

# 6 Autonomous motivation and the need for autonomy

## Findings and new theoretical developments in Israel

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תנהג לנער על פי דרכו גם פי יזקין לא יסור ממנה  
(משלי כ"ב)

*Educate a child in the way that fits him, and he will not swerve from it even in old age.*

The Book of Proverbs (22:6) – The Old Testament

The verse cited above expresses the effectiveness of an educational approach in which educators respect children's personal dispositions and preferences in the process of socialization and education. This old biblical recommendation, which is still cited frequently in Jewish education emphasizes and captures a core aspect of the notions of children's need for autonomy, autonomy support, and autonomous motivation posited by Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

This chapter focuses on research and theoretical advances pertaining to autonomy in education, as conceptualized in SDT, that have taken place in Israel. The first part of the chapter focuses on SDT-based research, and the second on theoretical advances (e.g., Assor, 2018). SDT is a major general motivational theory. Studies conducted all over the world indicate its applicability for different cultures and diverse fields, including education (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The unique and diverse sociocultural context in Israel constitutes fertile ground for examining the universality and applicability of SDT in different cultures, and for theoretical developments of the theory. Following a review of findings on autonomy-related educational research and interventions in Israel, we present recent, Israel-based, conceptual developments and related empirical work on the need for autonomy, including new aspects of autonomy support in education and parenting. We begin with a brief description of Israel's socio-cultural context, and then present Self-Determination Theory.

### **The sociocultural context of motivation research in Israel**

Israel is a democracy with Western characteristics, and its population comprises multiple cultures, including Jews of North African, the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, various European and other Western countries. The majority integrated

into Israeli society from the standpoints of the economy, occupation, and education, although some continue to preserve the values of their culture of origin.

About 43% of the Jewish population define themselves as secular, 10% as religious, 9% as ultra-Orthodox, and the remainder between varying levels of religiosity and traditionalism. Each of these groups upholds unique values and a way of life ranging from individualistic-Western to traditional-collectivist. Living side by side with the Jews are the Israeli Arabs, a native national minority constituting 20% of the population (82% Muslim).

The Israeli Arabs live mostly in their own towns or villages. Their identity is influenced by their own tradition, language, religion, nationality, and culture, as well as by urbanization and modernization processes, and the way of life of the Jewish non-orthodox parts of the Israeli society, which in turn is influenced by the Western world and its characteristics (e.g., Rottenberg, 2008).

The Bedouins are a discrete group within Israeli Arabs. Since many of the studies presented in this chapter focus on this group, we describe it in greater detail. Bedouin society is characterized as a patriarchal, hierarchical-collectivist society (e.g., Al-Krenawi, 2000). The Bedouins are Muslim, live in extended families, and in the main lead a traditional way of life. Bedouin society is tribal and typified by loyalty to the family and the tribe, strict observance of honor values, hierarchical structures, and a high degree of obedience to male-parental authority, with emphasis on the aims of the group over those of the individual. Various reports indicate their low socioeconomic status in Israel (Abu-Bader & Gottlieb, 2009).

In recent years, some Bedouins have transitioned from a traditional into a more modern and urban life. Many women are going out to work and study. However, despite these changes it can still be defined as collectivist compared to Western society (Abu-Rabia-Queder & Weiner-Levy, 2010).

In Bedouin society, education is considered a means to social mobility, and emphasis is placed in the schools on academic achievements (Mustafa & Arar, 2009). The schools reflect society, and the relationship with teachers resembles relationships with authority figures in the family (Abu-Asbah, 2006). The teaching methods include few opportunities for choice and are generally characterized by a controlling teaching style (Alayan, 2013).

Israel's education system structures schools mainly in relation to age: preschool (up to age 6), elementary school (ages 6–12), junior high school (ages 12–15), and senior high school (ages 15–18). There are also post-secondary and academic education. Israel has a Compulsory Education Law. The majority of schools are public. There are different schools for Jews, Arab-Muslim, Arab Christians, Bedouins, and Druze.

## **Challenges facing the education system in Israel**

The education system contends with challenges such as social inequality, disparities in achievements, and accessibility to higher education for populations with different socioeconomic status (SES) populations, and, especially between Israel's geographic

periphery and center, and between Jews and Muslim Arabs (Dobrin, 2015). There is also dissatisfaction by influential factors in the Israel from achievements in some international tests compared to other countries (Blass, 2016), discipline and violence problems, students' risk behaviors, and alienation (RAMA National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education, 2016). Some segments of the population and many researchers criticize the increased reliance on achievements tests (e.g., Feniger, 2010).

In light of the sociocultural and educational context in Israel, theory and research on motivation for learning and teaching appears highly relevant. The present chapter focuses on SDT and SDT-based studies conducted in Israel, especially among two populations – Jews and Bedouins – that represent two different cultures, and among preservice teachers. The next section is devoted to a brief presentation of SDT. We shall then present studies that demonstrate its applicability to different groups and various phenomena.

### **Theoretical framework: self-determination theory**

SDT is a macro theory of human motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to SDT, the nutrients for optimal development are three basic psychological needs: the needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Need satisfaction contributes to autonomous motivation, well-being, social adjustment, and positive academic functioning, while need suppression leads to controlled motivation and negative outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Central to SDT is the distinction between different types of motivation. SDT posits a motivational continuum ranging from defiance, through amotivation, to two types of non-autonomous and non-optimal types of controlled motivations (external and introjected) to three types of increasingly more autonomous and self-determined types of motivation: Identified, integrated, and intrinsic. In intrinsic motivation, activities are enacted for the enjoyment that they produce. In integrated motivation, activities may not be enjoyable or fun, but they are still experienced as highly autonomous because they are central to the identity and values that the person recognizes as most important in her/his life. In identified motivation, activities are engaged in and experienced as autonomous, because they are viewed as personally important, although they may not be most important or central in one's value system. In introjected motivation, activities are enacted to maintain or enhance acceptance by others or oneself, and not because one truly recognizes their value; as a result, introjected motivation is experienced as a controlling and autonomy-suppressive type of motivation. In external motivation, activities are enacted to minimize negative material outcomes (e.g., avoid resource removal, grounding, chores, extra boring homework, etc.), or enhance positive material rewards. In amotivation, there is no intent to enact viewed as desirable by external agents (e.g., teachers, parents). In defiance motivation, one engages in activities that are opposite to those desired by external agents.

In SDT the term “autonomous motivation” refers to motivational processes entailed in a relatively high sense of self-determination (identified motivation, integrative motivation, or intrinsic motivation), whereas “controlled motivation” comprises types of motivation typified by an external or internal sense of compulsion (extrinsic motivation, introjected motivation).

SDT posits that need support from teachers enhances students’ motivation and positive functioning because it nurtures and supports their sense of need satisfaction (Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1999; Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). When students’ needs are suppressed, negative outcomes ensue (Deci & Ryan, 2000). We now present a short review of the findings of SDT-based studies conducted in Israel.

## **SDT studies of Jewish students and teachers in Israel**

Motivation studies conducted among mainly secular Jewish children and adolescents in Israel produce a similar picture to that found in a Western population. The studies demonstrate the applicability of SDT in different educational frameworks – elementary and high school, regular education, special education, and non-formal education – and in populations from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Generally, the studies show that autonomy support and an experience of need satisfaction are associated with various aspects of teacher and student functioning. These include autonomous motivation for learning (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Kanat-Maymon, Benjamin, Stavsky, Shoshani, & Roth, 2015; Kaplan, 2004; Kaplan & Madjar, 2015; Katz & Cohen, 2014; Madjar & Cohen-Malaye, 2013; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007), positive emotions in learning (Assor & Kaplan, 2001), engagement in learning, and enhanced achievements (Assor et al., 2002; Kaplan, 2004). Autonomy support was also found to be associated with increased levels of consideration and internalization of prosocial values and behaviors, and reduced violence (Assor, Feinberg, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2018; Kaplan & Assor, 2004, 2012; Roth & Bibi, 2009; Roth, Kanat-Maymon, & Bibi, 2011), alongside reduced risk behaviors (Madjar et al., 2017).

In contrast with the positive effects of autonomy support, autonomy-suppression predicted negative emotions, amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and impaired autonomous motivation and engagement in learning (Assor & Kaplan, 2001; Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-Maymon, & Roth, 2005; Kaplan, 2004). Teachers’ psychological control and autonomy-suppression were found to be positively associated with students’ performance-oriented goals (Madjar, Nave, & Hen, 2013).

SDT-based studies have also been conducted to investigate specific phenomena associated with learning, including academic dishonesty (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2015) and motivation for homework (Katz, Eilat, & Nevo, 2014). Need support was found to also be associated with promoting processes of identity formation in formal and non-formal educational frameworks (Madjar & Cohen-Malaye, 2013). In Israel, too, studies have found a decrease in motivational and academic measures and in the perception of teacher support over the years (Kaplan, 2004;

Katz, Kaplan, & Gueta, 2010; Madjar & Cohen-Malayev, 2016). The positive findings concerning autonomy support were found in different socioeconomic groups (Kaplan, 2004; Kaplan, Assor, Roth, & Kanat-Maymon, 2007), and among special education students as well (Kaplan & Danino, 2002; Kaplan & Hibsher, 2016; Katz & Cohen, 2014). For example, Kanat-Maymon et al. (2015) found that perceived need fulfillment was positively associated with autonomous motivation, which, in turn, was inversely related to self-reported academic dishonesty.

In recent years there has been an increase in studies focusing on teachers' motivation (e.g., Aelterman, Vansteenkiste, Van Keer, & Haerens, 2016). In Israel, Roth et al. (2007) found that teachers' self-reported autonomous motivation was associated with teachers' sense of self-actualization and a reduced sense of burnout, as well as with students' perception of teachers as autonomy-supportive, and consequent student-reported autonomous motivation for learning. Eyal and Roth (2011) found that a principal's management style that supports teachers' autonomy was associated with increased teacher autonomous motivation and reduced burnout, whereas a management style characterized by autonomy-suppression led to controlled motivation and increased burnout. Additional studies indicated the importance of teachers' beliefs as a precondition for autonomy-supportive behaviors (Katz & Shahar, 2015; Reeve et al., 2014; Roth & Weinstock, 2013).

### *Autonomy support for Bedouin students*

Despite consistent findings concerning the positive effects of autonomy support, a number of researchers taking a cultural-relativist approach question the universality of the need for autonomy. For example, Iyengar and DeVoe (2003) claim that autonomy support or suppression does not have strong effects on students belonging to collectivist cultures. In contrast, according to SDT psychological needs are universal. The way to satisfy these needs and their specific means of expression may vary according to cultural context, but their core nature will not change (Ryan & Deci, 2017). And, indeed, various studies have corroborated the importance of the need for autonomy in different societies (e.g., Jang, Reeve, Ryan, & Kim, 2009; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Van Petegem, 2015).

Studies in Israel confirm the applicability of SDT to students belonging to Bedouin culture in Israel. The Bedouin society in Israel's south was found to manifest a strong hierarchical-collectivist value orientation (Abu-Rabia-Queder & Weiner-Levy, 2010). Therefore, it is of special interest to examine the importance of autonomous motivation and autonomy support for students from this background. Consistent with SDT, research on Bedouin students has demonstrated positive effects of autonomy support and autonomous motivation on elementary school students (Katz & Assor, 2002) and high school students (Kaplan, 2017; Kaplan, Assor, El-Sayed, & Kanat-Maymon, 2014; Kaplan & Madjar, 2015).

For example, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, Keren, and Katz (2003), found that parental decisions reflecting insensitivity to adolescents' temperament-dispositions have a similar negative effect on adolescents' intrinsic motivation to participate in decision-related activities in the Bedouin culture. These findings indicate that belonging to a Bedouin culture that endorses the value of obedience to parental authority does not mitigate the negative motivational effect of parents' temperament-insensitivity, suggesting that this type of autonomy support is important across cultures. Kaplan et al.'s (2014) study of Bedouin high school students found that autonomy support was a unique positive predictor of autonomous motivation, positive emotions, motivation for exploration, future orientation, and engagement, while autonomy-suppression was a unique negative predictor of amotivation and grades. Kaplan (2017) found that perceived need satisfaction among Bedouin high school students was positively predicted by teachers' autonomy support, and negatively predicted by teachers' conditional negative regard. In turn, psychological need satisfaction positively predicted autonomous motivation for learning that in turn predicted positive emotions and engagement in learning.

***SDT studies in colleges of education: preservice teachers, teacher interns, and beginning teachers***

In Israel, teacher training is carried out in universities and colleges of education. Policymakers and educators in Israel, as in other countries, are contending with the need to improve teaching quality, reduce teacher dropout (about 33% in Israel), and with the shortage of teachers (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015). We shall now present a number of SDT-based studies that were conducted in teacher education frameworks in Israel.

Madjar and Kaplan (in press) explored the motivational profiles of preservice teachers attending a multicultural college. They identified different profiles, such as "dominant autonomous profile," "dominant controlled profile," and some combined profiles. The results revealed that the dominant controlled profile was least adaptive, with significantly lower perceived need support and vitality and higher burnout in comparison to the other profiles.

Kaplan and Madjar (2017) conducted a study in a college of education attended by Bedouin and Jewish preservice teachers. Need support contributed positively to autonomous motivation, sense of competence and sense of relatedness in both cultures. Autonomous motivation contributed positively to sense of self-actualization, engagement, and self-exploration. Relatedness was associated with engagement only among the Bedouin participants, and with self-actualization only among the Jewish participants.

Kaplan and Refaeli (2015, 2016) conducted a combined quantitative and qualitative study to explore motivational processes entailed in implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL). The quantitative study found that in contrast to students who studied in the traditional method, students who studied in the PBL environment reported more positive emotions and satisfaction, experienced

greater support for autonomy and competence, and expressed more autonomous motivation and less controlled motivation. The study also supported the SDT model and indicated the importance of autonomy support for promoting autonomous motivation, positive emotions, engagement, and exploration.

Kaplan (2016) conducted a two-year SDT-based longitudinal study among Jewish and Bedouin teacher interns and beginning teachers in their first year of teaching. The teachers participated in workshops in the framework of the Induction Unit at Kaye Academic College of Education and were accompanied by a teacher-mentor. Results showed that the group facilitator's support predicted teachers' autonomous motivation in the workshop and in teaching (in school). Teachers' autonomous motivation in teaching in turn positively predicted sense of self-actualization and competence, and negatively predicted burnout. Mentors' support was associated with autonomous motivation for teaching, which in turn predicted positive self-experiences regarding teaching. The model was equivalent for all of the populations. Interestingly, the qualitative study showed that as a result of their participation in the workshop, Bedouin students learned to express a personal opinion, challenge the instructor's authority, ask questions, ask for help, and so forth.

In summary, the findings indicate the considerable importance of providing psychological need support in colleges of education for students belonging to different cultures, and the applicability of SDT to teaching methods that facilitate need support.

### *SDT-based educational interventions developed in Israel*

Various studies demonstrate the applicability of SDT in interventions designed to nurture the school as an optimal environment for students to learn and develop (Su & Reeve, 2011), and indicate the effectiveness of intervention programs focusing on promoting autonomy-supportive teaching (e.g., Perlman, 2015; Reeve, 1998; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004). Today there is agreement that autonomy support is a teachable interpersonal motivating style (Reeve, 1998).

SDT-based interventions have also been developed and successfully implemented in different populations in Israel. The programs are presented in Table 6.1. Readers are invited to read theoretical articles describing programs implemented in Israel as well as the intervention principles (Assor, 2012, 2016; Assor, Kaplan, Feinberg, & Tal, 2009).

Together, the findings indicate that teachers can be taught to support their students' needs in different educational frameworks – elementary schools, high schools, regular schools, and special education schools – in populations from different cultures, as well as in preservice teachers. The findings join those described here concerning the positive effects of need support on various positive outcomes in students and preservice teachers, including sense of need satisfaction and autonomous motivation for learning, as well as for pro-environmental activity, increased sense of relevance in learning, increased engagement in

Table 6.1 SDT-based intervention programs implemented in Israel

<i>The program and the population</i>	<i>Main results and impact</i>
<p><b>Kaplan and Assor (2004, 2012)</b> Promoting autonomy-supportive dialog among teachers and students. 18 seventh-grade classes – students and teachers, Jewish sector.</p>	<p>Increase in positive emotions and perceptions of teachers as conducting meaningful dialog on the relevance of studies to students' lives; decrease in classroom violence.</p>
<p><b>Kaplan and Madjar (2015)</b> Promoting high-achieving Bedouin students' autonomous motivation and active involvement in topics associated with the natural and human environments in their localities (encouraging pro-environmental behaviors). The students participated in group meetings. High school students (grades 8 to 10).</p>	<p>Group facilitators' and parents' autonomy support (students' perceptions), as well as self-perceived relatedness and competence, were associated with students' autonomous motivation, which in turn was associated with pro-environmental behaviors.</p>
<p><b>Assor (2016)</b> Teaching and learning growth-promoting structure/sequence intended to strengthen autonomous motivation for learning and coping with challenging tasks among students. Jewish elementary schools.</p>	<p>The program enhanced autonomous motivation for learning and students' ability to contend with challenging tasks.</p>
<p><b>Kaplan and Hibsher (2016)</b> Program for students with behavioral disorders in a special education elementary school in the Jewish sector. The program focused on promoting self-determination by means of a unique learning environment called "Creativity and Interest Spaces" that facilitates experiential and autonomous learning.</p>	<p>Need support during the intervention promoted autonomous motivation, sense of choice, sense of relatedness, sense of competence, and engagement, and reduced controlled motivation and amotivation.</p>
<p><b>Assor et al. (2018)</b> Promoting teachers' capacity to contend with violence and enhance caring without becoming more controlling. Jewish elementary schools.</p>	<p>Comparisons of the effects of a 22-month program in three intervention schools and three control schools indicated that the program: (a) reduced violent student behavior and controlling teacher behavior; and (b) enhanced caring student behavior and active teacher response to violence.</p>

(Continued)



Table 6.1 (Continued)

<i>The program and the population</i>	<i>Main results and impact</i>
<p><b>Kaplan, Glassner, and Hades (2016)</b>                      A new group facilitation program for beginning teachers operated by the Induction Unit at Kaye College.                      The program focuses on need support and exploration processes in order to promote autonomous motivation and sense of competence in teaching, and to enhance a proactive approach to contending with the challenges of entering the teaching profession.</p>	<p>The program was accompanied by a qualitative case study. Thematic analysis along a timeline, based on the reflective diaries of four Jewish and Bedouin teachers, shows that the experience in the workshop invites a process of exploration that promotes examination and construction of professional identity.                      The process is attended by a higher sense of competence and autonomy, adoption of a proactive approach, and reported changes in professional behavior. The group encounter was experienced as psychological need-supportive place both by the facilitator and the participants.</p>
<p><b>Assor et al. (2009)</b>                      A detailed learning and implementation structure to promote teachers' internalization and application of ideas and practices based on self-determination theory. This structure is aimed at overcoming the recurrent problem of "the predictable failure of educational reform" (Sarason, 1990).                      Jewish elementary schools.</p>	<p>Findings from two studies: (a) demonstrate the usefulness of the proposed structure in promoting educational reform, and (b) highlight the components of this structure that teachers report to be valuable.</p>

learning, increased caring and reduced violence, increased positive emotions, and promoting identity construction processes, alongside reduced controlled motivation, amotivation, and negative emotions.

SDT-based intervention principles are implemented in additional programs, not all of which are accompanied by research, for example, an SDT-promoting school network in Beer Sheva, in Israel's south. The schools base their educational outlook on SDT and have developed unique applications to implement this outlook. For example, one of the schools focuses on a program to develop the school as a caring, need-supportive community that promotes consideration and empathy (Feinberg, Kaplan, Assor, & Kanat-Maymon, 2008). Another school promotes agentic engagement (a concept developed by Reeve, 2013) in the students.

***Conclusions based on extant research in Israel***

One of the challenges facing the education system in Israel is its considerable heterogeneity. The research picture presented here indicates that a need-supportive

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environment is likely to promote optimal functioning, development, and well-being among students from different cultural, social, and academic backgrounds. The educational approach underlying SDT can also provide solutions for various phenomena that need to be addressed in Israel, as in the rest of the world, such as violence, risk behaviors, and alienation, some of which have been presented in the studies reviewed in this chapter.

While the concept of autonomy is clearly central to SDT, in Israel the emphasis on autonomy has also emerged from sources other than SDT. Thus, in the past 40 years influential Israeli educational thinkers have devoted considerable attention to the notion of autonomy (e.g., Aviram, 1986; Aviram & Assor, 2010; Aviram & Yonah, 2004; Ben Baruch & Shane, 1981; Ben-Peretz & Ben Zion, 1987; Fridman, 1990; Sheinberg, 2008). There have also been several important educational initiatives aimed at enhancing students', teachers', and principals' autonomy (e.g., Cohen-Ornstein, Beeri, Lior, & Levi-Reich, 2014; Gordon, 1991; Shapira, Green, & Danilov, 1994).

Central to some of these efforts is a view of autonomy derived from Mill (1947) and Kant (1960), whereby people are considered autonomous only to the extent to which they know what is truly important to them, and this knowledge is based on considerable reflection (e.g., Aviram & Yonah, 2004; Gordon, 1991). Consistent with these perspectives, one of the authors of this chapter (Assor, 2012, 2017) has developed a view of the need for autonomy and autonomous functioning that emphasizes the importance of the formation of an “authentic inner compass.” That is, self-knowledge that guides the individual when making important decisions. According to this view, one of the major tasks for teachers and parents is to help students develop their “inner compass,” which then helps students to feel autonomous and find their way in societies characterized by value confusion, non-optimal external influences, and excessive information. While the conceptual and empirical work on the notion of an inner compass is mostly based on the work of Assor (2012, 2017), it should be noted that Vansteenkiste and Soenens (2015) also carried out important work on the functions of the inner compass.

The next section presents the concept of the “authentic inner compass” (IC), which is based on a new conceptualization of the need for autonomy and suggests new directions for research and future interventions.

## **Nurturing students' authentic inner compass as a major aspect of autonomy support**

### *Defining the need for autonomy*

Based on Deci and Ryan's (2000) and on Mill's (1947) views of autonomy, Assor (2017) defines the need for autonomy as “the general meta-need to feel that I can direct and regulate myself in ways that feel truly satisfying.” Importantly, this definition includes two components: (1) the feeling that we can direct and regulate our major actions and life, and that (2) this regulation is

truly satisfying; that is, it enables the satisfaction of our basic psychological needs in ways that fit our intrinsic values, temperament dispositions, talents, and interests. Accordingly, a true sense of autonomy is attained when both aspects of the need for autonomy (self-direction and self-actualization) are present (see Assor, 2017, for a detailed discussion of this definition).

What kind of experiences (inputs) do we need to have to feel that we are directing (or can direct) ourselves in ways that are truly satisfying? What kind of experiences (inputs) do we need to avoid in order to minimize the feeling that we are not truly directing our life? Based on Deci and Ryan (2000); Weinstein and Ryan (2010); and Mill (1947), as well as on Aviram's (1986) interpretations of Mill, in order to feel fully autonomous, we need to satisfy three component-strivings of the meta-need for autonomy:

- 1 *Freedom*: To be free from (external and internal) coercion or arbitrary limitation of options, and especially to be free to access, explore, express, and realize our authentic inclinations. Note that the striving to be free from internal coercion reflects not only the yearning to be free from oppressive external demands that were internalized (i.e., introjected, see Assor, Vansteenkiste, & Kaplan, 2009), but also the yearning to be free from the domination of strong impulses and negative emotions (anger, jealousy, etc.) that may be experienced as overwhelming and perplexing (why do I feel this way? Is this a part of me I fully identify with?)
- 2 *Authentic IC*: To develop action-guiding schemas (self-knowledge) that inform us on what we truly value and need (basic preferences and aspirations), and how we can realize our needs and values within our personal and social constraints and affordances through specific goals and preferences. The striving to develop authentic IC knowledge also involves a striving to understand what the individual truly feels in relation to emotionally meaningful experiences, as understanding his true feelings provides important information regarding what he truly values or needs or does not value or need.
- 3 *Behavioral self-realization and congruence*: To feel that our behavior enables us to realize our authentic needs and values, and that our behavior is congruent with these needs and values.

In short, to feel that we can truly direct ourselves we need to feel that (1) we are free to explore and realize our authentic inclinations, (2) we know what these inclinations are and how they can best be realized within our personal and social context, and (3) we realize our authentic inclinations in our behavior. Importantly, the first two components – freedom and inner compass – greatly enhance our capacity to initiate actions that realize our authentic inclinations. Put simply, when we identify our authentic inclinations and know how to realize them, and when we are free to do so, we are more likely to realize them. Because the notion of IC is relatively new, we will now explain it in greater detail.

### *The striving for an authentic IC*

This striving is aimed at developing ideas and schemas of what we truly value and need (i.e., basic preferences), and how we can realize our authentic needs and values, within the affordances and constraints of our external reality and our personal dispositions and abilities, through specific goals, preferred activities, relationships, and contexts. Figure 6.1 describes a simplified schema of a mature authentic IC structure. IC schemas help us to feel that we can truly direct ourselves because they inform us on how to choose actions, relationships, and contexts that are likely to feel optimally satisfying and valuable. When we do not have such schemas (knowledge), we feel confused primarily because we do not know what actions to choose. The contribution of an IC to our sense of true direction is especially important in difficult or confusing situations, particularly in the postmodern information age, which is characterized by value confusion and an overwhelming amount of information.

Erich Fromm (1941) already noted that in such societies, freedom and choice are often experienced as a burden and a threat, and in response people choose to escape from freedom by joining totalitarian organizations and belief systems. The development of a firm and authentic IC can help people to contend with their fear of freedom and choice.

Value confusion and value conflicts appear to have increased in recent decades both for Jews and Arabs in Israel. Among Jews, recent decades have witnessed serious questioning, perhaps even collapse, of the socialist and collectivist ideals of the mostly secular founding fathers (e.g., Kimmerling, 2005; Shafir & Peled, 2002). At the same time, Muslim Arabs are experiencing greater tension between

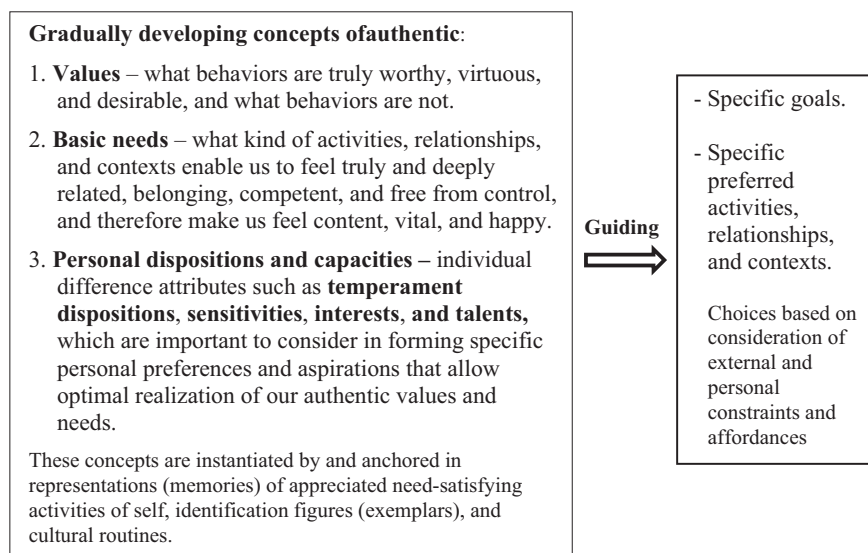


Figure 6.1 A simplified schema of a mature authentic IC structure

their religion and various Western influences. Arabs of all religions are also experiencing tensions between their Palestinian identity and their status as citizens of Israel, which is officially defined as a primarily Jewish state (e.g., Black, 2017). The value conflicts experienced by different parts of the Jewish and Arab populations are varied and complex, and a comprehensive account of these conflicts cannot be provided in this chapter. However, it appears that many Jewish and Arab adolescents and young adults feel a strong need for a firm and authentic inner compass, and consequently for educational contexts that support the development of such a compass (e.g., Assor et al., 2005).

Table 6.2 presents examples of items assessing the extent to which the striving to have an authentic inner compass is satisfied in adolescence and beyond. The

*Table 6.2* Items assessing the experience of having an inner compass

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### Satisfaction

- I have an inner compass that helps me to know what is truly important to me in life.
- I have principles that usually enable me to know the right thing to do in difficult situations.
- I have things that really interest me and I want to invest time in.
- I have values that help me decide what kind of people I want to spend time with.
- I have aspirations that I fully identify with.
- I know what kind of a person I definitely do *not* want to be.
- When I have to make important decisions and plan ahead, I usually know what my true needs are.
- I can usually figure out what I really need and look for in relationships and social contexts.
- I usually know what I truly need and what is most important for me at work or at school.
- I have interests and/or values that can enable me to persist and stay on course – even when the going is tough.
- I have ideas (beliefs) and perceptions (outlooks) that help me to direct myself wisely.
- I have life experiences and knowledge that can help me decide what path to take when making important decisions regarding school or work.

### Frustration

- I feel confused about what is important in my life.
  - Presently, I feel there is nothing that is really worth pursuing for me.
  - I feel that I do not have any direction in my life.
  - I have no idea about the kind of person I want to become.
  - There are no human attributes that I really value.
  - I often do not know what my true needs are.
  - I have no ideas or beliefs that help me to direct myself wisely.
  - When faced with difficult choices or decisions, I usually feel that I do not know how to act wisely.
  - I do not have inner knowledge (life experiences, knowledge, values, or interests) that can guide me in important decisions at school or at work.
-

items were validated in four studies with adolescents and young adults (see Assor, 2017).

## **Educational and socializing practices promoting an authentic IC**

In this section we describe educational and socializing practices that promote the development of an authentic IC. Studies demonstrating the importance of these practices are described in Assor (2012) and Assor (2018).

- 1 *Perspective taking*: To support children's need for autonomy, it is particularly important that parents and educators take children's perspective and accept their feelings, particularly when parent and child disagree (Assor, 2012).
- 2 *Allowing freedom to express and realize authentic inclinations*: This practice includes behaviors that minimize control and arbitrary restrictions, as well as allow choice, encourage self-initiated activities, enable the experience and expression of feelings, preferences, and opinions, and having a voice in family or class decisions.
- 3 *Value-conveying and explaining (rationale-giving) messages*: For children to develop authentic values and interests, parents and teachers need to communicate values and norms that show how children can meet their needs in socially acceptable and even commendable ways. Autonomous internalization of these values may lay the foundation for an authentic IC that is later developed and revised as they mature and experience various challenges. The following features of value-transmitting parental messages, when accompanied by perspective-taking and freedom, may be especially helpful: (1) Rationale: This feature enhances the likelihood that children will internalize the value-reflecting behaviors because they understand and identify with their merit; the rationale and specific behaviors exemplifying it may then become part of the IC schema; (2) Intrinsic values: As already noted, it important for the values communicated to be intrinsic; (3) Limited number of values and norms: to avoid undermining children's sense of freedom, it is important for the number and specificity of value-expressive norms to be limited.
- 4 *Nurturing intrinsic value and interest rudiments*: These practices include parents' and teachers' initiatives to involve children in activities reflecting intrinsic values and interests. For example, the value of consideration for others (benevolence) may be fostered by mentoring refugee children in subjects where the child-mentor has considerable competence and interest, with considerable room for mentor initiative and choice.
- 5 *Intrinsic value demonstration (IVD)*: This practice promotes children's tendency to willingly identify with parents' and teachers' values because they demonstrate the inherent merit of their values by enacting them in behavior, in ways that show that they deeply identify with these values (Assor, 2012). Thus, the values appear worthy because the person enacting them appears content and vital.

Since the notion of IVD has obvious similarities with the concept of modeling, it is important to note that IVD only refers to a type of

modeling that appears autonomous (Yu, Assor, & Liu, 2015). A recent study by Beyers, Soenens, and Assor (2016) showed that Belgian college and high school students distinguished between IVD, parents' perspective-taking and choice-provision, and reflective IC facilitation. Furthermore, in both samples, the students' perception of their parents as manifesting IVD was a unique predictor of their experience of having an authentic IC, which in turn predicted their well-being. Findings demonstrating the unique positive contributions of IVD were also reported in other studies (Brambilla, Assor, Manzi, & Regalia, 2015; Yu et al., 2015).

- 6 *Reflective IC facilitation*: This set of parental behaviors includes practices that promote children's inclination and capacity to seriously and freely consider the values and interests they truly identify with, and from them derive goals, commitments, and self-defined group affiliation that feel authentic (Assor, 2012; Assor, Cohen-Malayev, Kaplan, & Friedman, 2005). It is quite possible that significant others who are not parents (mentors, friends, counselors) will also employ these practices, especially in adolescence and beyond. The general practice of reflective IC facilitation includes four specific strategies.

- 6.1 *Fostering inner valuing (FIV)*: This strategy is likely to be the most basic and developmentally early way to enhance reflection on the child's emerging IC. In this practice, teachers and parents nurture children's tendency and capacity to pay attention to their authentic values and needs despite social pressures, and in particular when facing difficult decisions. Moreover, teachers and parents may also help children to understand what they truly value by helping children understand and articulate the emotions they experience after they went through challenging emotional experiences. This is because strong emotions often inform us on what we truly need and value, or not value.

As emotional understanding is sometimes threatening, elusive, and complex, children can often benefit from sensitive adult help in this domain. For example, children who actually like and value a certain subject may decide that they do not value it because of strong negative emotions they experience while engaging with this subject in a highly competitive and derogatory classroom. Sensitive conversation on their emotional experience may help these children understand that they like the subject, but not the context.

An important aspect of the FIV practice is cultivation of the capacity to accept and tolerate the ambiguity and stress experienced in such situations, so that children can take the time to reflect on the issues at hand, rather than respond quickly to escape emotional and social pressures, or to gain approval. Research anchored in SDT has assessed and studied this tendency only in adolescents and young adults (Assor et al., 2016). However, theoretically it appears important

to nurture this tendency from early childhood (e.g., Fonagy & Target, 1997).

- 6.2 *Support for value/interest examination (SVE)*: In this practice, parents encourage a thorough and open-minded reflection on goals, values, and interests through discussions, activities, and experiences in different contexts. In line with Erikson's (1968) and Marcia's view (1993), the examination process may then enable selection of relatively satisfying goals and commitments in adolescence and beyond. Recent studies demonstrated the unique positive effects of the perceived practices of SVE and FIV (Assor, 2011, 2012; Beyers et al., 2016; Assor & Olshtein, 2017).
- 6.3 *Support for inner compass clarification and formation*: This practice refers to active help in the goal- and interest-formation process. It includes suggestions on how to examine the issues at hand, and when appropriate, also challenge observations and questions. The latter type of responses, in the context of non-controlling empathic relationships, may help children to face needs, feelings, or realities they avoid or distort. Avoidance or distortion of their reality may cause them to form non-optimal or harmful goals. In this context, challenging yet sensitive interventions by close others may help children to acknowledge their avoidant or distortive behavior, and create a more accurate picture of their reality. The more accurate perception can then help them to form more optimal goals and commitments.
- 6.4 *Inner compass validation*: This practice may be particularly relevant after children have engaged in reflective-exploration and selected long-term goals. In this practice, parents and teachers validate the child's perception and feelings that the goal/commitment/interest they follow is worthy and desirable. Even more important, they try to avoid invalidation. Another aspect of validation is conveying the view that the child has the capacities to attain the relevant goal. The challenge of validation is especially difficult when the child adopts goals and interests that parents do not particularly respect, or that appear too demanding. Support for the importance of IC validation was obtained in a recent study of Israeli and Chinese college students, conducted by Assor et al. (2015).

## Conclusion

The present chapter includes two important contributions. The first part highlights the importance of autonomous motivation and autonomy support for students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds in Israel. The evidence indicating the importance of autonomous motivation and autonomy support for Bedouin students is especially important, as it highlights the importance of



autonomy for students from a hierarchical and collectivist context as well. The various intervention and training programs suggest that it is possible to promote autonomous student and teacher motivation across numerous contexts.

The second part of the chapter describes a new theoretical development – the concept of inner compass – that is likely to enrich theory and research beyond Israel. What are the major contributions of the proposed view of autonomy and the concept of inner compass to the domain of students' motivation? First, it underscores the idea that to feel a deep sense of self-direction it is not enough to be free to express authentic inclinations or to act according to them. In addition, it is also essential to develop internal schemas of values, interests, and derived goals and preferences that can give us direction. Only when such schemas exist, students and teachers may be able to face the difficult choices posed by the postmodern information age without escaping from freedom. In other words, autonomy is not only about freedom from control and behavioral self-actualization, it is also, primarily, about figuring out and knowing what we believe and feel is valuable and truly need-satisfying.

Second, the notion of IC underscores that in order to help children develop a deep sense of autonomy and consequent autonomous motivation, teachers and parents need to engage in two rarely discussed practices in most SDT work; namely inherent value demonstration (IVD) and reflective IC facilitation. Research suggests that these practices contribute to the growth of an authentic IC, autonomous motivation, autonomous internalization of values, and other positive outcomes.

The practice of IVD is of special importance for two reasons. First, it consistently emerges as a distinct practice with unique beneficial effects. Second, IVD reflects an important yet under-emphasized educational principle: If you want to foster autonomy and growth in children, it is not enough to interact sensitively with them; in addition, it is crucial to develop and demonstrate your own authentic IC. Accordingly, in teacher and parent education and in counseling we should focus on processes of teachers and parents' authentic IC formation, in addition to practices directly supporting students' needs.

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