

# *Substantive or Procedural Autonomy: Willing Slaves and Deferential Housewives*

ORCID: 0000-0001-8880-5169

Received: 24/06/2022

Accepted: 12/07/2023

Mary Barbara Walsh  
Elmhurst University  
walshm@elmhurst.edu

**ABSTRACT** Autonomy remains a central yet contested concept for contemporary feminism. In part, this results from a tension which is definitional to the concept of autonomy. Simply put, how can a concept of autonomy, of choice, explain the choice not to choose? In this paper, I argue that a consideration of procedural, content-neutral conditions of autonomy at work in the past, present and future of an agent allows insight into oppressive socialization without incorporating substantive limits within the concept of autonomy itself. This conception of autonomy promotes an evaluation of choice in terms of the conditions apparent in the act of choosing and sheds light on oppressive forces which diminish those conditions. Conceiving of autonomy as occurring across time and into the future also offers insight into the compatibility of deference and autonomy. This approach to autonomy best accommodates the multiplicities of human identities, values and goals.

**KEYWORDS** Autonomy, Feminism, Women, Oppression, Deference

**RESUMO** A autonomia continua a ser um conceito central, embora contestado, para o feminismo contemporâneo. Em parte, isso resulta de uma tensão que define o conceito de autonomia. Simplificando, como pode um conceito de autonomia, de escolha, explicar a escolha de não escolher? Neste artigo, argumento que uma consideração a partir das condições procedimentais e neutras de conteúdo da autonomia no trabalho no passado, presente e futuro de um agente permite uma visão da socialização opressiva sem incorporar limites substantivos dentro do próprio conceito de autonomia. Esta concepção de autonomia promove uma avaliação da escolha em termos das condições aparentes no ato de escolher e lança luz sobre as forças opressoras que diminuem essas condições. Conceber a autonomia como algo que ocorre ao longo do tempo e no futuro também oferece uma visão sobre a compatibilidade de deferência e autonomia. Essa abordagem da autonomia acomoda melhor as multiplicidades de identidades, valores e objetivos humanos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** Autonomia, Feminismo, Mulheres, Opressão, Deferência

# I. Autonomy

Autonomy remains a central yet contested concept in contemporary political philosophy. At least partly, this results from the paradox of the willing slave or, in the feminist formulation, the paradox of the deferential housewife. Simply put, how can a concept of autonomy, of choice, explain the choice not to choose? On one hand, autonomy can be understood in terms of the procedures founding choice (procedural autonomy). On the other, autonomy can be understood in terms of the content of the choice itself (substantive autonomy). Substantive conceptions of autonomy reject as inadequate content-neutral, procedural conceptions of autonomy for understanding the lack of autonomy inherent in the deferential housewife (Freyenhagen 2017; Garnett 2023; Mackenzie 2014; Oshana 2006; Stoljar 2018).

In this paper, I argue that a procedural notion of autonomy can address concerns about oppressive socialization by examining not only the procedural conditions of autonomy, but by also juxtaposing each of those conditions with an examination of the choice over time. A consideration of the procedural conditions of autonomy at work in the past, present and future of a choice allows insight into oppressive socialization without incorporating substantive limits within the concept of autonomy itself. Specifically, examining two procedural conditions of autonomy, competence and dialogical reflection, as they operate across time and across life choices can help reveal oppressive forces without resorting to substantive or perfectionist limits on choices. Focusing on the operation of autonomy over time prompts an interrogation of the forces of oppression which diminish competence and authorization, while also maintaining space for autonomy to flourish.

Furthermore, conceiving of autonomy as occurring across time and into the future offers insight into the compatibility of deference and autonomy as well as insight into the complexity and fluidity of choice. In this understanding of autonomy, an agent may choose deference, even submission, in the moment, as long as that deference manifests appropriate levels of competence and authorization at its inception and / or its continuation. In this way, this timeline approach best accounts for multiplicities of personal, social and historical experiences while allowing the greatest possible space for various identities, values and goals.

Understanding these conditions of competence and dialogical reflection as operating across time sheds light on the commonly-accepted

assertion that the actualization of autonomy is actually a matter of degrees (Freidman 2003; Knutzen 2020; Christman 2020, among others), in this current understanding, a product of the ebb and flow of competence and dialogical reflection across time. This, ultimately, also requires an identification of the threshold of autonomy which is located here with the definition of autonomy itself, the capacity to perceive options where and when they exist and to connect those options to one's own life, values or goals.

## II. Personal Autonomy

Personal autonomy denotes a capacity for self-management (Christman 2009, p. 11). Lee (2022) identifies personal autonomy as a broad concept which refers "to the idea of living in accordance with one's own self-determined, self-governed choices" (2022). So, autonomous choice requires a capacity to discern (more or less limited) options and to connect those options to one's own ends. These choices, however, may result from an assortment of different considerations, including emotional, relational, or intuitive considerations (Colburn 2008, p. 619). And, as we will see later in this paper, this capacity for self-management includes an option not to self-manage.

Disagreement exists, however, about the conditions necessary to a concept of autonomy which adequately recognizes the social, relational person and about how and if these conditions might require substantive limits on the possible set of autonomous choices. As a result of these disagreements about how prescriptive conceptions of autonomy need to be, two broad types of conceptual frameworks emerged: procedural and substantive.

### *Procedural Autonomy*

This section examines procedural conceptions of autonomy and offers one current, prominent example of such an approach. The next section surveys the challenges to procedural conceptions of autonomy posed by proponents of substantive autonomy. I conclude with a demonstration of the efficacy of procedural conditions of autonomy once they are combined with an insight into the temporal conditions, past, present and future, in which choice emerges.

Procedural accounts of autonomy point to content-neutral criteria as definitional to autonomy. These criteria are related to the process of choice-making. In order to identify the autonomy of a choice, procedural accounts put aside considerations of the content of a good choice or the character of a good agent to focus on the process of choice-making. Procedural conceptions of autonomy refuse to identify options available to the agent as inherently autonomous or non-autonomous prior to the agent's own interaction with, consideration of or action on those options. The sorting among options must occur within the process of the agent confronting or deliberating about a particular choice.

For example, proponents of procedural autonomy refuse to designate as a requirement of autonomy that the agent be self-regarding. If the agent's deliberation manifests the appropriate procedural conditions and engages in the appropriate process, the character of the agent is not at issue. Proponents of procedural autonomy also refuse to designate any particular outcome of the choice as necessarily autonomous or non-autonomous. If an agent engages in the appropriate process and subsequently chooses submission, that choice to submit would be considered autonomous.

So, autonomy, when construed as procedural autonomy, does not necessarily mean valuing autonomy (Colburn 2008, p. 39). Autonomous choice includes the possibility that an agent chooses a life of deference, submits their will to the direction of another person, a perceived higher power, an alleged expert or an oppressive social norm. As long as the agent possesses a capacity for self-management, with the capacity for self-management expressed through adherence to appropriate levels of competence and authorization,<sup>1</sup> the agent acts autonomously. As an example, Marilyn Friedman specifies self-reflection when not impeded by distorting factors such as manipulation and deception in her procedural account of autonomy (2003, pp. 5-7). Or consider Diana Tietjens Meyers (2014) procedural account of autonomy which explicitly ties competencies to an understanding of socio-relational selves.

Of course, the exact identification of the conditions that best manifest autonomy varies among theorists espousing procedural autonomy. Typically, procedural conceptions of autonomy stress two types of condi-

---

1 Many scholars refer to the companion condition of procedural autonomy which works alongside competence as the "authenticity" condition. I prefer "authorization" in that this characterization better includes manifestations of this condition which do not rely heavily on reflection. Andrea Westlund (2009, p. 30) refers to the "authorization" of desires.

tions: competence and authorization.<sup>2</sup> In general, competence conditions demand that the choice emerge as a result of an ability to reflect independent of heteronomous (external) or pathological forces. Authorization conditions, in general, require that the choice connect with the agent in terms of the agent's values, preferences, or attitudes.

John Christman adopts a social, procedural conception of autonomy and identifies as essential to autonomy certain levels of competence and authority (for Christman "authenticity"). The competence condition demands that the choice not merely mirror heteronomous forces and that the agent is capable of appraising their own life and history. Authenticity, according to Christman, requires that if a choice or desire were to be reflected on by the agent, the agent would not be alienated from the choice or desire given an awareness of how the choice or desire emerged. Non-alienation does not require wholesale or even conscious reflection but it does require that an agent not "resist and reject values in light of one's history and social situation" (Christman 2009, p. 144). Actions, values and choices which do not reveal resistance to the choice given this awareness of how they emerged are considered autonomous.

In sum, Christman, and procedural accounts of autonomy, appeal to processes within the agent (e.g., competence and authorization). As long as the agent is competent and the choice demonstrates the appropriate level of authorization (ie., conscious or unconscious reflection or, in Christman's case, non-alienation) the agent chooses autonomously.

### *Substantive Concerns*

Substantive accounts of autonomy deny the adequacy of procedural accounts for understanding the power and reach of oppression. Oppression alters the persons that we become. It impacts the desires that we acquire and the choices we make. Proponents of substantive autonomy reject as inadequate content-neutral, procedural conceptions of autonomy and find the content of choice and/or the character of the agent essential to determining the presence of autonomy (Mackenzie and Stoljar 2000, pp. 3-31). Proponents of substantive autonomy argue that regardless of their form and breadth, competence and authorization are always tainted by the oppressive forces in society which form and mold our desires and choices. Identifying autonomy simply in terms of processes internal to the agent cannot cap-

---

2 Christman (2005, p. 278) refers to competence and authenticity requirements.

ture the insidious, pervasive, psychological impact of oppressive socialization (Freyenhagen 2017; Garnett 2023; Mackenzie 2014; Oshana 2006; Stoljar 2018). These proponents of substantive autonomy share a rejection of abstract, instrumentally rational conceptions of autonomy which fail to recognize the defining impact of oppressive socialization on oppressed persons, an impact which women's lived experiences reveals.

Understanding this distrust of the autonomy of at least some choices formed in the context of oppression requires a closer look at oppression. Iris Marion Young defines oppression as "structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group" (1990, p. 42). These structures diminish the possibilities of persons based upon their membership in a disadvantaged group. In sociological terms, structures refer to "the distinctive, stable arrangement of institutions whereby human beings in a society interact and live together" (Wilterdink and Form 2023). When interrogating systems of oppression or injustice, these arrangements extend beyond narrow notions of institutions to include social positions and the norms and rules which guide the actions and choices of individuals (see McKeown 2021).

Oppression may be material or/and psychological (Cudd 2006). For example, one might identify the gender wage gap as one indication of oppression. This wage gap disadvantages women and results from many material and psychological structural forces. Institutions that differentially pay more for stereotypical "men's" over "women's" work are examples of material oppression. Heterosexual family structures that differentially impact a woman's ability to work full-time outside the home are also examples of material oppression. In both cases, oppression is a structural, material force outside the agent, constraining her choices and/or the reward for her choices.

Oppression is not only material, however; it also takes root in the minds of the oppressed and oppressor. Consider occupational segregation. Men are more likely to enter into professions and work in jobs that pay more (Aragão 2023). The European Commission reported that in 2021 the gender pay gap stood at 12.7% and identified occupational segregation as a main driver of that gap (see also Barabaschi and Mussida 2016). This occupational segregation results from a variety of complex and overlapping material and psychological processes. In regard to these psychological processes, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) reports that "although women are the majority of college students, they are far less likely than their male peers to plan to major in a STEM field" and attributes this disparity to gender differences in terms of interest in STEM fields of study, gender differences in perceived confidence in abilities, gender differences in terms of inter-

est in human services occupations, and more. More pointedly, a 2012 study conducted by *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) concluded that “even when boys and girls are equally proficient in mathematics and science, their attitudes towards learning and aspirations for their future are markedly different.”

These differences in attitude are, at least partially, the result of socialization that begins before students choose a major in college or a job to pursue. One example of this socialization can be tied to parent expectations. Parents, for example, are more likely to expect their sons to pursue a career in the STEM fields (OECD). In sum, socialization in childhood and beyond, impacts career choice, results in occupational gender segregation and helps maintain the gender wage gap. The US Council of Economic Advisors (2015) concluded that in terms of the gender wage gap “in many situations, the line between discrimination and preference is ambiguous.”

It is this sort of psychological oppression which diminishes life prospects in terms of gender. The procedural conditions of autonomy miss this, according to advocates of substantive autonomy. At that moment of choosing a major in college, the student may be acting independent of outside coercion and reflectively. They may even wholeheartedly endorse their choice, without any experience or indication of alienation as Christman’s identifies it. The student may welcome the choice and its outcome even in light of their own history and social situation. But this fails to detect the profound influence of oppressive socialization that differentially impacts the preferences, goals and values of men and women.

Substantive accounts of autonomy are commonly distinguished as strong or weak. Strong substantive accounts argue that autonomy is not merely the product of particular specified processes but is also manifest in the content of the choice itself. Autonomy necessitates not only the appropriate conditions of choice, it also demands actually living autonomously. Marina Oshana articulates a particularly vigorous account of strong substantive autonomy.<sup>3</sup> Oshana argues that autonomy not only disallows certain choices but also demands the actual exercise of autonomy throughout the agent’s life: “A person who abdicates his choices is not fully autonomous, even if his choice-making capacity remains intact” (2006, pp. 8-9). Assessing autonomy requires not only an evaluation of

---

3 Stoljar (2018) identifies Oshana’s view of autonomy as “social-relational” as opposed to strong substantive. For the limited purposes of this paper, I group Oshana’s understanding of autonomy with other strong substantive approaches because her approach requires both substantive values and actually living autonomously.

competence and authority but also an evaluation of the lived experience of the agent. Abdicating one's own authority and adopting a life of deference, as in the cases of the willing slave or the deferential housewife, can never be an example of autonomy.

In this way, advocates of strong substantive accounts of autonomy, incorporate a perfectionism into their understanding of autonomy (Christman 2009; Khader 2020). This perfectionism is reflected in the substantive demands incorporated in these accounts which require certain choices and reject other choices as non-autonomous. Strong substantive conceptions of autonomy label some ways of life and choices as necessarily non-autonomous regardless of the agent's own conclusions or the procedures grounding the choice because these conclusions and procedures may be tainted by adaptive preferences. Adaptive preferences are preferences formed in unconscious response to oppression, formed in unconscious response to deprivation or formed in unconscious response to stultifying social norms.<sup>4</sup>

Weak substantive accounts of autonomy refrain from designating the content of particular good or bad choices but do require certain "normative competencies" (Benson 2005, pp. 133-134) such as self-respect or self-worth which demonstrate a capability for self-management. In contrast to strong substantive accounts of autonomy which place normative limits on the choices of autonomous agents, weak substantive accounts place normative limits on the character or attitude of the agent. In order to account for the destructive impact of oppressive socialization on the agent's ability to choose and live autonomously, advocates of weak substantive accounts require that the agent demonstrate characteristics which make evident her ability to choose independent of oppressive socialization (Sperry 2013). Benson (2005) argues that this weak substantive approach to autonomy exposes the autonomy inhibiting character of many norms of femininity. Choices that reflect oppressive social norms which dictate deference or submission can never be autonomous even when internalized and supported by the agent herself, as in the case of the deferential housewife.

In sum, substantive accounts of autonomy find procedural accounts, and the various competency and authorization conditions procedural accounts propose, inadequate for understanding oppressive socialization and adaptive preferences. Thus, both strong and weak understandings of

---

4 For a discussion of adaptive preferences and oppression see Friedman 2003; Walsh 2015.



substantive autonomy incorporate limits on the choices, attitudes, or values of the agent to assure that the agent is choosing independently of oppressive forces. As a result, both strong and weak substantive accounts of autonomy identify the willing slave, or deferential housewife, as non-autonomous regardless of the procedures founding the choice (Stoljar 2018). In considering the case of the deferential wife, Garnett (2023) concludes that deferential wives “live lives that are not so much self-authored as ghost-written” and therefore “lack a degree of substantive or first-order autonomy, and so may be fairly subject to perfectionist criticism, even in cases in which they have been autonomously chosen and are thereby immune to procedural criticism.”

In contrast, procedural accounts of autonomy find the limits that substantive accounts of autonomy place on choice to be unnecessarily and dangerously perfectionist and normative. Labeling some ways of life, values or choices as necessarily non-autonomous regardless of the agent’s own conclusions or the procedures grounding the choices, restricts the options of the agent and provides a door for paternalist forces to exploit (Christman 2004). After all, if the agent’s choice is an expression of oppressive socialization, why not intervene? Khader (2020) finds this to be a problem for all substantive accounts of autonomy, “that is, all conceptions that say that autonomous preferences must have certain content” because they ‘invalidate the choices of individuals who choose the “wrong” kinds of lives’ (p. 509). As Khader points out, Oshana, the advocate of strong substantive autonomy elaborated above, explicitly acknowledges this when Oshana concludes that “strong paternalistic intervention is sometimes needed to preserve the autonomy that is threatened by a competent and deserving person’s self-regarding conduct” (Oshana 2006, p. 115; quoted in Khader 2020).

### III. Procedural Timeline Approach

In the following sections, I propose a procedural, constitutively relational understanding of autonomy that integrates a sustained concern for the temporal nature of autonomy. By looking at choice as an ongoing phenomenon, grounded in the past, realized in the present and extending into the future, the appropriate procedural conditions of competence and authorization can better detect oppressive socialization, including women’s oppression, while continuing to avoid per-

fectionism. This timeline approach to autonomy operationalizes the definition of autonomy as a capacity for self-management expressed via competence and dialogical reflection across time. Specifically, this timeline approach operationalizes a concept of local autonomy, that is, the autonomy expressed through particular choices, actions, or desires. This is not a conception of global autonomy, that is, the autonomy of a person's life overall.

Recall, procedural accounts of autonomy look to levels of competence and authorization to assess autonomy. The competence condition apprehends the difference between autonomy and heteronomy. For a choice to be competent, it must not be able to be wholly traced to some force external to the agent (Christman 2005, p. 278). According to Christman, agents must demonstrate a minimal level of instrumental rationality and decision-making abilities which "indicate that the agent is able to function adequately in judgments and choice" (2005, p. 278). Competency demands that the agent is free of certain pathologies which impede decision-making processes, such as some addictions and mental illnesses. It is to this understanding of competence that I appeal.

Authorization conditions of autonomy demand that the choice connect to the agent in terms of their life, values, or actions. Andrea Westlund proposes dialogical reflection as the thread that connects the autonomous agent to the eventual choice. Dialogical reflection requires that the autonomous agent be able to engage, at some level, perspectives other than her own. The agent must be able to consider other choices, other actions, other lives. Westlund describes dialogical reflection as a disposition "to hold oneself answerable to external critical perspectives" (2009, pp. 26-49). Dialogical reflection does not demand that the agent actually survey all possible alternatives, answer the objections, or embrace autonomy as a value in itself, but it does demand that the agent possess an awareness which recognizes the possibility of choice, even the choice to submit, as a choice and not merely an ordained outcome. It is this dialogical reflection which "makes a choice or an action an agent's own" (2009, p. 27).

Dialogical reflection manifests itself in a capability for self-representation, in the agent's receptiveness to dialogue about one's choices, although that dialogue may be internal to the agent, imaginary or actual. Automatic, unthinking dismissal of alternative possibilities and challenging stimuli does not qualify as dialogically reflective. The subject who automatically or mechanically defers to the choices of her husband, demonstrating a lack of awareness of or an inability to engage

any alternative other than deference, whose justificatory dialogue does not move beyond her spouse's conclusions, is not dialogically reflective. Justificatory dialogue which always falls back on another person's conclusions, religious dogma or societal pressures to explain a choice or to dismiss countervailing evidence, does not demonstrate a capacity for self-management.

This requirement of reflection described as answerability or self-representation may appear to echo the strictures of weak substantive autonomy. But Westlund's dialogical reflection does not so much demand a particular characteristic or attitude in the agent (e.g., self-regard) as operationalize the definition of autonomy itself. A capacity for self-management connotes an awareness of and an ability to assess (more or less limited) options. It does not demand that the agent adopt any particular attitude toward those options or adopt any particular characteristic beyond that contained in the meaning of self-management. Dialogical reflection relies on the definition of autonomy (self-management) to set the limits of autonomy, not an independent assessment of what – or who – is good or worthwhile.<sup>5</sup> In this way, a condition of dialogical reflection does not have the same normative edge that weak substantive approaches incorporate. Westlund describes, "To put it somewhat paradoxically, we don't need to embrace our own answerability, we just need actually to be self-answerable" (2011, p. 3).

Westlund describes this dialogical reflection criterion of autonomy as constitutively relational yet non-perfectionist. Dialogical reflection is constitutively relational in that it demands that the agent demonstrate a capacity to perceive and account for perspectives other than the agent's own. It is non-perfectionist in that it does not prescribe any particular outcome or choice. It does not pre-reflection label as non-autonomous, for example, deference. It is to this understanding of authorization that I appeal.

### *Competence and Dialogical Reflection Realized across Time*

These two procedural conditions of autonomy, competence and dialogical reflection, when juxtaposed with temporal considerations, best

---

5 Christman (2011, p. 216) makes this distinction when he explains that "certain value commitments are required for autonomy because of core conditions of autonomy . . . not because such commitments are inherently valid or justified."

detect oppressive socialization and reveal the compatibility between autonomy and deference without resorting to substantive limits or perfectionist conclusions.

Many theorists of autonomy have noted the importance of temporal considerations in assessing autonomy (Baumann 2008). Christman, for example, incorporates this temporal understanding of autonomy directly into his authorization condition – non-alienation. In order for a choice to be autonomous for Christman, the agent, if she were to reflect on the choice or preference, would not be alienated from the choice given an awareness of how that choice emerged. Resistance, or alienation, can be manifested through feelings, emotions, actions, or thoughts which reveal a failure to identify with or resist the choice, preference or value.

Resistance can be directed toward the choice itself or toward the origins of the choice. For example, one may autonomously choose to commit oneself to a monogamous relationship with a partner. One may reflectively endorse this relationship and may even explicitly declare the conclusion of those reflections in some sort of public ceremony. Or one may reflexively endorse the relationship through one's actions or contentment without ever explicitly reflecting on the choice or publicly declaring the choice. The autonomy in the later circumstance is located in the reflexive affirmation of the commitment as it is demonstrated over time and as it would be apparent to the agent if she were to reflect on it. But, resistance to the commitment, as might be apparent in the emotions or actions of the agent toward the partner or might be apparent in feelings of being manipulated or deceived, reveals alienation and a deficit of autonomy.

Christman's temporal procedural account of autonomy does not satisfy his "substantive" critics. In relying on the perspective of the agent in evaluating the choice, non-alienation fails to recognize the limits of that perspective. Non-alienation relies on the agent's perspective to assess autonomy (Baumann 2008, p. 449) and the agent's perspective may be tainted by oppressive socialization. Non-alienation may reflect deeply ingrained and oppressive social norms. For example, a woman may survey her choice of shoes and choose a crippling pair of stilettos. She may do so competently (ie., independent of heteronomous or pathological forces at that moment) and authoritatively (reflectively). She may even appreciate the gender norms and economic forces which support this choice. She may even work in the marketing of these shoes. Yet, procedural approaches, even when adjusted to incorporate non-alienation, fail

to track the oppressive, pervasive, yet less tangible forces prompting that choice, the gender norms, the role modeling, the marketing strategies and much more. In this way, Christman's approach fails to move beyond the effects of oppressive socialization on the agent's life, choices, desires and actions.

One way to get around some of these perspectival problems with procedural accounts of autonomy is to conceive of autonomy as occurring on a timeline and to focus on the conditions of competence and dialogical reflection (as opposed to non-alienation) as they occurred in the past, as they are maintained in the present and as they extend into the future. Whereas Christman's conception to procedural autonomy incorporates temporal considerations into the very conditions of autonomy (i.e., one of the two conditions of autonomy he proposes is non-alienation), this timeline approach plots and examines each of the appropriate conditions of autonomy (competence and dialogical reflection) as they occur across time. Unlike Christman's autobiographical approach, this timeline approach assesses competence and dialogical reflection as they manifest across time, ebbing and flowing. It does not depend exclusively on the agent's retrospective assessment, or the agent's current lack of alienation.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Christman's reliance on non-alienation to signify autonomy may require an unwarranted level of coherence among choices and among desires.<sup>7</sup> After all, many of us are alienated from key aspects of our lives, but rather than renounce those aspects, we weave our autonomy around them. Oshana argues that autonomy "involves owning up to but not necessarily endorsing one's legacy of commitments" (Oshana 2007, p. 426). Consider the life and choices of a career-oriented, devoted mother.<sup>8</sup> The tension between these two commitments is likely to create a tension in the agent's life. She often weighs these conflicting commitments in her daily and her life choices. She might at the same time repudiate the need to juggle these commitments without being alienated from her own ultimate choices or from the process within which each of those choices emerged.

---

6 Christman does specify that this "reflected judgment" is "repeated over a variety of circumstances" (2009, p. 152).

7 Christman denies this conclusion and argues that non-alienation "weakens the condition of self-identification in order to allow more flexibility" but also points to the question of whether the choice "fits into a coherent and acceptable self-narrative" (2009, p. 144). We will return to this question later in this paper.

8 Oshana 2007 gives the example of a woman CEO.

The timeline approach outlined here does not require the same level of “narrative coherence” (Christman 2009, p. 138) between the inception of the choice, the maintenance of the choice and the variety of different choices an agent confronts as does the non-alienation standard. Indeed, this timeline approach may better capture a possible synergy between alienation and autonomy. Consider an immigrant to the United States, perhaps a child brought to the US as a young child. Upon reaching adulthood and while navigating the norms and customs of American society, Huda<sup>9</sup> reflectively and with an awareness of (often limited) options, navigates the contradictory norms associated with an arranged marriage and the norms surrounding romantic love prevalent in U.S. media and in the dominant U.S. culture. Huda, with an affinity for both cultures, brings together the two apparently opposing visions for choosing one’s life partner by selectively accepting and rejecting norms associated with each to enter an “arranged marriage” which manifests both her consent and her desire for romance. While doing so, her choices may indeed appear incoherent, they certainly are as she tests the alternatives available to her. She may exhibit resentfulness towards the choice or process in which it emerged. But in grappling with these alternatives, in merging the demands of both cultures, she actually displays a high level of autonomy (i.e., competence and dialogical reflection), and might even arrive at a coherent merging of the two cultures, although this coherence would not be a requirement for autonomy.

The procedural approach to autonomy elaborated here requires an assessment of the choice in time, as it occurred in the past as well as how it is retained in the present. An assessment of any choice at every point in time is, of course, impossible; perfect competence and perfect reflection is also impossible. But, as Marilyn Friedman notes, autonomy is a matter of degrees (2003, pp. 5-7), the autonomy of a choice ranges from the more autonomous to the less autonomous. And, looking directly at the competence and dialogical reflection of the agent at the very inception of a choice and at multiple points thereafter helps reveal any possible lack of competence and/or dialogical reflection, any deficits of autonomy.

---

9 I chose the name “Huda” in reference to the protagonist in the memoir by Huda Al-Marashi.

	Multiple Moments at Acquisition of Choice or Value	Multiple Moments in Maintenance of Choice or Value	Multiple Moments in Future of Choice or Value
Competence Condition	<i>Preference/choice acquired by agent capable of appraising own life and history.</i>	<i>Preference/choice maintained by agent capable of appraising own life and history.</i>	<i>Preference/choice maintained by future agent capable of appraising own life and history.</i>
Dialogical Reflection Condition	<i>Preference/choice integrates dialogical reflection at inception, ie., agent is able to engage, at some level, perspectives other than her own.</i>	<i>Preference/choice integrates dialogical reflection in maintenance, ie., agent is able to engage, at some level, perspectives other than her own.</i>	<i>Future agent integrates dialogical reflection in continuing to maintain preference/choice, i.e., agent is able to engage, at some level, perspectives other than her own.</i>

Consider: A young woman enters college choosing a major in nursing. Her choice may be assessed via a consideration of the competence and dialogical reflection present at that moment. Did she demonstrate competence in her decision-making, an ability to deliberate independent of external forces? Did she demonstrate an ability to engage alternatives? Engage other possibilities? We might answer yes. This is a moderately independent young woman, who often listens, but also sometimes rejects the advice of others. She surveyed the options, weighing some, rejecting them. Indeed, this choice of nursing lines up nicely with the narrative she has composed of her life. When she reflects, she is comfortable with the pressures exerted on her by her parents, friends and/or and society in terms of nursing as a career option.

But, if we move back on the timeline, to the initial moments in which the choice is rooted, we might find the conditions of competence and/or dialogical reflection to indicate less autonomy. We might find that the girl is surrounded by social forces directing her to nursing: the applause for hands-on help with a sick sibling, her high school guidance counselor, her own personal experiences with a healthcare industry which remains seg-

regated by gender,<sup>10</sup> all in unison directing her choice. Only by assessing the competence and dialogical reflection as actualized in the past, can we gain insight into these autonomy impairing forces.

Does that mean that her later choice of nursing as a major is not autonomous? Not necessarily. But it does indicate that autonomy is a matter of degrees, and certainly these early circumstances impact the degree of autonomy, offer insight into the degree of dialogical reflection and competence in the moment. For Marilyn Friedman (2003), the degree of autonomy is related to the procedural / substantive divide: procedural autonomy marks the threshold of autonomy; the substance of the choice marks a higher level of autonomy. Unlike Friedman's conception, this timeline approach does not resort to substantive distinctions to assess the degrees of autonomy, rather it looks at the choice as it evolves over time. This timeline approach to autonomy shifts the focus from a consideration of the character of the agent or the quality of the choice to a sustained thorough-going consideration of the autonomy enhancing or inhibiting conditions in which a choice emerges.

Of course, this agent may autonomously choose nursing as a major in college despite the prior forces leading to that choice. She may competently and with dialogical reflection choose the holistic, hands-on approach to healthcare and the greater patient contact. She may choose this in light of the alternatives. Or, she may non-autonomously drift into the major, yet later come to understand and embrace the role over other alternatives. All these scenarios illustrate the complexities of assessing autonomy; and this assessment must reflect the complexity of autonomy itself. Ultimately, assessing autonomy demands an assessment of levels of competence and dialogical reflection over multiple periods of time in order to adequately ascertain the levels of competence and reflection manifest in any choice.

This is messy. It is demanding and complicated. It doesn't allow any easy or clear-cut conclusions about the specific level of autonomy manifest in any particular choice, but it does provide footing for identifying the forces which inhibit autonomy across the life of an agent – forces which may be tied to oppression - that is, forces which privilege some while disadvantaging others as a result of their membership in social

---

<sup>10</sup> Despite progress in recent decades, healthcare professions remain segregated by gender. In the U.S., 85% of registered nurses are women while women are only about a third of full-time physicians and surgeons who work year-round (Cheeseman Day and Christnacht 2019).



groups (Young 1990, p. 42). And, it allows this insight without prejudging the choices of the agent as she moves forward in expressing her possible and/or emerging autonomy.

Consider the earlier discussion regarding oppression and the gender wage gap. Women tend to choose careers that pay less. This can be explained in terms of material and psychological oppression. Looking at the choice of the woman, at the moment in which she chooses that clerical job over that construction job, may not capture the internalized norms which prompted her choice. She may indeed choose competently and reflectively at that moment. But, looking to the roots of that choice, at the variety of social cues and norms which influenced that choice, may reveal a lack of both competence and reflection. This timeline approach to autonomy shifts the focus from an assessment of the deficits in the character or choice of the agent to a comprehensive consideration of the autonomy enhancing or inhibiting circumstances in which agents live. This timeline approach requires an assessment of how autonomy enhancing and inhibiting forces impact the competence and reflection of any particular choice, particularly those choices which result in the disadvantage of some social groups over other social groups.

In this way, this timeline approach to autonomy integrates an understanding of the oppressive forces at work across an agent's lifetime, forces that were once external to her, but may have been internalized into her person and perspective. By examining competence and dialogical reflection over time, as well as, the social forces of oppression that obstruct autonomy, this conception best recognizes the choices of the agent in the moment, if they are indeed competent and dialogically reflective, without erasing the forces in the past which may have diminished that autonomy.

This timeline approach also helps explain the phenomenon of alienation<sup>11</sup> and its relationship to autonomy. Consider a woman who embraces her own arranged marriage but rejects the possibility of an arranged marriage for her daughter. This woman treasures the partnership she has built with her spouse. She competently and with dialogical reflection contemplates choices and moves into her future with her spouse. But, although she might not be able to articulate why she doesn't want the same arrangement for her daughter, she manifests alienation toward the origins of her own marriage by rejecting it as an option for her daughter. She rejects the coercion forcing her hand at the inception of her marriage

---

11 I refer to the understanding of alienation espoused by Christman (2009, p. 101) and associated with feelings such as resistance and repulsion.

but accepts, even celebrates, the marriage itself. This timeline approach captures the experience of an agent moving through time, between circumstances of more and less oppression, of alienation and autonomy. This timeline conception of autonomy better understands the autonomy of an agent who chooses her arranged marriage in the moment without erasing the oppression in the past.

Consider, I may be alienated from key aspects of my identity: my slow metabolism, my preference for cakes over vegetables, my tendency to over-analyze, my desire to sleep late. But these are not examples of my lack of autonomy, but part and parcel of my autonomous life. Alienation is not necessarily anathema to autonomy when autonomy is understood as occurring over time. This timeline conception to autonomy gets around the problems in some procedural accounts which seem to label the parts of my person from which I am alienated as less autonomous. Rather, this timeline conception captures the richness of an autonomous life in which the agent confronts a variety of (internal and external) challenges as they navigate through a variety of possibilities and obstacles.

Instead of labeling victims of oppression as “dupe(s) of patriarchy” (Narayan 2002, p. 418), this approach allows insight into the genuine choices which may emerge in both autonomy enhancing and autonomy inhibiting circumstances. Consider the choice of a Muslim woman to wear a hijab, a headscarf. This choice may emerge as an expression of a personal celebration of identity, culture or religion. Or, it may result from an internalized acceptance of patriarchal interpretations of certain religious tenants. Or, it may result from an assessment by the agent of the negative and positive societal repercussions of wearing the scarf (Narayan 2002). This woman may have accepted the head scarf as a necessity of life in a particular household or family. She may have donned the scarf without any real alternatives or without any awareness of the possibility of not wearing the scarf. She might also grow in an awareness of her options and her relationship to those options. This choice may result as a product a complicated mixture of all or some of these or other concerns. Understanding the autonomy of this choice demands an evaluation of the presence of competence and dialogical reflection at the multiple moments in which that choice is actualized and maintained.

This timeline approach shifts the focus of the analysis from the content of the choice, i.e., wearing the head scarf, to the process of choosing and the conditions in which the choice evolved. Understanding how the choice emerged and evolved demands a look at competence and dialog-

ical reflection at multiple points in the process, which together indicate the level of autonomy of the choice. This allows an interrogation of the oppressive forces at work in a person's life, and in a society's norms and structures, without erasing the possible autonomy of persons living in oppressive circumstances or denigrating the choices of oppressed persons in terms of some normative, perfectionist ideal (Friedman 2003, p. 25).

While this procedural timeline approach to autonomy helps persons to reflect on the complexity and fluidity of their own autonomy and prompts an assessment of the multiplicity of points in which autonomy is realized or diminished, it remains limited by the individual agent's subjective assessment of those multiple moments. After all, this subjective assessment may well be tainted by oppressive socialization. But, this approach also offers conceptual footing for liberal societies to grapple with oppressive socialization, as detected via deficits in competence and dialogical reflection. And, it does this without idealizing individuality, independence or even autonomy itself. In shifting the focus from the particular choices and the characteristics of unique and varied lives to focus on the conditions of autonomy, and the forces that obstruct those conditions, this approach provides footing for societies which seek to protect some level of choice to address those oppressive forces without dictating the ultimate choice or life.

For example, this procedural, timeline approach to autonomy recognizes both the oppressive force of norms of femininity and the possibility of autonomously choosing femininity. Consider a woman as she chooses a pair of shoes. This approach provides insight into the autonomous choice of a woman as she chooses those shoes, the levels of reflection and competence present in the moment, which might indicate that the choice is autonomous. But this approach also requires an assessment of the levels of reflection and competence leading to that choice and any forces which may have diminished the competence and reflection in the past and linger in the present. Liberal political societies can enhance competence by reducing forces outside the agent coercing femininity, perhaps by tackling economic coercion which diminishes women's economic possibilities and alters women's expectations through generations - or, perhaps by promoting dialogical reflection and an awareness of alternate possibilities regarding life choices and gender norms.

But if this timeline conception allows insight into the degrees of autonomy without resorting to substantive conclusions, what is the threshold to autonomy, the point demarcating autonomy from non-autonomy? If, every choice lays someplace on a spectrum between perfect autonomy

and perfect coercion what marks the threshold to autonomy? The minimum in competence and dialogical reflection? Recall the broad definition of personal autonomy adopted here: a capacity for self-management. Competence and dialogical reflection come together to allow self-management, to allow the agent to assess choices, some level of capacity to perceive available options and to choose among them. The threshold to autonomy is the capacity to perceive options where and when they exist and to connect those options to one's own life, values or goals. As Christman explains, "A person reflects adequately if she is able to realistically imagine choosing otherwise" (2005, p. 280).

Jonathan Knutzen (2020) distinguishes scalar from threshold assessments of autonomy. In assessing the levels of autonomy across time, this timeline approach provides a scalar framework for the assessment of autonomy, allowing a rough determination of greater and lesser autonomy at various points and also providing insight into how past moments influenced the present reflection and competence of a particular choice. Scalar and threshold assessments of autonomy are useful for various, often different purposes. A scalar assessment of autonomy via this timeline approach might best help with a personal assessment of one's own autonomy and with a more public assessment / discussion of autonomy enhancing and diminishing forces in society. A scalar, timeline assessment of autonomy better provides insight into adaptive preferences, into choices through which the agent unwittingly accommodates oppressive socialization. But, this timeline approach also allows an assessment of the threshold of autonomy. This timeline approach allows the assessment of the competence and reflection present in any choice at any particular moment, so that any choice that in the moment demonstrates adequate reflection and competence, demonstrates an ability to perceive available options and to choose among them, qualifies as autonomous in that moment.

In sum, this timeline conception of autonomy shifts the focus from an evaluation of the choices or character of the agent to the sources of oppression as they are actualized across time. Many persons live in oppressive circumstances, managing their lives within the constraints imposed by society and other persons. This timeline conception of autonomy provides conceptual footing for addressing those sources of oppression, the socially instilled lack of competence and lack of dialogical reflection, without implicating the oppressed in their own oppression and without limiting the possibilities of self-management. Unlike strong and weak substantive

accounts of autonomy, this temporal conception of autonomy is firmly procedural, rejecting perfectionist requirements about ends, character or self-regrading attitudes. It does not integrate normative constraints on the outcome of the choice or the character of the agent, but it does integrate a sustained concern regarding oppressive socialization.

This conception of autonomy differs from other temporal, procedural conceptions, most specifically Christman's, in three significant ways: 1. It eliminates the non-alienation authorization condition for autonomy as too dependent on the agent's subjective assessment and replaces it with an assessment of dialogical reflection across time. 2. It integrates a constitutively relational criterion (dialogical reflection) as the authorization condition of autonomy and thus is both thoroughly relational and less demanding in terms of coherence between choices on the part of the agent and 3. It extends the cross-temporal concern to include the future agent. This third difference is elaborated in the next section.

### *Willing Slaves and Deferential Housewives*

In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill famously argued, "The principle of liberty does not require that he should be free not to be free" (1989, p. 103). This prompts the following questions: Does autonomy include the option of abdicating autonomy? Does autonomy necessarily conflict with submission? deference? Mill understood the significance of this dilemma in the fight for women's liberty. In *The Subjection of Women*, he points to the many historical attempts to "enslave" women's "minds" (1989, p. 132). Oppression produces willing slaves, and deferential housewives. Preferences and choices are sometimes merely responses to the unconscious acceptance of oppressive social norms. As Benson (2005) points out, some women internalize oppressive norms regarding appropriate femininity which are not only tied to their past but also impact their current and future autonomy.

Understanding autonomy, and the impact of oppressive socialization on autonomy, demands an examination of the agent's autonomy which is not only rooted in the past and realized in the present, but which also extends into the future. Recall the definition of autonomy: the capacity to perceive options where and when they exist and to connect those options to one's own life, values or goals. If slavery demands relinquishing the future ability to connect the perception of options with one's own life, values or goals, then slavery jeopardizes the autonomy of that future (un-willing) slave.

Mill recognized this. The problem with slavery is not as much the submission, but the future lack of choice: “By selling himself into slavery, he abdicates his liberty; he foregoes any future use of it beyond the single act” (1989, p. 103).<sup>12</sup> Thus, for Mill, and for the procedural, timeline conception of autonomy proposed here, autonomy allows servility, deference and submission in the moment. It does not allow slavery if by slavery we mean involuntary submission now or in the future. It does not allow the current autonomous agent to abdicate the choice, or the capacity for choice, of the future autonomous agent. But it does allow the agent to voluntarily choose submission in the moment and under conditions (competency and dialogical reflection) that manifest autonomy. The autonomous person would have to continually choose their submission beyond inception and throughout maintenance for that choice to be considered autonomous.

Consider, I may autonomously choose to defer to the choices of another, or to a perceived higher power, as long as I do so competently and with dialogical reflection. I may plan to continue to submit in the future and I may indeed submit in the future. But, the agent must continue to competently and reflectively choose deference as she moves forward if that choice is to be considered autonomous in that future moment. The agent may conjecture that she will continue to defer, and she may actually continue to defer over-time. She may promise or vow to continue to defer into perpetuity, but she must continue to choose to submit. Or, more precisely, she must continue to demonstrate a capacity to perceive the possibility of doing otherwise, if her deference is to continue to be considered an autonomous choice.

This timeline procedural approach incorporates the possibility that an autonomous agent may autonomously choose to submit in the moment and all future moments. But, the moment that choice to submit is replaced by a lack of awareness of the possibility of doing otherwise, the moment that choice no longer demonstrates competence and dialogical reflection, it is no longer autonomous.

Thus, an examination of future autonomy, or lack thereof, provides insight into the compatibility of procedural autonomy and deference. It recognizes the autonomy possible in relationships built on trust and reciprocity, relationships in which one relinquishes a part of oneself to another. If the trust originates under circumstances which manifest competence and dialogical reflection, if it is maintained absent of coercion and blind habit, that trust and the

---

12 See Galeotti 2015, pp. 45-66.

deference it yields is autonomous. Life partners frequently yield to the will of their partner in certain spheres of common responsibilities. When partners yield while demonstrating competence and dialogical reflection, then that yielding is autonomous by the definition of autonomy elaborated here.

In this way, this timeline approach also recognizes the autonomy possible in faith relationships. In this understanding, one may autonomously submit to the perceived will of some perceived higher power. In managing one's life choices, one may autonomously choose to follow the dictates of one's chosen faith. One may submit to the dictates of that faith. But, for that submission to qualify as autonomous, the faithful agent must choose with competence and dialogical reflection their submission. Recall, dialogical reflection is not always a conscious or explicit process. Rather, it entails an ability to hold oneself accountable for one's choice (Westlund 2009). In this way, submission is an ongoing phenomenon, a continual act of submission and exercise of faith.

As an example, consider a Catholic nun who took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience upon entering the convent as a young adult. Let's call her Sr. Mary. At the time Sr. Mary entered the convent, she certainly did not have unlimited options, but she understood her vows as an expression of her own choice to submit to her perceived God's will at that moment and into the future. In other words, she possessed a capacity to discern (more or less limited) options and to connect those options to her own ends and life. Her commitment to continue to submit into the future is her own projection about the choice of her future autonomous self. But, erasing the possibility of the future agent submitting, or not submitting, would erase the autonomy of the future agent's choice, and indeed transform that submission into the slavery of the future agent.

The *autonomous* "deferential housewife" must defer while possessing an awareness of the possibility of choice, an ability to hold herself accountable for that choice by connecting the choice to defer with her life, values or ends. This autonomous deferential housewife may never claim or even value the option not to defer. She may declare that she will never avail herself of that option. She may even identify any option not to submit as corrupt, evil, unnatural or dangerous. But, if in coming to those conclusions, in speculating about those outcomes, she demonstrates her competency and a capacity to discern options and to connect those options to her own ends, she chooses autonomously. She demonstrates some level of competence and dialogical reflection, and therefore some level of autonomy. Autonomy is compatible with deference.

Recall, this timeline approach to autonomy operationalizes a concept of local autonomy, that is, the autonomy expressed through particular choices, actions, or desires. But, if for one moment, we shift our focus to the life of the agent overall, to global autonomy, the essential connection between past, present, future autonomy and global autonomy becomes more apparent. Global autonomy assesses the autonomy of an agent's life. And, of course, global autonomy is at least partly a compilation of particular choices (values or preferences). But globally autonomous lives include some (perhaps many) non-autonomous choices. And, non-autonomous lives include some autonomous choices (Mackenzie 2011, p. 19). Considerations of local autonomy unpack each life choice without assuming a unified, coherent, or even rational life.

After all, some people embrace chaos. It is local autonomy that best captures the possibility of autonomy in a capricious and unpredictable life. In doing so, a consideration of local autonomy is a useful analytic and political pursuit because it allows insight into autonomy without assuming a unified subject and avoids passing judgement on the value of a person's life. Instead, this procedural, local approach to autonomy focuses on the conditions manifest in each choice over time.

Understanding autonomy requires a perspective on the trajectory of choices past, present and future. Persons and societies that value autonomy can use this timeline conception of autonomy to identify the things that lead to deficits in autonomy, impair competence and dialogical reflection, without placing normative constraints on the choices of the agent.

## IV. Conclusion

The procedural conception of autonomy presented here focuses on the operation of autonomy over time, as opposed to the substance of autonomous choices. This temporal, procedural approach allows insight into the forces impeding autonomy without limiting the scope of autonomous choice. The conception of autonomy advanced here promotes an evaluation of choice in terms of the conditions apparent in the act of choosing and sheds light on oppressive forces which diminish those conditions, forces which may be both material and psychological. Identifying these coercive forces allows an attack on the material and/or psychological forces of oppression while avoiding perfectionism. While this conception of autonomy does not offer any clear-cut equation for calculating



the specific level of autonomy at any one point or as manifested in any particular choice, it does provide footing for evaluating both autonomy and the forces which inhibit autonomy across the life of an agent.

## References

- Al-Marashi, H. (2018). *First comes marriage, my not-so-typical American love story*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books.
- Aragão, C. (2023). *Gender pay gap in U.S. hasn't changed much in two decades*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2023/03/01/gender-pay-gap-facts/>
- Barabaschi, B., & Mussida, C. (2016). Drivers of occupational gender segregation in Southern European countries. *Rivista Internazionale Di Scienze Sociali*, 124(2), 127–160.
- Baumann, H. (2008). Reconsidering relational autonomy. Personal autonomy for socially embedded and temporally extended selves. *Analyse & Kritik*, 30, 445–468.
- Benson, P. (2005). Taking ownership: authority and voice in autonomous agency. In J. Christman & J. Anderson (Eds.), *Autonomy and the challenges of liberalism* (pp. 101–126). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cheeseman Day, J., & Christnacht, C. (2019). *Women hold 76% of all health care jobs, gaining in higher-paying occupations*. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/08/your-health-care-in-womens-hands.html>
- Christman, J. (2005). Procedural autonomy and liberal legitimacy. In J. S. Taylor (Ed.), *Personal autonomy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Christman, J. (2009). *The politics of persons*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Christman, J. (2014). Coping or oppression: autonomy and adaptation to circumstances. In A. Veltman & M. Piper (Eds.), *Autonomy, oppression, and gender*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Christman, J. (2020). *Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy*. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/autonomy-moral/>.
- Colburn, B. (2008). Forbidden ways of life. *Philosophical Quarterly*, 58, 618–629.
- Colburn, B. (2010). *Autonomy and liberalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Cudd, A. (2006). *Analyzing oppression*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- European Commission. (n.d.). *The gender pay gap situation in the EU*. Accessed on 3.25.23. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu_en)
- Freyenhagen, F. (2017). *Autonomy's substance*. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 34(1), 114–129.
- Friedman, M. (2003). *Autonomy, gender and politics*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Galeotti, A. E. (2015). Autonomy and multiculturalism. In G. Levey (Ed.), *Authenticity, Autonomy and Multiculturalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Garnett, M. (2023). Ghostwritten lives: Autonomy, deference, and self-Authorship. *Ethics*, 133(2), 189–215.
- Hill, C., Corbettand, C., & St. Rose, A. (2010). *Why so few? Women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics*. Association of University Women (AAUW). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED509653>

- Khader, S. (2020). The feminist case against relational autonomy. *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 17(5), 499-526.
- Knutzen, J. (2020). The trouble with formal views of autonomy. *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 18, 173-210.
- Lee, J. Y. (2022). Normative competence, autonomy, and oppression. *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*, 8(1).
- Mackenzie, C. (2014). Three dimensions of autonomy: a relational analysis. In A. Veltman & M. Piper (Eds.), *Autonomy, oppression, and gender*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mackenzie, C., & Stoljar, N. (2000). Autonomy refigured. In C. Mackenzie & N. Stoljar (Eds.), *Relational autonomy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McKeown, M. (2021). Structural injustice. *Philosophy Compass*, 16(7). <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/phc3.12757>
- Meyers, D. T. (2014). The feminist debate over values in autonomy. In A. Veltman & M. Piper (Eds.), *Autonomy, oppression, and gender*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mill, J. S. (1989). *On Liberty and other writings* (S. Collini, Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Narayan, U. (2002). Minds of their own: choices, autonomy, cultural practices, and other women. In L. Antony & C. Witt (Eds.), *A mind of one's own*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2012). *The ABCs of gender equality in education: aptitude, behavior, confidence*. [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-gender eng.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-gender-eng.pdf)
- Oshana, M. (2006). *Personal autonomy in society*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.
- Oshana, M. (2007). Autonomy and the question of authenticity. *Social Theory and Practice*, 33(3), 411-429.
- Sperry, E. (2013). Dupes of patriarchy: feminist strong substantive autonomy's epistemological weakness. *Hypatia*, 28, 886-904.
- Stoljar, N. (2018). *Feminist perspectives on autonomy*. In E. Zalta (Ed.), The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-autonomy>
- Walsh, M. B. (2015). Feminism, adaptive preferences, and social contract theory. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 30(4), 829-845.
- Westlund, A. (2009). Rethinking relational autonomy. *Hypatia*, 24(4), 26-49.
- Westlund, A. (2011). Reply to Benson, Christman, Rocha, and Stoljar. *Symposia on Gender, Race and Philosophy*, 7, 1-6.
- Wilterdink, N., & Form, W. (2023). *Social structure*. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-structure>
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.