment and internal motivation to overcome prejudice under conditions of low and high autonomy frustration.

[−.119, −.051]) and via external motivation to overcome prejudice (*effect index* = −.06, [−.086, −.031]). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

To test the moderating effect of autonomy frustration (Hypothesis 3), we included the interaction term of individual-COE values alignment and autonomy frustration in the regression. As shown in Table 2, we found that the interaction is negatively related to internal motivation (Model 2a: $b = -.08$, $p < .01$), but not to external motivation (Model 2b: $b = .07$, *n.s.*). Figure 3 illustrates this interaction effect. Simple slope analysis shows that when autonomy frustration is low, individual-COE values alignment has a stronger relationship with internal motivation ($b = .33$, $p < .001$) than when autonomy frustration is high ($b = .18$, $p < .001$). These results support Hypothesis 3 for internal motivation, but not for external motivation.

Further, once again using the SPSS PROCESS macro, we examined the extent to which the overall mediation effect of internal motivation is conditionally influenced by the levels of autonomy frustration. Results suggested that when autonomy frustration is low, the indirect effect of internal motivation linking individual-COE values alignment and diversity antagonism is stronger (*effect index* = −.12, [−.167, −.070]), than when it is high (*effect index* = −.06, [−.102, −.034]), with a significant index of the overall moderated mediation model (*effect index* = .02, [.001, .036]).

Discussion

In Study 2, both internal and external motivation to overcome prejudice were shown to mediate the relationship between individual-COE values alignment and diversity antagonism. Additionally, autonomy frustration moderated the mediation for internal motivation to overcome prejudice, but not for external motivation. Autonomy frustration was found to hinder internal motivation, which, through the other paths of this model, is shown to directly reduce diversity antagonism, in line with our hypothesized model (Figure 2). Autonomy frustration also directly increased external motivation to overcome prejudice, which indirectly linked it to more diversity antagonism. Findings from this

study suggested that experiences of autonomy at work influence how ethical values relate to attitudes; when autonomy is frustrated, the beneficial downstream consequences of holding ethical values in line with those of the organization are attenuated.

General discussion

Using two-wave data collected from police officers and staff from English police forces in two separate studies, we investigated the relationship between autonomy support and diversity antagonism, a measure of prejudice adapted for a policing context. Across two studies, we found that autonomy support—either within domain-specific communications or experienced as part of the broader workplace, plays an important role in individual-COE values alignment and its relation to diversity antagonism.

In Study 1, we found autonomy-supportive communications within the organization were associated with more positive police officer and staff diversity attitudes, and that this relationship was mediated by individual-COE values alignment. The results support our conceptual model (Figure 1) that autonomy-supportive communications to reduce bias would facilitate alignment between individuals' values and those of the Code of Ethics— the codified ethical principles held by the organization, and that Code of Ethics values alignment would in turn relate to lower diversity antagonism.

In Study 2, a second and complementary model was tested, which shed light on how individuals' ethical values affect their motivation and attitudes, and how this might be impacted by the broader (rather than context-specific to ethical values) satisfaction of autonomy at work. We found that, as hypothesized, individual-COE values alignment was positively related to internal motivation to overcome prejudice and negatively related to external motivation. Furthermore, internal motivation was found to be associated with less diversity antagonism, while external motivation was associated with more diversity antagonism. Both internal and external motivation mediated the relationship between individual-COE values alignment and diversity antagonism.

Moreover, an autonomy-frustrating environment was found to moderate the individual-COE values alignment and internal motivation to overcome prejudice relationship. When the environment was perceived as being controlling, the relationship between individual-COE values alignment and internal motivation was reduced, which in turn resulted in a reduced effect of individual-COE values alignment on diversity antagonism. From the analyses we note that this was not the case for external motivation, suggesting that individual-COE values linked to less external motivation, regardless of how frustrated the autonomy of individuals experienced in their daily working lives. Our findings indicate that autonomy frustration is an important factor for ethical attitudes through two effects. Firstly, it is positively associated with external motivation, which in turn has a negative relationship with diversity attitudes. Secondly, it was found to suppress the effect of ethical values on internal motivation. These findings are consistent with previous research (Legault et al., 2009), where using external control to reduce prejudice was found to be associated with higher levels of implicit and explicit prejudice than a control condition of nonintervention.

Our findings are consistent with previous research within self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) that has shown that autonomy-supportive practices that offer the interpersonal space for volitional, self-congruent actions, as opposed to practices

characterized by pressure and coercion, aid in the internalizing, or taking in and accepting, of new information, ideas, and experiences. Our findings are consistent with those of Weinstein et al. (2013) that autonomy aids individuals to integrate or incorporate new information, ideas, and experiences into existing values, beliefs, and identity. Furthermore, results from Study 2 add to the existing literature (Legault et al., 2009) on how autonomy-supportive environments affect individuals' internal motivation to overcome prejudice. Our findings speak to how autonomy-supportive communications to reduce prejudice (Study 1) and how autonomy-frustrating rather than supportive workplace experiences (Study 2) facilitate individuals' adoption of the desired ethical values stated within an ethical code of practice. These processes seem to point to the importance of autonomy support for facilitating *internalization* of ethical values.

Our focus in these studies was to explore the relationship between ethical values and diversity attitudes. We explored a conceptualization of internalization of values in terms of the level of fit between an individual's values and those of a professional code of ethics. We also explored the role of internal and external motivation to be non-prejudiced in the relationship between values and diversity attitudes. Our findings help to address the apparent difficulties many organizations have when attempting to regulate employee misbehavior (Eitle, D'Alessio, & Stolzenberg, 2014). Front-line policing personnel may be particularly vulnerable to influence by bias because of the individual discretion they may have when dealing with the public (Eitle et al., 2014; Goldstein, 1960); it may be that an approach that fosters internal motivation is the most effective long-term strategy to reduce misbehavior, but future research is needed to more deeply examine how internal motivation for non-bias is best promoted and its long-term impacts on ethical behavior.

Furthermore, it has been suggested (see, for example, Maguire, 2003) that unwanted behavior in policing can be reduced through increasing structural control through implantation and enforcement of rules and written procedures. However, our findings demonstrate that autonomy frustration, or control, is associated with higher external motivation and hence poorer attitudes to diversity, as well as negatively buffering the relationship between individual-Code of Ethics values alignment and internal motivation to overcome prejudice. Bearing these results in mind, we suggest that this approach will prove ineffective and may in fact backfire.

Our findings have important implications for policing. Through increasing autonomy-supportive communications and enhancing autonomy support at work, policing may improve diversity attitudes. During this process and in daily interactions, more broadly, respecting police officer and staff viewpoints and perspectives, as well as offering choice and opportunity to find their own way to improve attitudes and behaviors, may promote internal motivation to overcome prejudice, and facilitate internalizing the underpinning values driving inclusive behavior. This may be particularly the case (or even, only the case) in an organization such as UK policing that strongly espouses inclusive values.

Whereas the current research is but a first step to supporting these conclusions, one strength of our studies is the use of multiple time points to collect data. As previous research has shown, bivariate relationships between variables may be exaggerated or understated when measured at the same time (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). To reduce common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), we collected data in both studies at two separate time points. Despite this methodological advantage, we cannot draw firm causal conclusions about causal

pathways since we relied on correlational data. However, the assertion that autonomy support has an impact on ethical values and behavioral aspects, including reducing diversity antagonism has strong conceptual and empirical support (e.g., Legault et al., 2009; Weinstein et al., 2013). Future studies could seek to replicate the two proposed models using experimental or longitudinal designs.

Note

1. Due to an administration difficulty, one item for this measure included in study 1 was omitted in study 2. However, we are encouraged that the Cronbach Alpha still indicated adequate reliability (α = .72).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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