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ARTICLE



Sense of authentic inner compass as a moral resource across cultures: possible implications for resisting negative peer-pressure and for parenting

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on a recently conceptualized construct—sense of authentic inner-compass (AIC)—and two parenting practices promoting it: basic autonomy-support (BAS) and inherent value-demonstration (IVD). Rooted in self-determination theory, sense of AIC refers to the perception that we have self-guiding values, aspirations, and goals, which function like an ‘authentic inner-compass’ that informs us on *what we truly value and need*. The utility of this construct for understanding morality-related phenomena also in cultures not emphasizing autonomy and authenticity, is demonstrated by a study conducted in two widely different cultures: Bedouin and Jews in Israel. As expected, across cultures, the practices of BAS and IVD were associated with sense of AIC, which then predicted adolescents’ resistance to peer-pressure to engage in antisocial behaviors. Invariance analysis showed a similar pattern across cultures. Discussion focuses on implications of the AIC concept for various moral behaviors, and for value-oriented parenting and moral education.

KEYWORDS

Authentic inner compass; peer-pressure; autonomy support; inherent value demonstration; cross-cultural research

The purpose of this paper is to present potential moral implications of a recently conceptualized notion—the authentic inner-compass (AIC; Assor, 2012, 2018a; Vansteenkiste & Soenens, 2015)—rooted mainly in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Following an introduction explicating the concept of AIC, we demonstrate the utility of this notion for understanding moral behavior and education via an empirical study. The study focused on adolescents’ resistance to peer-pressure to engage in antisocial behaviors, and on parenting behaviors promoting AIC and subsequent resistance to peer-pressure, across two widely different cultures. The discussion highlights possible implications of the concept of AIC for various moral behaviors, and for value-oriented parenting and education.

Sense of authentic inner-compass (AIC) definition and functions

Based mainly on SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995), and partly also on Aviram’s (2010) notion of autonomy and Mill’s (1946) notion of

liberty, Assor (2012, 2018a) proposed that to feel autonomous, we need to see ourselves as having self-guiding ideas, knowledge, sentiments, and preferences. These ideas function like an ‘authentic inner-compass’ (AIC), informing us on what is truly important to us and what we really value and need. According to Assor (2018a), AIC schemas are essential for autonomy need satisfaction (experiencing true self-direction) because they inform us how to proactively choose actions, relationships, and contexts likely to feel valuable and optimally satisfying. In addition, they also guide our reactions when we are unexpectedly confronted with difficult situations. When we do not have such action- and decision-guiding schemas, we are likely to feel confused and incapable of true self-direction because we do not know what actions to choose. Consequently, we may prefer to ‘escape from freedom’ even when we are relatively free to direct our lives (Fromm, 1941).

While the notion of AIC is implicit in the concepts of identified, integrated and intrinsic self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and self-concordant goals (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995), the latter concepts refer to specific goals or behaviors. In contrast, the concept of sense of AIC refers to a global sense of knowing what is truly important to us and what we value, which is assumed to be an essential part of the experience of autonomy. Thus, as the need for autonomy focuses on the striving to regulate and direct ourselves in ways that feel truly self-congruent (e.g., Assor, 2018a; Deci & Ryan, 2000), it seems reasonable to assume that we need to know what directions we truly want to take. Sense of AIC represents the experience of knowing these directions, as captured by the perception that we have direction-giving values, aspirations and goals, which also feel authentic. In addition, the perception of having authentic direction-giving, values, aspirations and goals is assumed to contribute to the experience of self-continuity (Erikson, 1963), self-congruence, and meaning, because it enables us to understand how different acts represent the same underlying, meaning-conferring, values, aspirations and goals (Assor, 2018a). Because a sense of AIC contributes to our experience of autonomy and self-congruence, it is conceived as a general growth and resilience resource that enables actions that are perceived as self-realizing and authentic (Assor, 2018a, 2019); for example, resisting peer-pressure to engage in anti-social behavior.

Assor (2018a, pp. 126–131) provides a detailed account of how the cognitive emotional schemas underlying the experience of an AIC are assumed to develop. In here, we only note that values underlying the sense of having an AIC are assumed to begin to develop from early childhood, if the environment supports autonomous growth of such values. Then, as children become adolescents, they are likely to develop need-satisfying aspirations (for example, for specific types of close relationships) and individual interests, which together with one’s values, inform the formation of long-term goals. To the extent that these goals feel authentic, they allow the formation of growth-promoting plans and commitments. Thus, it is only in early adulthood that youngsters that have experienced growth-supporting contexts are assumed to develop the schemas necessary to support a deep sense of AIC. The contribution of the AIC to optimal functioning is posited to be particularly important in adolescence and emerging adulthood, because in these periods individuals face the developmental task of making important, long-term, decisions and identity-shaping commitments, and the presence of a firm AIC can help to make growth-promoting decisions.

Given the likely importance of AIC in adolescence and emerging adulthood, most studies conducted so far on this construct focused on this period. A scale assessing the AIC was developed by Assor, Ezra, and Yu (2015), and then translated to Dutch and Chinese (Assor et al., *in press*; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Beyers, Verstuyf, & Assor, 2016; Yu, Deng, Yu, & Liu, 2018). Illustrative items are: ‘I have principles that help me decide what is the right thing to do in difficult situations’, ‘I know what is truly important for me in life’, and ‘I have goals that are personally important to me’. Findings from studies using this scale supported theoretical claims regarding outcomes and correlates of AIC. Thus, sense of AIC was found to contribute to increased adolescents’ autonomous engagement in goal promoting activities over time (Assor et al., *in press*), and to increased well-being of college students over time (Assor, 2019). In addition, AIC was associated with high self-esteem and absence of depressive feelings, perceived self-congruence, authentic living, sense of meaning, absence of attachment avoidance, clear and autonomous future plans, and intrinsic goal aspirations (e.g., Assor, 2019; Assor et al., *in press*; Yu et al., 2018).

As a firm AIC entails a strong sense of clarity concerning one’s values and goals, it is important to ascertain that high levels of sense of AIC are not a product of rigid adherence to normative standards, and/or crude and simplistic beliefs. Studies by Assor et al. (2015) in China and Israel, indicated that, as expected, sense of AIC was positively associated with tolerance for ambiguity (Stanley Budner, 1962), and negatively associated with a normative-foreclosed style of processing identity-relevant information (Berzonsky et al., 2013), capturing non-reflective acceptance of beliefs one was raised on. Assor (2019), found that the AIC scale was positively associated with an open-minded information-oriented style of the processing identity-information (Berzonsky et al., 2013). These findings suggest that high levels of AIC do not reflect dogmatic, closed-minded, convictions.

Basic autonomy-support and inherent value-demonstration as two socializing antecedents of sense of AIC

Past research suggests that parents can influence adolescents’ values and life-goals (e.g., Barni, Ranieri, Scabini, & Rosnati, 2011; Knafo & Assor, 2007; Lekes, Gingras, Philippe, Koestner, & Fang, 2010). Therefore, it is likely that parents can also affect the formation of adolescents’ sense of AIC. Consistent with this view, Assor (2012, 2018a) described several SDT-based parenting practices that are posited to promote the formation of adolescents’ AIC. The first set of practices is termed ‘basic autonomy-supports’ (BAS); a large body of SDT-based research has shown that these practices contribute to autonomous internalization of parental expectations and values (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2017). The concept of basic autonomy-support (BAS) emphasizes the importance of taking the child’s perspective, providing rationale, and providing some choice, particularly when parents’ and children’s preferences differ (e.g., Assor, 2018a; Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

A second parenting practice posited by Assor (2012, 2018a) to promote the formation of sense of AIC in adolescents is inherent value-demonstration (IVD). In IVD, socializing agents demonstrate in their behavior that they have values that are very important to them, and that acting upon these values serves as a source of meaning, satisfaction, and

vitality for them. Frequent exposure to parental IVD is assumed to enhance youngsters' motivation to autonomously internalize their parents' values and use them as a foundation for the development of the formation of goals, because parents have demonstrated their values in a convincing way.

During adolescence and emerging adulthood, children may revise the values and commitments they have internalized from their parents (e.g., Erikson, 1963, 1968), so that their more mature AIC differs from the parental IVD which their parents have demonstrated in their behavior. However, the presence and memory of parental IVD is assumed to provide a general direction, and perhaps even more importantly, act as an inspiring proof, that value-based goals, commitments and actions are important sources of a fulfilling life. Research on IVD suggests this practice contributes to autonomous internalization of religious values (Brambilla, Assor, Manzi, & Regalia, 2015), and to experiences of self-congruence and well-being (Yu, Assor, & Liu, 2015). Beyers, Soenens, and Assor (2016) found that perceived maternal BAS and IVD predicted sense of AIC, which then predicted students' well-being, and this link was mediated by AIC. IVD was also found to enhance AIC over time in Israeli adolescents (Assor, 2018b). However, no study to date has examined whether IVD and BAS have simultaneous but unique associations with adolescents' sense of AIC, and their subsequent resistance to negative peer-pressure.

Sense of AIC as a resource supporting resistance to negative peer-pressure

Authors concerned with morality, have emphasized the importance of *resisting group norms and prevailing social pressures to act in ways that deviate from one's values* (Aramovich, Lytle, & Skitka, 2012; Kim, Chen, Smetana, & Greenberger, 2016; Kundu & Cummins, 2013; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Stammers, 2017; Waller, 2007). In adolescence, the capacity to resist peer-influence that goes against one's beliefs and values is of particular importance. For example, a low capacity to resist negative peer influence was found to increase youth involvement in antisocial and deviant activities (e.g., Allen, Porter, & McFarland, 2006; Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986; Dishion & Patterson, 2015; Monahan, Steinberg, & Cauffman, 2009; Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz, 1998; Warrington & Younger, 2011). Therefore, it is important to identify personal attributes that may allow youth to resist negative peer-pressure.

Past studies have identified several personal attributes associated with resistance to peer-pressure. For example, feared delinquent possible self (Pierce, Schmidt, & Stoddard, 2015). However, research on this issue is scarce, and no cross-cultural studies have addressed the topic. In an attempt to expand our knowledge in this area, we focused on AIC as a potential resource of adolescents' capacity to resist peer-pressure to engage in antisocial behaviors, looking at two very different cultural contexts: Bedouins and Jews in Israel. We also examined adolescents' perceptions of BAS and IVD as parental practices that may promote the formation of adolescents' AIC and resistance to negative peer-pressure, across cultures.

Adolescents with a firm sense of AIC are likely to be more able to resist peer-pressure to engage in anti-social behaviors because they have a clear picture of their values, and they deeply identify with them. As these values are closely tied to their sense of self-direction, self-continuity and self-congruence, they may be relatively more inclined to

adhere to them and, when necessary, pay the social costs of such adherence. In addition, their relatively firm AIC may function as a source of self-worth, making them less dependent on ongoing social approval, and better able to withstand negative peer reactions when they refuse to comply. Moreover, an increased AIC-based sense of self-worth may enable adolescents to reject social pressures in a clear and assertive way, which in itself may reduce peers' tendency to apply more pressure. Consistent with these assumptions, recent studies have shown that sense of AIC is associated with self-esteem in Belgian high school and college students (Beyers et al., 2016; and see also Assor et al., *in press*).

The hypothesis that a firm sense of AIC contributes to the capacity to resist negative pressure to engage in anti-social or deviant actions has also been supported by some indirect evidence. Soenens et al. (2016) found that sense of AIC was negatively associated with deviant antisocial behavior (bullying, vandalism, fighting), relational aggression (rumor spreading, exclusion) and affiliation with deviant peers in Belgian high-school students. In addition, it also served as a moderator, reducing the association between deviant peer affiliation and both deviant anti-social behavior, and relational aggression. While this study suggested a sense of AIC might promote resistance to negative peer-pressure, there was no direct evidence that it was associated with adolescents' perception of their capacity to resist. Therefore, our first objective was to examine these relations.

Sense of AIC, resistance to peer-pressure, and parenting in different cultures

The notion that a firm sense of AIC contributes to the capacity to resist negative peer-pressure seems plausible in western cultures, given their emphasis on autonomy and authenticity (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2012; Taylor, 1992). However, the contribution of sense of AIC to resistance to negative peer-pressure cannot be taken for granted in cultures advocating the importance of social hierarchy and traditions, where autonomy, authenticity, and self-expression are not important values. In these cultures, there is a strong emphasis on paying attention to and complying with external expectations based on tradition, hierarchy and the social group (e.g., Triandis, 1995). As part of this emphasis, people are not encouraged to examine how authentic they feel as they pursue societal values and expectations. Given this cultural orientation, it is interesting to examine if a sense of AIC functions as an important resource of resilience against negative peer-pressure also in hierarchically oriented cultures. Perhaps, in contrast to the view emphasizing the importance of AIC as a resistance resource, it is possible that in hierarchical-collectivist cultures, youth can rely on prevailing cultural and familial norms in their attempts to resist peer-pressure to engage in antisocial behavior; thus, not needing the added confidence and assertiveness provided by a firm AIC.

While the latter option seems plausible, we posit that the clarity, feelings of self-direction, confidence, and self-congruence generated by a firm sense of AIC can be beneficial across widely different cultures. Research consistent with this view was conducted recently by Maree, Yitshaki, and Assor (2018) with Bedouin adolescents. Results showed that autonomous identification with the value of avoiding deviant peer-association was a negative predictor of engagement in antisocial behavior. Autonomous identification with specific values and sense of AIC both emphasize the importance of endorsing values because they feel authentic. Hence, it seems reasonable to

hypothesize that sense of AIC, like the autonomous identification construct, is beneficial for Bedouin adolescents. As for basic autonomy-supportive (BAS) practices promoting sense of AIC, there is considerable evidence that these practices are important for youth also in hierarchical-collectivist societies (e.g., Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Van Petegem, 2015). Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that BAS will be associated with sense of AIC also in these cultural contexts.

Given the absence of cross-cultural studies in this area, the second objective of our study was to examine the hypothesis that both IVD and BAS are uniquely associated with adolescents' sense of AIC and subsequent resistance to peer-pressure in two widely different cultural contexts: Bedouin and Jewish Israeli adolescents living in the southern part of Israel.

The present study

The study was conducted with Bedouin and Jewish adolescents living in the southern part of Israel. It focused on adolescents in the seventh and eighth grades, because in this age many adolescents start to experience substantial negative peer-pressure (e.g., Monahan et al., 2009; Vitaro, Brendgen, & Wanner, 2005). The Bedouins in south Israel are a distinct social group that is a part of the Muslim-Arab minority in Israel. As part of their collectivist-hierarchical orientation, they emphasize the importance of group goals above personal goals, view their belongingness to the tribe and the family as a central part of their self-definition, and strongly endorse the value of obedience to traditional hierarchies (e.g., Al-Krenawi, 1998; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001; Dwairy & Achoui, 2010; Katz & Assor, 2002). Compared to Israeli Jews, Bedouins were found to have stronger collectivist-hierarchical orientation (e.g., Cohen, 2006; Oyserman, 1993; Schwartz, 2009; Weinstock, 2011).

Based on SDT, our view of the importance of the practices of IVD and BAS, and adolescents' sense of AIC, and the research surveyed, we hypothesized that, for both Bedouin and Jewish adolescents: (1) the perceived parental practices of BAS and IVD would each be uniquely associated with adolescents' sense of AIC and with their resistance to peer-pressure to engage in antisocial behavior, and (2) adolescents' sense of AIC will mediate the relations between BAS and IVD and resistance to peer-pressure.

Method

Participants

Participants were 506 middle-school adolescents (Grades 7–8) from southern Israel: 336 Jewish students (mean age = 12 years and 11 months; SD = 0.72; 59% females) from four non-religious Jewish schools and 170 Bedouin students (mean age = 13 years and 4 months; SD = 0.72; 58% females) from three Bedouin schools. The Bedouin sample was smaller because we had difficulty obtaining questionnaire administrators. Studies of participants from randomly chosen different classes in the same schools and from classes in adjacent schools (Katz & Assor, 2002; Yitshaki, Maree, & Assor, 2016) found that Bedouin adolescents had significantly higher scores than Jewish adolescents on a scale assessing obedient orientation to parents, based on Lay et al. (1998).

Procedure

The study was approved by the university ethics committee, and parental and adolescent consent was obtained prior to participation. Participants completed a questionnaire assessing the variables of interest in their mother language (Hebrew or Arabic), administered in each classroom by trained college students, whose nationality and dress code coincided with the relevant school.

Measures

The scales were based on those employed in studies focusing on the same variables for only Jewish participants (e.g., Geifman, Yitshaki, & Assor, 2018). The items in the scales used by Geifman et al. (2018) were translated to Arabic and then back to Hebrew. Then, based on pilot study, we selected items that produced scales with satisfactory internal consistencies in both cultures. All items were rated on 7-point Likert scales (1 = *Almost never true*; 4 = *Sometimes true*; 7 = *Almost always true*). Scales for parents addressed perceptions of both parents because our pilot work indicated that parents were perceived to have similar practices and we were limited in the number of items that could be used. Scale scores were computed by averaging the values of the items constituting each scale. Internal consistencies for the study variables are presented in Table 2 (diagonal).

Basic autonomy-support (BAS)

BAS was assessed on a 5-item scale based on the scale used by Roth et al. (2009) with adolescents. The scale captures adolescents' perceptions of their parents' response in situations involving potential conflict. For example, school attendance, or association with misbehaving peers. The scale was validated in a study with Jewish adolescents (Geifman et al., 2018). Sample item: 'My parents try to understand how I view the situation, and are willing to listen to my opinion.'

Inherent value-demonstration (IVD)

This construct was measured by a 5-item scale. Sample items include: 'My parents not only talk about what is important to them but also show it in their behavior'; 'When my parents act in ways that fit their values—they look satisfied and full of energy'. The scale is based on a longer scale developed and validated by Brambilla et al. (2015), Yu et al. (2015), and Geifman et al. (2018).

Sense of authentic inner-compass (AIC)

This construct was assessed by a 4-item scale. These items were used to assess the latent construct of sense of AIC in both Jewish and Bedouin adolescents. The items were: 'I have principles that help me to decide what is the right thing to do in difficult situations'; 'I have goals that are personally important to me'; 'I know what kind of a person I want to be'; 'I know what is truly important for me in life'. The items are based on the AIC scale used in previous studies in China, Israel and Belgium (Assor et al., 2015; Soenens et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2018).

To examine the incremental and discriminant validity of the AIC scale, Assor (2019) assessed relations with widely used measures of identity formation and purpose. To test

incremental validity, the AIC scale was compared to two other scales assessing having commitments or a purpose with which one deeply identifies: identification with commitment (Luyckx et al., 2008) and identified purpose (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009). Regression analyses assessing effects on various well-being indicators found the AIC scale made a unique contribution to the prediction of all well-being measures examined. Moreover, in all these cases, it was the strongest predictor. Discriminant validity was assessed by examining the relations between AIC and three indicators of exploration: commitment exploration in breadth, commitment exploration in depth (Luyckx et al., 2008), and searching for purpose (Bronk et al., 2009). As the AIC measure emphasizes having values and goals with which one deeply identifies, it was hypothesized that AIC would have weaker correlations with indicators of exploration and purpose-searching than with identification with commitment or identified purpose. Results supported the hypotheses, and Fisher Z tests indicated the differences between the correlations were significant.

Resistance to negative peer-pressure

This construct was assessed by a 3-item scale adapted from Monahan et al. (2009) to capture situations in which adolescents feel that they are pressured to act in ways that they view as clearly harmful. Sample items: ‘When other boys or girls around me are acting in ways that are harmful to other people, I feel that I can refuse to join them, also if they will be angry at me’; ‘When my friends start behaving in ways that are harmful, I feel that I can avoid joining them’.

Results

Preliminary analysis

Measurement model

To establish the metric equivalence of the scales administered across cultures, we conducted a multi-group Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), using Mplus version 7.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Our estimation method was maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR). This analysis tested whether the item-loadings on the constructs they are assumed to capture were equivalent across cultural groups. To assess equivalence, we compared a model in which the item-loadings on each latent construct were constrained to be equal across cultures, with an unconstrained baseline model in which these item-loadings were allowed to vary across cultures. The fit indices of the unconstrained and the constrained models were both satisfactory ($\chi^2_{(218)} = 285.55, p < .001$, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .05, CFI = .97, TLI = .96 for the unconstrained model; $\chi^2_{(235)} = 326.88, p < .001$, RMSEA = .04, CFI = .95, TLI = .95 for the constrained model). Importantly, the Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test (Satorra & Bentler, 2010) yielded non-significant differences between models ($\text{TRD}_{(17)} = 25.30, p > .05$), indicating an acceptable factor structure that did not significantly vary across cultures.

Mean and standard deviation differences

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the Bedouin and Jewish adolescents on the variables examined. Results indicated that while standard deviations were

Table 1. Differences between Jewish and Bedouin participants on the study variables.

	Jewish Means (SD)	Bedouin Means (SD)	T test for mean differences
1. BAS	3.68 (1.12)	3.22 (1.00)	−4.53***
2. IVD	4.27 (.84)	3.90 (.80)	−4.61***
3. AIC	4.38 (.70)	4.00 (.88)	−5.24***
4. Resistance to Negative Peer-Pressure	4.03 (1.12)	3.61 (1.11)	−3.98***

BAS = Basic Autonomy-Support; IVD = Inherent Value-Demonstration.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

similar across cultures, means differed, with Jewish participants scoring significantly higher than Bedouin ones. Past research conducted in similar Bedouin and Jewish schools on self-reported adolescents' risk behavior (Yitshaki et al., 2016), did not show higher means for the Jewish participants; therefore, the higher mean levels in this study maybe specific to the variables examined.

Correlations

As expected, in both groups, all correlations were positive (Table 2). For Jews, but not for Bedouins, gender correlated positively and significantly with BAS, IVD and AIC, such that females had higher scores than males. However, regression analyses examining the expected effects within each culture found the effects of gender became non-significant when considered with the other predictors. To further control for possible gender effects, we included this variable in the structural models of the primary analyses.

Primary analysis

Structural model

We employed multigroup structural equation modeling (SEM) using Mplus 7.11 to assess the hypothesized associations, across cultures, controlling for the effect of gender, and for direct effects of IVD and BAS on resistance to peer-pressure. The significant paths in the SEM model are presented in Figure 1. For clarity's sake, the figure does not include gender effects, or the direct effects of BAS and IVD on resistance to peer-pressure, because none of these effects was significant.

To assess cross-cultural equivalence, we compared constrained and unconstrained structural models. In the constrained model, we constrained the factor-loadings of the

Table 2. Correlations between the study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Reactive AS	.76/.83	.44**	.34**	.25**	.17**
2. IVD	.26**	.76/.82	.52**	.32**	.14*
3. AIC	.34**	.65**	.78/.63	.30**	.13*
4. Peer-resistance	.21**	.41**	.42**	.72/.63	.08
5. Gender	.03	.16 [†]	.09	.00	

[†] <0.10 , * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Coefficients above the diagonal—Jewish sample; Coefficients below the diagonal—Bedouin Sample. Coefficients in the diagonal are Cronbach alphas. Coefficients on the left are based on the Jewish sample, and on the right are based on the Bedouin sample.

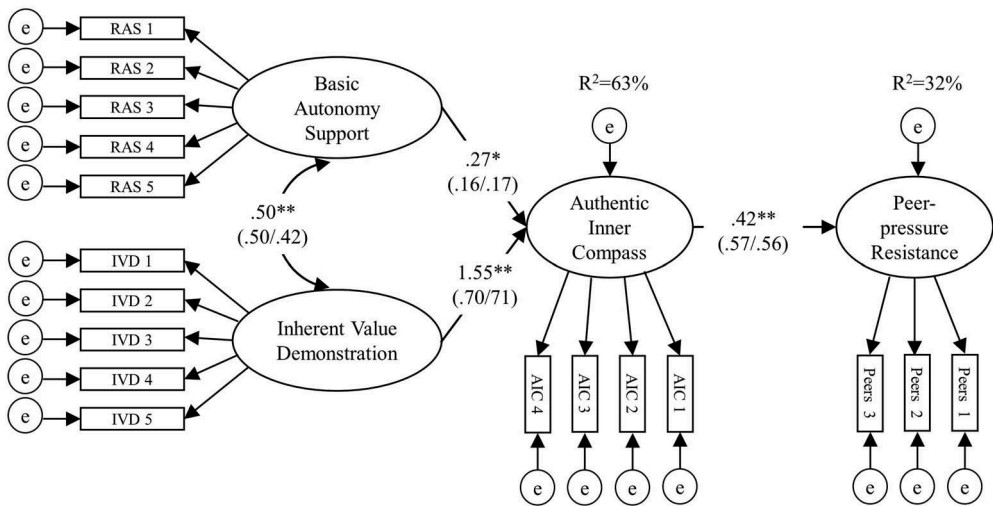


Figure 1. Structural equations models: AIC as a mediator of the effects of BAS and IVD on resistance to peer-pressure.

Note: Upper figures are unstandardized β weights. Figures in parenthesis are standardized β weights (Jews on the left and Bedouins on the right). For the sake of clarity, non-significant direct paths are not presented in the figure. Bootstrapping tests showed that the mediated effects of BAS and IVD on resistance to peer-pressure through AIC were both significant. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

indicators of each latent construct and the structural paths to be equal. Because there were mean differences between cultures in the study variables (see Table 1), albeit with a small effect size, scalar (intercepts) invariance could not be achieved. However, the metric (loading) equivalence was sufficient to compare associations between variables across cultures (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). In the unconstrained baseline model, structural weights, but not indicators' factor loadings, were allowed to vary across the two groups.

Results of the multigroup SEM analysis showed good fit indices for both the unconstrained and constrained models ($\chi^2_{(252)} = 311.26$, $p < .004$; RMSEA = .03; SRMR = .06; CFI = .97; TLI = .96, for the unconstrained model; $\chi^2_{(255)} = 312.95$, $p < .006$; RMSEA = .03; SRMR = .06; CFI = .97; TLI = .96 for the constrained model). The Satorra–Bentler scaled chi-square difference test indicated a non-significant difference between models ($\text{TRd}_{(5)} = 2.53$, $p > .05$). Thus, as expected, the hypothesized model was supported for both cultural groups and did not vary significantly as a function of culture.

Mediation tests

Tests of indirect effects yielded significant mediation terms for the path from BAS to resistance to peer-pressure through AIC (estimate = 0.113, $p < .019$) and for the path from IVD to resistance to peer-pressure through AIC (estimate = 0.484, $p < .001$). Because the direct paths from BAS and IVD to resistance to peer-pressure were not significant, full mediation was indicated.

Discussion

The findings confirmed the hypothesis that adolescents' sense of AIC is associated with the capacity to resist peer-pressure to engage in anti-social behavior, in two widely different cultural contexts in Israel: Bedouin and Jewish. As expected, in both cultural contexts, the parental practices of inherent value demonstration (IVD) and basic autonomy support (BAS) were uniquely associated with resistance to peer-pressure, and this link was mediated by adolescents' sense of AIC. Interestingly, the effects of sense of AIC on resistance to peer-pressure were similar in both cultures, suggesting that having an AIC *is not less important* in a highly hierarchical and collectivist culture.

Importantly, the findings are consistent with the notion of AIC as a moral resource contributing to resistance to negative peer-pressure *across* cultures. Thus, it appears that in two widely different cultures, youth are likely to feel more capable of resisting antisocial peer-pressure if they sense that their authentic inner compass gives them the strength to resist. The new findings linking sense of AIC with resistance to peer-pressure in a hierarchical-collectivist culture are particularly intriguing. At the same time, however, they are consistent with previous studies indicating the importance of AIC and related constructs emphasizing the importance of autonomously endorsed values in such cultures. For example, sense of AIC was found to contribute to increased well-being over time in Chinese youth (Assor, 2019), while autonomously endorsed cultural value orientations have been associated with well-being in hierarchical and collectivist cultures (e.g., Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003).

The substantial associations of IVD with sense of AIC and resistance to peer-pressure are consistent with developmental views highlighting the contribution of constructive forms of identification with parents' values to the formation of identity (e.g., Erikson, 1968). The findings also have practical implications; parents may help their children form an AIC not only by providing basic autonomy support (perspective taking, providing rationale), but also by enacting their values in ways that demonstrate the satisfying nature of value-reflecting activities. This is an important conclusion, because it implies that *optimal parental autonomy support is not only about optimal reactions to one's child but also about forming and enacting an authentic path in one's own life, by which youth can be inspired*.

Educational implications of the notion of AIC: active fostering of the formation of autonomous values as a key task of autonomy-enhancing parenting and education

The notion of AIC assumes that a firm sense of AIC is based, to a large extent, on autonomously endorsed values, that is, values that are held because they are viewed as truly important and not because of external or internal pressures (e.g., Assor, 2011). As an AIC based on autonomous values promotes experiences of autonomy and authenticity, it follows that *educators and parents who want to enhance children's capacity to feel and act autonomously would do well to foster the development of autonomous values*.

SDT-based research offers a number of practices likely to support children's autonomous value internalization; for example, perspective-taking, rationale-giving, encouraging initiative (i.e., BAS) and minimizing control. While these practices are beneficial, the

focus on fostering autonomous values suggests that beyond simply using these specific practices, *it is important that educators and parents also ask themselves: How can we best foster the growth of autonomous values in our children?* By asking this question, educators may increase the likelihood of flexible and sensitive application of various practices that promote autonomous value internalization in most children. For example, while choice-provision may often promote autonomous internalization, this may not be the case for a specific child in a specific situation (e.g., Katz & Assor, 2007).

The focus on promoting autonomous values also encourages educators to consider, when appropriate, the importance of *sensitively taking a more active role* beyond basic autonomy supportive practices and control minimization. One such practice involves inherent value-demonstration, as examined in this study. However, depending on the circumstances and the child's age, there might be other options which parents and educators may consider. For example, creating opportunities for children to experience the intrinsic satisfaction of pro-social actions may enhance their autonomous endorsement of these values. Similarly, creating settings and conversations in which children are encouraged to explore and reflect on what is truly valuable for them, rather than automatically adopting popular behaviors (i.e., fostering inner valuing; Assor, 2018a), may enhance the development of values experienced as deeply authentic (see Assor, 2018a for a discussion of such practices). Interestingly, even the practice of limit setting can promote autonomous value formation, when applied selectively and together with perspective taking and inductive rationale provision. For example, sensitive limit-setting may help children who thoughtlessly hurt another person to realize the importance of the values of caring harm-avoidance.

Importantly, the emphasis on educators playing an active (yet sensitive) educational role on value-related occasions is consistent with the basic assumptions about the need for autonomy that led to the development of the AIC notion in the first place. According to this view, the need for autonomy involves both a striving to be free from control so we can explore and realize what is truly important for us, and a striving to know what is truly important and valuable to us (Assor, 2018a; Assor et al., *in press*). While basic autonomy supports are crucial to allow freedom to explore, the more active practices (e.g., IVD, fostering inner valuing) may help youngsters clarify what is important for them in situations where effective self-initiated exploration is difficult or even threatening. In these contexts, it is educators' role to help children find satisfying experiences and inspiring models that may assist them in formulating self-guiding values and aspirations. At times, *educators may also need to help youngsters face and overcome oversights, concerns or fears that prevent them from further exploring, recognizing, or realizing what is really important to them.*

AIC and other moral qualities

Our study focused on one possible outcome of adolescents' sense of AIC, but AIC is likely to be associated with other important moral qualities. One particularly relevant outcome might be: Acting in ways that feel *authentic* (e.g., Furtak, 2003; Taylor, 1992; Trilling, 1972; Yalom, 1980). While the notion of authentic behavior may not be included in some classifications of moral behaviors, some theorists view it as an important moral virtue in western cultures today (e.g., Taylor, 1992), and recent empirical evidence suggests

inauthentic behavior is often experienced as immoral (Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015). In line with this view, a recent study (Assor, 2019) found that AIC predicted sense of authenticity.

While the quality of authenticity refers mostly to the actor experience of being true to oneself (e.g., Gino et al., 2015; Thomaes, Sedikides, van den Bos, Hutteman, & Reijntjes, 2017), it can also be viewed as a moral quality that is not only subjective. Thus, people can be viewed as behaving in authentic ways when they demonstrate congruence between their values and deeds, especially when such behavior is costly, when they are sincere, and when they resist self-deception and moral hypocrisy. These behaviors are considered by various authors as indicators of self-integrity (Blasi, 2005; Lapsley, 2008; Monin & Merritt, 2012; Williams, 1981). Knowing what you truly value and want (i.e., having an AIC), does not guarantee behavioral enactment of one's values or lack of moral hypocrisy (Monin & Merritt, 2012). Yet, based on research in the domain of attitude-behavior consistency and on studies grounded in self-determination theory, it appears that feeling that one's values are truly important and self-endorsed enhances the likelihood of behavioral enactment of one's values (e.g., Boninger, Krosnick, Berent, & Fabrigar, 1995; Eaton & Visser, 2008; Koestner, 2008; Koestner, Losier, Vallerand, & Carducci, 1996; Pelletier, Tuson, Green-Demers, Noels, & Beaton, 1998). It should be noted, however, that there are other conceptualizations of the phenomenon of self-integrity that are less directly linked to morality, and therefore are not discussed here (Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 1973).

A third moral quality that is likely to be associated with sense of AIC is benevolent, pro-social, values. Research by Strohming and her colleagues (Strohming, 2019) shows that many people construe their inner (essential) core self as beneficent and moral. Cross-cultural research on human values also indicates that across very different cultures, benevolence values (being honest, caring) are rated as more important relative to all other values (Cieciuch, Davidov, & Algesheimer, 2016; Schwartz et al., 2012). Interestingly, Assor (2012, 2018a), adopting a developmental socialization perspective, also noted that benevolence values are likely to provide the most important foundation for the experience of having an AIC; furthermore, these values are likely to be the component of sense of AIC that develops most early. Based on these three quite different perspectives, it is reasonable to assume that many people with a firm sense of AIC are likely to hold autonomously endorsed benevolence values, and these values are experienced by them as a core component of the AIC.

Another moral behavior that AIC may predict is self-restraint and flexibility in the pursuit of moral convictions. Human history is replete with examples of strong, but extreme and rigid, moral convictions that lead to violations of judicial procedures and the law, cruelty and, at times, unnecessary self-sacrifice. In their literature review, Skitka and Mullen (2002) provide examples of the rigid pursuit of moral convictions. As the sense of AIC is based not only on 'pure' moral values, but also on aspirations and goals reflecting the full range of our basic psychological needs, it is possible that it will predict a more tempered and self-restrained pursuit of moral convictions.

Methodological limitations and directions for future research

Our study has some limitations which should be addressed in the future research. First, while extant longitudinal research supports AIC as a predictor of positive outcomes over

time (Assor, 2019), and IVD as a predictor of AIC over time (Assor, 2018b), the full model tested in the present study was only examined via a cross-sectional design. To allow cautious causal interpretations, future research should examine the longitudinally designed model. Second, it would be desirable to obtain measures of resistance to peer-pressure and parental practices that are not restricted to participants' self-reports.

Third, it is important to examine if sense of AIC also has similar effects and antecedents in other cultures than the two examined here. Fourth, it is important to examine the relations between the AIC measure examined here and measures of moral identity (e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002; Jia, Krettenauer, & Li, 2019). Theoretically, the AIC measure refers to a wide range of values, aspirations and goals that people feel are truly important to them, not just to moral values assessed by the moral identity measures. AIC also has a more explicit focus on autonomous identification with one's self guides. Therefore, it appears that the two constructs are distinct. Yet, the relations among these constructs require careful examination.

Conclusion

Research presented and reviewed in this article suggests that sense of authentic inner-compass (AIC)—knowing what is truly important and valuable to us—is an important personal resource that can promote thriving, feelings of authenticity, and resistance to negative peer-pressure. The notion of AIC and related research also highlight the importance of the socializing practice of intrinsic value demonstration (ICD) in promoting a sense of authentic inner compass (AIC), that is based, to a large extent, on autonomous moral values.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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