

**A SPECTRUM OF RELATIONAL AUTONOMY,
ILLUSTRATED USING THE CASE STUDIES OF
FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBERS**

By

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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October 2013

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ABSTRACT

When women become perpetrators of suicide bombing, their agency – their ability to act upon and affect the world – is often denied. There are a number of reasons for this and one this thesis considers is that – as females – they are not expected to be violent. Accordingly, such women are judged to be coerced or incompetent, and so unable to rule themselves sufficiently as agents. Models of autonomy propose various frameworks for assessing whether acts or persons are self-governing, and the relational approach in particular has garnered much support recently. However, some aspects of the relational account remain under-theorised, including how autonomy might be measured.

In this thesis, I aim to bring these two elements together by examining whether an extension of the relational model may offer a way in which to estimate the autonomy of the bombers in a more nuanced fashion. I make two claims. First, that the relational conception of the agent and autonomy ‘fits’ the bombers. Second, that my spectrum view, which is rooted in the relational approach, maps the bomber’s autonomy approximately but in detail. As such, my spectrum view is a befitting notion of autonomy and allows a graded and comparative representation of the bomber’s autonomy.

For Gurdip 'orp' Singh & Jasbir 'good luck for you' Kaur

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest debt of gratitude is owed to Professor Heather Widdows, who has been an excellent supervisor and mentor throughout the entire research process. She has provided insightful comments, steered me in new directions, pulled me back from dead ends, and encouraged me tirelessly. I cannot thank her enough for all her support.

In addition, I would like to thank all those who have offered feedback on my work over the years. This includes staff and students at various conferences and seminars at which I have presented, both in Birmingham and further afield. I am particularly grateful to Professor Natalie Stoljar, who spent a month talking with me about all things relational autonomy. Thanks to Benjamin Bessey, Dev Churamani, Sarah-Louise Johnson, Lauren Traczykowski, and Peter West-Oram, who proofread and provided (helpful and humorous) comments on parts of this thesis.

My thanks must also extend to Professor Matthew Hilton and Professor Helen Beebee, who both gave me jobs, twice, which kept me going through my studies. I benefitted a great deal too from receiving a University of Birmingham U21 scholarship that generously allowed me to spend a month at McGill University.

Finally, thanks to those who started and ended this (long) journey with me: Feen (for endless support and dresses), Turbo (for being there to check in and chill out), Nosh (for talks and generosity), Dev (for carrots and sticks), Bhav (for kind words), Big Fish (for ‘multiple chats’ and jaffa cake toast), and to Pal, Kul and Jeeves (for putting up with me).

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INTRODUCTION

Are female suicide bombers autonomous? When women become perpetrators of political violence, this question – the crux of which concerns issues of gender, violence, and agency – is often raised. Since she is female, and not thought to be capable of violence, however, the suicide bomber's ability to act upon and affect the world from her own volition is often doubted. She is insouciantly denied agency and agency-undermining excuses for the attack are sought: she was physically coerced, mentally incompetent, spiritually compelled, emotionally frenzied, but she did not wilfully do it. A proper attribution of agency is usually withheld, if even considered.

Debates about autonomy speak directly to this question since autonomy theories aim to distinguish desires or persons that are self-governing from those that are not, with differing models generating distinct criteria for how this is established. The longstanding liberal account, for instance, has typically discussed autonomy as an individual and internal capacity, while the recent relational approach has focussed on social and external dimensions. The relational model in particular has garnered momentum and support for how it conceptualises autonomy, who can be autonomous according to it, and how autonomy can be evinced under it. However, relative to the liberal account, it is still in its infancy with some under-theorised aspects, and one such area is how autonomy comes to be measured.

In this thesis, I bring together these theoretical and practical domains in order to develop a nuanced way of gauging the autonomy of the female suicide bombers. I do this by outlining and evaluating the liberal and relational approaches, before applying and extending the

relational model specifically to the bombers to assess its fit, and finally offering a relational spectrum along which to plot the women's autonomy. In so doing, I make two claims. First, that the relational conception in general persuasively represents the suicide bombers as agents and their autonomy. In defending this point, I also contend that the relational agent and autonomy is a model that is, in fact, appropriate for *all* persons. However, it is particularly suited to the bombers of the case studies as their autonomy is harder to represent accurately on other models. Second, that my spectrum view can map and measure various features of autonomy in some detail for each bomber, and, in so doing, makes it possible for comparisons between the bombers and their autonomy to be made. The details of this (worked out in chapter five) are, by necessity, approximate and experimental, but still valuable in providing a means to measure and contrast the autonomy of individuals. In these ways, I argue that the spectrum that I propose, which is situated in the relational account, can overcome some of the misrepresentations of the women and offer a way to plot and compare autonomy – in this thesis, primarily of the bombers but, outside this thesis, it may also be useful for plotting and comparing autonomy in other instances and potentially for all.

The thesis is split into four broad sections (and five chapters in total). First, I set out the case studies of female suicide bombers – the focus of this thesis – and use empirical evidence and portrayals of the agency of these women to produce pictures of their autonomy (chapter one). Second, I characterise liberal and relational models of autonomy and outline standard critiques of these – particularly of liberal models – and gaps in current theories – particularly in relational models – to show where my relational spectrum view aims to supplement and improve present accounts (chapters two and three). Third, I apply the relational account to the case studies to demonstrate that it is appropriate for representing the bombers and their

autonomy (chapter four). Fourth, I further develop the model and outline and apply a spectrum of autonomy. This is to show how it allows for a more detailed mapping and estimate of autonomy, which would aid in differentiating better along the spectrum of autonomy for each individual and for comparing individuals (chapter five).

To start, the first section (chapter one) explores the case study of female suicide bombers and their agency in three parts. First, I outline examples of women from various conflicts around the world who have adopted the suicide bomber role. Second, I suggest that women are expected to conform to the 'peaceful woman' stereotype and, when they transgress this by behaving violently, are 'explained away' as either 'victims' or 'ideal warriors'. Third, I argue that both the 'victim' and 'ideal' narratives serve to distort the women's agential capacities; either they are perceived and understood as lacking agency altogether or they have abundant levels, but neither portrayal accurately represents their agency. I, thus, contend that female suicide bombers are denied proper agency for their acts.

The second part (chapters two and three) moves to the theoretical realm and examines two dominant models of autonomy. In chapter two I characterise liberal autonomy using five themes: authentic desires, procedural independence, local and basic autonomy, consistency, and the distinction between autonomy and responsibility. Having outlined this understanding of liberal autonomy, I then present standard critiques in the contemporary debate to show some of the limitations and possible weaknesses of the view. Following the now mainstream critiques, I suggest that liberal accounts of autonomy are problematic because they tend to construct the agent individualistically and tend to focus too much on internal obstructions to the will. In chapter three I present five unifying traits of relational autonomy: the social agent,

social autonomy, a spectrum of autonomy, broad motivations, and complex identities. Again, building on the literature, I highlight concerns about the agent being determined and that autonomy is too socially conceived. I argue, however, that the relational account can overcome such problems and that it is promising for female suicide bombers (the argument of the next section) as the standard critiques of liberal autonomy make ascribing autonomy to female bombers particularly hard. In this way, the standard critiques of liberal accounts are deemed effective against this charge.

The third section (chapter four) applies the relational model to the case studies to assess whether it suitably represents the female suicide bombers. I do this by considering the agent and autonomy. On the agent, I maintain that the relational approach prioritises the connected self and this permits a rich picture of both these bombers, who are social selves, and why they act, which is usually in an interconnected way. On autonomy, I argue that the relational model develops a socially constitutive account that mirrors how these bombers engage in and exercise decision-making well. My claim is that, for these two reasons, the relational approach offers a befitting representation of these women as agents and of their autonomy. Further, I contend that, we may be able to extend this position and suggest that the model is suited to all agents and their autonomy. Though particularly relevant to the bombers (because their autonomy is more difficult to recognise on less social conceptions), the relational account may represent other persons well too (because they too are likely to be social selves with a social autonomy). However, since the argument is about the bombers, we do not need to accept this possible expansion to non-bombers; we merely need to recognise it for the women of this thesis, and I argue that we can.

The final section (chapter five) proposes my spectrum view of autonomy, which attempts to expand the relational account by offering a way to measure the female suicide bombers' autonomy in a nuanced fashion. I do this in three parts. First, I describe the theoretical features of my spectrum by outlining three axes (constraints, self-regard and reflection). Second, I apply my view using four of the bombers to show how this spectrum view permits us to plot different elements of autonomy and estimate the women's autonomy overall, and to compare the women's autonomy against each other. Third, I argue that a consequence of my relational, degree-based approach is that the 'victim' and 'ideal warrior' narratives of the bombers (from chapter one) are likely to become more complex.

Therefore, I contend that the relational approach in general is a good fit for the female suicide bombers (and perhaps for all), and that my spectrum view (a relational notion) in particular offers a detailed map of the bomber's autonomy. This allows us to distinguish and measure elements and the extent of autonomy, to approximately place each bomber on the spectrum and to compare degrees of autonomy between bombers. Where we are concerned to attribute the bombers with autonomy, however limited, my spectrum view, rooted in the relational model, meets this aim.

1. FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBERS

Introduction

In the first chapter, I discuss female suicide bombers who will serve as the fulcrum of this thesis.¹ I explore several sample cases of bombers from across the world as well as general issues regarding their agency in order to introduce both the phenomenon and problems with how they are presented. I do this in three sections. First, I situate the role of the suicide bomber within other diverse roles women have assumed in political conflict and highlight the (perceived) transgressive nature of violent women. Second, I examine the ways in which various societies and media portray the bombers given this breach of gender norms. Third, I consider how these depictions affect descriptions of the women's agency. In so doing, I argue that gender stereotypes render violence perpetrated by women unacceptable and that female suicide bombers are cast (depending on the context) as negatively or positively extraordinary in order to reinstitute conventional gender norms. I contend that such representations undermine or exaggerate, but – in both instances – misdescribe, the bomber's agency.

I, therefore, highlight first, that women, just like men, can be violent and hold manifold reasons for suicide bombing that warrant acknowledgement and second, that a fair account of the bombers as actors in the world is required, otherwise there is a failure to appropriately reflect this agency. In this regard, I introduce the core themes of this thesis in this chapter: that better interpretations of the bombers and what they do are required since women do carry out attacks and it is unlikely that a binary (completely non-agential or wholly agential)

¹ Parts of this chapter have been published as a journal article. See Marway (2011).

classification of these acts fully captures the complexity of their agency. In the final chapter, I offer a way to approximately measure the women's autonomy in order to potentially fulfil this function, but for now I explore the female suicide bombers, which will be our illustrative focus.

Women and Violence: Norms and Roles in Conflict

In the first section, I survey the gender norms surrounding violence and roles women have undertaken during political conflict in order to contextualise and draw out problems with the female suicide bomber. I offer evidence of women in a range of violent roles and examine ways in which these patterns of activity and behaviour conflict with common gender stereotypes. I embark upon this task in five parts, starting broadly and gradually becoming more narrowly focussed. First, I outline the general relevance of gender and binary constructions thereof. Second, I discuss more particularly the norms that govern, and roles that exist for, men (as violent) and women (as peaceful) in war. Then, I consider inconsistencies with these stereotypes by setting out examples of women that (in part three) are indirectly aggressive (as morale boosting mothers and arms transporting supporters, for instance) and (in part four) directly threatening (suicide bombers) participants in conflict. Fifth and finally, I analyse how these violent roles flout female gender norms of passivity to varying degrees. In this section, I will argue that women do adopt violent roles of differing extremes in war and that this shift contradicts dominant gender norms.

Gender norms and typical narratives outside conflict: social and political binaries

First, I address the significance of gender in broad terms in order to better understand the motivations behind the dilemmas that the bombers pose (and that I go onto discuss in subsequent sections). This comprises of two parts, first, I outline the social and political features of gender as well as its pervasiveness and how it is internalised as ‘natural’ and second, I set out some narratives of women in line with this specific reading of gender. Relying on standard arguments in the literature, I highlight that accepted gender binaries dictate the kinds of narratives and roles associated with and expected of women in non-war contexts, and – as will be considered in the next section – these directly inform their expected roles in war too.

i. Gender as construct, and gender internalised

First, by way of context and background, I sketch understandings of gender in two parts, first, gender as a social and political construct and second, the ‘normalisation’ of a particular conception of gender is discussed. In so doing, I outline the point in the standard literature that gender is a social and political fabrication but has become internalised by women and men alike.

To start, gender can be described as both social and political construction (de Beauvoir, 1949; Butler, 1990). As a social concoction, for instance, understandings of gender are widely shared. Gender norms consist of “(1) norms of masculine and feminine behaviour which are embodied in social practices, and (2) the habitual ways of acting that people acquire as an effect of those norms” (Stone, 2007, 67). Gender incorporates communally and routinely accepted behaviours that are expected from male and female bodies. As a political

formulation, this social notion is not neutral but mimics specific and underlying power dynamics. Some, for example, argue that patriarchy has sought to foster and systematically maintain unequal power relations between men and women, and that a particular understanding of gender has been constructed to facilitate this (Engels 1884; Pateman 1988). In this picture, those who hold power (men) regard themselves as the standard, while the powerless (women) are considered their opposite or, in other words, binaries of norm/aberration (respectively) are engineered. Wendy Lynne Lee, for instance, explains that in the dichotomies of “male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, straight/queer, human/animal, self/other, white/black, us/them” (Lee, 2010, 16), the first of the pairing is set up as superior and ‘normal’ and the second its inferior or deviation. To reiterate, in the male and female dynamic, “he is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other” (de Beauvoir, 1949, 16). Gender, then, is not only socially but – in patriarchy – politically constructed too: “women’s position is not dictated by nature, by biology or sex, but is a matter of social and political contrivance” (Pateman, 1988, 225). Though gender is a socially forged concept, its current and *particular* manifestation is politically motivated and shaped.

Second, despite gender norms being constructed, they are ubiquitously passed off, reinforced and embraced as ‘natural’; categorically *not* contrived (Calhoun, 1997). To examine this, I first, discuss an example and second, outline internalisation. First, to illustrate, consider the occupations that women and men have been ascribed according to their respective ‘natural’ dispositions. In the private sphere, for instance, women have been cast as ‘natural’ carers and confined to the home, so duties of childcare and homemaking have been shaped such that women disproportionately fulfil these than men. Similarly in the public sphere, women are

not afforded the same economic, political or social opportunities as men to develop skills that men are 'naturally' seen to possess but have in fact learned through their privilege (Enloe, 1989). This is so because "patriarchal society conflates *sex* and *gender*, deeming appropriate for women only those jobs associated with the traditional feminine personality. Thus, in the United States, for example, women are pushed into jobs like nursing, teaching, and childcare, while they are steered away from jobs in business, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics" (Tong, 2009, 34). Women do not 'naturally' opt for these vocations, rather they are manoeuvred into them by the already-skewed, male-dominated, constructed system in place.

The second point is about internalisation. Since gender norms are presented as 'natural', there are repercussions for those that shift away from the pattern. Non-conformers are regarded as transgressing nature. Given this, women and men are socially disciplined to adopt feminine and masculine norms. With regard to women, for example, Catherine MacKinnon argues:

Conditioning to these values permeates the upbringing of girls and the images for emulation thrust upon women. Women who resist or fail, including those who never did fit – for example, black and lower-class women who cannot survive if they are soft and weak and incompetent, assertively self-respecting women, women with ambitions of male dimensions – are considered less female, lesser women. Women who comply or succeed are elevated as models, tokenised by success on male terms or portrayed as consenting to their natural place and dismissed as having participated if they complain (MacKinnon, 1997, 71).

Women who (purposely or through necessity) subvert norms breach what it means to be a woman and – though this notion is created and not ‘natural’ – are spurned.² Further, as these social punishments are entrenched, they eventually become self-administering such that women discipline themselves to achieve the particular construction of womanhood. Women (and men) who have been successfully socially regulated about ‘natural’ femininity tend to endorse it, and they internalise and adopt these attitudes, even though the conception is fabricated (Bartky, 1990).³ Thus, as has been argued extensively in the gender literature, gender norms – though socially created and politically skewed – are nevertheless espoused.

ii. Typical narratives in non-conflict

Having set out how gender is constructed but considered ‘natural’, in the second part of this section I explore representations of women in non-war settings. Drawing on the standard literature, I profile the ascribed narratives or roles of the ‘virgin’, the ‘temptress’, the ‘mother’ and the ‘witch’. These are, in no way, exhaustive but, based on the binary notion of gender, are illustrative of stereotypical narratives or roles for women that are opposite to those of men.

On the first narrative, the ‘virgin’ is regarded as an innocent, demure and unadulterated maiden, and is distinct from men, who are typically cast as more sexually dominant, in her

² In this regard, women must be both ‘not-men’ and ‘women proper’, whereby they fit a particular patriarchal construction of femininity. If they fail to adopt this construction, society considers them different to the norm and thus not ‘women proper’. They are considered deviations and aberrations, as will be explored with female suicide bombers in this chapter.

³ It is in this sense that gender becomes particularly significant for this thesis. In addition to conspicuous oppressions of conflict and war, there are less obvious oppressions that gender might entail. Women might adopt particular goals or desires that are underpinned by suspect (where this implies being socially and politically constructed, subordinating, and internalised) gender norms of women as (for example) the ‘natural’ homemakers and men as the ‘natural’ breadwinners. These present a more covert kind of oppression to war, but it is oppression nonetheless. These different oppressions will be discussed more fully in chapters four and five.

sexual naivety. She is the symbol of vulnerability and someone to be protected, but also – as an adolescent – a figure of emerging desirability (Driscoll, 2002; Caputi, 2004). The second narrative is the ‘temptress’ and, in contrast to the virgin, is a deliberate seductress who is highly sexualised. She entices men into sexual acts in roles such as the siren or provides them with sexual ‘services’ as the prostitute (Butcher et al., 1974; Caputi, 1998, 2004). Notably the virgin and temptress are not wholly dissimilar since they are extremes of the same scale of women as sexual objects: either pure and ripe for sexualisation or already sexualised. Though seemingly different, both are framed in terms of sex for and in opposition to men, and so both (given gender norms) are legitimate narratives and roles for women. The third narrative is the ‘mother’, who is usually the self-sacrificing nurturer, and dissimilar to the self-focussed, career man. She is the figure that bestows life and is central to family life, so she is valued and a necessity, but she is also taken for granted in this role (Butcher et al., 1974; Kaplan, 1992; Meyers, 2002). The final narrative is that of the ‘witch’ who, as non-maternal and even supernatural, is markedly different to the mother. She is not a woman who nourishes and attends to others, but one that attracts suspicion and so is distant from others (Meyers, 2002; Caputi, 2004). Again, just as with the ‘virgin’ and ‘temptress’, though the ‘mother’ and ‘witch’ seem distinct, they are contrasting ends on a permissible scale, though in this instance the range concerns deference to others. While the ‘mother’ is self-depriving, the ‘witch’ is not because others shun her, but both are different to the independent man. Though apparently contradictory, they are deemed legitimate narratives and allowable roles for women.

These four archetypes, in differing ways are admissible. Two of the roles – the virgin and mother – adhere to norms of women as passive and altruistic and are regarded as positive. The other two roles – the temptress and the witch – follow norms of women as whores or

sorceresses and so have negative connotations. Either way, however, they are equally tolerable since they are within the range of which women are permitted to be. In other words, though some stereotypes are less favourably perceived than others, all are narratives defined in opposition to men, and these are therefore possible narratives for women to fulfil. When women veer off prescribed narratives or roles, however, consequences ensue (as I will discuss in the rest of this section).

Thus, in this first section, I have introduced gender in non-war contexts using arguments in the standard literature. I have highlighted that gender is a social and political construction, with socially reinforcing and self-policing habitual roles for men and women. In addition, I recognised that specific dichotomous narratives and roles are ascribed to both sexes.

Gender norms and typical roles in conflict: ‘peaceful woman’ and ‘violent man’

Second, I now shift from a non-war to war situation and consider the gender norms and roles that women are permitted in this context. To do this, I first, reiterate how – even in political conflict – male and female norms and roles are constructed in contrast to each other and second, explore this notion through the ‘peaceful woman’ and ‘violent man’ norms and consequent permitted roles. I will suggest that the presumptions about men being violent and women being peaceful frame the kinds of behaviours men and women are expected to display in war.

To start, I restate the understanding of gender norms and roles while emphasising the relevance to war. As outlined above, gender is contrived such that the female and male are classified in opposition to each other – the private/public, weak/strong, carer/breadwinner

binaries respectively, for example. Gender norms and roles in political conflict follow suit, both in being polarised pairings and extensions of permissible non-war roles. For example, though there are various combinations, the “beautiful soul” and “just warrior” (Elshtain, 1985, 45) for females and males respectively is one duality (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Sjoberg, 2010).⁴ In such narratives, women and men take on similar traits to non-conflict situations: while men have belligerent tendencies in war and peace alike, women are deemed non-aggressive in both cases. Thus, gender binaries exist in conflict just as they do in non-conflict, and the characteristics of those binaries in war often complement those in non-war.

Second, I investigate this claim by considering, first, the ‘peaceful woman’ and ‘violent man’ stereotypes and second, some of the activities that can be associated with these narratives. Beginning with the ‘peaceful woman’, the female norm in war is often that of the ‘docile nurturer’ with the associated traits of altruism, passivity and fragility that (allegedly) resembles her gender group outside of conflict. That is, woman is “pictured as frugal, self-sacrificing, and, at times, delicate...In matters of war and peace, the female beautiful soul cannot put a stop to suffering, cannot effectively fight the mortal wounding of sons, brothers, fathers. She continues the long tradition of women as weepers, occasions for war, and keepers of the flame of nonwarlike values” (Elshtain, 1985, 45). Reflecting ostensible ‘virtues’ of the

⁴ The “just warrior” that Elshtain uses is one manifestation of how masculinities are framed in war (Hutchings, 2008) just as the “beautiful soul” that she employs (drawing on Hegel, 1977) is one example of how femininities are regarded. This pairing is being drawn upon as an illustration and because of the combative (instead of, say, the technical or scientific) nature of the suicide bomber role, and it is these violent versus peaceful features that are explored here. Moreover, Kimberly Hutchings argues that, though men are not a homogenous group (‘maleness’ is distinguished in terms of, for instance, the ‘hegemonic’ and ‘subordinated’), masculinities in war involve contrasts between different types of men and they also ultimately involve a contradiction with women (Hutchings, 2008). In this way, the feminine is considered non-masculine and inferior, and this can be seen in the rhetoric of war. The enemy, for instance, is often feminised, such as the US being considered male and Iraq female at the state level, and US army personnel who are regarded as male and Iraqi prisoners of war (that they tortured) as female at the individual level (Sjoberg, 2007, 2010; Enloe, 2004). Binaries between male/female, then, have long been entrenched in war. Thus, though there are different types of dualities and the oppositions are simplifications (as will be seen in this chapter), the point is that such a distinction between the male (violent/strong) and female (peaceful/weak) exists.

feminine as dainty, self-abnegating, limited to the private sphere, and submissive, the female role in conflict, according to the ‘peaceful woman’ stereotype, then, is peripheral. Women are unresisting and incapable, anxiously awaiting the return of their men-folk and lacking the power to contribute to the war effort (Elshtain, 1985, 1995). In this respect, women – cast as the antithesis of the aggression synonymous with war – are ultimately deemed non-actors in conflict.

By contrast, the ‘violent man’ archetype takes the male norms to be equivalent to the ‘aggressive protector’, with the zealousness, authority and bellicosity that are (apparently) the hallmark traits of men in non-conflict circumstances too. Men, for example, are “construed as violent, whether eagerly and inevitably or reluctantly and tragically” (Elshtain, 1995, 3–4) and, in war, this assigns them the role of the warrior. Further, men “fight as avatars of a nation’s sanctioned violence” (*ibid*) where they hold a courageous reason for carrying out violence (such as defending the vulnerable, including women and the country) rather than a cowardly one (such as committing a war crime).⁵ Reflecting perceived male traits of strength, chivalry, dominating the public realm, and aggression in non-conflict, man plays a central role in conflict and carries out violence in order to protect the weak (Elshtain, 1985, 1995). Men, then, are considered to be truculent and powerful when compared to women and so are deemed to be actors in war. In conflict, therefore, gender norms are contrasting and aligned to non-war stereotypes; whereas the male holds a principal and violent position, the female occupies a secondary and non-violent one.

⁵ In other words, it is a moralised notion of male violence. As Elshtain argues, “the just warrior is a complex construction, an amalgam of Old Testament, chivalric, and civic republican traditions...[where] ‘male physical force could sometimes be moralised’ and ‘thus could provide the foundation for an ideal of warlike manliness.’ This moralisation of collective male violence...continues to exert a powerful fascination and to inspire respect” (Elshtain, 1985, 45). Further, she argues that women do not participate because they are presumed innocent, but that they are also the reason that men, as just warriors, go to war (1995).

These distinctions, however, do not imply that women can never be aggressive and men can never be passive.⁶ For example, women can use violence in certain non-war scenarios – “exceptions to the [non-violent] rule include: fending off an attacker, especially a rapist; defending her children; fighting back against a terribly abusive husband; some sporting activities” (Eager, 2008, 3). Given this precedence in non-conflict, we can imagine that a defensive use of force by women is permissible in similar predicaments – of rape and abuse, or of aiding children – in war.⁷ Likewise, just as men can shun macho behaviour in peacetime – by holding a religious faith, for example – so too can they avoid partaking in violence – by contentiously objecting to it on religious grounds – in wartime. In both the female and male examples, the binaries are indeed made more complicated, yet it remains that the broad norms for the female as non-violent and male as violent remain the same. Thus, though there may be exceptions, the general rule persists.

Second, the kinds of behaviours and activities that flow from these gender norms of peacefulness and violence are opposite too. In the ‘peaceful woman’ stereotype, for example, the roles usually include those of pacifists and bystanders. In this category, women do not take part in violence at all, either on the principled grounds of an outright objection to violence, or in a non-active way as onlookers to the aggression. Though pacifists may carry out acts of protest or civil disobedience and though bystanders may continue in their traditional female roles (so they are not entirely non-actors), both roles are distinctly non-

⁶ Of course, violent women and non-violent men are equally transgressive of norms of femininity and masculinity. Eager, for instance, argues, “just as we are fascinated by women terrorists, we are equally fascinated, although certainly not to the same extent, by male conscientious objectors. They are exceptions to the supposed ‘rule’ of how men and women are supposed to behave vis-à-vis violence” (Eager, 2008, 21). Both these women and men breach gender norms relating to violence.

⁷ Note, however, how the violence permitted is defensive as opposed to aggressive and in this respect it is not deemed to be a transgression. More will be discussed about the transgressive nature of political violence for women in subsequent sections of this chapter.

violent and exemplify the passive norms linked to the ‘peaceful woman’. As ‘violent man’, on the other hand, men typically take up the roles of soldiers and combatants. There is an assumption that men are legitimately violent participants in war, either as fighters on the front line or engaged in the battle in other ways, and this adheres to non-war norms that underpin the ‘violent man’. These kinds of roles indicate how women and men typify the norms associated with the female and male in conflict and non-conflict.

The ‘peaceful woman’ and ‘violent man’, then, are just one set of gender norms that exist in conflict, and the pacifist and soldier are but some examples of the roles and activities that reflect these norms respectively. Other roles are possible, however, and in the next two sections I consider women who are involved in violence, either indirectly or directly, and in so doing arguably transcend the ‘peaceful woman’ norm.

Atypical roles for women I: indirect violence, and the mother and the supporter

In this part I consider violent roles for women in conflict beginning with the indirectly violent. Though the phrase ‘indirectly violent’ may appear, at first glance, to be a misnomer (why not label it ‘non-violent’ if violence has not occurred?), it refers to eschewing violent acts but engaging in violent struggles. Though the woman may not commit any violent activity, she is a participant in the violence in a way that the pacifist or bystander (as passive) or the activist (as political but non-violent) is not.⁸ I will discuss just two of the roles women have had that fall under this category in the form of the ‘mother’ and the ‘supporter’. I will argue that women have occupied indirectly violent positions.

⁸ By focussing on violent roles, these other roles that could fall within the ‘peaceful woman’ norm are set aside. These include the actively non-violent (such as peace activists, without political allegiance, and who seek the cessation of hostilities) and the passively non-violent (such as civilian bystanders).

i. Mother

The first role I explore is that of the ‘mother’. This is an informal, non-conscripted position that can comprise one or all of several elements, including three that I will trace here: bearing children, raising them as combatants, and showing pride in sacrificing offspring.⁹

Taking childbearing first, women in the indirectly violent ‘mother’ role are encouraged to give birth to (preferably) male babies who will eventually constitute the movement’s or nation’s future soldiers. As a responsibility that women alone can fulfil (in any context), it has often been their principal and overriding function in conflict. Indeed, Mia Bloom argues, “the primary contribution expected of women has been to sustain an insurgency by giving birth to many fighters” (2007, 95). This reproductive role, then, is intended to literally replenish troop numbers. Yet, it also figuratively regenerates the cause by defying the enemy and boosting morale, since it ensures the ethnic and “biological survival” (Swindell, 2005, 238) of the group. A mother from Sarajevo, for example, planned to “fireoff one baby every year to spite the aggressors” (Salzman, 1998, 350) in her contribution to the political goals. Given that the birthing mother bolsters the number of fighters in the long-term and the resolve of the group in the short-term and is a duty in which many actively partake (though the reasons for this involvement may be complex), it is a significant indirectly violent way in which women have participated in conflict.

⁹ The term “combatant” is intended to describe any person involved in the violent conflict, whether they are part of an officially recognised national army or an unofficial insurgency or revolutionary movement. In this thesis, it is used interchangeably with words such as “fighter”, “soldier”, “warrior”, “insurgent”, “revolutionary”, and “martyr” (for example) unless otherwise stated.

The second aspect of the 'mother' role is nurturing children to become combatants. Women are expected to raise loyal individuals who are devoted to the cause and eager to fight for it. This rearing role, again, is one that women are considered to be suitable for given it is an extension (albeit with a violent tone) of the activities they typically assume in society. Samira, a Palestinian mother of two young boys, for example, states, "it is the duty of every Palestinian mother to encourage her sons and daughters to become martyrs" (Samira in Victor, 2003, 102) and it is in cultivating willing soldiers that mothers are judged and praised. Similarly, in Chechnya, the 'mother' role is "to raise children, form their characters, and make them strong so that they became warriors for the Islamic faith (*mujahideen*) when they grew up" (Bloom, 2007, 97). As well as physically reproducing, then, the mother's responsibilities also include nurturing and conditioning children to be sympathetic to a particular ideology. Through this act, the women are indirectly participating in the violence.

The final feature of the 'mother' role is sacrificing her offspring and showing pride in her child's commitment to the struggle. Sacrificing children is the actualisation of the indirectly violent tasks of bearing and raising soldiers in which the 'mother' is already engaged. A woman commented, for example, that "we Palestinian women, we give birth to them, we bring them up and we bury them for the revolution" (elderly peasant woman in Sayigh and Peteet, 1986, 122). The sacrifice of children for the cause, then, is ostensibly a fitting conclusion of the 'mother' role in conflict. Moreover, whatever capacity children serve in, the 'mother' duty commends expressions of admiration rather than signs of lamentation when reflecting on the sacrifice. Um Nidal, the mother of Mahmoud Farhat, a nineteen-year-old Palestinian suicide bomber, for example, stated, "I began to pray from the depths of my heart that Allah should give me ten Israelis for Mahmoud, and Allah granted my request, and

[Mahmoud's] dream came true when he killed more than ten Israelis. I began to utter cries of joy" (in Victor, 2003, 170). Whilst proclamations of pride need not be genuine or devoid of sorrow, they are a culmination of the 'mother's' success in procreating and nurturing combatants.¹⁰ The sacrificing of children and the (expressed) contentment thereof contributes to the indirectly violent role of 'mother'.

Thus, the 'mother' duty includes bearing, rearing, and sacrificing children as well as displaying pride in their child when the acts carried out are aligned to the goals of the specific political struggle. This role is an indirectly violent way that women participate in conflict since, though it is not directly violent, it is not entirely passive or disengaged from the conflict either.

ii. Supporter

The second indirectly violent role I address is women as 'supporters' of war. I consider two of the varied 'supporter' roles women have held, first, informally assumed responsibilities as civilians and second, more formal duties as members of insurgencies. These both indicate roles that are more violent than bystanders or peaceful activists.

First, as civilians, women have sustained movements by carrying out tasks that blatantly defy the opposing side. They have propagated their group's message, publicly objected to unfair treatment, and thwarted policies and acts directed at weakening male fighters, for example

¹⁰ As Christopher Reuter contends, however, pride may be the only acceptable emotion to express in public. He argues, "if these parents did not express pride, they would be guilty of a double betrayal: first, of the child, who would otherwise have died for nothing; and also of his faction, or even the community as a whole, which for its part is flattered that its struggle is now seen as so important and sanctified by the self-sacrifice it inspires" (Reuter, 2004, 15-16). Although mothers proclaim pride, therefore, it may not always be genuine and it by no means excludes other emotions, such as sorrow, in private.

(Victor, 2003).¹¹ Yet, these women are distinct from the peace activist who protests but does not align herself to one group or another, but rather is committed to peace. Women as ‘supporters’, by contrast, pick a warring side and challenge the adversary, albeit in an indirectly violent way. Further, civilian women’s status as *civilians* and *women* has enabled them to carry out, not just overt but, covert ‘supporter’ tasks. In Sri Lanka, for example, by assuming a clandestine ‘supporter’ role, civilian women were considered to be the “backbone of the war: running arms, procuring survival necessities, acting as communications systems, doing reconnaissance” (Nordstrom, 2008, 72), activities that, if executed by combatant or civilian men, would arouse suspicion. Likewise, in Ireland, civilian women carried munitions in their bags for the Irish Republican Army, which evaded the British Army’s surveillance checkpoints (Alison, 2004). Civilian women, then, have carried out vital ‘support’ positions, both publically and privately during conflict, which can be considered indirectly violent roles.

The second ‘support’ role is women as members, and under the formal command, of revolutionary or military groups. In this role, though women serve alongside men, they often continue to adopt ancillary, rather than combative, duties (Enloe, 1988). In Chechnya, for example, “female insurgents were initially used merely to supply medical aid, food, and water to the men; they also carried weapons and ammunition across enemy territory and maintained the guerrillas’ morale” (Bloom, 2007, 98). Here, women are members of the same movements as men but instead of being involved in the fighting, a duty that is left to the men, they are supportive of them. In insurgencies, women are encouraged to “cling to their ancestral role of

¹¹ For example, in Palestine: “women wrote and circulated leaflets, joined in demonstrations and protests, scrawled slogans on the walls of buildings, hoisted flags, donated blood, violated curfews and closures, and helped organise alternative means of educating their children. Women defied the Israeli army’s policy of confiscating Palestinian agricultural produce. They physically tried to prevent Palestinian boys and men from being arrested” (Victor, 2003, 9-10). In carrying out political acts like disobeying curfews and obstructing arrests, women in civilian ‘supporter’ roles have often organised themselves, rallying mass support and allegiance to the cause.

care takers, moral supporters, sustainers of food and medical care, and raising of children” (Beyler, 2003b, 9). Again, these are familiar roles that women adopt in their newer positions within a violent organisation. Their roles, however, may expand over time, such that other specialist skills are required and developed. Women, for example, have been trained to “gather intelligence information” (Victor, 2003, 134) and scope out targets. This demonstrates a shift towards more expert ‘support’ tasks relative to the civilian woman or the insurgent that takes on administrative responsibilities, but is still non-combative (Alison, 2004). In either form, such roles are closely aligned to the groups executing aggression, so that though the women are not directly engaged in violence, they certainly are indirectly involved because they are recruited members.

The ‘support’ role, then, may involve women as civilians or operatives. When women engage in a civilian capacity, they assume overt and covert reinforcement roles. When they are enlisted in an insurgent capacity, the assistance can vary from being a carer or administrator to a technical specialist, but it is supportive and indirectly violent nonetheless. In this regard, the women who are in these ‘support’ roles are participants in violence, but in an indirect way.

In this section I have considered women’s indirect violent engagement during times of conflict. Two of the diverse roles women have assumed include that of the ‘mother’ – who gives birth to, raises, and sacrifices children to the war – and the ‘supporter’ – who is either a civilian that champions a violent group or a signed-up member of one that takes on an ancillary function in combat. They are roles that are distinct from peaceful involvement but they are also different to directly violent roles, which I discuss next.

Atypical roles for women II: direct violence, and the female suicide bomber

The second set of roles is the directly violent, a set that includes female suicide bombers. To consider these roles, first, I briefly set out some data contextualising suicide bombing and, second, I present individual cases as evidence of directly violent roles. Together these will demonstrate that women do take on aggressive roles.

First, though the statistics and history of suicide bombing varies, it is helpful to summarise the origins and scale in order to provide some background. The modern phenomenon of suicide bombing can be traced back to Iran in 1980 and, although it is predominately still men that fulfil this role, women have increasingly been involved since the first female attack in 1985.¹² During the period 1985 and 2011, for example, there have been some 145 female bombers, which accounts for 21.2 percent of all attackers (Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism – CPOST, 2011). Other research places this figure closer to 220 women, which represents 15 percent of all bombers between 1985 and 2006 (Schweitzer, 2006).¹³ Of the 76 organisations who employ the strategy of suicide bombing, recent reports suggest that sixteen have utilised women as bombers (CPOST, 2011), which has doubled from earlier estimates of around eight or nine.¹⁴ These movements are varied and include those with secular, religious, nationalistic and theocratic aims (Skaine, 2006). Some groups, for instance, seek nationalistic independence using a secular philosophy (nationalistic/secular), such as the Syrian Socialist

¹² The first modern day attack was by Hossein Fahmideh, a 13-year-old Iranian boy, who, in 1980, detonated a grenade under an Iraqi tank in the Iran-Iraq war, killing himself and, according to Iranian legend, causing the enemy to retreat. Suicide attacks, however, have a longer history, arguably traceable to the Crusades and *hashishins*, and being employed by Japanese kamikaze pilots in the Second World War (Reuter, 2004).

¹³ CPOST and Schweitzer's figure include both 'successful' (bombs that were detonated) and 'unsuccessful' (bombers that were prevented) attacks, irrespective of the number of deaths caused.

¹⁴ Mia Bloom cited original figures. She claims, of the "seventeen groups that have started using the tactical innovation of suicide bombing, women have been operatives in more than half of them." (Bloom, 2007, 95)

National Party (SSNP), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's (PLO) military wing, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, which also encompasses the faction Fatah. Other groups seek nationalistic independence by employing religious ideology (nationalistic/religious), such as the Chechen rebels, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Hamas. Differently still, some groups seek theocratic goals under a religiously motivated movement (theocratic/religious), such as al-Qaeda, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (CPOST, 2011; Cunningham, 2008; Skaine, 2006).¹⁵ There are different reasons, then, for organisations using women in this role. Though cursorily, here I have indicated the extent and context of female suicide bombing.

Having provided this synopsis, I now document 12 examples of female suicide bombings carried out by each of these groups: Sana Mehaydali, Thenmuli Rajaratnam, Leila Kaplan, Wafa Idris, Dareen Abu Aishen, Ayat al-Akhras, Hawa Barayev and Luisa Magomadova, Hiba Daraghmeh, Hanadi Jadarat, Reem Saleh al-Riyashi, Muriel Degauque and finally, an unnamed bomber. In addition, I describe the case of an implementer, Zina, and a failed suicide bomber, Zarema Muzhakhoyeva, as closely related roles to those of the bombers. In presenting these, I do not intend to provide a comprehensive chronology of female suicide bombing but instead illustrate women working within diverse geographically located and ideologically driven organisations and operating under unique circumstances.¹⁶ For each case,

¹⁵ The nationalistic/secular, nationalistic/religious and theocratic/religious categorisations have been slightly modified from Cunningham's original classification to include non-Muslim based groups. Rosemary Skaine also includes the Lebanese based group Hezbollah and Iraqi insurgents in the organisations that have used women as suicide bombers.

¹⁶ These particular examples have been chosen because they are unique and "firsts" (Zedalis, 2004, 2) for various reasons. For instance, the first suicide bombing, or the first time a particular organisation used a bomber, or the first mother to be used, and the specific details are outlined in each case. This section does not intend, however, to probe the perpetrator's reasons behind these acts, but some assumed 'reasons' will be set out in 'Responses to Women's Violence' (section two) in this chapter, as well as explored in the application chapter (chapter four).

I chronicle the role of the perpetrator, the movement that claimed responsibility, and the conflict in which it occurred.

i. Sana Mehaydali

The first example is that of Sana Mehaydali, who on 9 April 1985, at age 17, became the first female suicide bomber. Having joined the SSNP in February 1985, her first and only assignment was to drive a Peugeot filled with explosives into military vehicles used for transporting Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers into Bater al-Shuf Jezzín, South Lebanon (Skaine, 2006; Schweitzer, 2003). Mehaydali and between one and five Israeli soldiers were killed, and two others sustained injuries in the bombing (Bloom, 2007; Zedalis, 2004). The SSNP have taken responsibility for 12 suicide bomb attacks, of which five (including Mehaydali) involved women (Beyler, 2003b).

ii. Thenmuli Rajaratnam/ Dhanu

Thenmuli Rajaratnam, or Dhanu, is the second female suicide bomber I discuss. Dhanu, a woman in her late twenties was a fully trained Black Tigress, which is the elite female suicide bomber wing of the LTTE in Sri Lanka. In April 1991, Dhanu and another Tiger, Shubha, received orders to travel to Madras to prepare for an attack against the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at a forthcoming election rally in Tamil Nadu, India. The women underwent two rehearsals – one on 17 April, when Dhanu failed to touch the feet of her practice target, as required in the mission strategy, and one on 7 May, when she succeeded (Stack O'Connor, 2007).

On 21 May, before the trip to Sriperumbudur, Shubha and another LTTE conspirator, Nalini, fitted Dhanu with the first known use of a customised suicide vest, packed with explosive materials, such as C4 based grenades, trinitrotoluene (TNT), and steel balls, all controlled by a detonation switch (Skaine, 2006). As one of only three individuals who had pre-authorized security clearance from the Indian authorities, Dhanu was escorted to Prime Minister Gandhi without delay. As planned, she garlanded and bowed down to touch the feet of the Prime Minister in a customary act of respect before detonating her bomb, which killed between 16 and 18 people, including herself and Gandhi, and injured 33 others (Skaine, 2006). Dhanu was not only the first woman to wear a suicide vest but also to assassinate a head of state (Skaine, 2006; Pape, 2006).

With over 200 attacks associated with the LTTE, the group is widely recognised to be the most proficient at deploying suicide bombers. Of this number, women have participated in approximately 30 to 40 percent of missions (Beyler, 2003b) and comprise some 60 percent of the elite suicide-bombing unit, the Black Tigers (Reuter, 2004).

iii. Leila Kaplan

The third case is Leila Kaplan, a 17-year-old member of the PKK, based in Turkey. On 25 October 1996, Kaplan became the first female to disguise herself as a pregnant woman before detonating a bomb in front of Adana Police Rapid Deployment Force headquarters in Adana, Turkey (Skaine, 2006; Eager, 2008). She killed between three and five people and wounded twelve (Skaine, 2006; Beyler, 2003a). The PKK have executed 21 suicide bombings, with 14 of them, representing 66 percent of the total, perpetrated by women (Beyler, 2003b).

iv. Wafa Idris

Wafa Idris was a 26-year-old Palestinian woman and a regular volunteer with the Palestinian Red Crescent (Victor, 2003), and is the fourth suicide bomber I consider. On 27 January 2002, she travelled from her home in the al-Amari refugee camp in Ramallah to Jerusalem, passing the checkpoint at Kalandria, most likely in an ambulance belonging to the Red Crescent. She went to Jaffa Road, a popular shopping street in Jerusalem, and carried with her a rucksack containing a ten-kilogram bomb packed with nails. The bomb exploded near revolving doors in a shoe store in the shopping area, killing Idris, an 81-year-old Israeli man, Pinhas Toukatli, and wounding between 40 and 150 bystanders (Skaine, 2006; Victor, 2003; Brunner, 2005). Idris is widely recognised as the “first *shahida*” (Eager, 2008, 179), the feminised version of the Arab word *shahide*, or martyr, who sacrificed herself for the Palestinian cause (Victor, 2003; Bloom, 2007). Although Idris was not believed to be affiliated to any organisation, it was the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade, the military wing of the PLO, who claimed responsibility for the act two days later, arguing that Idris had acted upon Arafat’s call to arms in his “Army of Roses” (Victor, 2003, 19) speech that morning. The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and Fatah have collectively claimed responsibility for nine ‘successful’ and seven ‘unsuccessful’ female suicide bombings (Skaine, 2006) since the Second Intifida, starting with Idris’ attack.

v. Dareen Abu Aishen

The fifth female suicide bomber is Dareen Abu Aishen, a 21-year-old English literature student at al-Najah University, Nablus. On 27 February 2002, Aishen left a car driven by two male dispatchers and walked towards the Israeli Maccabim checkpoint in West Ramallah, in the West Bank. She walked about fifteen metres before Israeli soldiers called for her to stop

and present her identification papers, to which she responded by running away. After about six metres, on a road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, a soldier fired at her and she simultaneously detonated the bomb she was carrying (Victor, 2003; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 2003). Aishen was the only person who died but two soldiers were severely injured and her two male chaperones were wounded (Schweitzer, 2008).

Aishen initially approached Jamal Mansour, the leader of a local Hamas group, to be a bomber but he dismissed her as a candidate because she was a woman, stating, “when we run out of men we shall start using women” (Daraghmeh, 2002, 1). Aishen’s sister, Shireen, said that her sister’s reply was, “well, then we’ll have to go to Fatah” (*ibid*). The al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade, of which Fatah is a part, claimed responsibility for the attack accepting her as a legitimate martyr. She was the first woman to leave a martyrdom video (Victor, 2003) and, despite the attack being claimed by al-Aqsa, she wore a Hamas headband (Skaine, 2006).

vi. Ayat al-Akhras

The sixth bomber is Ayat al-Akhras, who was an 18-year-old politics and journalism student. On 29 March 2002, she left her home in the Dehaishe refugee camp near Bethlehem and travelled to Kyriat Hayovel in Jerusalem, where she set off her ten-kilogram bomb, packed with nails and screws, at the Supersol supermarket during the Passover. The attack killed three people and injured between 22 and 28 IDF soldiers and she has been the youngest bomber in the territories (Skaine, 2006; Schweitzer, 2008; Victor, 2003). In her martyr’s statement, she declared that she was “going to fight instead of the sleeping Arab armies who are watching Palestinian girls fighting alone” (Skaine, 2006, 128) while “doing nothing”

(Victor, 2003, 211) to end the occupation. The attack was organised and carried out on behalf of Fatah (Victor, 2003).

vii. Hawa Barayev and Luisa Magomadova

Next is the example of the first time two suicide bombers were used as part of the same attack and the first bombing claimed by the Chechen rebels. On 7 June 2000, Hawa Barayev, a 22-year-old Chechen woman, and Luisa Magomadova, a 16-year-old Chechen girl, drove a truck filled with explosives into a temporary Russian Special Forces (OMON) base in Alkhan-Khala, Chechnya, killing between two and 27 Russian soldiers (Eager, 2008; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Speckhard and Akhmedova, 2008; Beyler, 2003a). Women have carried out some 42 percent of all the suicide bombing attacks claimed by the Chechen rebels, which equates to 46 out of 110 bombings in total (Speckhard and Akhmedova, 2008).

viii. Hiba Daraghmeh

The eighth case I discuss is Hiba Daraghmeh, a deeply religious, 19-year-old English literature student enrolled at Quds Open University. On 19 May 2003, Daraghmeh disguised herself as an Israeli woman and entered the Amakim Shopping Mall in Afulah. She detonated explosives in her suicide belt close by to the entrance, killing herself, three civilians and wounding between 52 and 83 bystanders (Skaine, 2006; Victor, 2003; Eager, 2008). This was the first attack claimed by the religious PIJ, although it was carried out as a joint attack with the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade (Skaine, 2006). In total, the PIJ has taken responsibility for two 'successful' and three 'failed' female suicide bombings (Skaine, 2006).

ix. Hanadi Jadarat

The next woman is Hanadi Jadarat, a 29-year-old lawyer, who had recently completed her studies in Jordan and returned to Jenin to open a practice. In early October 2003, she left her trainer's (Yasser Obeidi, a military commander of the PIJ) home in Zboda, close to Jenin, and slipped passed the Israeli checkpoint into Haifa. On 4 October (two days before Yom Kippur), she travelled, in disguise as an Israeli woman and with accomplices, to Maxim's, a restaurant on the beachfront that both Israeli Jews and Arabs frequented. She detonated a ten-kilo bomb that was hidden in her rucksack, which killed herself, 19 others, and injured over 60. This attack was also carried out on behalf of the PIJ, but Jadarat is considered the first 'professional' woman to be involved in suicide bombing (Victor, 2003; Skaine, 2006; CPOST 2011).

x. Reem Saleh al-Riyashi

The tenth case is Reem Saleh al-Riyashi, a 22-year-old mother of two children. On 14 January 2004, al-Riyashi's husband escorted her to a drop-off point close to the Erez checkpoint between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Upon reaching the checkpoint, she feigned an illness and refused to pass through the metal detectors, telling Israeli soldiers that a metal pin in her leg would trigger the alarms and requested, instead, a body search (Jaber and Mahnaimi, 2004). Al-Riyashi was instructed to wait in a building in the Erez industrial zone for a female soldier to conduct the search but, upon entering the building, she detonated a five-kilo bomb filled with ball bearings and screws that she was carrying. She killed herself and four Israeli soldiers, and injured between seven and ten Palestinian civilians (Skaine, 2006; Brunner, 2005). Although the attack was executed in collaboration with the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, this was the first attack that Hamas were involved in and the first time a mother was used (Skaine, 2006; Brunner, 2005). Hamas has arranged 74 bombings in total and claimed it has

been responsible for two ‘successful’ and three ‘unsuccessful’ female suicide attacks (CPOST, 2011; Skaine, 2006).

xi. Muriel Degauque

The eleventh example that I present is Muriel Degauque. On 9 November 2005, Degauque, a 38-year-old Muslim convert originally from Charleroi, Belgium, detonated a bomb close to American troops and Iraqi police in Baqubah, Iraq. Degauque died in the attack and one American soldier sustained minor injuries. She was the first known female suicide bomber of Western appearance claimed by al-Qaeda and her instructions were believed to be from Jordanian militant, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Eager, 2008; Skaine, 2006; Cunningham, 2007; Zedalis, 2008; Browne and Watson, 2005; Smith, 2005). In total, al-Qaeda has claimed responsibility for 153 suicide bombings across the world, of which five have been by women (CPOST, 2011).

xii. Unnamed bomber

The last case is a 17-year-old, unnamed bomber, who detonated her device outside the World Food Programme Distribution Centre (set up for families displaced by anti-Taliban military operations) in Khar, Pakistan on 26 December 2010. When stopped for routine security checks just outside the Centre, she threw two hand grenades into a crowd of 300 people, including police and military personnel, queuing for aid before activating her suicide belt. She killed between 43 and 45 people, and wounded 80 to 102 others. She was the first confirmed female bomber claimed by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (Dawn, 2010a,b; Guardian, 2010; Jerusalem Post, 2010).¹⁷ This is the only female suicide bombing attack that Tehrik-i-Taliban

¹⁷ There were at least two other cases of suspected female bombers in Pakistan before this, but these were not confirmed or claimed by the Pakistani Taliban. The group claimed this attack, but the female nature was not

Pakistan have so far authorised, though they have been responsible for fifty bombings in total (CPOST, 2011).

xiii. Zina

In addition to these female suicide bombers, I also consider two closely aligned roles in this section. The first is Zina, who was a student at Bir Zeit University, and had the role of implementer. On 30 July 2001, she travelled with a bomb, concealed in a nail-strewn beer can, to the Coop supermarket on Jaffa Road, Jerusalem, placed it on a shelf with similar products, and activated the timer to explode an hour later. Though the bomb was successfully triggered, it failed to result in casualties. Subsequently, on 9 August 2001, she helped Izzedine Masri (a male martyr) cross three gated checkpoints along the Israeli border and detonate his ten-kilogram bomb, hidden in a guitar case, outside Sbarro's Pizza restaurant, close to the supermarket. The bomb killed 15 people and injured 130 and was carried out on behalf of Hamas. She was sentenced to 25 years in prison as an accomplice in the Sbarro's Pizza bombing (Victor, 2003; Schweitzer, 2008).

xiv. Zarema Muzhakhoyeva

The second related role (and the final example) I consider is Zarema Muzhakhoyeva, a 22-year-old, would-be or failed suicide bomber. On 9 July 2003 she travelled to three different cafés in Moscow with a 1.5-kilogram bomb in her rucksack, but was unable to set-off the bomb at any of the locations despite pressing the button some "20 times" (Muzhakhoyeva in Groskop, 2004, 32). Russian police detained her at the fourth café from which she attempted

commented on explicitly. An attack on 26 June 2011 involving a husband and wife team in Kolachi, Pakistan was claimed by the group *and* the sex of the bombers was highlighted, with Pakistani Taliban spokesman, Ahsanullah Ahsan, claiming that the use of a woman, "shows how much we hate Pakistani security institutions" (Ahsan in Mahsud, 2011).

to activate the device, and a bomb disposal expert died in the process of trying to defuse it. She is currently serving 20 years for her involvement on behalf of the Chechen insurgents (Groskop, 2004; Strauss, 2004).

In this section I have charted 12 cases of female suicide bombing, as well as that of an implementer and a failed bomber. The activities of the bombers differ from both the indirectly violent ‘mother’ and ‘supporter’ roles (since they physically carry out – or attempt to carry out – violent attacks) and the non-violent bystander and activist ones (as they are neither passive nor unbiased towards the parties in the conflict). Thus, the 14 cases I have described in this section are examples women as direct perpetrators of violence.

‘Peaceful woman’ gender norm and women in violent roles

In the final part of this first section, I draw out salient complexities relating to aggressive females, the sorts of violence exhibited, and the ‘peaceful woman’ gender norm. I do this by examining, first, the impact that the roles have on classifications of gender and second, asking whether the problems identified are better understood in terms of violence. I will argue that women in violent roles are perceived to be transgressive – to varying extents – of both gender and violence norms.

First, violent roles in war affect the ‘peaceful woman’ gender norm in differing ways depending on whether they are first, indirectly or second, directly, violent. Taking indirect violence first, there is both some and paradoxically little modification to the gender norm. On the one hand, for example, the mother and supporter are not averse to being complicit in aggressive activity, which distinguishes them from the resigned bystanders or pacifists that

more readily fit the 'peaceful woman' caricature. By raising combatants, sacrificing their children, and supporting the war effort through transporting arms, women play active roles in conflict that destabilise the passivity engendered in the 'peaceful woman' stereotype. On the other hand, by not engaging in combat or inflicting force in the way soldiers do, mothers and supporters are not actually violent and thereby retain aspects of the peacefulness that is associated with females. In this regard, they remain entrenched within the 'peaceful woman' framework. Whilst obscuring the non-participatory feature of the paradigm, therefore, indirectly violent roles nevertheless continue to perpetuate other key elements, such as non-aggressiveness, of the 'peaceful woman' gender stereotype.

By contrast, and second, women who are directly violent more compellingly infringe gender norms. Female suicide bombers, like mothers and supporters, are operatives in conflict but, unlike them, the bombers are executors of violence too, and so are irrefutably aggressive actors. The suicide bombers undermine female archetypes because "*women* are not supposed to be violent" (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 2) but, rather, are meant to conform to the 'peaceful woman' norm. Yet the bombers conspicuously flout these requirements. Indeed, Cindy Ness argues:

as typical social roles and expectations associated with females virtually negate their potential for aggression, females who carry out terrorist acts, whether fighting for secular or religious ends, have historically been seen as violating conventional notions of gender and power...their behaviour represents a challenge to the social order (Ness, 2008, 2).

Women who are directly aggressive, that is, defy the peaceful norms by which they are expected to be bound and instead encroach upon the violent norms reserved for men. Put differently, they contravene the “male monopoly” (Brunner, 2005, 30) on violence when they carry out such attacks.

Thus, I have argued that the gender stereotype of ‘peaceful woman’ is challenged to some extent when females are indirectly violent but is obfuscated to a much greater degree when women are direct perpetrators of violence. It is when women expand their roles in conflict (either from a peaceful or indirectly violent) to a directly violent role that gender norms are most clearly transgressed.

Second, I consider whether these transgressions are better framed in terms of violence rather than gender norms. Since violence committed by anyone is generally condemned in many societies (there are laws prohibiting actual bodily harm right through to murder) but is sometimes allowed (as in situations of self-protection), the issue might be that suicide bombing is more aligned to the former type of violence than the latter. Perhaps it is the *unsanctioned* nature of the aggressive behaviour, not the *gender* of the perpetrator at all, that is the crux of the female bomber ‘problem’ (what makes it an infraction). In this regard, morally unjustified violence (such as the – male or female – terrorist, paedophile, or gangster) violates the non-violence norm per se, whereas morally permissible violence (the male ‘just warrior’ or the mother protecting her child) does not. Male suicide bombers, for example, are often derided as being “craven homicidal lunatics” (Atran et al., 2003, 1536) because of the

perceived taboo of their violence that kills others and themselves.¹⁸ As this is the same violence female suicide bombers employ, and she is in breach too, it can be suggested that it is the violence – not the gender – that is the nub of the matter in both cases. If violent women are an issue because they are immorally violent (and not because they are women), then it seems that aggression of this kind is seldom approved whoever perpetrates it.

Yet, even being attributed with violent tendencies in the first instance is gender dependent. While engaging in proscribed violence is at least within the spectrum of possible male conduct (so it is plausible for men to embark upon prohibited aggression), it does not constitute a comparable feature of the woman's repertoire (it is not conceivably open to her). That a suicide bombing attack perpetrated by a man is analysed with due seriousness while one perpetrated by a woman is not is an illustration of this. As Paige Whaley Eager argues:

male suicide bombing, whilst repulsive to most observers and researchers, is viewed in some way as more 'understandable' given the particular macrolevel or mesolevel factors. In other words, some might argue that it is to a certain degree understandable that a male Palestinian would detonate himself and kill and maim as many civilians as possible given the deep sense of alienation, humiliation, and despair he might feel living under Israeli occupation; however, the female suicide bomber's motivations are rarely afforded the same speculation (2008, 24).

¹⁸ On the contrary, suicide bombers are usually well educated, rational individuals acting from varying motives. As Atran argues, "study after study shows that suicide attackers and their supporters are rarely ignorant or impoverished. Nor are they crazed, cowardly, apathetic or asocial" (Atran, 2004, 5).

Though the severity of the bombing is equivalent, it is because *women* are adjudged incapable of forbidden violence that the aggression is deemed transgressive (rather than solely because the violence is of a particularly heinous sort, which is at the root of the infringement for men). A violent woman, like the suicide bomber, therefore, violates both the norms against disallowed violence and gender; she enacts a “double transgression” (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 15). This makes her unique to a violent man because her act “is a qualitatively different matter from a man doing the same thing [. . .] – the gender of the bomber being the critical factor here, not [just] the act itself” (Ness, 2008, 11). In this way, female suicide bombers are more troublesome than their male counterparts because they challenge norms twice over (gender and violence).

Thus, women who inflict direct violence, such as the female suicide bomber, disobey the ‘peaceful woman’ stereotype to a greater degree than those engaged in indirect violence, such as the mother and supporter. Directly violent women are ‘problematic’ in a second sense too, because they defy societal norms against proscribed violence. This makes them more troubling than men who carry out such violence.

In this section I have discussed norms and roles relating to women in political conflict in order to situate and introduce some complexities around the female suicide bomber. I have set out the gender norms of ‘peaceful woman’ and ‘violent man’ in war that were underpinned by passive and aggressive norms in peace respectively, and I indicated that women typically hold non-violent roles in conflict that adhered to this norm. I then explored women in increasingly violent roles, either indirectly (as mothers or supporters) or directly (as female suicide bombers). I argued that these violent roles challenge gender norms. While indirectly violent

roles test the boundaries to some extent, directly violent ones are, incontrovertibly, more transgressive. Further, norms against prohibited aggression are also breached. Together, this makes female bombers more controversial than their male peers.

Responses to Women's Violence

Having outlined the 'problem' of the female suicide bomber, in this section I investigate possible 'solutions' to her. In particular, I explore a range of societal responses to these women that both accounts for her and reinstates gender and violence norms that she disrupts. I do this in three parts, first, I briefly examine how violent women specifically are 'explained' in order to preserve norms of 'peaceful woman' generally, before I consider in more detail examples of how this shift manifests itself in societies that (in the second part) reject and (in the third part) endorse (to some degree) the use of female suicide bombers. I will contend that, though with differing emphases, both societies seek to maintain the 'peaceful woman' norm and do so by peddling the impression that female bombers are dissimilar to non-violent women.

Explaining transgressive behaviour

First I outline approaches to explaining violent women, focussing on societal analyses that attempt to unravel the transgressive behaviour. I do this by prioritising and exploring the pattern of responses in first, broad attitudes and second, the media. Though these two facets of society are inextricably linked (the media does not operate in a social vacuum and attitudes are not unaffected by the media), they will, for the purposes of clarity, be discussed somewhat separately. I will argue that a significant attitudinal change is to disassociate violent from

‘normal’ women, and that media interpretations credit and reinforce these bids to ‘explain away’ the bombers. Moreover, I will hint that different societies and groups adopt these strategies to particular ends, and I will spend the subsequent two parts of this section substantiating this claim.

First, I explore societal attitudes towards transgressive women. In order to repair the break with convention that violent females present (the disconnect, that is, between norms and behaviour), society can address the situation in one of two ways. Either the norms in general (pervading stereotypes can be revised to include the offending conduct) or the violent women in particular (specific incidents that transgress otherwise apt norms can be explained) can be reconstructed. The latter option of reinterpreting single cases of violence is far less demanding than the former of overhauling stereotypes.¹⁹ Specifically, it is more expedient for female suicide bombers and their violent acts to be, as Ness describes it, “reframed or rhetorically repackaged” (2008, 12) than it is for the system that denies women the capacity for violence (amongst other behaviours) to be so. Particular instances of violent women, therefore, need to be explained.

One way in which the discrepancy between peaceful norms and violent female behaviour can be resolved is by distinguishing violent and ‘normal’ women (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). A contrast can be made between “violent female political actors [and] the *acceptable* and *normal* conception of women as nurturing, caring individuals” (Eager, 2008, 12). In this way, ‘normal’ women preserve their peaceful, passive characteristics that bar violent behaviours,

¹⁹ The reason for this is two-fold. First, because – as the norms are political, in as much as they are social, constructs – the dominant group seeks to maintain the existing order rather than effect change. Second, because reaching the tipping point for the successful transition to new archetypes is a cumbersome process, as any emancipatory movement will testify.

whereas ‘non-normal’ women possess the hostile, assertive traits that enable them to perpetrate aggressive acts. By drawing this distinction, society standardises peaceful women and “fully other[s] violent women” (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 13), so that most women are understood to adhere to widespread norms, while a few can be isolated as different. In this picture, this separate contingent transgresses gender stereotypes that are otherwise appropriate for all ‘normal’ women.

Already distinct from most women in order to sustain gender norms, this ‘othered’ group can be ideologically explained one further time by particular societies or movements for political ends. Depending on the circumstances, they can, for example, be construed negatively (where female suicide bombers are not utilised) or positively (where they are), thereby engendering the correlative attitudes of rejection and acceptance in the community.²⁰ That is, “the public at large, depending on the context, sometimes cheers and valorises these women or at other times condemns and demonises them” (Eager, 2008, 3). I will examine this claim about acceptance and rejection in greater detail later but, for now, suffice to say, political groups and sub-groups can create biases in the explanations offered for ‘othered’ women that impacts societal attitudes towards them. Thus, violent females are separated, with a particular spin, from ‘normal’ women, which reflects and affects social attitudes towards them.

Having considered social approaches for dealing with the ‘problem’ of violent women, I now examine media strategies for responding to it. The media reports not just facts but facts encased in particular narratives that explain events using shorthand terms, interpretations, and biases that its audience can understand and with which it can quickly engage (West, 2004;

²⁰ This is argued in Marway, 2011.

Nacos, 2008). In this regard, it has descriptive and inventive purpose, or as Jessica West puts it:

framing and myth-making functions. In ‘selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution,’ the media frames an event in society’s consciousness. Moreover, in contributing to the production of myths, the media provides the stories that ‘make sense of a society for a society’ (2004, 5).

In using existing references and stereotypes and in structuring and linking incidents in selective ways, the stories are more exaggerated and easier to comprehend, and the media bolsters current, and forges new, myths in that society to explain events back to it.²¹

Where violent women and the transgression of norms are concerned, for example, the media frames reports so they resonate with societal attitudes about female suicide bombing but also develops its own streamlined narratives that make this telling easier. Societies that prohibit and those that sanction the female bomber can illustrate this. Just as some societies reject female violence and others endorse it, so too the media in those communities follow suit and also simultaneously devises its own tropes that society can recognise. I will flesh out examples of these trends in the following parts of this section, but the key point here is that

²¹ In these ways, the narratives of women in non-conflict are important, as these help frame interpretations of women in conflict. Such representations will be explored in the rest of this section.

different media explanations give credence to, uphold, and trigger various societal attitudes about female violence.²²

I have suggested, then, that one way in which the transgressions of violent women are dissipated is to regard them as different to ‘normal’ women and that this attitude can be propelled and accelerated by media reports. In the next two sections, I set out evidence of how these ‘othering’ trends manifest themselves in different societies: those that prohibit and those that permit (to some extent) female suicide bombers.

Female suicide bombers as unacceptable

In this section I discuss contexts where violent women are ‘othered’ *and* considered to be unacceptable. In this setting, the female bomber is constructed as deficient and “less than a woman” (Eager, 2008, 3) in order to account for her act whilst maintaining the ‘peaceful woman’ norm. As Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry argue, “if the women who commit violent crimes and political violence...can be discredited *as women* and seen as ‘bad women’ or ‘femininity taken to an irrational extreme’ then they can exist in a world that holds intact the stereotype of women’s fragility and purity” (2007, 13).²³ Where female violence is rejected, such women are therefore constructed negatively.

Focusing on the causes of their ‘defective’ femininity, these responses rationalise violent women in two ways, first, as suffering from personal traumas (‘bad’) or personality disorders

²² Differing societal biases can be seen at the most rudimentary level of the terminology used for these attacks. While ‘suicide bomber’ or ‘Black Widow’ is a Western construct, ‘martyr’ or ‘shahida’ are more likely in Middle-Eastern media (Whitehead, 2007; Nacos, 2008). The way the media frame the bombers even at this level, then, reflect particular societal attitudes to these violent women.

²³ Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) have explored the ‘othering’ of violent women through the narratives of mothers, monsters and whores (30-49) and they focus on the West’s treatment of such women. This thesis considers both societies where female bombers are unaccepted and accepted.

(‘mad’) that hinder their ‘proper’, nonviolent, development and second, as enduring imposed hardships that precipitates violence (the ‘victim’ trope). In so doing, female suicide bombers are cast as inferior aberrations that are understood by society through a ‘victim’ narrative, while peaceful women continue to be ‘normal’, ‘full’ women.

i. ‘Bad’ and ‘mad’ women

In the first set of explanations, the female bombers are cast as different to ‘normal’ women because they suffer individual impediments of various kinds, including two that I will explore here. First, they suffer distress that accompanies psychological traumas (a weak version) and second, they suffer abnormalities that are associated with psychiatric disorders (a strong version). By explaining the bombers in either of these ways, they are distinguished from ‘normal’ women as either ‘bad’ or ‘mad’; in short, not ‘normal’ women.

‘Bad’

On the weaker account, women are regarded as afflicted by social stigma that causes them psychological upset. Personal difficulties – such as, improper relationships with men, reputations of collusion with the enemy, lacking suitable characteristics for marriage, or holding irregular aspirations, for example (Schweitzer, 2008) – are pointed to as ‘proof’ of their subnormal social status as “misfits or outcasts” (Bloom, 2005b, 59). This provides reasons for seeing them as different to ‘normal’ women.

To elaborate, where unsuitable relations with men are concerned, for instance, these women are derided for “having had sexual relations before marriage or an affair during marriage” (Schweitzer, 2008, 133) or being “pregnant out of wedlock” (Victor, 2003, 201). These

scenarios lead to the women being renounced by their societies for failing to be ‘good’ women. In terms of conspiring with the group’s adversaries, the bombers are sometimes deemed to belong to “families that carry with them the stain of collaboration, which obligates the woman’s sacrifice in order to cleanse the family name” (Schweitzer, 2008, 133). Here, the women and their families are rejected by society for being traitors. At other times, they are considered to be missing the appropriate traits to fulfil their roles as women, such as being “barren...[or having] a physical defect that lowers a woman’s desirability as a wife” (*ibid*) and which results in them rebuffed by suitors in particular and society in general. Differently still, the women are unwanted because they are “unmarried at a relatively advanced age” or “divorced” (*ibid*), and which means that they are no longer prime candidates for being wives in their societies. Finally, where women have aspirations outside the roles they are expected to have, they are “the target of ridicule and exclusion because they [a]re educated and intelligent” (Victor, 2003, 201). They are ‘outsiders’ in their societies for having career goals, as opposed to settling for being a domestic homemaker. In whichever form, these women are ostracised, labelled “damaged goods” (Schweitzer, 2008, 131), and marginalised (for reasons spanning ineligibility as a wife to an inability to follow social mores about what women should be) in the societies of which they should be a part. In other words, they are considered ‘bad’, not ‘good’, women.

Responses such as these ‘other’ the bombers through scandal, seeking out the social pressures that could impinge on and compromise their standing in the community, and which can be used to ‘explain’ their (presumed) damaged psychological health. They are separated from ‘normal’ women and judged to be tragic anomalies, and in so doing the broad ‘peaceful woman’ norm is preserved.

‘Mad’

The stronger version of the ‘defective’ explanation suggests that female suicide bombers suffer from psychosis; they are ‘mad’. Sjoberg and Gentry argue that violent women are construed as “monster[s and...] as insane, [...] no longer woman or human” (2007, 13) but, rather, delusional and out of control. These responses focus not on personal pressures but individual abnormalities: “mental illness plays a part, since not all marginalised women within the Palestinian society kill themselves. Pathology plays an important role” (Professor Masalqa in Victor, 2003, 28). ‘Evidence’ of the bomber’s ‘madness’ includes first, the impaired interpretation of their ‘accepted’ roles, second, the severity of their anger and third, their sexual depravity. In all of these instances, the bombers are considered to be different to ‘normal’ women.

In the first example, female bombers embrace their social roles (in contrast to the ‘bad’ woman above) but do so to an uncontrollable extreme. They are women who are caring and nurturing but construe these ‘normal’ female dispositions in an irrational way; they are mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters who have “gone awry” (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 13). Through their ‘madness’, they are unable to discern the proper levels of love and sacrifice for their families or country – which ‘normal’ women can grasp – and are instead excessively doting and self-abnegating – which leads to the flawed logic of suicide bombing (for the ‘good’ of others and despite the certainty of one’s death). In this regard, the bombers are seen as unreasonable and are ‘faulty’ compared to ‘normal’ women.

The second indication of their ‘madness’ is the anger they display. Female suicide bombers are judged to be ferocious women. They are “more macho” (Alison, 2004, 457), “more fanatical, more cruel, more deadly” (Nacos, 2008, 228) than, not just ‘normal’ women, but men too, and this acute temper is attributed to a psychotic, unstable streak. The women are considered to harbour the kind of “cold rage” (Cooper, 1979, 151) that leads to fighters in the LTTE, for instance, to have a “fearsome reputation” (Alison, 2004, 457). Likewise, it is this fury that caused hostages in the Dubrovka Theatre Siege to claim that the women were “severe with us [...and that] with the women I had no desire to speak” (Hostage in Speckhard et al., 2004, 319) lest there be repercussions.²⁴ This is a brutality that is beyond the pale of ‘normal’ women and explainable only by the bomber’s derangement.

In the final example, women are ‘mad’ because of their intense sexual depravity (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). Rather than a bomber’s error being average sexual curiosity that their society condemns (as in the ‘bad’ scenarios above), this is an altogether more extreme sexuality that makes these women deviant. They are either heterosexual “erotomania[cs...or] erotic[ally] dysfunction[al]” (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 13); hypersexual or not sexual enough. Alternatively they are “excessive . . . lesbian[s]” (Eager, 2008, 3), which is a view that regards “the terrorist as lesbian, because everyone knows no ‘real woman’ would hijack planes or cripple middleage men by shooting them in the kneecaps” (Jacoby in Nacos, 2008, 229). By possessing ‘unorthodox’ (abnormally dominant or subservient hetero- or homo-) sexual

²⁴ However, even this perception about the women’s severity is based on accepting false norms about women being unable to be violent and thereby there is something askew with these women. As Lisa Kruger argues, “the idea that women are more ruthless arises from cultural myth as well as the notion that if a ‘pretty, small girl’ becomes violent she must be extra ruthless since it’s ‘not in her nature’. There is no substantial evidence that women terrorists are more ruthless or more dangerous. Such claims are largely based on perceptions” (Kruger in Skaine, 2006, 35 - unpublished email interview between Lisa Kruger and Rosemary Skaine, September 16, 2005).

compulsions and obsessions, violent women are both aberrant and inferior to ‘normal’ women’s ‘moderate’ (hetero-) sexuality.

In ascribing the violent behaviour to psychosis – using ‘evidence’ such as their unhinged interpretation of duties, or their anger or sexuality – female suicide bombers are distinguished from ‘normal’ women. Further, the bombers are deemed to be inferior to the norm because such women do not carry out violence. Through this, the ‘problematic’ women are explained and the norm of ‘peaceful woman’ remains intact.

The first response to violent women where they are unacceptable, therefore, is to ‘other’ them from ‘normal’ women (in order to protect gender norms) by presenting female suicide bombers as faulty, isolated irregularities. They are women either undergoing personal traumas (‘bad’) or are psychotic (‘mad’), and are not ‘real’ women.

ii. ‘Victims’

The second way in which violent women are explained by societies that find female suicide bombing unacceptable is through media portrayals, which base their reporting on the ‘bad–mad’ ‘othering’ process to weave a narrative that the public understands. In doing this, the media attempts to “re-establish some kind of rational argument in order to provide their audience with comprehensible explanations” (Brunner, 2005, 39) for the female suicide bomber’s act. In particular, I suggest that media in these societies excuse the women using the ‘victim’ narrative, where they are deemed injured parties, whether at the hands of first, a ruthless enemy or second, a coercive terrorist regime. In either case, these victimised women are presented as not electing to be violent, but rather being pushed into it. This is a narrative

both that society immediately understands and that preserves the view that women are generally peaceful.

Victims of 'hostile' forces

In the first set of examples, women are direct or indirect victims of an occupying force, with violence meted out at either the women or their families and communities. As victims of direct aggression, it is reported that enemy combatants sexually defile these women, who then turn to violence for retribution. Dhanu, for instance, was “allegedly raped by soldiers from the Indian Peacekeeping Force when it was posted in Sri Lanka for three years” (Goodwin, 2007, 6) and thereafter was determined to become a bomber. In other instances, such as in Dagestan, women are clandestinely “abducted [...and then] tortured” (Harding, 2010, 30) into becoming bombers by Russian forces so that Russian authorities gain a political excuse to ‘retaliate’. Here, they are direct targets of surreptitious activity by the enemy. Differently, the women experience degradation of other sorts: “the [Israeli] army stormed [...Daraghmeh’s] family house. One of the soldiers tore up Hiba’s textbooks and a copy of the Koran...a week later...as she was walking to school, an army jeep stopped her and soldiers forced her to take the veil off” (Ghazali, 2003, 1). Such incidents are presented as angering the women enough to take justice into their own hands as bombers. These women, therefore, suffer violence personally from their foes.

As victims of indirect force, on the other hand, enemy troops harm the women’s extended family and communities. The women witness aggression towards their male relatives, for instance, whom enemy forces routinely humiliate, torture or “sho[o]t dead” (*BBC News*, 2005, 1), thereby prompting violence by the women out of “despair and revenge” (Wente, 2003, 1)

for family deaths. Aishen, for example, became a suicide bomber because she “had lost members of her extended family in shootings” (Copeland, 2002, 1), and likewise, Degauque is reported to be a bereaved widow, mourning from the loss of her second husband, who was executed by occupying forces in Iraq (*BBC News*, 2005). These women are reported as grieving victims. In other instances, the violence is not towards loved ones but the community at large. Idris, for example, is reported to have reacted to the suffering of “all the wounded people she saw in the ambulances. She wanted to help her people” (Malbrook Idris in *BBC News*, 2002, 1) generally rather than her family specifically. Though the enemy forces prey on their families or communities, not the women themselves, these women experience violence indirectly nonetheless.

Through a narrative of violent women being resentful and vengeful (because they have experienced – immediately or vicariously – rape, torture, or assassination from callous foreign occupiers), these bombers are involuntarily reacting to insurmountable hardships. In this regard, they are victimised, and considered to be responding begrudgingly to violence they have endured and not making a decision to act.

Victims of ‘friendly’ forces

Second, female suicide bombers are victims of militant terrorist organisations (that are supposedly fighting on their behalf), who exploit either their forlorn circumstances or their naive susceptibility. In the former scenario, the women are in situations of hopelessness that are capitalised upon by the insurgents. The widowed and failed Chechen bomber, Muzhakhoyeva, for instance, is “not a defiant Islamist desperate for a place in heaven. Her story is one of poverty and desperation” (Groskop, 2004, 32). She is reported as being given

the chance to clear her debts by becoming a martyr but then covertly “drugged regularly in her orange juice” (*ibid*) by Chechen militants to prevent her renegeing on the agreement.²⁵ Here, the potential bomber was not only bereaved and mourning the death of her husband but was trapped and misused by the Chechens. Similarly, Kaplan was someone in a difficult situation, having witnessed a hesitant PKK combatant, Turkan Adiyaman, being shot in front of her by the PKK “as an example of the fate that befalls shirkers” (Reuter, 2004, 165). She too was in despair and ill-treated. These women are deemed victims of terrorist organisations, who exploit their discontent.

Alternatively, the women are regarded as gullible and easily manipulated. For example, female bombers are reported to be innocent girls lured into disreputable relationships by calculating men who force them to act. One account, for example, read: “Palestinian masters of mass murder have themselves had affairs with vulnerable young Palestinian girls in order to compromise their ‘honour’ and to season them, pimp-style, for martyrdom” (Chesler, 2004, 1). Here, the women are helpless and too trusting of these sinister men. For instance, al-Riyashi, a married woman, was reported to have a lover who was also a member of Hamas and whose (alleged) intention for her was to be shamed precisely so she could redeem herself as a bomber. She was “told to choose between being killed by her family as an unfaithful wife or die as a heroine in a suicide bombing” (*Daily Mail* extract, Berkowitz, 2005, 616). These women are regarded as impressionable individuals, exploited by unrelenting terrorists.

²⁵ Viv Groskop paints a vivid picture of Muzhakhoyeva’s plight: an unplanned pregnancy, early marriage brought about by social mores, and the death of her rebel husband. In her effort to escape her husband’s family, who treated her like a “household slave” (2004, 32), she stole from them and amassed many debts in failed attempts to flee, at which point she encountered Chechen militants, who offered to repay her debts if she became a martyr. Once she agreed, she was allegedly held against her will.

Framed as vulnerable (through either despondency or immaturity) these reports present the bombers as “lost soul[s] led astray” (Smith, 2005, 1) by manipulative insurgents. These women are dupes, who are taken advantage of by those who profess to be fighting for their communities. They are coerced victims, not wilful actors.

The victimisation frame, therefore, presents women as resorting, rather than rationally deciding, to engage in suicide bombing. Either they avenge harms done by enemy forces or lack alternatives after being tricked by ‘friendly’ ones. In both cases, they do not choose to be violent, and in both cases the victim notion is quickly understood. This provides an easy to comprehend narrative for aberrant violent women and distinguishes them from ‘normal’ women.

In this section, I have explored responses in societies where female violence is prohibited. In these instances, violent women are differentiated from ‘normal’ women as aggressive because they are faulty (‘bad’ or ‘mad’). Further, they are presented as impelled to act (‘victims’) because this is a media narrative allied with the ‘defective’ explanation and that individuals can immediately identify and understand. This ‘explains’ violent women while preserving gender norms of ‘peaceful woman’ in a clear way for society.

Female suicide bombers as acceptable

In the final section, I consider contexts that endorse (to some extent – as will be clarified) female violence; where violent women are ‘othered’ *and* acceptable. As in societies where such violence is disallowed, the women deviate from their gender stereotype but, unlike those societies, they are construed positively. To achieve this, society must substantiate “the breach

of its social order to itself in its own cultural terms” (Ness, 2007, 88). In other words, the departure from the norm must be justified, in language that resonates with that community, if the support of the people is to be garnered.²⁶ This appeal is expected whenever violence is systematically used by political organisations – since any aggression breaks non-violence norms (recall that the male suicide bomber is ‘problematic’ too). Yet, it is demanded to a greater extent when female violence is employed – since there is a “double transgression” (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 15) of (gender and proscribed violence) norms.²⁷ Insurgents must

²⁶ Even if the broad political aim of terrorist organisations, such as gaining national independence, is supported by the affected community, the tactic of suicide bombing itself is more controversial and its legitimacy contingent upon public sanctioning. In this regard, “organisations that use humans as weapons would not exist without community support” (Zedalis, 2008, 55). The group is thoroughly dependent on wider society to condone the tactic. For this to happen, the violence “needs not only to have the expected pragmatic consequences but also to be judged appropriate” (Whitehead, 2007, 46) by the people, such that it is presented and seen as strategically necessary and ideologically sound. If successful on this count, the organisation can rely on the support of the community. As Bloom argues, “when the bombings resonate positively with the population that insurgent groups purport to represent, they help the organisation mobilise support. If suicide bombing does not resonate among the larger population the tactic will fail” (Bloom, 2005a, 78). If it convinces the wider public, the suicide bombing attacks come to be regarded as “*from the people for the people*” (Reuter, 2004, 169) and necessary, legitimate and praiseworthy.

Moreover, the justification for this kind of attack often happens in later phases of the struggle, rather than at the beginning (though note that Barayev and Magomadova were employed from the start of the battle for an independent Chechnya, which is unlike many other campaigns for freedom). Bloom (2005a) and Eager (2008) both argue that it is easier for groups to engage in ‘standard’ warfare tactics before moving to ‘non-standard’ varieties, of which suicide bombing would be a part. Bloom contends, “militant groups are more likely to adopt suicide bombing as a strategy, and the tactic is more likely to resonate positively with the population, after other strategies have been tried and failed” (Bloom, 2005a, 78).

²⁷ Note also that *any* organisation or state that employs violence must justify that violence. Each side of the conflict, then, has its own narrative and grounds for war and, where female suicide bombers are involved, women have a certain “utility” (Ness 2007, 87) for sustaining military advantage and are useful rhetorical tools in this strategy. In this regard, just as violent women are ‘othered’ from normal women, so too is the ‘wrong’ side of the conflict ‘othered’ from the ‘right’. Those that do not use bombers, for instance, castigate the other as barbaric and uncivilised and, as Claudia Brunner argues, a dichotomy that devises a “rational, emancipated, and enlightened first world” (Brunner 2007, 964) non-user of female suicide bombers (the ‘right’ side) and an “oriental, third world, Muslim/Arab, far away, and necessarily other” (Brunner 2007, 964) who does (the ‘wrong’ side) is evident. This assigns political, military, and moral legitimacy to the former while undermining the latter. Similarly, where female bombers are used, the women have a military value in raising awareness of the conflict and being able to evade detection (Bloom 2007; Ness 2007), but also serve to underscore the moral superiority of insurgents. By highlighting that women, usually considered to be virtuous in society, take up these roles draws attention to the ‘worthiness’ of the cause – that “we even sacrifice our best and brightest to bring salvation” (Brunner 2005, 35). Further, by emphasising the asymmetry of power, the tactic is portrayed as a morally permissible “last resort [. . .] the weapon of the weak” (Brunner 2005, 35), but morally ‘right’, side of the conflict. Each party then has tactical advantages when women are used as suicide bombers. Of course, warring sides drawing on the utility of violence and rhetoric to justify battle exists in conflict more generally. There are, for example, theoretical parallels, with various theorists justifying violence on the grounds of instrumentality, necessity and virtue, as well as employing persuasive arguments that focus on aesthetics, tragedy, sublimity and rhetoric (Frazer and Hutchings, 2007). However, the use of women as suicide bombers –

provide stronger evidence when contraventions are by women than by men to convince the wider group of their legitimacy.

This ‘othering’ and endorsing of violent women can be achieved in two ways, first, by elevating their cultural or religious status (so they are ‘revered’) and commending their acts (so they are ‘cheered’) and second, by presenting them as just partakers of violence (the trope of the ‘ideal warrior’). By doing this, the bombers are ‘othered’ as exceptional women using the terms of the easily comprehensible ‘ideal warrior’ narrative, while ‘normal’ women continue to abide by the unexceptional ‘peaceful woman’ norm.

i. ‘Revered’ and ‘cheered’ women

In the first part, I explore explanations in societies where violent women are ‘othered’ and where that non-conformity is commended. To justify the violation, groups utilising women bombers can first, lay a precedent for female violence by culturally or religiously historicising it (‘revere’ the women) and second, reward the behaviour (‘cheer’ them) though, third, there are also some caveats (the violence must be a temporary and sole transgression) that must be abided (Ness, 2008).²⁸ Through this process, and with the limiting conditions honoured, the women are separated from ‘normal’ women and approved by society.

‘Revered’ women

The otherwise norm-contravening status of violent women is mitigated when organisations link the aggression to a mutual and treasured history, such that the behaviour becomes

for all their perceived uniqueness – adds another way in which both sides of the conflict appeal to utility and rhetoric.

²⁸ Ness (2008), drawing on Schalk (1997), uses these themes of historicisation, rewards and conditions in relation to religious groups utilising female bombers. Here, both secular and religious groups and the ‘othering’ process are considered.

esteemed by association. Organisations may, for example, point to familiar (real or fictional) violent females, prominent principles, or pivotal struggles from the past as paragons to justify the necessity for female bombers in the present conflict (Schalk, 1997; Ness, 2008). By connecting the transgressive bomber to society in this way, the behaviour is “historicis[ed]” (Schalk, 1997, 35) and embedded “within a collectively shared past where it can draw its sustenance from symbols that transcend time” (Ness, 2008, 12). In associating the women and the past, the violent females are ‘othered’ from ‘normal’ women but, instead of being ‘bad’ or ‘mad’, are held in high regard (‘revered’).

To illustrate, insurgents have historicised female violence whether they have a secular or a religious ethos. Taking the secular groups first, examples of violent women from the past and their use in previous conflicts have been used to sanction the bombers in contemporary wars. For instance, the (then) leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, referred to Sathyabama, Krishna’s wife, who participated in mythical battles in Hinduism and the role of women in the national army in order to make Black Tigresses more palatable to the Tamil community (Schalk, 1997). This connects female bombers to figures of antiquity in a positive way. In another example, Yasser Arafat of Fatah built upon the historic role of women as self-sacrificing in the first Palestinian Intifada to not only galvanise support for a second Intifada but to also hint at one where women took up more aggressive positions. He argued, “you [the women] are my army of roses that will crush Israeli tanks...the hope that will liberate your husbands, fathers, and sons from oppression. You will sacrifice the way you, women, have always sacrificed for your family” (Arafat in Victor, 2003, 19-20).²⁹ In relating expected and valued roles of women in former conflicts with potentially expanded roles in the current

²⁹ Though it is not clear that it was his intention to introduce a policy of female suicide bombers, Arafat’s speech was certainly the catalyst for attacks by women in Palestine. Indeed, that afternoon Wafa Idris became the first bomber in the territories.

injustice, the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (such as female aggression) is blurred. Thus, by drawing a parallel between previous esteemed violent women or past roles in other conflicts endured by the society, secular groups justify the aggression of female bombers in small and incremental steps.

Similarly, theocratic organisations have identified historic violent women from the past as tolerable models for modern violent women (Ness, 2008). Hamas, for instance, claim that the first person to die for Islam was a woman (Sumayah Zawjat Yasir), and Sheikh Abu al-Hassan cites the Prophet's aunt as a famous example of a female warrior: she "came down from the women's citadel, and fought a man from among the infidels who climbed up the citadel. She killed him but took care to protect Islamic morality by refraining from stripping and disarming him" (al-Hassan in Ness, 2008, 27). Just as in secular organisations, religious groups connect historical female violence to present day suicide bombers too. Differently from secular groups, however, they also utilise religious principles, such as reinterpreting Jihad, to justify female violence (Ness 2008; Cook 2008). For example, as David Cook (2008) argues, Jihad as *fard kifaya* suggests that the threat is serious enough for the "Muslim, adult, sane, free, male, and able-bodied" (41) segment of the community to fight, but Jihad as *fard 'ayn* is the appropriate understanding of Jihad when the crisis facing Muslims is "existential" (Cunningham 2008, 93). This latter interpretation compels every individual (including women) to bear responsibility (without asking the permission of men - Sister Al, 2007) to engage in combat.³⁰ Pervasive and eminent religious principles then have been tweaked and

³⁰ Salafist movements (like al-Qaeda) as well as other religious organisations (such as Hamas) have adopted these revamped religious doctrines that rely on existential threats to the group to dispense with otherwise orthodox principles – such as the need for women to be escorted by a male member of the family when outside the home. Under the reinterpretation, women can now leave the house and participate in Jihad without anyone's permission and without a chaperone because they are fighting for Islam's survival (Cook, 2008; Cunningham, 2008).

tied directly to women's violence to allow legitimate participation. Thus, by connecting historical religious figures and doctrines to the female bomber, the violence is made more acceptable.

In secular and religious organisations alike, therefore, violent women are 'othered' from peaceful ('normal') women and linked to venerated ('non-normal') violent women, past injustices, or the substance of sacred tenets that permit female violence in specific contexts. By emulating these esteemed figures, appealing to shared events, or embracing these holy canons, modern-day violent women are, by association, 'revered'.

'Cheered' women

Once 'historicised', female violence is made more socially acceptable by rewarding, rather than punishing, the behaviour. Building on the culture of martyrdom and "popular-culture hero-worship" (Reuter, 2004, 13) of male bombers, female suicide bombers are similarly praised as "heroes [...and] have entered immortality" (Beyler, 2003b, 11). The women achieve an iconic status, with processions for burials, and statues, libraries, and exhibitions to commemorate them, as well as recreations of their acts. In so doing, the bombers are separated from 'normal' women in their violence, but they are also exonerated; the women are 'cheered'.

For instance, grand funerals are often arranged to acknowledge the sacrifice of female suicide bombers. After attacks by women in the Middle East, for example, "hundreds of Palestinians showed up at their funerals to pay their respects" (Beyler, 2003b, 11) and equally in Sri Lanka "scented candles, garlands of flowers, and papier-mâché effigies of the dead decorate their

shrines” (Reuter, 2004, 160) to honour their contribution. Further, family members refuse to mourn these women at the funerals, seeing their martyrdom as a “gift” (Jadarat – father of the bomber – in Berkowitz 2005, 615) and exclaiming, “why should we cry? It is like her wedding day, the happiest day of her life” (Thafer Jadarat – brother of the bomber – in Berkowitz 2005, 615).³¹ By organising elaborate funerals and celebrating rather than grieving, society salutes the bombers acts.

In a different example, the women and their acts are memorialised. Saddam Hussein, for instance, allegedly commissioned a statue built in honour of Idris (*BBC News* 2002, 1) and a library at Yemen Children’s Hospital was named after her in 2009 (Middle East Media Research Institute – *MEMRI* – 2009, 1), indicating that Idris received acclaim for her acts. Exhibitions have also been curated to document and celebrate the work of suicide bombers such as the ‘Sbarro Café Exhibition’ in Palestine, which marked the anniversary of the bombing of the café in August 2001 in which Zina was instrumental. The admiration for the bombers and their acts at this show was evident: “the Sbarro section of the exhibit was replete with body parts and pizza slices strewn across the room. The walls were painted red to represent spattered blood. Another part of the exhibit glorified the ‘martyrs’ who carry out suicide operations” (Anti-Defamation League, 2002, 1). In this exhibition, suicide bombers

³¹ This response is similar to the ‘supporter’ role of mothers discussed in typical roles in conflict in the earlier parts of this chapter. As was noted there, families here too may be following the pattern of publicised joy and privatised grief when the bombers are women (Tzoreff, 2006, 19). For example, Mabrook Idris, the mother of Wafa Idris, initially exclaimed, “I am proud that my daughter died for Palestine, proud that she gave her life for us all. Thank God, thank God...” (Idris in Victor, 2003, 37). However, as Barbara Victor notes, “after an hour of sitting with her, talking with her, listening to her, Mabrook Idris is weeping. ‘If I had known what she was going to do, I would have stopped her,’ she says. ‘I grieve for my daughter.’” (Victor, 2003, 37). In this way, though the mothers and families of the women grieve privately, they are joyous publicly because this is the only allowable emotional response.

(including females) are praised for their efforts. Such tributes glorify these women and their attacks.

Finally, the female bomber's acts are imitated and re-enacted by the youth. For instance, "martyrdom has become the most popular trend that separates the 'in' kids from the nerds" (Victor, 2003, 190) and many applaud it. This trend is discernible in the playground "with some children in the Gaza strip emulating martyrdom operations in childhood games such as conducting mock funerals of suicide bombers" (Eager, 2008, 194). Similarly, it is present in the classroom when a 12-year-old girl claimed that she wanted to be a martyr, "to follow my brother...and in honour of Wafa Idris, who proved that women can do as much as men" (Victor, 2003, 191). Whether for recreation or learning, these children think highly of suicide bombing and seek to emulate it. There is, then, admiration for these women across society, including amongst the young.

These examples of lavish funerals, ostentatious tributes, and mimicking acts of bombing have all demonstrated that the bombers are iconised in societies that regard them as permissible. This praise spans society, including families, communities, and the youth. The suicide bombers are 'cheered' women, aggrandised and different to 'normal', non-violent women.

Caveats to 'revered' and 'cheered' women

In the final part of this section, I lay out some conditions to sanctioning violent women. In particular, female aggression is only extolled on two provisos: that the bombers neither breach other norms of femininity nor permanently transgress the nonviolent one (Ness, 2008). These

caveats make ‘revering’ and ‘cheering’ the women easier because broader gender norms are preserved in the long term.

Under the first limitation, the violent women must not breach any other norm beyond the ‘peaceful woman’ one. As already guilty of violating the violence/gender norms, female suicide bombers must be exemplary in and perpetuate other norms of femininity: they “must in all other ways ‘belong’ to their social world” (Ness, 2007, 88–9). By sustaining these wider norms, the bombers only require justifying on account of their proscribed violence as women. In the LTTE, for example, women combatants are expected to maintain many aspects of ‘femaleness’ and chasteness in the broader culture, so the group “issued rules of behaviour and mimicked familial relationships” (Stack-O’Connor, 2007, 50; Alison, 2004, 456). Men and women lived separately, and were not allowed to marry (initially at all, but subsequently only to a male comrade), or have sex outside of marriage. In so doing, violence was cast as the only distinguishable (and to be explained) trait when compared to ‘normal’ women.

Under the second constraint, the bombers must be regarded as interim. Since rewarding female violence implies the eventual normalisation of violent women, this consequence must be circumvented by presenting female bombers as a “necessary” – owing to the grave circumstances facing the group – “but temporary” (Alison, 2004, 458) measure. Both theocratic and secular organisations follow this rule. For example, the definition of the religious principle *fard ‘ayn* (that theocratic organisations utilise) is based on an imminent threat that demands extraordinary, but short-lived, action. Similarly, strategies of leaders (in secular groups) to employ women fighters has “frequently been stymied by [...] society, which has tended to resist expanded roles for women and only allowed such expansion under

extreme stress, and then only for limited periods of time” (Cunningham, 2008, 88). In both examples, violent women are permitted only insofar as their ‘normal’ (peaceful) roles will resume once the threat has passed. Broader gender norms must remain post the conflict.

The caveats, then, are that female violence is allowable only if other aspects of gender norms are honoured (so violence is the sole anomaly to justify) and the transgression is temporary (so the ‘peaceful woman’ norm is intact in the end). By adhering to these two stipulations, violent women can be sanctioned; they can be both ‘othered’ from ‘normal’ women and approved.

In this section, I have investigated how violent women might be accepted in societies. I have suggested that they could be ‘othered’ from ‘normal’ (peaceful) women by exalting (‘revering’ and ‘cheering’) them. I also highlighted that this ‘othering’ cannot be a permanent or multiple challenge to the ‘peaceful woman’ norm, since such moves would be too far a transgression for society to accept.

ii. ‘Ideal warriors’

The ‘othering’ process is evident in a second way through media narratives of violent women that trace the ‘revered–cheered’ responses and offer simple stories that society understands. In contrast to the rationalised accounts discussed earlier, however, media in these contexts present the women as romanticised, noble figures “using another kind of language, a kind of poetic storytelling” (Brunner, 2005, 39) and shared (rather than individual) motivations to ‘explain’ them to the public.³² Here, women are framed, not as ‘victim’, but as either ‘ideal

³² Instead of focusing on individual traits and explanations (pathologies and personal traumas, for example) as Western media tends to do, these accounts are more communal (drawing on cultural injustices faced as a group,

woman' or 'liberated female warrior' – together, 'ideal warriors' – and these are accessible tropes for society.

'Ideal'

As 'ideal woman', female suicide bombers are presented as either, first (at their best) inimitable prodigies or, second (at their worst) exemplary, though replicable, models. Women in the first camp are portrayed as unique and possessing admirable traits that other women lack including, "supreme qualities of purity, beauty, piety, and rare brilliance" (Schweitzer, 2008, 132).³³ Using Idris to illustrate, the bomber has been attributed pious qualities and labelled a "merciful angel" (Bahgat in al-Ahrami, *MEMRI*, 2002b), as having "freed us from our sins" (Qandil in al-Arabi, *MEMRI*, 2002a), and of even acquiring the apotheosised status of "Jesus Christ" (Victor 2003, 26). Similarly, Idris' beauty is seen as exceptional and pure. Columnists, for instance, have commented that "her dreamy eyes and the mysterious smile on her lips, that competes with the famous smile some artist drew on the lips of Mona Lisa – Wafa's smile is more beautiful" (Muntasir in al-Ahram, *MEMRI*, 2002b). Such references focus on these women as unblemished, virtuous and virginal and, unlike the victimisation frame, here the media characterise them as 'ideal' candidates for suicide bombing. They are not coerced into, but are making an honourable decision to die. As 'ideal women', female bombers are conveyed as sublime.

for instance). In this regard, "contrary to the individual-based explanations predominating in the Western media, many Arab quotations in the discussions about the women martyrs draw a picture where community enjoys a distinct priority over the individual" (Brunner, 2005, 39). These differences will be discussed again in representations of their agency in the next section of this chapter and in chapter five.

³³ Yoram Schweitzer (2008) introduces the "virtuous heroine" (132) theme in opposition to the "damaged goods" (*ibid*) interpretation in the West. In this section, attention is drawn to how this contributes to 'othering' the female bombers.

In the second portrayal, suicide bombers are ‘ideal women’ because they are shining examples, or better versions, of ‘normal’ female roles, particularly the ‘sacrificing mother’. They are, for instance, finer mothers than just “the Mother of a Shahid” (Tzoreff, 2006, 14) – which is typically valued as a contribution. They “will not settle for being mothers of martyrs” (al-Din in al-Akhbar, *MEMRI*, 2002a) – expected of ‘normal’ women – and demand instead to be “time bombs” (al-Din in al-Akhbar, *MEMRI*, 2002a) – an enhanced (‘mother-plus’) role. These women have already sacrificed their sons or are “widowed mothers” (Speckhard et al. 2004, 324) and so qualify as ‘good’ mothers, but in sacrificing themselves too, they are preferable and ‘ideal’ ones to be imitated. Even where bombers are childless, the rhetoric of the mother is employed, and the women are regarded as ‘giving birth’ not to a child for the cause – a ‘normal’ role – but to a ‘free nation’ – a much grander mothering role. In this way, the suicide bomber is a worthy model and alternative “for a woman who will never be a mother” (Silva in Gunawardena, 2006, 84) and never raise a martyr. In giving up their own bodies, children and husbands for the movement, these are quintessential sacrificing mothers to be followed and ‘ideal women’.

By presenting the bombers as either unsurpassable or re-creatable examples, these women are romanticised through the ‘ideal woman’ narrative. In framing them this way, the reports reflect the societal responses to the violent women as ‘revered’ and ‘cheered’ and so the bombers are more comprehensible to their communities.

‘Warriors’

Where the bombers are portrayed as ‘liberated female warriors’, there are two elements to consider, first, warriors and second, liberated women. In the first ‘warrior’ element, the

women are constructed as more like men because of their heroism, courage, and defiance. For instance, the narrative emphasises her qualities as protector of the nation (usually a male role) instead of someone to be protected (typically a female role). She is framed as a guardian, rather than a nurturer: “a nation that has in it [a woman like] Wafa Idris will never be defeated, will never be humiliated” (Qandil in al-Arabi, *MEMRI*, 2002a), and as a champion of resistance, rather than an obsequious homemaker. Though comparing women with men is similar to responses above (where women were said to be more aggressive than men), in this context it is construed positively rather than negatively. Idris is reported, for example, as doing “what the strong, proud men do” (al-Din in *MEMRI*, 2002b) and even of being their superior and a role model: “it is a woman who teaches you today a lesson in heroism, who teaches you the meaning of Jihad, and the way to die a martyr’s death” (unknown, *MEMRI*, 2002a). The woman’s act is like the man’s, but in this narrative it is lauded (rather than criticised). Thus, the ‘warrior’ is more akin to the (perceived) dynamism of men, who make active decisions to die, rather than the (ostensible) passivity of women, who do not.

Complimenting this warrior frame is the ‘liberated female’, where women suicide bombers are applauded for being emancipated in a respectful and demure way. Such liberation is not about “equality with men, and [...women’s] right to be prostitutes, to strip, to reveal their charms” (al-Magdoub, *MEMRI*, 2002a), which al-Magdoub puts forward as a caricature of Western feminism. Rather, the liberation is reserved and “silent” (*ibid*) yet more effective and deadly: “it is a woman who blew herself up, and with her exploded [...] myths about [...her] weakness, submissiveness, and enslavement” (in al-Sha’ab, *MEMRI*, 2002a). In their ‘appropriate’ emancipation, female bombers are both ‘othered’ from ‘normal’ women in their

culture (who are peaceful but non-liberated) and from Western women (who are peaceful but ‘shamelessly’ liberated) and, in their differentiation, attributed decision-making powers.

In the ‘liberated female warriors’ narrative, then, the bombers are portrayed in an idyllic fashion; they are both similar to male warriors and are ‘appropriately liberated’ female revolutionaries, deciding their destinies. In these ways, the media sentimentalise the violent women, presenting them as fitting a virtuous and strong ‘ideal warrior’ narrative. This story ‘explains’ the bomber’s behaviour (they are idealised women and apposite fighters, capable of deciding about violence) in a way that society can swiftly understand.

Where female violence is temporarily allowed, therefore, suicide bombers are still separated from ‘normal’ women, but in a positive way. They are connected to a communal history and are honoured for it (‘revered’ and ‘cheered’), and they are presented through a superior person’s narrative (‘ideal warrior’) that makes the women and their acts straightforward for society to grasp. In so doing, these particular violent women are justified whilst broader gender norms of ‘peaceful woman’ prevail.

In this section, I have explored representations of the female suicide bomber who deviates from the societal norm of the ‘peaceful woman’. I argued that, in order to reconcile the non-violent female stereotype with female violence, societies that reject this behaviour and those that accept it, both (though in diverging ways) ‘other’ violent women. While one set of responses explains their actions through individual abnormalities and condemn or ‘victimise’ them, another set of understandings regards them with respect and commends them as ‘ideal

warrior’ women. Though resulting in different interpretations, both are (for society) intelligible constructions that ‘resolve’ the transgressions and preserve gender norms.

Denial of appropriate agency

Having contrasted these societal responses towards female suicide bombers, in the the final section of this chapter, I draw out repercussions of the ‘victim’ (hereafter the shorthand for the ‘mad-bad-victim’ view) and ‘ideal warrior’ (likewise, the ‘revered-cheered-ideal warrior’) framing. In particular, I consider first, the consequences of each portrayal for the bomber’s agency and second, the need for more complex representations of agency. I argue that both characterisations serve to deny violent women appropriate agency, and that nuanced accounts of agency that resist binaries must be generated to avoid this (and it is precisely this challenge that will be taken up in the remainder of this thesis).

(Mis) representing agency

To begin, I discuss the effect that first, the ‘victim’ and second, the ‘ideal warrior’, narrative has for the suicide bomber’s agency. I argue that both depictions, in their own way, misstate the women’s agency. Where they are reduced to ‘victims’, the bomber’s agency is understated and, where they are bolstered to ‘ideal warriors’, it is usually overstated. Both narratives, then, fall short of representing their agency properly.³⁴

i. ‘Victims’

³⁴ This is argued in Marway, 2011.

Starting with the ‘victim’, this narrative underplays women’s agency by either first, excluding it entirely or second, diminishing it significantly. In the former case, doubt is cast on their agentic capacity altogether, which “exclude[s] the possibility that women can choose to be violent” (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 50). The women are conveyed as disempowered automatons, completely devoid of abilities to navigate their options or situation. Reports on Palestinian female suicide bombers, for example, “encourage the reader to feel sorry for these women...[suggesting they] do not have agency; rather they are manipulated by men” (Eager 2008, 193). Similarly, for Chechen bombers, “the choice to inflict violence is portrayed as a non-choice; a force of circumstance. These women are...preyed upon by ruthless men” (West 2004, 7). Removing the choice to be violent and instead attributing their acts to factors and persons beyond their control, these women are agentless victims, coerced into the act. While the victimisation accounts attempt to rationalise women’s behaviour, they also preclude women’s choices by making “powerful appeals for sympathy...[that] undermine the strength and capacity of individuals” (Schneider 1993, 395) to take up violent options, and constructs them as non-agents. Therefore, as ‘victims’, the women in these examples are wholly denied agency for their actions.

Second, if violent women are permitted some reasons for acting, their portrayal as ‘victims’ weakens their agency by limiting those explanations to the personal realm (West, 2004; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Eager, 2008). They are, for instance, bereaved widows or socially disgraced women. That the impetus to bomb is routinely framed in terms of “personal, private turmoil” implies that “women do not make a political choice to be terrorists” (West, 2004, 7) in the way that men (the supposedly legitimate political actors) do. This effectively abolishes their political agency, since it (incorrectly) looks exclusively to the personal for reasons

“beyond simply that women want to fight for their respective causes” (Cunningham, 2004, 103). It restrains agency, not because focusing on the personal is an inauthentic motivation to act, but because political intentions become unavailable to women (whilst a range of both political and personal goals are conceivable for men). In so doing, women only have personal extenuating excuses (and that only insofar as it compels them to act), whereas men may have personal biases but are inspired, in the main, by their politics too. Just as denying these ‘victim’s’ choices altogether misconstrues agency, narrowly focusing their acts on personal reasons alone perpetuates the distortion of their agency.

As ‘victims’, the female suicide bomber’s agency is either utterly withheld (so it is non-existent) or substantially eroded (so it is inaccurate or nugatory). Both eventualities, however, misrepresent the bomber’s agency, which is unlikely to be so effectively degraded as to render them all non-actors.

ii. ‘Ideal warriors’

Second, when women are framed as ‘ideal warriors’, their agency is misreported in two respects, first (and typically), it is overstated but second, it is (superficially) downplayed. Though violent women are deemed to have some agency, it is inappropriately exaggerated. With the ‘liberated female warrior’ frame, for instance, “these women are portrayed as self-conscious, determined women who know exactly what they are doing and for what aim” (Brunner, 2005, 43). They are shown to be consummately resolute and tenacious with nothing but political or religious goals: they are “individuals, acting alone, unconstrained by social forces, [and] unmediated by social structures and systemic hardship” (Schneider 1993, 395–6). Yet, various contextual factors (such as bereavement, political ideologies, religious

affiliations, and economic circumstances) do exert influence on most people's lives, and so they are allotted an unrealistic agency. Similarly, the 'ideal woman' frame presents female suicide bombers as exemplary individuals, almost divine, and they are portrayed as having an irreproachable agency with "meta-human qualities" (Schweitzer 2008, 143), enabling them to choose without fault or constraint. Further, by associating 'ideal warriors' and extraordinary women in history, the bombers are bestowed with an analogous (that is, remarkable) agency that belongs neither to women in non-violent roles nor human beings more broadly. Just as dismissing agency in the previous 'victim' classification ignores women's real agency, so over-emphasising it in the 'ideal warrior' one makes these women unreal.

Constructing violent women as 'ideal warriors' also belies their agency in a second (seemingly contradictory) way, not by making it infinite but by curbing it, though (less inconsistently) it is still a flawless agency in that form or at that point. For instance, as 'ideal' women, the bombers are depicted not as adults but as children. They are "mostly cited by their first names and treated like little girls – even 28-year-old Wafa Idris...[whilst] their male martyr companions are mostly named by their full name and treated as grown-ups, even if they are only 16 years old" (Brunner, 2005, 43). So, on the one hand, they are faultless heroines capable of deciding for themselves while, on the other, they are child-like, without the agential capacity of adults. Critically, however, even as non-adults, their agency is superior, since they retain a purity and innocence that enables them to choose morally. Though in the form of a child, then, this is still a pristine agency. Similarly, as 'liberated female warriors', suicide bombers appear to be given boundless agency, but they are actually attributed a pseudo-agency and cast as temporary substitutes for men (the proper fighters), and are restricted in the type of emancipation permitted (mute and self-sacrificing). Here,

though such women are portrayed as ‘ideal warriors’, their agency is in fact fleeting, though it is perfect and surpasses male agency in that moment. Whatever it reverts back to, their agency is unsullied at that point. This indicates that agency is dually misrepresented; it is purportedly understated (as being childlike or temporary) but, in the end, is overstated (immaculate, even in that reduced state). Both understandings, however, misstate women’s agency.

Again, on the ‘ideal warrior’ narrative, violent women are denied appropriate agency. They either perform services for others with limitless agency, or they are naive and innocent with reduced, albeit untarnished, agency. In neither case, however, is agency realistically represented, since these women’s ability to act upon the world is unlikely to be so unflawed.

One consequence of the ‘othering’ mechanism that frames the bombers negatively or positively, then, is a stark contrast in their agential abilities. Female suicide bombers are cast as either entirely devoid of agency or full agents, and yet it is improbable that any of the women considered thus far has an agency so constructed. Whether it is completely undermined or altogether overplayed, then, I argue that both the ‘victim’ and ‘ideal warrior’ narratives radically warp women’s agency.

Better representing agency

In the final part of this section, I set out the worry about these polarities and a possible way forward. I contend that both the total non-agent and total agent views that the ‘victim’ and ‘ideal warrior’ characterisations imply are too simplistic, and that there is a need for complicating and enriching this agency in order to encourage better representations of the female suicide bomber.

A particular concern about the oppositional agency that emerges from the narratives is that it is unhelpful for providing an adequate impression of these women's agency. Determining whether the bombers are, as Miranda Alison puts it, "agents or victims, liberated or subjugated, emancipated or oppressed strikes [her] as an unnecessary and unsophisticated binary" (Alison, 2003, 52) that does not move towards a proper understanding of the agency that may exist. In this regard, ending up in a position where violent women either have no agency or full agency is misleading because neither reflects women's agential abilities in a fair way. It is unlikely that the bombers exclusively fit either category since "women's violence is not [purely]...an instrument of men, nor is it purely emancipating" (Skaine, 2006, 29), and yet, in presenting it in these ways, agency is forced into two cursory extremes. Thus, in framing and attributing agency as a binary, it is shallow and ineffectual at representing the women properly.

Instead of categorising women unrepresentatively (as agent-less victims or possessors of ideal agency), violent women's agency can be made more accurate by properly complicating it. Rather than only considering that which limits *or* enables these women, the combination of restraints and powers that are more likely to exist should be acknowledged. As Elizabeth Schneider argues:

Women's victimisation and agency are each understood to exist as the absence of the other – as if one must be pure victim or pure agent – when in fact they are profoundly interrelated [...] We must seek to understand both the social context of women's oppression, which shapes women's choices

and constrains women's agency and resistance, and also recognise women's agency and resistance in a more nuanced way. This means that we reject simple dichotomies, give up either/ors, learn to accept contradiction, ambiguity, and ambivalence in women's lives, and to explore more 'grays' in our conceptions of women's experience, rather than seeing only 'blacks' and 'whites' (1993, 396-7).

To understand agency in a fruitful way, a graded picture that recognises that choices exist but that they do not exist without constraint (for example) is important. Rather than evaluating female suicide bombers in terms of being wholly agential or not agential at all, a more intricate view where "the female offender is no longer necessarily innocent or biologically flawed" (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 18) or godlike or perfect is required. In short, an agency that reflects her as, "a complicated construct" (*ibid*) and that recognises that decision-making occurs within (sometimes severe) constraint is needed. By achieving this, a considered and potentially more faithful representation of the bomber and her agency may be made possible.

I have outlined how 'no agency' and 'full agency' binaries are unrepresentative, and that nuanced, rather than dichotomised, understandings of agency could offer a more accurate and constructive appreciation of the bombers and the ways they act upon the world. In this section, more broadly, I have explored the impact of the 'victim' and 'ideal warrior' narratives of the suicide bomber's agency. I have argued that such narratives serve to deny violent women proper agency by regarding them as either wholly agential or not agential at all, but it is unlikely that they can be regarded in these simplistic ways. Therefore, I contend

that a complex construction of agency that acknowledges decision-making within constraint needs to be proposed, since it may be more representative of the women and what they do.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the female suicide bomber. I have suggested that women are not ‘supposed’ to be violent according to the ‘peaceful woman’ gender norm and that, as directly violent, suicide bombers clearly break with this convention. I contended that, in order to explain her transgressions and preserve gender norms, she is ‘othered’ from ‘normal’ women – either negatively as a ‘victim’, or positively as an ‘ideal warrior’. Moreover, I argued that, by attempting to account for the acts whilst sustaining the norm, such narratives ultimately mis-state the women’s agency – either she is a non-agent or a full agent, but neither appropriately represents her agency, which is unlikely to be so stark. Thus, better (more complex and accurate) understandings of the suicide bomber’s agency are required.

The issue that now arises is how can these more satisfactory judgements of agency be arrived at – how best can we conceptualise agency such that it fits the brief of comprehensively representing the suicide bomber who operates within constraints and avoids the problems so far identified? One way in which to achieve this is by considering how well different theories of agency account for the bombers. The concerns raised in this chapter – about whether bombing is what the women wanted, whether coercion was at play, and how much they were driven by oppressive forces, for example – are particularly pertinent to those of autonomy (as will be explained). Given this, philosophical conceptions of autonomy are a sensible starting point from which to explore these questions.

Many philosophers recognise some form of autonomy as being relevant to making a life go well. This may be formulated in several ways. For instance, being able to devise a conception of the good and engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life is regarded as a human need (Nussbaum, 2001). Or being able to carve out and manage a sense of personal identity to become who one wants to be is considered admirable (Meyers, 1989). Or being able to utilise one's critical faculties to resist oppression and subjection, which may interfere with the agent doing what she wants, is regarded as useful (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2001). Though each of these examples is slightly different, the connection is that they all identify that living a life in a manner that is acceptable to the agent is valuable and significant for a good life. Ascribing autonomy – and degrees of autonomy – to individuals, including the female suicide bombers, then, is an important task, since it reflects the extent to which agents govern their lives. For the bombers in particular, where their agency is often misrepresented and binary, attributing autonomy properly and in a more nuanced way helps to approximate how far they are autonomous and so recognise their agency.

To explore philosophical conceptions in more detail, I will examine two possible models of autonomy – the liberal and the relational – over the course of the next two chapters. I will revisit the suicide bombers in the fourth chapter to show how suited the relational approach (the liberal will be discounted after chapter two using standard critiques) is to representing their agency. I will consider the women again in the fifth chapter to outline and demonstrate my spectrum view of autonomy (a new proposal for measuring and comparing the autonomy of the women in detail).

2. LIBERAL MODELS OF AUTONOMY AND THEIR CRITIQUES

Introduction

Having set out case studies of female suicide bombers, shown that their agency is currently not well represented, and that better ways of accounting for their decision-making in constraint are needed, our focus now shifts to the theoretical. In the next two chapters I introduce diverging models of autonomy – the liberal and the relational – which examine what it means to be self-ruling or self-governing, in order to describe and evaluate two of the dominant models in the debate, and to consider which one might be more appropriate for the bombers.³⁵ It should be noted that, though these accounts differ in many ways (as will be shown), there is some overlap between them in places (as will also be highlighted). I will address liberal models of autonomy in this chapter (leaving relational ones to the next) in two parts. First, I will identify five unifying themes of liberal theories of autonomy: authentic desires, procedural independence, local and basic autonomy, consistency, and the distinction between autonomy and responsibility. Second, I will examine common critiques of the liberal model by philosophers in the relational camp and, in particular, problems with how the account delineates two concepts relevant to the women of the case studies: agent and autonomy. Drawing on now standard critiques of liberal autonomy and arguments made by other relational theorists (the claims presented here are not new), I will contend that liberal theories construct the agent and autonomy less satisfactorily than they might, and that other

³⁵ In this thesis, I use terms such as ‘model(s)’, ‘account(s)’, ‘theories’, ‘approach(es)’ interchangeably to refer to the liberal or relational view. I use terms such as ‘theory’ when considering a specific philosopher’s position in either of those camps.

approaches – that could more satisfactorily account for these – should be preferred for the bombers.

To be clear, my aim in this chapter is to present one of the main models of autonomy and to offer a point of comparison for relational accounts in the next chapter. In so doing, my claim is not that the liberal model fails to offer any useful conceptualisations of the agent and autonomy but rather that – following standard relational critiques of liberal autonomy – there are alternative conceptualisations for our purposes. That is, these different interpretations are helpful particularly (as I will hint at here and argue for in more detail in chapter four) for the bombers, who are certain kinds of persons who operate within particular types of complex and extreme constraints. My focus, then, is not primarily about decisively rejecting liberal autonomy wholesale, but principally about contextualising relational accounts and portraying the bomber's autonomy properly and thoroughly.³⁶ My argument overall is that many standard accounts, like liberal ones, are not the most appropriate if these women are going to have their autonomy, however limited, recognised and perhaps, more importantly, the elements and extent of their autonomy distinguished and measured. Having clarified this, I now move on to consider the theoretical liberal account.

³⁶ In this regard, this thesis is focussed on the relational account and how to improve it, and I discuss the liberal model only to give a frame of reference for the overall debate. While I could have configured chapters 2 and 3 differently – by setting out necessary and sufficient conditions for each model and decisively analysing these in detail (rather than broadly characterising then critiquing them using standard arguments) – this would be its own project and shift the emphasis of mine. I simply seek to map the existing debate fairly but swiftly in order to go on to do the principal job of examining the suitability of the relational account to the bombers and, most importantly, developing a spectrum on which their autonomy can be measured.

The liberal approach

First, although there are numerous and diverse theories that can be categorised as ‘liberal’, the majority of models (to some extent) share five attributes, and these can be used to characterise the overall approach.³⁷ In setting out these components, my intention is not to suggest necessary and sufficient conditions for liberal autonomy, but rather to sketch the rough approach. The five features that I discuss to do this are: authentic desires, procedural independence, local and basic autonomy, consistent desires and, the distinction between autonomy and responsibility. In outlining these, I both classify the account that can be broadly labelled as liberal and provide a framework for analysis in the second part of this chapter.

Authentic desires

The first common element in liberal theories of self-rule is a mechanism for determining authenticity, or a method for differentiating legitimate and illegitimate desires, values, preferences, or goals.³⁸ Here, the concept of the ‘will’ is crucial, as the concern is about distinguishing how someone decides between and acts upon desires emanating from ‘within’ and reflectively endorsed by the individual (classed as authentic) from desires originating from an ‘outside’, non-approved, source (non-authentic). Liberal theorists propose various tests to ascertain the authenticity of desire formation and endorsement, including three positions that I will examine here as examples. These are first, hierarchical (which are the

³⁷ The term ‘liberal’ is not a general political position usually defined in opposition to conservatism, but the specific philosophical conception that is usually classed as distinct from (for example) communitarianism. This will become clearer throughout the chapter, but this note is intended to stem any misinterpretation from the outset.

³⁸ This thesis uses terms such as ‘desires’, ‘values’, ‘preferences’, or ‘goals’ interchangeably and often ‘desires’ or ‘preferences’ as shorthand for all these, unless otherwise stated. It recognises that there are distinctions between these terms and concepts, but these are not critical for the arguments in this thesis.

dominant theories) second, “neohierarchical” (Taylor, 2008, 2) and third, non-hierarchical models.

i. Hierarchical

First, hierarchical theories propose that desire authentication is achieved structurally. Desires are formed at the first-order (a desire to eat a cupcake or smoke a cigarette, for example) but are endorsed at the second-order (a *desire* to desire to eat cake or to smoke). Whereas the lower-order desires are rudimentary and belong to any person (autonomous or not), it is the critical faculties at the higher level that reveals evidence of authentic primary desires.³⁹ Several theorists have advocated this account, including Gerald Dworkin and Harry Frankfurt. Dworkin, for instance, proposes that “autonomy is conceived of as a second-order capacity of persons to reflect critically upon their first-order preferences, desires, wishes, and so forth and the capacity to accept or attempt to change these in light of higher-order preferences and values” (Dworkin, 1988, 20), such that first-order desires reflect what is *really* wanted. In this way, the autonomous person “identifies with” (Dworkin, 1989, 61) their first-order preferences and “such identification is not itself [...] in some way alien to the individual” (Dworkin, 1989, 61); it is not unendorsed by, or external to, the agent. To illustrate, consider the smoker. On the one hand, the smoker may desire to smoke and identify with that desire

³⁹ Frankfurt notes that first-order desires belong to non-persons (as well as all persons) and the aim of the higher orders is to identify self-rule in human beings. He argues, “many animals appear to have the capacity for what I shall call ‘first-order desires’ or ‘desires of the first order,’ which are simply desires to do or not to do one thing or another. No animal other than man, however, appears to have the capacity for reflective self-evaluation that is manifested in the formation of second-order desires” (Frankfurt, 1971, 7). Similarly, Dworkin argues that limiting a theory of autonomy to a single level is problematic because it would not be able to distinguish the subtleties of human behaviour, including different attitudes in the coerced person. He contends, “I think we fail to capture something important about human agents if we make our distinctions solely at the first level. We need to distinguish not only between the person who is coerced and the person who acts, say, to obtain pleasure, but also between two agents who are coerced. One resents being motivated in this fashion, would not choose to enter situations in which threats are present. The other welcomes being motivated in this fashion, chooses (even pays) to be threatened. A similar contrast holds between two patients, one of whom is deceived by his doctor against his will and the other who has requested that his doctor lie to him if cancer is ever diagnosed. Our normative and conceptual theories would be deficient if the distinction between levels were not drawn” (Dworkin, 1988, 19). Thus, the levels are to distinguish the kinds of desires that are authentic and those that are not.

according to the structural requirement, in which case it is authentic and she acts autonomously. On the other hand, however, “one may not just desire to smoke, but also desire that one not have that desire” (Dworkin, 1988, 15), in which case the desire to smoke is not endorsed at the second-order level, and consequently it is not a desire she wishes to have (it is non-authentic). This is one example of a structural configuration of authenticity.

In another account, Frankfurt also advocates a hierarchical theory of authentication but, unlike Dworkin, he differentiates higher desires and volitions. He argues that autonomy, or freedom of the will, ensues when first-order desires are validated by “second-order volitions” (Frankfurt, 1971, 10), which affirm that the person “wants a certain desire to be his will” (*ibid*).⁴⁰ Such volitions are distinct from second-order desires generally, which might (unreflectively) move persons to act but do not indicate anything about their will or attitude towards the primary desire.⁴¹ Second-order volitions demand an active reflection and acceptance towards desires rather than adoption as a “passive bystander” (Frankfurt, 2009, 54). While the unwilling drug-addict, for example, may have conflicting first-order desires (to both take and refrain from taking the drug), she – unlike the “wanton” (Frankfurt, 1971, 11) – is not “neutral” (12) about which of these desires she wants to be effective, since she wants

⁴⁰ Frankfurt also clarifies that his concept of the ‘will’ distinguishes inclination and effective desires. He argues that merely being inclined to carry out a first-order desire does not qualify that desire to be her will, rather that an effective desire does. He states that “the notion of the will is not coextensive with the notion of what an agent intends to do. For even though someone may have a settled intention to do X, he may nonetheless do something else instead of doing X because, despite his intention, his desire to do X proves to be weaker or less effective than some conflicting desire” (2009, 14). The will, then, is about effective desires that moves someone into action.

⁴¹ Frankfurt refers to someone who has first-order desires and may even have second-order desires, but has no second-order volitions as a “wanton” (Frankfurt, 1971, 11). He goes on to say that “the essential characteristic of a wanton is that he does not care about his will. His desires move him to do certain things, without its being true of him either that he wants to be moved by those desires or that he prefers to be moved by other desires. The class of wantons includes all nonhuman animals that have desires and all very young children. Perhaps it also includes some adult beings as well” (*ibid*).

the desire to refrain from smoking to be the desire that she acts on.⁴² However, it is only when these desires and volitions are harmonised that someone acts autonomously: “it is in securing the conformity of the will to his second-order volitions, then, that a person exercises freedom of the will” (15), and so the unwilling addict’s will is not ‘free’ and her desire is not autonomous. Frankfurt’s theory, then, is structured differently from Dworkin’s, but it is still hierarchical.

In these ways, both Dworkin and Frankfurt have developed a hierarchical account – drawing on higher and lower desires and volitions – of distinguishing authentic preferences that are one’s own from non-authentic ones that cannot be described as such. These offer one way in which to determine the authenticity of desires in the liberal approach.

ii. ‘Neohierarchical’

The second of the three methods to identify authentic desires are “neohierarchical” (Taylor, 2008, 2) theories. These shift from a solely hierarchical model to include a historical component where authenticity focuses on how desires were formed.⁴³ In order to differentiate authentic from non-authentic desires, John Christman, for example, offers a theory that evaluates the development of “processes of preference formation” (Christman, 1991, 10) that lead to the adoption of the desire. The key question is whether an individual did not resist, or *would* not have resisted (thereby permitting a hypothetical, retrospective test) the

⁴² Frankfurt subsequently clarifies the requirement for someone wanting a desire to be hers as the ‘satisfaction’ view of identification, where the person is autonomous if she accepts (is satisfied with) a first-order desire she has (she would not wish to change the desire and she sees it as indicating something about herself). Here ‘satisfaction’ does not imply the person’s particular (positive or negative) attitude or belief towards the desire, merely that she does not wish to change it. Moreover, the satisfaction attitude itself does not require endorsement, which was included in response to the regress problem (which will be discussed in the criticisms section of this chapter) (Frankfurt, 1999; Taylor, 2008).

⁴³ The historical component is in response to various criticisms of the hierarchical theories, such as manipulation of desires, which will be discussed in the criticisms section of this chapter and the application chapter (chapter four).

development of certain desires when “attending to this process of development” (Christman, 1991, 11).⁴⁴ In addition, this lack of resistance must not have been due to illegitimate factors impeding critical self-reflection (which I will discuss more in the second characteristic below). Finally, the process of reflection itself must be minimally rational (so resulting in logical regularity) and self-aware (so not self-deceptive) (Christman, 1991). When the motivating reasons for a person’s formation of a desire to eat a cupcake, for example, is made transparent, and when in frankly questioning those causes the person does, or *would*, not reject them, then the desire is authentic. Historical theories focus on authentic desire-formation and endorsement, rather than hierarchical affirmation alone.

iii. Non-hierarchical

A third way to distinguish authentic from non-authentic desires is to reject the structural approaches and opt instead for non-hierarchical models. There are several examples of these, but I outline just three here: Laura Waddell Ekstrom, Gary Watson, and Irving Thalberg’s theories.

Ekstrom proposes a coherence model that moves beyond a hierarchical methodology for authenticity to focus on the integration of desires. Attempting to reflect the agent’s “real self” (Ekstrom, 2008, 151) and minimise the levels of hierarchy, Ekstrom argues that internally cohering ‘preferences’ – that is those desires that have “survived a process of critical evaluation” (148) – indicate authenticity of preferences. She argues, “one’s action is self-

⁴⁴ For Christman, this ‘attending’ to the process means that a fairly “full description of the steps of reasoning or the causal processes that led her to have this desire is available for her possible consideration. This reflectiveness assumes that an agent can become aware of the beliefs and desires that move her to act. Call this the ‘transparency’ of her motivating reasons. What I mean by this is the ability of an agent to bring to conscious awareness a belief or desire – either in the form of a mental representation or a proposition – and concentrate on its meaning.” (Christman, 1991, 11)

governed when it is directed by the true self, and the true self is comprised of a cohering aggregate of preference and acceptance states, along with the capacity to form and re-form these” (155). That the smoker’s authorised preference to smoke coheres or is “well supported by a network of her [other] considered attitudes” (151-2) suggests her desire to smoke is from the ‘real self’ and authentic. It is having an integrated and cohering set of preferences and acting upon these that results in authenticity.

In a different way, Watson also offers a non-structural account when he differentiates ‘valuing’ and ‘desiring’ in free action rather than higher and lower order desires or volitions. Whereas the evaluation system enables a person to rank the worth of different states of affair and generates judgements like “the thing for me to do in these circumstances, all things considered, is *a*” (Watson, 1989, 116), the motivation system (or will) are those considerations that “move him to action” (117). For Watson, a state of unfree action is possible when “an agent’s valuation system and motivational system may not completely coincide” (*ibid*). Though one may value or most want to live healthily, for example, one is motivated by or desires to eat cupcakes or smoke, which undermines what is valued. By contrast, one gets what one really wants *and* action is free when these coincide.⁴⁵ Here, the connection between valuing and desiring, not hierarchically or historically endorsing desires, determine what it is to act freely or authentically.

The final example is Thalberg, who also challenges the structural account, though this time by arguing that the fundamental concern of inauthenticity is not with underscoring the

⁴⁵ To clarify, for Watson, because “talk about free action and free agency can be understood in terms of the idea of being able to get what one wants” (Watson, 1989, 117), it is the case that “the problem of free action arises because what one desires may not be what one values, and what one most values may not be what one is finally moved to get” (Watson, 1989, 112), and in this instance the action is unfree.

misalignment of desires and volitions but with highlighting a problem in the resulting act. Citing the case of the hold-up victim who hands his money over to the highwayman, Thalberg asks, “what is likely to be the principal object of his aversion – that his money is gone, or that it was ‘for these reasons’ that he abandoned his money? Surely he ‘minds’ his action, and particularly its financial consequences, more than he ‘minds’ his own motivational state?” (Thalberg, 1989, 126-7) Accordingly, what the agent really wants is a different situation, not to be moved by a different desire: “although there is no deed the coerced individual really wants to perform, as conditions stand, his really important attitude is his preference for different conditions” (Thalberg, 1989, 128). Thalberg contends that it is this difference of wanting an alternative situation, not hierarchical harmony of desires, which reveals what it is the agent truly wants.

Whether as coherence, desiring-valuing, or attitudinal theories, these non-hierarchical models are intended to introduce alternative ways in which to conceptualise authenticity of desires (or preferences) to the structural (hierarchical or ‘neohierarchical’) approaches. But what all liberal models of autonomy have in common is a method of distinguishing what one authentically wants from what one does not authentically want. The three different theories – hierarchical, ‘neohierarchical’ and non-hierarchical – that I outlined above are all examples of how such a distinction could be made.

Procedural independence

The second condition that many liberal theories share is that of procedural independence. This has two elements, first, ‘procedure’ and second, ‘independence’, and together these advocate that a non-interfered reflective process is necessary for autonomy. First, I will discuss

proceduralism by sketching the liberal political theory on which it is based and then describing how liberal autonomy is content-neutral about which desires count as autonomous.

i. Procedural

First, the focus on the procedural in liberal autonomy stems from modern liberal political theory, and while there are many accounts that fall under this banner, one of the most influential, that of John Rawls, will serve as our example. Rawls in a *Theory of Justice* (1971) argues that, under conditions of a hypothetical contract, the principles of justice that citizens adopt are commitments to basic liberties and socio-economic equalities, which enable them to pursue their individual conceptions of the ‘good’ (what it is that makes their lives good).⁴⁶ A person opts for ‘neutral’ principles of justice on which most can agree because they value “conditions that enable him to frame a mode of life that expresses his nature as a free and equal rational being” (561). In other words, for Rawls, “what matters is people’s freedom to make their own choices, and to change their minds, not whatever it is they choose” (Mulhall and Swift, 1996, 6). Rawls’ account is a content-neutral, non-substantive view of justice that favours the individual’s capacity to choose over what that choice may be.

In *Political Liberalism* (1993), Rawls makes this commitment to proceduralism even stronger.

He discusses liberalism as limited to the basic structures of society, without reference to any

⁴⁶ In a *Theory of Justice*, Rawls proposed ‘justice as fairness’ and used two theoretical devices of a hypothetical contract – the ‘original position’ that states persons in liberal societies are free and equal, and the ‘veil of ignorance’ where one’s life details are unknown to anyone – to argue that the principles of justice people would adopt in these circumstances were morally comprehensive in the form of a commitment to basic liberties and socio-economic equalities, which enabled them to “frame, revise and rationally to pursue” (Mulhall and Swift, 1996, 6) their individual conceptions of what it is that makes their own life ‘good’. The commitments are first that “each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all” and second that “social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged...and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity” (Rawls, 1971, 302).

comprehensive doctrine, and to those principles that most citizens of liberal states (characterised by their diversity and plurality) would endorse.⁴⁷ He argues:

Given the fact of reasonable pluralism, citizens cannot agree on any moral authority, whether a sacred text, or institution. Nor do they agree about the order of moral values, or the dictates of what some regard as natural law. We adopt, then, a constructivist view to specify the fair terms of social cooperation...[I]f the procedure can be correctly formulated, citizens should be able to accept its principles and conceptions along with their reasonable comprehensive doctrine (Rawls, 1993, 97).

Here, Rawls advocates a position where political liberalism is wedded to the correct, non-substantive, procedures that most citizens would endorse, rather than notions of justice that are content specific and that many might not accept. In this regard, Rawls considers neutrality in framing the structures of the state and plurality of the good to be important for liberal societies.

Second, we can trace the influence of liberal political proceduralism in liberal conceptions of autonomy. Such autonomy theorists argue that rather than demand that individuals (who have

⁴⁷ In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls makes the view about justice as procedural stronger by offering a general view about liberalism (rather than the specific form of liberalism he advocated in a *Theory of Justice*) as one that is: limited to the publicly shared, “basic structure of society” (1993, 11) (rudimentary political, economic and social – not religious or private educational – institutions); “freestanding and expounded apart from” (12) any wider comprehensive religious or political doctrine (transcends moral, religious or philosophical claims about how people ought to live their lives privately *and* publicly); and represents “fundamental ideas viewed as implicit in the public political culture of a democratic society” (13) (developing those ideas that citizens of a democratic society intuitively endorse because they are present in the basic structures of that specific society and are non-comprehensive). Though his earlier work suggested that justice as fairness was at least a partially comprehensive doctrine, in *Political Liberalism* he makes it thoroughly non-comprehensive in an attempt to deal with the plurality of views in societies of a liberal-democratic persuasion.

diverse ends) are only autonomous if they exemplify substantive values or behaviours (which, given their varied ends, is likely to limit who is classed as autonomous), autonomy should be content-neutral. This broadens the kinds of desires and persons that can be classed as autonomous (it allows plurality and inclusivity). It is the fact that individuals can develop a wide range of reasons and preferences, whether one agrees with them or not, that is the crucial point for liberal autonomy. Indeed, as Christman argues:

we can imagine cases where an agent would have *good reason* to have [any kind of] a desire. Hence, we can also imagine that the person is autonomously guided by those good reasons in formulating that desire, and so by that token we can imagine it as autonomously formed. So since we can imagine *any* preference as being autonomously formed, given a fantastic enough situation, then it cannot be the content of the preference *itself* that determines its autonomy. It is always the *origin* of desires that matters in judgements about autonomy (Christman, 1991, 22-3).

Liberal autonomy theorists typically favour the procedural view articulated by Rawls' contending that, because there are conflicting conceptions of the autonomous life, it is not the kind of desires one endorses but the endorsement process that matters for autonomy. In this way, the procedural account "makes no reference to constraints on the content of a person's choices or the reasons he or she has for them. In a thoroughly liberal manner, this shift to formal, procedural conditions allows this model to accommodate a diversity of desires and ways of life as autonomous" (Christman and Anderson, 2005, 3). Since this requirement enables theorists to differentiate the ability and process of reflecting upon desires from the

content of those desires, an “autonomous person can be a tyrant or a slave, a saint or sinner, a rugged individualist or champion of fraternity, a leader or follower” (Dworkin, 1988, 29).⁴⁸ As the focus is the procedure, the actual choices the agent makes can be liberal or illiberal, autonomy-conferring or autonomy-reducing, good or bad.

ii. Independence

The content-neutral requirements for autonomy, then, allow a broad range of decisions to be classed as autonomous, but to be procedurally *independent* – the second element of this characteristic – the process of critical self-reflection itself must be free from improper interference. This supports the authenticity condition above – that the agent’s desire is genuinely hers – by “distinguishing those ways of influencing people’s reflective and critical faculties which subvert them from those which promote and improve them” (Dworkin, 1989, 61).⁴⁹ The concern is about weeding out malignant influences, such as brainwashing, hypnosis and coercion, rather than relatively benign forces, like persuasion and offers (Dworkin, 1989).⁵⁰ To be independent, the reflective process must not be hampered by interferences from the former category and if it is the desire is non-autonomous. The process of reflection associated with autonomy must be free from negative obstructions.

⁴⁸ Indeed Dworkin argues that a decision to enter into slavery could be legitimately autonomous because of the commitment to proceduralism. He contends, “there is nothing in the idea of autonomy that precludes a person from saying, ‘I want to be the kind of person who acts at the command of others. I define myself as a slave and endorse those attitudes and preferences. My autonomy consists in being a slave.’ If this is coherent, and I think it is, one cannot argue against such slavery on the grounds of autonomy. The argument will have to appeal to some idea of what is a fitting life for a person and, thus, be a direct attempt to impose a conception of what is ‘good’ on another person” (Dworkin, 1988, 129).

⁴⁹ For Dworkin, the “full formula for autonomy [...] is authenticity plus procedural independence” (Dworkin, 1989, 61), not simply authenticity.

⁵⁰ To differentiate interferences, Dworkin highlights a distinction between offers and threats in the way agents regard them. He argues, “people resent acting merely in order to retain a status quo against the interference of another agent (threats). They, normally, do not mind acting for the reason that they will improve their situation contingent on their accepting the terms of another agent (offers)” (Dworkin, 1988, 155).

Thus, the second feature of liberal models is a commitment to procedural independence. This involves both content-neutrality and a non-tampered reflective process. Specifically, the focus is ascertaining whether the procedure has been interfered with or not, rather than assessing the substance of desires.

Local and basic scope

The third characteristic of liberal autonomy is two-fold, first, a local and second, a basic scope, as identified by Christman and Anderson (2005). These aspects set the parameters and focus for autonomy as minimal, and I consider these in turn.

i. Local

Under the first element, there is a distinction between local (act-based) and global (agent-based) autonomy. This recognises that “the autonomy of *persons* can, in principle, be separated from *local* autonomy – autonomy relative to particular aspects of the person, say, her desires” (Christman and Anderson, 2005, 2). While a global scope is broader and deals with an autonomous life, the local is narrower and concerns specific autonomous desires. Although some liberal theorists, such as Dworkin, argue that the correct scope of autonomy is global, many have countered that to assert this rejects crucial features of autonomy.⁵¹ James Stacey Taylor, for instance, argues, “in adopting this more global approach to autonomy Dworkin is no longer offering an analysis of autonomy that is congruent with the discussions in moral philosophy in which autonomy plays a major role, for these discussions focus on the

⁵¹ Dworkin argues, “I am not trying to analyse the notion of autonomous *acts*, but of what it means to be an autonomous person, to have a certain capacity and exercise it” (Dworkin, 1988, 19-20). Similarly, he contends, “the question of freedom is decided at specific points in time [...] whereas the question of autonomy is one that can only be assessed over extended portions of a person’s life” (60). In this way, he is taking a global view of autonomy.

more localised question of what makes a person autonomous with respect to her *particular* desires or her *particular* actions” (Taylor, 2008, 8). Specific acts, not the agent in general, is the remit of autonomy in the liberal approach. Indeed, most theorists argue that being a globally autonomous person is simply the aggregation of having enough locally autonomous acts; Christman, for instance, contends that “the property of being autonomous *tout court*, then, is parasitic on the property of autonomy for isolated preferences and values” (1991, 3).⁵² By analysing autonomy at the smallest ‘unit’ – the act, desire, or preference – individuals that are sufficiently autonomous locally might be considered autonomous globally. So, it is the local that represents the appropriate scope for liberal theories of autonomy.

ii. Basic

The second aspect is basic, as opposed to ideal, autonomy. This requires that there is “a certain level of self-government necessary to secure one’s status as a moral agent or political subject” (Christman and Anderson, 2005, 2) without, as ideal autonomy demands, “the level or kind of self-direction that serves as a regulative idea” (*ibid*). In other words, some, but not an extensive, amount of self-rule is needed to class someone as an agent, such that she *can* govern herself.⁵³ Following the procedural characteristic above, which was rooted in the political goal of inclusivity and plurality, this notion too is intended to incorporate multiple

⁵² Christman argues, “construing autonomy as an all-or-nothing property of a person’s whole life (or a whole person) obscures the need for an account of the autonomous formation of single (or ‘localised’) desires. Autonomy at the more ‘global’ level should simply amount to perhaps an aggregation of this property.” (Christman, 1991, 3)

⁵³ What is intended here – as will be discussed in the next paragraph – is that ‘basic’ is closely aligned to minimal competence. Though competence is a condition of the agent, it does not make liberal theories in general global. This is because – as will be seen in the critiques in this section – global autonomy is about living a life that is autonomous, and this is to distinguish the slave who might be locally autonomous (deciding which order to perform her chores) but might not be globally autonomous (she cannot govern herself by escaping her servitude even though she wishes to do so). In either instance, however, the slave, must be competent (she must meet the basic threshold) to be able to decide. In this regard, Christman and Anderson (2005) distinguish basic autonomy (this sort of minimal competence condition that entitles persons to rights or be morally responsible) and ideal autonomy (a more extensive set of idealised requirements, but attaining this level is not necessary to secure such rights or to be responsible).

agents into the class ‘autonomous’ (Christman, 2004). A minimal, not maximal, threshold of autonomy is thereby required. The basic requirement is less onerous than the ideal, since it stipulates a rudimentary level that must be attained (but beyond which agents can be autonomous to a greater or lesser extent). This minimal approach is likely to include many more agents than a demanding maximal one.

The basic threshold is connected to competence conditions, or the minimal ability to make decisions, which are drawn on in political, legal, and medical fields, and can be framed in various ways. For instance, Christman and Anderson argue that basic autonomy includes “capacities for rational thought, self-control, self-understanding, and so on” (Christman and Anderson, 2005, 3) that enable individuals to comprehend the situation, reason and reflect on the issue, weigh up options, and decide what they *really* want. Joel Feinberg also prioritises “the ability to make rational choices” (Feinberg, 1989, 28) but, in addition, lists general ‘virtues’ that someone who is competent is likely to possess in at least minimal amounts. These include “distinct self-identity (individuality)” (she has her own identity and is not defined wholly by her relations to others), “self-creation” (she generates and applies principles that she has endorsed), “self-legislation” (she follows her own un-coerced rules), and “self-control (self-discipline)” (she is in control of her self) (Feinberg, 1989, 31-42).⁵⁴ According to Feinberg, these traits and competencies are likely to facilitate decision-making since reasoning, knowing oneself, understanding one’s values, and applying facts and values

⁵⁴ Feinberg’s full list is: “self-possession” (the person does not ‘belong’ to anyone but himself), “distinct self-identity (individuality)” (she has her own identity and is not defined wholly by her relations to others), “authenticity” (her tastes, opinions, values and goals are genuinely her own), “self-creation” (she generates and applies principles she has endorsed), “self-legislation” (she follows her own un-coerced rules), “moral authenticity” (her moral beliefs are authentically her own), “moral independence (minimises excessive dependence on others for moral beliefs), “integrity (self-fidelity)” (the person is faithful to her own principles over time), “self-control (self-discipline)” (the person is in control of the self), “self-reliance” (she is able to morally depend on herself), “initiative (self-generation)” (the person actively initiates her own activities rather than depending on other people to provide cues for her) and, “responsibility for self” (she is responsible for the consequences of her actions and responsible *tout court*) (Feinberg, 1989, 31-42).

to choices (for example) all indicate a person who can self-govern. But, however devised, having a basic competency separates those who can be autonomous and those who cannot.

Putting these points about minimal thresholds and competence together, by meeting the criteria for basic self-rule, even individuals who govern themselves poorly should not be overridden in their desires. It is the possession of the appropriate capacity, not what one does with it, which demands respect from others and that signifies autonomy (Dworkin, 1988).⁵⁵ Only those who fail to attain the threshold, and so are always non-autonomous, can be overruled.⁵⁶ For either individual, the significant element is whether the basic levels have been attained. As Feinberg argues:

The person whose relevant capacities are just above the bare threshold of competence that qualifies him for *de jure* self-government may rightfully rule himself, but in fact he may rule himself badly, unwisely, only partially. He may in fact have relatively little personal autonomy in the sense of *de facto* condition, but like a badly governed nation, he may retain his sovereign independence nevertheless. A genuinely incompetent being, below the threshold, is incapable of making even foolish, unwise, reckless, or perverse choices [...] Being stupid, no less than being wise, is the sole prerogative of the threshold-competent (Feinberg, 1989, 30).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Dworkin, here, argues that “moral respect is owed to all because all have the capacity for defining themselves” (Dworkin, 1988, 31).

⁵⁶ To reiterate, by failing to meet a threshold, the idea is that someone fails to be competent. If individuals are not competent then they cannot make locally (or globally) autonomous decisions.

⁵⁷ The idea of noninterference if someone is competent again recognises something about the agent, but it does not make it a global conception, which is about living a life that one wants and considers external conditions of the agent (see the example about the slave in footnote 53 and the critiques in this chapter). If an agent is competent, a particular decision may not be overruled, so long as it meets the authenticity criteria (some examples of which were outlined in the first characteristic of this section). It is not noninterference by default

The benchmark for autonomy, then, is basic. The liberal account neither stipulates that competencies must be possessed fully nor in equal measure, but merely that they are met to a minimal standard. Thus, the third characteristic of a number of liberal theories is that autonomy is local and basic, both of which are minimal conceptions.

Broadly consistent desires

The fourth characteristic of the liberal approach is that the individual must have substantially consistent or non-conflicting desires. This requirement is another check against adopting a desire that has been interfered with in an underhanded way by ensuring that the endorsed preference is synchronised, to some extent, with others already validated by the agent. Liberal models acknowledge that persons are rarely fully constant in their desires, so theorists propose different amounts of consistency.

Frankfurt, for instance, emphasises a unified set of endorsed desires by advocating ‘wholeheartedness’. To be wholehearted, one must resolve (though not necessarily eliminate) conflicts at the volition-to-volition level by deciding, and deciding “*decisively*” (Frankfurt, 1971, 16), which of the preferences to integrate “into a single ordering” (Frankfurt, 2009, 170) and which to detach from the ranking altogether. Here, ‘decisively’ means “without reservation” (*ibid*) and in a manner that it is “authoritative for the self” (175). By deciding this way, ambivalence and conflict are managed, a strategy for classifying desires is developed,

because they are competent, then, since authenticity criteria, which are determined locally for many liberal theories, still need to be satisfied. In this way, as Christman and Anderson note, both competence and authenticity requirements are part of the debate in autonomy, and “authenticity conditions are typically built on the capacity to reflect on and endorse (or identify with) one’s desires” (2005, 3). One can be competent and authentic or non-authentic, then, but one cannot be incompetent and authentic or non-authentic.

and endorsed desires are largely consistent in their ordering.⁵⁸ In other words, deciding one-way or the other about the conflict is not “to ensure a certain action. Nor is it to ensure that one will act well [...rather it] is to establish constraint by which other preferences and decisions are to be guided [...and] is to integrate the person both dynamically and statically” (Frankfurt, 2009, 174-5). Frankfurt, then, offers a view where there may be inconsistency and where this is not entirely evaded, but the agent is able to wholeheartedly decide between the conflicts such that what she intends to do (rather than actually does) is clear to her.

Another account is Ekstrom's, who argues that discord amongst preferences is probable and that it matters not that the self is conflicted, or that one feels ambivalent toward a desire, or even that one does not ‘feel good’ about certain preferences. Rather, what matters is accepting these desires are part of one's ‘true self’. Cohering attitudes are, however, important to Ekstrom for three reasons: first, they “are abiding, relatively stable through time, because they support each other” second, they “are fully defensible by the agent” because they fit with her other preferences and finally, they “are attitudes with which the agent is for the most part comfortable” (Ekstrom, 2008, 154-5).⁵⁹ So, one need not be satisfied at the level of preferences but one does require some uniformity at the level of attitudes. This offers a notion of consistency where though each desire is not harmonious, the overarching attitudes are.

⁵⁸ Frankfurt suggests that inconsistency can occur at the volition-desire level (in which case someone is non-autonomous) or at the volition-volition level (in which case one is lacking ‘wholeheartedness’ because their highest preferences are “not fully integrated, so that there is some *inconsistency* or *conflict* (perhaps not yet manifest) among them” (Frankfurt, 2009, 165).) Frankfurt argues that this latter volitional conflict is about wholeheartedly deciding, either between integration (ranking preferences) or separation (rejecting a preference as an “outlaw” – Frankfurt, 2009, 170) into or from the volitional order. In this regard, wholeheartedness involves the person deciding between two conflicting desires, even though the conflict is not eliminated, whereas non-wholeheartedness arises when the person does not genuinely decide between them and there remains doubt about what the person intends to do (rather than actually does).

⁵⁹ The stipulation “for the most part comfortable” does not ultimately matter for Ekstrom, however. She argues, “a person might at some time feel estranged from a desire, for whatever reason (perhaps, out of situational embarrassment or in denial). But if that desire is a preference and it coheres with her character, then it is part of her real self, whether at any given moment she wishes to acknowledge that fact or not. A feeling of alienation or, conversely, a feeling of satisfaction does not by itself settle the matter of what is central to a person's psychological identity.” (Ekstrom, 2008, 157-8)

Differently to either of these approaches, Christman, through his account of rationality, proposes a weaker test. His theory requires a minimal self-awareness and that desires or beliefs are not “*manifestly inconsistent*” (Christman, 1991, 15).⁶⁰ They must not be “in obvious conflict [...whereby] the agent could bring easily to consciousness and recognise [their preferences] as incompatible” (*ibid*).⁶¹ For instance, there may be contradictions between the ends an agent hopes to achieve and the rest of her judgements, principles and values, but this results in the kind of inconsistency that is conspicuous. As Christman puts it, “if I believe that ‘p’ and I believe that ‘if p then q,’ but I desire something X which is based on the belief that ‘not-q,’ then the desire for X is not autonomous” (*ibid*). In this weaker sense, consistency is not wholehearted preference ranking or cohering attitudes, but the absence of obviously inconsistent desires.

Each view discussed requires some consistency in desires because each recognises that autonomous individuals are likely to be united in their overall goals and projects (and so have generally compatible preferences) rather than fractured (with mostly incompatible ones). In this regard, the self must be a broadly rational, cohesive unit since “if the ‘self’ doing the ‘governing’ is dissociated, fragmented, or insufficiently transparent to itself, then the process of self-determination sought for in a concept of autonomy is absent or incomplete”

⁶⁰ Christman rejects as too stringent both the externalist account of rationality that pins the individual’s beliefs to objective standards and the internalist account that requires consistency of a set of beliefs such that is true in all possible worlds and is complete (Christman, 1991, 13-14, f/n 22). Rather, he argues that manifest inconsistency enables a concept: of “normal autonomy” (Christman, 1991, 15) that is not metaphysically vague; that does not simply equate self-governance with the objective intelligence and consistency of a ‘reasonable person’; and that captures the specific way that some compulsive desires are not autonomous (only when there is a manifest inconsistency in the desires moving an agent can it be said that compulsive desires are a problem for autonomy) (Christman, 1991, 15-16).

⁶¹ For instance, someone who believed, despite the doctor’s diagnosis, that she does not have cancer, is deceiving herself (and therefore not self-aware) to this degree. Likewise, someone who is delusional or paranoid would not be able to make reflective judgements about her beliefs (Christman, 1991, 17).

(Christman, 1991, 17). The important factor that consistent desires reveal, then, is a self that is constant; a self that desires (somewhat) predictably. In this way, the fourth aspect of liberal models of autonomy is broadly non-conflicting desires.

Autonomy and moral responsibility

The final feature of liberal accounts of autonomy that I discuss is the distinction and relationship between autonomy and moral responsibility. Early liberal models established a direct link between these concepts. It was generally thought, for instance, that “at the most fundamental level, responsibility arises when one acts to bring about changes in the world as opposed to letting fate or chance or the decisions of other actors determine the future” (Dworkin, 1988, 67). Being an agent assumes that one decides for herself and this, in turn, implies that one is responsible for those self-made decisions. Similarly, Watson (1987) and Ekstrom (2008) suggest that free agency requires self-direction and alternative possibilities, and Nomy Arpaly points out that others assume that “the class of deeds for which we are morally responsible and the class of deeds that are instances of autonomous agency are identical, or approximate each other quite closely” (Arpaly, 2008, 163).⁶² These views follow the intuition that to be morally responsible for doing *x* demands that one actually decides to do *x* and really wants to do *x* or, in other words, that the individual was autonomous in her decision-making with regards to *x*.

Yet, one can be responsible even when one is not autonomous. Someone who lives according to the preferences of another, for instance, “cannot evade responsibility by doing what another tells him to do. He is responsible precisely for doing *that*. Nor can he escape responsibility by

⁶² Arpaly refers to John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza (1998) in particular.

refusing to think about or reflect on the kind of person he is and should be. ‘I didn’t think’ is hardly an excuse” (Dworkin, 1988, 28). So, at a superficial level, the non-reflective person is still ‘responsible’ for the act. On a more fundamental level, the agent can also bear *moral* responsibility. Michael McKenna, for example, distinguishes autonomous and morally responsible agency through control and epistemic conditions, and argues that autonomous agency requires a higher threshold of control but a lower threshold of epistemic conditions than responsible agency.⁶³ So, “it is possible for a person to satisfy all of the conditions for autonomous agency and yet fail to satisfy the more demanding epistemic condition for morally responsible agency [...and] it is possible for a person to satisfy all of the conditions for morally responsible agency and yet fail to satisfy the more demanding control condition for autonomous agency” (McKenna, 2008, 205). On this view, there is a difference between these types of agency and one is not required for the other as “the relationship between them

⁶³ McKenna has argued that there is a difference between autonomous and morally responsible agency. The difference can be seen in two steps: the control condition, which refers to whether someone had control over herself when carrying out a particular act and is often invoked in freedom of the will debates, and the epistemic condition, which refers to what knowledge the individual had in the circumstance. Taking these conditions in turn, *control conditions* are required for both autonomous and morally responsible agency but whereas the control condition for autonomy requires a historical component because it is about the principles, desires, values and goals the agent has endorsed through critical reflection over time, the control condition for moral responsibility only requires a time-sliced component because it depends on how an agent acts at a particular time, not how that responsible agency was formed (McKenna, 2008, 211, 220-21). Further, autonomous agency is not just a capacity in McKenna’s view, but must be exercised, unlike morally responsible agency, which need not be exercised (221). This account of autonomous agency is, by McKenna’s own admission, demanding, as, since it is understood “as *both* a threshold and a scalar notion admitting of degrees, then perhaps what [historical autonomy] captures is a fairly advanced level of autonomous agency.” (222) In this way, because “the control condition for autonomous agency involves *more* than what is required for morally responsible agency [...] it is possible for a person to satisfy all of the conditions for morally responsible agency and yet fail to satisfy the more demanding control condition for autonomous agency.” (205)

With regards to the *epistemic condition*, it applies to moral responsibility in its entirety, but with regards to autonomous agency “the condition is restricted to matters relevant to the rules (values, governing principles, goals, passions, whatever) that serve as the basis for an agent’s ruling herself.” (211) By this, McKenna means what matters for determining autonomous agency are only the rules one lives by, not the whole of autonomous agency. It is possible for the rules one governs oneself by to have been correctly formed with appropriate knowledge, but it may also be the case that such rules were incorrectly affected by an “epistemic glitch” (212) that “pollute the formation, evaluation, or retention of those rules.” (211) So, one could, on the epistemic condition, have morally responsible agency but, owing to incorrectly formed self-rules, lack autonomous agency. In this case, “the epistemic condition for autonomous agency involves *less* than what is required for morally responsible agency [..., so] it is possible for a person to satisfy all of the conditions for autonomous agency and yet fail to satisfy the more demanding epistemic condition for morally responsible agency” (205).

is entirely contingent; while the circumstances giving rise to each might make it likely that a person winding up as one would also wind up as the other, she needn't" (McKenna, 2008, 224). In this way, many liberal autonomy theorists logically distinguish the two concepts and "generally seem to suggest that the set of autonomous actions is significantly smaller than the set of actions for which we are commonly held morally responsible" (Arpaly, 2008, 164). While some theories synonymise autonomous action and morally responsible action, most treat these as distinct concepts.

However, it is more likely that one evades responsibility if they are non-autonomous because of undue interference. In this case the agent has not simply failed to think about what they really want, they have, in certain scenarios, been unduly compromised so as to make this critical reflection difficult or impossible. To elaborate, "what may affect responsibility is interference with a person's autonomous action when the person is not in a position to realise this is occurring, or to do much about it if he does. If my will is overborne or undermined, then in suitable circumstances the responsibility for what I have done may shift to those who have interfered with my autonomy" (Dworkin, 1988, 28). In such a situation, autonomous agency is interfered with and the agent does something different to what she wants, and so responsibility is impaired. This, in turn, is different to situations where the agent does not have alternative possibilities or options but nonetheless acts in a way that they most want, in which case the individual is likely to be responsible. Frankfurt, for instance, presents the case of Jones, who has no alternative but to do what Black (who – unbeknownst to Jones – has inserted a failsafe device into Jones' brain that can be triggered to make sure he does *x* should it become clear at any stage that Jones is going to do *not-x*) wants (Frankfurt, 2009, 6-8). He suggests that Jones does what he wants despite there being no other option: "there may be

circumstances that make it impossible for a person to avoid performing some action without those circumstances in any way bringing it about that he performs that action” (Frankfurt, 2009, 9). In such a case, Jones has moral responsibility (despite lacking alternative possibilities and the latent manipulation) because he acts from his own will. This implies that responsibility rests with the individual only when one’s will is one’s own and, by contrast, “a person is not morally responsible for what he has done if he did it *only* because he could not have done otherwise” (Frankfurt, 2009, 10, emphasis added) – such that it was not the agent’s will too.⁶⁴ Moral responsibility, then, rests on what the agent really wanted to do, not the lack of alternatives. Thus, in this fifth and final aspect of the liberal approach, while autonomy and moral responsibility can be decoupled logically in that one does not depend on the other, liberal theorists usually still focus on interferences with the will as potential limiters of responsibility.

In this section, I have set out five characteristics of liberal models of autonomy: authentic desires, procedural independence, local and basic autonomy, consistent desires, and the interrelation between autonomy and moral responsibility. Though the traits appear in specific theories to differing extents, they are nonetheless shared in some form. This, therefore, describes the core features of the first of the two approaches to autonomy that we will consider in this thesis.

⁶⁴ Frankfurt presents several versions of Jones, where he responds differently to the coercion, and explores how he may (or may not) be morally responsible in each. Jones₁ is an unreasonable man and does what he wants irrespective of the threat, which has no effect on him. In this instance, Jones₁ has the same moral responsibility as if there were no threat, and he is not denied any alternatives. Jones₂ is so overwhelmed by the threat that he does not remember his earlier decision to do the same thing. Here Jones₂ only performed the act because of the coercion, not his decision, so – though he may have responsibility for the earlier decision – he has no responsibility for the actual act. Jones₃ is impressed (not indifferent or overwhelmed) by the threat but acts from the earlier decision, not the threat. Like Jones₁, he is responsible for the act even though he could not have done otherwise because he’d already decided to do it. This suggests one is not coerced by the threat if he acts for his own earlier reasons despite the threat being made, and that – even if one is *in fact* (just the instance of being) coerced by a threat – he may still be morally responsible for the act (by virtue of his doing it for his own reasons) (Frankfurt, 2009, 3-6). These cases are to be distinguished with Jones₄ – the case presented in the main text of this thesis – where Jones does what he most wants.

Critiques

Having discussed the common features of liberal autonomy, in the second half of this chapter, I examine standard problems with the liberal account in general (rather than with particular theories). The concerns that I consider here are largely drawn from mainstream relational theorists (for instance: Nedelsky, 1989, 1990; Code, 1991; Benhabib, 1992; Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000).⁶⁵ Separately, then, they are not new critiques, but drawing them together and showing how important they are for female suicide bombers in application is. In this section, I will explore concerns with how the liberal approach constructs two concepts in particular, first, the agent and second, autonomy. Following now established arguments, the proposition here will be that liberal theoretical formulations of these notions are somewhat impoverished when it comes to describing agents and also a little too internally and narrowly focussed when it comes to describing autonomy. The argument is that, though the liberal model does provide conceptualisations of the agent and autonomy (it is certainly not unable to offer useful interpretations of these), they tend to lead to a less satisfactory understanding of the agent and autonomy for persons in constraint than other models. And – as I will claim in chapters three and four – a relational approach tends to offer a more useful picture of these concepts for such individuals. When we are concerned to represent the autonomy of the bombers properly and thoroughly, the argument overall, then, is that the liberal account is less proficient at recognising the real but constrained way autonomy is exhibited by female bombers than other accounts, particularly the relational one.

⁶⁵ Recall that my purpose is to map the existing debate fairly (see note 36). While some liberal theorists may disagree with some of the concerns presented here, I use standard criticisms that are considered commonplace in the literature. For example, Christman and Anderson, in their section on ‘Challenges to Liberalism’s Reliance on the Autonomous Individual’, note that “the model of the autonomous person has drawn powerful calls for reconsideration” (2005, 4) from a broad array communitarian, postmodern and feminist thinkers. Given the overall aim of my thesis, it is these sorts of mainstream critiques that will be reflected in this section.

Agent

The first criticism regards the agent, and especially how the liberal approach first, overemphasises acts and underemphasises agents and second, constructs the residual agent somewhat implausibly. Based on standard relational critiques, I argue that the liberal focus on acts results in an agent that is conceptualised as more individualistic and unified than it should be. I contend that, though the liberal model offers a view about agents, more appropriate theoretical accounts of agents should be sought.

i. De-emphasising agents

The first concern is about de-emphasising the agent in questions of autonomy. To recap, the liberal account tends to focus on the local (act, desire, preference, for example) rather than the global (agent, lives, self) when assessing autonomy (with autonomous agents simply being a composite of multiple autonomous acts). Even though some theories (such as Dworkin, 1988) do consider a more global conception and some (like Watson, 1989) the agent's values, and while the model in general does identify some features of the agent (like that of basic competence), the appraisal of authenticity is usually at the specific act level. In this regard, "most contemporary discussions of free agency could be described more accurately as discussions of free action. They do more to explain what it is to act freely than to illuminate what it is to be a free agent" (Benson, 1994, 650). In this task, the focus is on acts, which are assessed somewhat separately, rather than the agent, which could be assessed in a more holistic – and possibly more accurate – way. The claim, then, is not that the liberal account cannot consider the agent, but that the attention is more on the act.

Sumi Madhok labels this kind of approach “act atomism”, whereby “actions of persons are typically evaluated in a manner that does not take into account the acts preceding or following that particular act and are thus considered in isolation of all other acts. For instance, the particular act, say A2 is separated from other acts performed by the same person, say A1 or A3, and examined independently” (Madhok, 2007, 344). This general model of prioritising acts ahead of agents might be problematic if trying to gain a clear picture of the extent to which acts are autonomous given other factors – especially those of constraint – in the agent’s life. Though we might recognise that assessing acts is important for and a necessary part of autonomy, it is also imperative that the agent’s life more generally is seriously considered.

While this critique does not suggest that assessments of autonomy should not focus on acts at all (and so the relational account is similar to the liberal insofar as some consideration of acts is required, as we shall see), it does propose that the act is not, and should not be, considered as one act in isolation from the agent’s others or her life more generally.⁶⁶ The claim, then, is that though some liberal theories might be global and recognise the agent, by focusing predominately on the authenticity of single acts, the agent’s life as a whole and her other acts (that may clarify, and that interrelate with, the discrete act) are emphasised less in the overall model. For the bombers, where we want to represent their acts properly, this may be less beneficial than an account where her acts are contextualised and the constraints of her life are recognised more.

ii. Implausible residual agent

⁶⁶ See chapter 3, where relational autonomy includes acts as well as the agent (p140), and chapter 5, where things like the goal or plan is one, but not the only, element of how much autonomy is attributed to the bombers on the spectrum (see the condition starting on p243). In particular, what is key here is that external conditions are relevant to how much autonomy is occurring.

The second issue to highlight is that the agent that remains (after the act is considered) is somewhat trivially conceptualised such that the richness of the agent goes unnoticed. In other words, as relational theorists have put it, the concern is that the liberal approach “promotes a very stripped-down conception of agents [...] a conception in which diversity and complexity of agents are paved away and agents are reduced down to an interchangeable sameness” (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, 6). Concentrating on acts suggests that less attention is paid to the particularities of the agent, which may be important when we want to account for the bombers as agents. This objection can be explored further by considering how such a construction of agents is discordant with persons on two counts, first, for being individualistic and second, for being too unified. This leads to an agent that is constructed less plausibly and accurately than it might be, and so is likely to be less representative of the bombers.

Individualism

The first concern is that the liberal approach constructs autonomous selves individualistically. While liberal theories certainly recognise that social factors and others influence agent’s lives, this criticism charges that these factors are underplayed for the purposes of autonomy. For example, on the one hand, some liberal theories admit that others are necessary to selves; that their importance is a matter of “empirically grounded or theoretically derived knowledge which [otherwise] makes it impossible or extremely unlikely that anybody ever has been, or could be, autonomous” (Dworkin, 1988, 7). Here, it seems to be acknowledged that others are needed for developing the self in the model. Likewise, some theories suggest that agents are “the product of external influences over which he has no control” (Feinberg, 1989, 34) – so that social factors seem to be part of the approach. On the other hand, however, the account does not observe the prominence of these social aspects and “ultimately assigns such

influences as peripheral rather than [having] a constitutive role” (Abrams, 1998, 808) in theorising the agent. These are considered, then, but tangential. With this framing there are two problems that arise, first, others are considered logically necessary but ultimately inimical to autonomy and second, socialisation exists but is to be transcended by ‘successful’ self-rule. The, now standard, relational argument is that the liberal account’s recognition of the social features of the self is somewhat superficial and that the agent is largely individualistic.

(a) Others

On the first point, the concern is that liberal models utilise the rhetoric of clearly demarcated, rights-bearing selves whose boundaries must be protected from intrusion by others (Nedelsky, 1989, 1990) and that this is a problematic conception because it suggests that others exist but are somehow harmful to autonomous selves. Isaiah Berlin, for example, describes autonomy as preserving the “inner citadel – my reason, my soul, my ‘noumenal’ self – which, do what they may, neither external blind force, nor human malice, can touch. I have withdrawn into myself; there, and there alone, I am secure” (Berlin, 1958, 20). The self is constructed as one’s ‘safe haven’, whilst others are cast as trying to encroach upon it. Jennifer Nedelsky uses the analogy between autonomy and property to illustrate this pattern and argues that there is a “deeply ingrained sense that individual autonomy is to be achieved by erecting a wall (of rights) between the individual and those around him” (Nedelsky, 1989, 12). Autonomous agents are regarded as self-governing, distinct territories whose parameters must remain intact in the way that property is owned and defended against misappropriation.

This, however, distinguishes the individual and others in society in an exclusive and hostile way. It is – as admitted by some liberal theorists – a “hyper-individualism” (Christman and

Anderson, 2005, 8), where selves are detached entities, framed with “a separateness and independence that is a reaction against others” who are seen as “threatening by definition” (Hirschmann, 1989, 1231). In other words, the type of agent that remains in the general liberal approach (though particular theories do try to distance themselves from this view – such as Christman, 2004) is an independent self, who does not need and is suspicious of others. Relational theorists argue that this kind of agent is the mark of the autonomous person in the liberal approach in general. As Lorraine Code declares, on this view, “autonomous man is – and should be – self-sufficient, independent, and self-reliant, a self-realising individual” (Code, 1991, 77). It is a self that is wholly disconnected from others. It is this type of individual, then, that is the paradigmatic autonomous agent in liberal theories.

Such a construction, however, ignores the central importance of others to selves, and so to autonomous selves, and results in a flawed understanding of persons as maintained by the relational critique. There is, for instance, a “denial of the self’s own development out of and ongoing dependence on intimate personal ties, [and] a disregard for nonvoluntaristic relational responsibilities” (Friedman, 1997a, 42) in the liberal account, such that this sovereign and rights-wielding self underestimates the ways in and extents to which all persons rely on others. This notion of the self “produces a conception of agency that abstracts individual will (the ability to make choices and act on them) out of the context of the social relationships within which it develops and within which it is exercised” (Hirschmann, 1989, 1231). The liberal picture of agent, so relational theorists contend, deflates how much others are required for agents in the first place.

Though the liberal approach recognises that persons are social (such as through Dworkin, 1988 and Christman, 2004), the argument from the relational camp is that others are in fact cast in opposition and tension with the self in the model. There is acknowledgement of but also – compared to other models – less weight attached to the importance of others for the self. In so doing, “there has been a gradual alignment of *autonomy* with *individualism*” (Code, 1991, 78), a position that underplays the role of others and over-emphasises the (detached and independent) self.

(b) Socialisation

The second worry is that the liberal model, in its conception of the agent, tends to misstate the significance of social factors. Though accepting the obvious import of the social, the model aims to overcome them, as though social influences always interfere with the autonomous agent. Diana Meyers, for instance, argues, “instead of addressing the question of how a person can live in harmony with his or her authentic self, these theories are fundamentally concerned with explaining how people can elude socialisation, that is, how the authentic self can transcend the impact of social causes” (Meyers, 1989, 40). The approach seeks to develop an account of the self that sheds social influence and so what it ‘really’ wants can be uncovered. Yet, relational theorists argue that to try to determine what agents most want by attempting to surmount socialisation portrays the autonomous self as “disembedded and disembodied” (Benhabib, 1992, 157), and underestimates how much agents’ identities, goals, principles, and standards are in fact socially constituted.

In other words, the concern is that persons are not beings with self-generated values that exist before the societies of which they are a part. Rather, they are, to some extent, constituted by

their contexts. This is a familiar argument that has parallels in communitarian critiques of the liberal self. Michael Sandel (1998), for example, argues that persons “are not strictly prior with respect to their ends, but are embedded in and conditioned by the values and interests and desires from among which the...self...would take its purposes” (121). Ends are discovered rather than chosen, such that “agency consists less in summoning the will than in seeking self-understanding” (153), not in choosing values from nowhere but in asking about, “who I am” (59) from somewhere. It is unrealistic to extract agents from their settings in a bid to understand what they ‘truly’ want because the very desires they have are attributable (in some way) to those contexts. Similarly, Alisdair MacIntyre contends, “I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectation and obligations. These constitute the given of life, my moral starting-point” (2011, 220). Socially bestowed identities form the basis of agency and cannot be brushed away in order to reveal the ‘true’ self in the way liberal models assume. Finally, Charles Taylor submits that trying to evade one’s social background is misjudged because “living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency, [and] that stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside what we recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood” (1989, 27). It is impossible to transcend the frameworks within which all persons are embedded as these ‘orientate’ selves from the very core. Thus, according to both the communitarian and relational critiques, though the liberal approach might grant that individuals live within non-chosen societies (as, for instance, Feinberg, 1989, did), the extent to which they are immersed in such contexts and so are unable to circumvent them is less appreciated on this view than others.

Though attachments and social factors are acknowledged in liberal models, then, relational theorists contend that the agent that emerges is more individualistic than necessary, and that this constructs the agent less well than other accounts could.

Unified

The second problem with the residual agent of liberal theories is that of the unified self. The liberal construction “assumes that agents are self-transparent, psychically unified, and able to achieve self-mastery” (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, 10). In so doing, it alludes to a self that is largely synthesised, with her wants and desires clear to and knowable by the agent. While some integration of persons is likely to be relevant, the criticism here is that this more excessive than required. Relational views propose that persons are much more likely to be conflicted and desires much more opaque, such that the level of lucidity or cohesion expected in assumptions about unification are too high. Christman and Joel Anderson, for example, describe this contention thus:

various writers focusing on the standard conception of the autonomous person have raised trenchant questions about the degree to which such conceptions problematically assume a unified, self-transparent consciousness lurking in all of us and representing our most settled selves. These commentators point to the ways in which conflict and irresolvable ambivalence characterise the modern personality. They emphasise that our motivational lives must be understood as containing various elements that are hidden from reflective view and disguised or distorted in consciousness

[...] The idea of unified, transparent selves being a mark of autonomy has thus come to be seen as suspect (Christman and Anderson, 2005, 7).

The problem, then, is that individuals are not as consistent or harmonious in their desires, and what they ‘really’ want may not be as conspicuous to them, as the liberal approach supposes with its (residual) agent. To elaborate, consider two concerns posed by psychodynamic and postmodern theorists, and which some relational theorists (such as Hekman, 1991; Benhabib, 1992) also support. On a Freudian analysis, for example, agents are “conflict-ridden, often self-deluded, fundamentally opaque to themselves, and driven by archaic drives and desires of which they may not even be aware, let alone be able to master” (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, 10). On a Foucauldian lens, liberal autonomy “naively ignores the fact that subjects are constituted within and by regimes, discourses, and micropractices of power. There is no pure, self-determining free will that somehow escapes the operations of power, nor is there a true self, there to be discovered through introspective reflection” (*ibid*). On either view, agents are much less transparent and integrated than liberal autonomy theories assume, so the relational critique is that the unified self postulated by the liberal account is somewhat “illusory” (*ibid*). Thus, the liberal understanding of agents as largely knowledgeable and consistent about their desires and wants might be a less satisfactory construction given the problems raised about the actual intricacies and complexities of selves.

A failure often associated with the liberal approach, then, is that the agent that it leaves behind is overly individualistic and overly unified. Together these understandings misdescribe the self and so offer a less accurate picture of agents than other accounts, according to relational

theorists. Where the focus is to represent the bombers as agents well, a more thorough and plausible construction of the agent is therefore required.

Thus, the first problem of liberal autonomy that I discussed was about the agent. I argued that, according to common relational criticisms, there are two key flaws with the approach: first, that the agent is prioritised lower than the act in evaluations of autonomy and second, that the residual agent is more individualistic and unified than it needs to be. Given this, I contend that better theories of autonomy (classed as those that assess the agent globally as well as the local act and those that present more realistic accounts of agents) should be sought for representing the bombers.

Autonomy

The second set of standard criticisms focus on the liberal conception of autonomy. I discuss two relational issues with the liberal model: first, the relationship between self-rule and the external and second, the construction of autonomy itself. These criticisms suggest that the liberal account is less adequate at recognising the interaction between context and autonomy and that it develops a narrower account of autonomy than other models might. Following some of these worries, I argue that, insofar as the bombers, who are typically in constrained contexts, are concerned, alternative views that could characterise and trace instances of autonomy in less internal and narrow ways should be considered.

i. Relationship between autonomy and the external

The first concern is that liberal theories focus predominately on the internal will and so do not address the connected factor of externalities as thoroughly as other approaches might.

Deemphasising the external in this way is a weakness for two reasons, first, where there is negative interference, the approach describes the relationship between the will and the obstruction less satisfactorily than it could and second, where there is no interference of this sort, it underestimates positive forces outside the will when compared with other models. For our purposes, better recognising how the external is linked to autonomy might be relevant for representing the bomber's autonomy properly.

Negative influences

The first worry regards interferences with the will. There are various types of obstructions that liberal models usually consider. Some theorists focus on external interferences (such as coercion) and internal interferences stemming from the external (such as hypnosis and psychosurgery) (Noggle, 2008; Ekstrom, 2008). Other theorists discuss “impediments to the wilful control of behaviour” (Benson, 1994, 652) such as surgical manipulation of the brain's function, “and impediments to the regulation of the will in light of what matters to the agent” (*ibid*). These include brainwashing techniques, hypnosis, and drug-induced addictions. For our discussion, I broadly categorise these obstacles, many of which originate from outside the person's will, as preference changers and preference disablers. I will contend that, in both cases, the liberal account is less able to adequately describe the crux of the negative influence because it is more focussed on the internal than other approaches.

(a) Preference changers

The first kind of influence is when the external situation is coercive or oppressive such that it causes a preference change in the agent. Here, the claim is that neither the dominant hierarchical theories specifically (according even to some liberal theorists) nor liberal

approach more generally (according to relational theorists) offer the most appropriate characterisation of these respective hindrances.

(a.i) Hierarchical theories

First, as liberal historical autonomy proponents have argued, hierarchical positions cannot adequately diagnose instances of coercion because the internal will is ahistorical or time-sliced, and so, at that particular moment, higher and lower order desires are (counter-intuitively) in alignment despite there being an interference (Christman, 1989). To illustrate, imagine Christman's example of the bank teller who hands over cash to the armed bank robber. Non-historical theories would suggest that the bank teller's higher-order desire (not to be heroic in dangerous circumstances) does not conflict with her lower-order desire (handing over the money). However, "on this theory, she seems to have acted autonomously, a verdict that runs counter to our usual judgement in such cases (after all, coercion situations seem like paradigm cases of the loss of autonomy)" (Christman, 1989, 8). In this case, ahistorical, hierarchical models, such as Frankfurt and Dworkin's theories, fail to differentiate coercive from noncoercive cases. As Christman argues, the bank teller actually has two active desires – "not to be heroic in threatening situations," formed before the present situation and "to give over the money to the robber *in this particular case*" (1989, 8). Though both desires have the same outcome (the money is exchanged), the difference is that the agent does not approve of the second desire because, following Christman's historical model, "*the conditions of its formation*" (1989, 8) were coercive owing to the robber's threat of violence, and so it is non-autonomous. Yet, on the ahistorical approach, it is (dubiously) deemed autonomous. So, to properly identify coercion, one cannot look only for corresponding higher volitions and lower

order desires, and there must be a historical dimension too. The hierarchical theory, then, does not identify coercion properly.

In order to avoid this charge and better capture instances of undue interference, the procedural independence requirement (Dworkin, 1989) could be added to hierarchical theories. Recall from part one of this chapter that, for Dworkin, the “full formula for autonomy [...] is authenticity plus procedural independence” (Dworkin, 1989, 61) precisely to capture undue interference such as the kind being discussed here. If the theory is supplemented in this way, then, the gun-wielding robber sullies the teller’s reflective endorsement process, and handing over the money is recognised as not being an autonomous act, despite the aligned levels. But, even with this addendum, some liberal theorists have argued that the structural account still falls short because it does not explain the impetus of the duress (what it is that makes *r*, but not *s*, an obstruction). Taylor, for instance, argues that procedural independence may distinguish coercive and non-coercive cases, but that:

it only does so by fiat, by simply ruling *ex cathedra* that a person is not autonomous with respect to those desires that he has been manipulated into possessing. And this is not enough for [Dworkin’s] analysis of autonomy to be theoretically satisfactory. This is because an acceptable analysis of autonomy should not merely list the ways in which it is intuitively plausible that a person will suffer from a lack of autonomy with respect to her effective first-order desires, but must also provide an account of *why* a person’s autonomy would be thus undermined, so that influences on a person’s behaviour that do not seem to undermine her autonomy (e.g.,

advice) can be differentiated from those that do (e.g., deception) (Taylor, 2008, 5-6).

Structural theories are less able than historical theories to ascertain why the robber with the gun appears on the negative side of divide while the teller's boss giving her financial incentives to perform better at work does not. The hierarchical model, even with a procedural independence criterion, then, is not the most appropriate way to distinguish and account for passable (noncoercive) and non-passable (coercive) types of interference.

(a.ii) Other theories

According to the relational critique, however, it is not just hierarchal theories that suffer this sort of problem. The broader liberal (hierarchical, 'neohierarchical', and non-hierarchical) approach also struggles to interpret oppressive (rather than coercive) influences on the agent's preferences. This is because the account tends to prioritise the integrity of the internal will and this propensity is more likely to downplay external circumstances that are pervasive yet perhaps subtle, such as the effects of various forms of oppression, than other views. As relational theorists have argued, to underrate such details undermines the "externalist's intuition" (Oshana, 1998, 86) that contexts matter, and that situations of repression can affect the will differently than those of non-repression, so much so that this should be part of the account of autonomy. The relational concern is that it is precisely this connection between context and the will that the liberal approach does not make as well as others.

Take the classic case of the 'voluntary slave', for example, who has willingly given up all authority over and about her life to the slave owner because she believes this will make her

more free (Oshana, 1998). The slave's desire may be (internally) autonomous according to the liberal view because it passes one of the stipulated (hierarchical, 'neohierarchical', or non-hierarchical) tests and there is an absence of coercion (like that of the robber's gun). However, there are also pressures (externally) from slavery that can impinge upon her will and change her desires nonetheless but that liberal models ignore. So, as far as this criticism goes, even if the slave feels content in her preference – she is not necessarily autonomous and – even if she is treated well – she is not necessarily free, since her desire, in effect, suspends her autonomy and freedom (*ibid*).⁶⁷ In other words, internally desiring to be non-autonomous does not make that preference autonomous since the external oppressive context of slavery in which it is formed (and which may affect what is desired) needs to be taken into account too. The position, in other words, is that a satisfactory assessment of autonomy requires not just the internal but also the external to be considered.⁶⁸ Liberal models, which primarily focus on the internal (though this is not to say the external is never considered – problems of coercion and manipulation, for instance, often are discussed as acknowledged above), are more likely to find this difficult than an account that typically discusses both together.

A different example used in the literature might be a pregnant woman whose desire to become a mother is (depending on the particular liberal approach adopted) structurally, historically, or coherently sound, but is based on internalised “*false*” (Stoljar, 2000, 109) gender norms about a woman's worth being tied to the role of motherhood. In this instance, “it is the content of these norms that can be criticised from a feminist point of view” (*ibid*), not the internal

⁶⁷ Similarly the monk, who can reassess his autonomous decision to subject himself entirely to the authority of a religious order on a yearly basis (which is different to the slave who has permanently given up any such right), would still be ruled daily by others for a substantial period of time, thereby eroding what it means to be autonomous even if he was not coerced (Oshana, 1998).

⁶⁸ The thesis aims to bring together the internal and external and so the concept of autonomy being discussed and advocated is one that can deal with both these elements. This will be explored further in the remaining chapters on relational autonomy and its application and on the spectrum.

procedure of critical reflection or lack of an integrated will, since the woman endorses external norms that subordinate her.⁶⁹ It is this oppressive feature of the environment (which is unlike the threat of a loaded gun but is an ominous force nonetheless) that liberal models struggle to capture as well as other accounts because of the predominately internal focus, according to this critique.

These examples indicate that individuals may have their internal will intact, and so would be deemed autonomous on the liberal approach, yet may be impacted externally and disconcertingly (though not coercively) such that preferences are being changed and autonomy is being eroded. The account, however, less appropriately pinpoints or describes these subtler interferences (of, say, sexism or racism) than an account that is more attuned to these kinds of everyday constraint. Though clearly able to recognise the impact of interferences such as coercion, the general liberal approach, however, is not the most satisfactory for dealing with external situations of oppression, as maintained by relational theorists.

Based on standard critiques, I have contended that, because the focus tends to be the inner constitution of the will, both the structural theory specifically and the liberal approach overall are less effective at properly accounting for interferences that arise from outside of the will, such as oppression, than a model that considers the internal and external together. That is,

⁶⁹ Stoljar's reflection is based on a study she cites by Kristin Luker (1975), which involved interviews with young women who were about to abort their pregnancy and who had not used contraception (despite having free access to it) for reasons including the perceived 'benefits' of being a mother. Stoljar argues, "women who accept the norm that pregnancy and motherhood increase their worthiness accept something false. And because of the internalisation of the norm, they do not have the capacity to perceive it as false. [...] It is the content of these norms that can be criticised from a feminist point of view, not the way in which Luker's subjects engage in the bargaining process" (Stoljar, 2000, 109). In cases such as these, the problem is with the kinds of norms adopted. This idea will be revisited in the next chapter on relational autonomy.

there is not as extensive a relationship between the internal will and the external context set out in the liberal account as there might be in other approaches.

(b) Preference disablers

The second category involves circumstances that inhibit, rather than change, the agent's preference. The relational concern is that liberal theories are not the most suited to account for instances where there is neither outright coercion nor underhanded oppression that alters desires, but rather obstructions that disable forged ones. The approach is less sensitive to properly characterising autonomous preferences that are formed but where the external situation prohibits the execution of those preferences. This is because of the tendency to predominately focus on "inner obstacles to a person's autonomous existence" (Madhok, 2007, 345), and much less so on outer ones (*ibid*). Liberal approaches do recognise autonomy as an internal capacity and external condition (so there is some discussion of the external), and regard them as separate in order to distinguish two different kinds of autonomy. However, it is less attuned than other approaches at deciphering the relationship between external factors limiting autonomy, such as oppression – where the situation is not necessarily brought about by coercion, sinister devices lodged into the brain, or compulsions (impediments that the liberal account tends to debate), but neither is it unconstrained or unhampered by it (problems that it tends to shy away from) (Benson, 1994) – and autonomy enactment.

For instance, there may be cases where the external situation may be repressive enough that, though the individual generates internal preferences (that may well contradict dominant norms), the situation does not allow the individual the opportunity or possibility to carry out their will. Consider some examples used by relational theorists: women living in patriarchal

societies who may genuinely want to be heads of societies or work in factories, but who cannot do so because of the oppressive contexts of which they are a part (Madhok, 2007), or men who authentically do not want to undergo a risky operation, but who agree to do so because refusing the procedure would make them dependent on others in a society that prizes self-reliance (Dodds, 2000). In these instances, there may be endorsed preferences but the circumstances constrain the execution of those preferences, and this is different to the way heroin-addiction or brainwashing internally alters their preferences because the issue is about exercising those wants not whether they are authentic desires. In other words, as Sarah Buss argues, “an agent's authority over her actions is no guarantee that she has the power to determine how she exercises this authority” (Buss, 2008, 1) because this is more to do with her context. Though liberal approaches acknowledge some of these features (in general it can identify that something external can prevent an agent acting on her desires), the claim is that the connection between the internal abilities and external hindrances, such as these, are made more central in other models.

In these examples, then, autonomy is not unrestricted because there is preference disablement. There are situational oppressions that forestall agents getting what they really want, even if there are no coercive hindrances or preference modifications. Yet, the relational critique is that liberal theories do not analyse autonomy within these contexts of “reduced freedom” (Benson, 1994) as well as they could, partly because they do not pay proper attention to the relationship between the internal and external. As such, I argue that other approaches are more suited to describing the association between the internal and external.

In this section I have considered interferences with the will. Though the liberal approach recognises that the external has a bearing on what an agent does, it looks primarily at the integrity of the internal will such that it is less able to characterise negative external influences than an account where the external and internal link is given more weight. It has more trouble with adequately differentiating coercive and non-coercive forces on desires, or properly appreciating the way oppressive contexts impact desire development or desire enactment than other models might. Whether preferences are changed or disabled, therefore, following some of the standard relational criticisms, I argued that different accounts could more appropriately conceptualise the relationship between the external and internal for the women of this thesis, who may be constrained by the external.

Positive influences

The second element of the unsatisfactory will-to-external link is not about negative interferences but rather about not perceiving the extent of positive influences. Building upon the criticisms of individualistic agents discussed earlier, this concern highlights that liberal autonomy tends to be less social when compared to other theories. In particular, in the preoccupation with protecting the “inner citadel” (Berlin, 1958, 20), liberal models less satisfactorily heed how nurturing relationships and circumstances are conducive for autonomy acquisition and development than other accounts might.

To take autonomy inception, for instance, Linda Barclay argues, “the capacity and aspiration for autonomy is not something we are born with but something we develop only in society...[It] is a debt that we owe others” (Barclay, 2000, 57). To assume that autonomy is an individualistic capacity, as the liberal account does according to the standard relational

critique, is to downplay its social features, since autonomy is ascribed importance by, and thereby the ambition to attain it is through, interaction with others not in isolation.⁷⁰ Similarly, with autonomy maturation, raising individuals in an environment where they are able to develop and flex their self-governing proficiencies – such as by practicing introspection, communication, memory, imagination, self-nurturing, volitional, and interpersonal skills (Meyers, 2002, 20-21) – increases the likelihood that they can live autonomously. Learning how to be autonomous is highly dependent upon an agent's surroundings. Though the liberal model would acknowledge some of these social elements, given the liberal characterisation of autonomy as less social and more internal, other accounts with a stronger social and external focus might be more useful for recognising the gravity of this.⁷¹ Whilst neither obtaining nor training in autonomy is sufficient for achieving self-rule – an agent may still fail to reflect in the relevant ways – they are important external enablers of autonomy. External factors, such as others and contexts, then, should not be regarded as significant facilitators for autonomy. Though liberal models would not deny that the external matters in these respects, a more social account might appreciate this more.

The first concern about liberally conceived autonomy has been the flawed relationship between autonomy and the external. In particular, I discussed the mis-description of the effects of undue interference on the changing and disabling of preferences, as well as the under-appreciation of the favourable impact of the external for autonomy acquisition and development. I argued that though liberal models can recognise negative and positive influences for autonomy, other accounts that are more social might more satisfactorily do so.

⁷⁰ This would be true of many abilities, such as for language or for building friendships.

⁷¹ Moreover, as will be discussed in the next chapter, an acknowledgement of the importance of others for autonomy (which liberal theorists might make) is not the same as recognising the fundamental importance of others to autonomy (which relational theorists argue for).

ii. Construction of autonomy

The second problem I consider is about how liberal accounts construct autonomy more generally. I explore two sub-issues, first, the narrowly conceived approach to autonomy, which misses wider-ranging instances of self-governance according to relational accounts and second, the infinite regress and *ab initio* charges levied at hierarchical theories, which identify shortfalls in the dominant theory as stated by some liberal autonomy advocates. As the female suicide bombers are likely to be making decisions in constraint, together these indicate that the liberal approach is more limited than other accounts for representing their autonomy.

Narrow

First, I discuss how liberal models have a more constricted view about autonomy – about what it is, where it is located, and how it is devised. This is evident in a number of ways, including four interrelated elements that are identified by the relational critique and that I will briefly set out here: first, rational and psychological competencies, second, unequivocal desires, third, overt actions, and fourth, as a minimal and binary notion. I contend that, though some liberal theories might be better at describing these than others, the account overall tends to formulate autonomy in a narrow way, and that an alternative approach that develops broader characterisations of these in general could be more useful for discerning instances of autonomy in constraint.

(a) Rationality

To start, one relational criticism is that the liberal approach tends to be framed around mental cognition and competencies in a way that is less sensitive to the non-formal components of

‘what one most wants’ and potentially limits those who can attain autonomy. As relational theorists have argued, liberal accounts gravitate – sometimes almost exclusively – towards rational or psychological processes, such as cerebral reflective reasoning, as indicators of self-rule. One concern, for example, is that the focus is on the “unitary self” that is “independent, self-monitoring, self-controlling” (Meyers, 2005, 29), which prioritises rationality and “the role of reflective self-definition in autonomy” (43-44). Reasoned self-direction is important and key for the approach (and, no doubt, it is relevant for other accounts of autonomy too), but it is also the (overwhelmingly) presiding method, which makes it *too* rational. Put differently, the theories “in their insistence on the role of reflection appear to take too narrowly cognitivist a view of the way in which a commitment to certain wantings may be clarified” (Young, 1989, 80) as it deemphasises other indicators (as will be discussed below). This foremost leaning towards analytical thinking has not only prompted “the charge that autonomy is the province of dull plodders and hyper-rationalists” (Meyers, 2005, 43-44), but – as I suggest here – that the liberal approach restricts evidence, and thereby the notion, of autonomy.

The insistence on this type of reflection, for instance, may well downplay other dependable methods of determining self-rule. Indeed, stopping at rational decision-making as the best source of autonomy may be too premature:

The opinions about their own motivations which people form, even after the most careful introspection, are not always the most reliable indicator of their deepest preferences. [...] my inclination is to think of the formation of second-order [...] desires as *indicators* of a person’s deepest preferences and

ultimately of what desires are to be identified with. At the same time it must not be forgotten that there are other indicators, too, which can satisfactorily be taken as supporting a claim that a particular individual does identify with certain of his desires (Young, 1989, 80).

Reflecting upon desires may well connote that the agent's preferences are her own, but this is not the sole, or even most reliable, signifier of autonomous preferences. For Robert Young, for example, emotions such as "remorse" or "admiration" (1989, 85) suggest other equally plausible and revealing barometers of what one most wants. Though some liberal theorists, such as Frankfurt (2009) do argue for the importance of emotions, the account in general, so the relational model charges, tends to be more focussed on the rational. Alternatively, for Meyers, "the role of self-discovery" (2005, 43) is an intelligence realised through the body or relationships (not the mind) and emerges through unexpected experiences or responses (not pre-reasoned judgements) (40).⁷² These different motivational springs offered by Young and Meyers (as well as Frankfurt) of an agent's sentiments, the body, and affinity to others are alternative and supplementary ways in which to identify autonomous desires. The relational concern, however, is that they are not considered enough by many liberal theories, which rely primarily on psychological and rational reflection.

Not only is the focus on rationality limiting because it minimises other competencies (such as those relating to emotion or the body), but also because it skews who is deemed to have autonomous desires. Several relational theorists have argued that constructing autonomy as

⁷² Meyers, for instance, suggests that "autonomy often emerges in unexpected places: the unexpected smashing of dishes in the sink, the body's refusal to relinquish its hold on life, or even a revealing slip of the tongue" (Christman and Anderson, 2005, 10). In this regard, these other non-cerebral focuses on autonomy are important for revealing autonomy.

mainly an intellectual process has turned out to problematically favour particular individuals over others. It is, for instance, “autonomous man” (Code, 1991, 77) or “rational economic man” (Held, 1997, 635) or the “rugged male [...] rational maximising chooser” (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, 5) that is the archetypal self-ruling individual in liberal theories. Yet, in the very language utilised, this interpretation benefits some more than others: specifically, “middle- and upper-class white men” (Friedman, 2003, 45) seem to fit this mould more readily than those outside this category according to this critique. This is not because such a group are more rational than those not in the group, but because the characteristics of rationality and autonomy have been defined by the privileged few. In this picture, rational/autonomous persons are “presumed to be secular, individualist and with weak cultural conventions” whereas the non-rational/non-autonomous ones are “presumed to be religious, family oriented and culturally driven or defined” (Phillips, 2010, 136).⁷³ If we accept these relational criticisms, it transpires that, in the liberal account, white, Western, men fair better than black, Southern, women (in other words, our female bombers) – not because the men actually are secular, individualist, and non-cultural (and thus more rational and autonomous), but because they venerate and *regard* themselves as epitomising this particular conception. In other words, “autonomy [has] been unfairly denied historically to subordinated or oppressed social groups” (Friedman, 2003, 53), on account of ‘failing’ to meet the standard set by the oppressors. Those in this group, then, are considered to have more rationality and, so, autonomy competencies than those outside it, and it is contended by relational theorists that this wrongly restricts autonomy to the privileged and excludes the non-privileged.

⁷³ Referring to the case of *SA* (2005) where a judge considered ‘coercion’ or ‘undue influence’ to include religion and cultural influence. Non-white Western men are presumed to ‘suffer’ from such interference whereas white Western men perceived to evade it (Phillips, 2010, 136).

In attending to the logical capacities of persons, the relational critique is that the liberal approach is unnecessarily limiting in how it conceives of autonomy. Following this, I suggest that a model with a less confined conception would be more useful for the bombers.

(b) Inflexible will, unequivocal desires

The second sense in which liberal theories are narrow is related, and is that an excessively rational focus leads to an overly systematised construction of autonomy. The paradigmatic autonomous self is taken to be the individual who is generally consistent in her desires and preferences, usually because rational persons are thought to choose in line with, and to achieve, a pre-endorsed life plan. Having wholehearted volitions in hierarchical theories (Frankfurt, 2009), minimally consistent and enduring desires in the past and present in historical ones (Christman, 1991), or congruent attitudes in coherence models (Ekstrom, 2008), all indicate a requirement for the largely organised uniformity of the will. Though the liberal account concedes that persons will make legitimate decisions that depart from this order and that decision-making is not always a consistent affair (individuals may falter or be torn between competing desires or volitions, for instance) (Frankfurt, 2009), the overarching trend in the approach is that there is a clear system of endorsed preferences.

However, according to the relational critique, this is likely to be too curtailing because it less accurately reflects the architecture of autonomy, especially for persons in situations of oppression (rather than coercion), such as the bombers, who might find their desires destabilised a great deal more than the liberal view, which is less social than other accounts, might allow.⁷⁴ Where contexts are strained and the demands on individuals are high, desires

⁷⁴ Where outright coercion (a gun to the head) happens, it is thought to be problematic when the hierarchy of desires changes (it is clear that this is an unarguable case of coercion even if the bank teller in the end voluntarily

are likely to be re-arranged and re-prioritised more often, and existing endorsed desires may be willingly set aside in favour of contradictory ones (Barvosa-Carter, 2007; Meyers, 2000; Lugones, 1987).⁷⁵ Instead of devaluing this highly flexible will or the inconsistent shift as not what the person ‘really wants’ (thereby needlessly truncating autonomy), it may be more prudent to pay attention to the decision-making that it does uncover given the context, so some relational theorists argue. In other words, to recognise that the agent is able, in some ways, to manage her hostile settings effectively and in so doing is displaying some evidence of autonomy, even if it turns out to be a limited amount given the oppression. In this respect, a more fluid will with “endorsements not being rigidly set [...] but instead flexibly ordered and plied as may best fit different contexts” (Barvosa-Carter, 2007, 17), would be a preferential notion of autonomy. Though liberal approaches recognise that the will may be fluid and inconsistent to some extent (whether through stipulations about wholeheartedness or minimally consistency, for example) they tend to be more static than other accounts that are social in construction and identify complex repressive circumstances as the norm for many people. There are different models that are less restrictive and pay more attention to this more malleable sort of will, then.

(c) *Overt acts*

The third way in which the liberal view is too narrow links to oppressive contexts and discrepant preferences, and concerns overt acts as indicators of autonomy. As I have already

– the levels of her desires are aligned – hands over the cash). But in some cases of oppression (racist or sexist societies) the shift to the structure may reveal skills in navigating the situation, showing resilience, and some level of autonomy that ought to be recognised. This will be discussed more in the next chapter on relational autonomy.

⁷⁵ For instance, Maria Lugones (1987) discusses the Latina and lesbian communities she belongs to and how she resists racial/ethnic and sexual subordination associated to either group. These views are not usually expressed or identified with together and at once, but are dependent on the social context because of the hostility of belonging to each group holds to the other. This may require inconsistency in what she identifies with, but she strongly identifies with both (Barvosa-Carter, 2007, 16-17). This will be discussed more in the next chapter on relational autonomy.

discussed in the agent section, acts are the (problematic) primary assessment point for many liberal theories, but the act-bias also poses a concern for the present issue of constricting autonomy. In particular, the focus on *enacted* desires in conditions of constraint can hamper a proper evaluation of autonomy because the performed outcome may not reflect the desires of the agent faithfully (as evident in the second point in this section about re-structuring desires in oppression). Conversely (as is argued here), there might be activity that attests to autonomy occurring broadly in the agent's reflection irrespective of what is, in the end, expressly preferred by them and how autonomy-undermining this seems to be (Madhok, 2007; Khader, 2011).⁷⁶ If this is so, the relational critique is that confining evidence of autonomy predominately to the act in contexts where it is difficult to execute that which is desired is gratuitously restrictive and undermines other indicators that may uncover the autonomy of persons. Madhok, for instance, argues that looking at the agent, not mainly the act, in constraint is preferable since this may “reveal many of the ideas or desires that [the oppressed group's] actions do not fully reflect [as] it is only rarely that the motivations or desires are reflected accurately in their final acts” (350).⁷⁷ While some liberal theories do focus on the agent and so could make these kinds of expansive assessments, in general the account is primarily about the act, which is likely to be restrictive when trying to identify and properly evaluate instances of autonomy in constraint. Other models that could consider more than the

⁷⁶ Madhok (2007), for instance, uses the example of the *sathins* – a group of female development workers in Rajasthan, Northern India, whose agency fluctuates in complex ways in their interactions with a range of groups including feminist scholars, NGOs, and the state – to suggest that autonomy should not be measured by the act alone since this misses other manifestations of autonomy at the level of the agent (such as her feeling like she must be a good Indian woman and so not stand for local elections. Though this decision appeared to be autonomy-undermining by many of the agencies involved with the women, Madhok suggests this reveals evidence of good amount of reflection). Differently, Serene Khader (2011) contends that there may be women who selectively demand less in certain contexts or domains because this bolsters their flourishing in others (sacrificing leisure time to attend to their husbands, for instance). She regards this judgement as an indication of agency (since it reveals what is important to them in their worlds, even if this assessment seems to thwart their autonomy according to some NGOs) that ought to be recognised.

⁷⁷ Madhok (2007, 2013) argues that speech practices more broadly that indicate autonomous reflection might provide such sites for autonomy. This will be mentioned again in the next chapter on relational autonomy.

overt act, then, may be helpful for discerning autonomy in oppressive conditions for the bombers.

(d) Binary autonomy

The fourth and final example of the narrowness of the liberal account is in its minimal (largely political, legal, medical) goal of determining whether desires are autonomous or non-autonomous, and where this stops short of the wider task of exploring the extent of autonomy. Though the approach concedes that autonomy is theoretically on a range (some preferences are likely to be more autonomous than others), the focus for practical (political, legal, medical) purposes tends to be on whether a threshold was crossed or not. This has led to acceptance of but less attention paid to developing a spectrum; the account being more concerned to distinguish when desires can be paternalistically overridden in medicine (for instance) or not. Though an important endeavour, in constricting the remit of autonomy to making this binary pronouncement and not generating a spectrum, the usefulness of autonomy in oppressive conditions specifically becomes unnecessarily restricted. In cases of domestic violence, for example, having an autonomous-or-not approach to the question of whether a woman ‘really wanted’ to stay in an abusive relationship, leads to an outcome where “subjects are expected to be unambivalently assertive or thoroughgoingly submissive, wholly compromised or fully resilient” (Abrams, 1998, 845-846).⁷⁸ The binary, according to this criticism, either unreservedly labels the women’s desire as autonomous (‘they willingly chose to stay’) or withholds it altogether (‘they absolutely had no choice’). In so doing, however, it fails to grapple the broader question of how much autonomy might exist when compared to an account that more seriously develops a non-threshold view. By limiting the role of autonomy to an all-or-nothing, either/or notion, the possibility of exploring the ways in which autonomy

⁷⁸ Abrams is referring here to liberal theories of autonomy and their influence on the legal system.

contracts and expands to varying degrees or in all its complexity – a task that is especially important in instances where autonomy is particularly constrained, such as for the bombers – is prematurely terminated.⁷⁹ In this regard, I argue that, though the liberal approach recognises that autonomy is in degrees, the propensity is for it to focus on when the threshold is crossed, and this limits the usefulness of the concept of autonomy for the bombers, whose autonomy we want to represent in a more nuanced way.

In this part, I have examined the narrow construction of autonomy in liberal models. I argued, drawing on standard relational criticisms, that by concentrating on rationality, a less flexible will, chiefly overt acts, and mainly binaries, the liberal approach constricts autonomy in an unwarranted way. A less restrictive account, then, should be sought for the women.

Structural concerns

The second predicament for the liberal construction of autonomy that I discuss relates to hierarchical accounts (the dominant view) in particular, and how these are unable to resolve, first, the infinite regress and second, the *ab initio* problem, which are the standard charges that are lodged against them in the literature and usually by those in the liberal camp. These ongoing difficulties suggest that this most influential of liberal accounts remains deficient in its formulation of autonomy.

(a) Infinite regress

With the regress problem, for example, the concern is that in a structural theory there is no cut-off for conclusively settling whether a desire is authentic. Second-order desires or

⁷⁹ This problem of a binary in particular will be important for properly understanding the autonomy of the suicide bombers, as will be explored in chapters four and five.

volitions do not ascertain that a first-order desire is ‘one’s own’ since it is always plausible to ask of the higher desire whether *it* has been autonomously chosen, *ad infinitum*. Indeed, as Thalberg argues, “why not go on to the third-story or higher desires and volitions?” (1989, 130) To whichever level of hierarchy one regresses, these theories cannot satisfactorily answer the question of why the endorsement should stop at that point. Even if, as Frankfurt contends, the regress can be halted through ‘decisiveness’ – such that “when a person identifies himself *decisively* with one of his first-order desires, this commitment ‘resounds’ throughout the potentially endless array of higher orders” (Frankfurt, 2009, 21) and thereby categorically ends the regress – the rejoinder is not adequate. Watson, for example, argues, “either this reply is lame or it reveals that the notion of a higher-order volition is not a fundamental one. [...That is,] it is unhelpful to answer that one makes a ‘decisive commitment,’ where this just means that an interminable ascent to higher orders is not going to be permitted. This *is* arbitrary” (Watson, 1989, 119). So, Frankfurt’s appeal to resoluteness does not block the infinite regress because such a move is theoretically capricious.

Further, there is no sufficient reason for why higher order desires or volitions are more ‘one’s own’ than lower ones. To elaborate, “why grant that a second-order attitude must always be more genuinely his, more representative of what he genuinely wants, than those you run into at ground level? Perhaps his higher attitude is only a cowardly second thought which gnaws at him” (Thalberg, 1989, 130). The second-order is no guarantee of an effective desire or volition anymore than infinitely higher, or alternatively lower, ones are. Given this, there seem to be fewer and fewer inducements to prefer a hierarchy at all. Watson, for instance, argues that first-order desires suffice for autonomy and that second levels ought to be abandoned. He contends: “it is unclear why these acts of identification cannot be themselves

of the first order – that is, identification with or commitment to courses of action (rather than with or to desires) – in which case, no ascent is necessary, and the notion of higher-order volitions becomes superfluous or at least secondary” (Watson, 1989, 119). The foundering to solve the regress and the suggestion that a single-order of desires would be just as efficacious, then, makes the need for a structural approach less compelling. This criticism, then, is that the hierarchical approach has failed to resolve the regress problem without arbitrarily placing a cap on it or returning to some other non-hierarchical method of determining what one ‘really wants’.

(b) *Ab initio*

Differently, the *ab initio* charge is that, though one might gloss over the regress – by fudging that if the immediately preceding higher-order desire or volition endorses the lower one, the affirming level need not itself be autonomously endorsed by a superior one still – this leaves hierarchical theories open to the ‘problem of authority’. This asks, “what gives these volitions any special relation to ‘oneself?’” (Watson, 1989, 119) The second tier does not reveal that the want is specifically agent *x*’s and, without agential authority, lower-level desires are simply “without foundations” (Christman, 1989, 9). The concern is that there is no conceptual tie between higher volitions and the self (and so no licence for lower desires either).

The main attempt to quell this worry has come from Michael Bratman, who has argued for ‘planning agency’ to supplement the hierarchical model. Here ‘plan-type attitudes’, those that give the agent “a self-governing policy” (Bratman, 2008, 43), are both structural and involve “the organisation of practical thought and action over time” (Bratman, 2008, 42) – so they are temporally stable, non-conflicting, higher-order plans. These are authoritative for the self

because one “*decides* to treat it as being reason-giving (in the sense of being end-setting) in the relevant circumstances” (Taylor, 2008, 12), and the reason is one with which the agent is “satisfied” (Bratman, 2008, 44). In essence, the attitudes have a sanctioning status because they are hierarchically affirmed, stable over time, and the justifications for them are satisfactory to the agent.

However, this invites the question about how these attitudes are in turn endorsed, and so, despite brushing aside the infinite regress, the challenge emerges yet again. Bratman counters that this can be dealt with through an “appeal to reflexivity: The self governing policies that are central to the model of autonomy that we are constructing will be in part about their own functioning. Such a policy will favour treating certain desires as reason-providing as a matter of this very policy” (Bratman, 2008, 44). In short, these policies are self-governing because these policies are self-governing. Even if the attitudes or policies are based on stable, justified and hierarchically confirmed plans of the agent, put like this and in a manner reminiscent of Watson’s dispute with Frankfurt, this proposal can be undermined as an “arbitrary” (Watson, 1989, 119) explanation or stop of the regress.⁸⁰ Thus, the *ab initio* complication for hierarchical theories remains and has not been acceptably allayed.

Both the infinite regress and *ab initio* issues, which are usually identified by non-hierarchical liberal autonomy theorists, demonstrate there are flaws in some of the most widely adopted liberal theories. This, in turn, suggests that the way that such theories formulate autonomy is problematic. In addition, the relational critique is that the approach more generally has a narrower (in terms of emphases on rationality, a more static will, enacted desires, and a

⁸⁰ Further still, it would allow manipulated desires to pass because such preferences would meet the reasons-giving part of Bratman’s test (if the agent is thoroughly controlled, she would be able to justify and be satisfied with her desires, and treat them as ends for her) (Taylor, 2008).

binary) interpretation of autonomy than it could do. This unnecessarily limits autonomy, especially for those in oppressive circumstances. I have argued that together these points indicate that other models that construct autonomy more broadly would better suit individuals in constraint, such as the bombers, and better represent their autonomy.

The second relational criticism of liberal models, then, has been about autonomy. I have claimed has been that the liberal account tends to misjudge the relationship between the internal and external, since it gives primacy to the will and underestimates the significance of contexts. I have also argued that, even when it does theorise the internal will, the construction of self-rule that it offers is somewhat wanting as it is usually too narrow and structurally unsound. Though the liberal account does provide an interpretation of autonomy, then, I contend that these are shortcomings that make the aim of representing the autonomy of those in constraint more difficult, and the need to alternative approaches more pressing.

In this section I explored two problems with liberal autonomy. First, concerning the agent, where I argued that the primary focus was on acts and that the residual agent tended to be too individualistic and unified when compared to different accounts. Second, about autonomy, where I claimed that the relationship between external influences and the will was less satisfactorily described, and that the account was more narrowly and improperly constructed, than in other models. I argue that these criticisms, either alone or together, expose conceptual issues of the liberal approach for those in constrained contexts. A different account of autonomy, therefore, is needed in the quest to represent the female suicide bomber's agency and autonomy properly.

Conclusion

This chapter on liberal autonomy had two principal aims. First, to characterise the liberal approach, which I described as, authentic desires, procedural independence, local and basic, consistency, and the separation of autonomy and responsibility. Second, to examine standard relational criticisms of the overall liberal approach to map the debate, which centred on the agent and autonomy. My claim has not been that the liberal model cannot offer useful conceptualisations of the agent and autonomy, but rather that – given its characteristics and mainstream critiques – there are potentially preferable conceptualisations available for those in conditions of constraint. In other words, a different approach that can properly develop an agent focus, advocate less individualistic and unified notions of persons, describe the relationship between the will and the external more accurately, and allow broader constructions of autonomy, should be explored for the female suicide bombers. Though the liberal approach has strengths, and some liberal theories may be more favourable than others, I argue that alternative models more generally may be helpful for the bombers.

With this in mind, from here on in, I leave the liberal approach behind and focus on the relational account and what it can do for representing the bombers as agents and their autonomy. I will also explore what deficiencies the relational model has that need to be overcome to ensure a detailed and nuanced assessment of their autonomy. Once again, in doing this, the claim is not that the relational model can theorise agents and autonomy and the liberal one cannot; it is that the relational one might do this more satisfactorily for persons that are highly constrained, like the bombers. To embark upon this task, in the next chapter, I investigate the relational account, leaving chapters four and five to demonstrate and expand the model.

3. RELATIONAL MODELS OF AUTONOMY AND THEIR CRITIQUES

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the second of the two principal models of autonomy – the relational – in order to present a potentially viable theoretical alternative to the liberal approach. Just as with the previous chapter, I split the present undertaking into two parts, first, I outline five elements that many relational theories share and second, I discuss two sets of criticisms that might pose a problem for this conception, focussing (in parallel to the discussion of liberal models) on the agent and autonomy. I will argue two points. First, that by framing the agent as relational, factoring in context and constraints, and capturing degrees of autonomy, the relational approach offers a promising construction of agents and autonomy. Second, because socialised agents can challenge oppressive norms and substantive autonomy recognises contextual constraints some of the concerns around relational autonomy are dampened. Together, this offers a suitable foundation on which to develop a spectrum (as I will go on to show). In sum, I will contend that relational models are more conceptually encouraging than liberal ones for representing the female suicide bombers as agents and their autonomy.

Again, to be clear, I do not suggest that the liberal account does not have conceptual merit or cannot do some of what the relational one can, or that the relational approach does not have flaws of its own to fix. Rather I argue that, taken together, the relational model is more helpful for those who are constrained, as agents and autonomy are constructed to be more social and external notions, and so limitations of various sorts are assumed within it. Where we wish to

not just recognise but distinguish and allot autonomy, even if in restricted amounts, to these women – who are highly constrained – the relational account is an apt base from which to help us achieve this. I will explore these suggestions in greater detail in chapter four when I apply the account delineated here to the bombers, and chapter five when I propose and apply a supplement to the model (in the form of a new spectrum) to the women. However, now I examine the relational theory.

The relational approach

In the first section, I characterise the relational account by outlining five attributes. As was noted for liberal models in the previous chapter, particular relational theories are diverse and do not share these traits in equal measure, but they do exemplify them to some degree, and these characteristics are not necessary and sufficient conditions, but rather outline the general approach. Bearing this in mind, the five common features I discuss in this section are the relational agent, socialised autonomy, a spectrum of autonomy, broad motivations, and complex self-identities. In so doing, I will provide an overview of the model for analysis in the second part of the chapter.

Social agent

First, relational models adopt a socialised conception of the agent. The unique qualities of this agent are twofold, first, the relational understanding of self and second, the prioritisation of agents as well as a consideration of acts when assessing autonomous agency. Taken together, I argue these develop a discernibly distinct agent to that of liberal theories.

i. Relational agent

To start, I outline the relational aspect of the agent, the origins of which lie in developmental and normative ethics of care theories. In this section I discuss, first, the developmental and second, the ethical roots of this kind of agent, and then third, I describe more fully the relational agent that emerges from this body of work and that is the staple of these models.

First, I set out the influence of the ethics of care as a psychological developmental theory. The research into care was pioneered in 1982 by Carol Gilligan in response to Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive development studies, where Kohlberg tested his hypothesis that there were six stages of moral development (ranging from the first – obedience – to the last – applying universal rules).⁸¹ He presented subjects with various moral problems, including 'Heinz's Dilemma', and investigated how they responded and where this placed them on the scale.⁸² Gilligan challenged Kohlberg's finding that "sizable portions of [girls] are remaining at Stage 3, while their male age mates are dropping Stage 3 in favour of the stages above it" (Kohlberg and Kramer, 1969, 108), and its implication that girls were less morally developed than boys. To this end, she conducted her own series of experiments that sought to investigate actual moral experience rather than solving fictional problems (Gilligan, 1982, 1986).

⁸¹ Kohlberg hypothesised that there were three levels – each comprising two types – of moral thinking: the "preconventional" (including, "heteronomous morality" and "individualism, instrumental purpose, and exchange"), "conventional" ("mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal conformity" and "social system and conscience") and, "postconventional" ("social contract or utility and individual rights" and "universal ethical principles") (Kohlberg, 1976; Colby, Kohlberg et al., 1983, 3-4). Moral maturity was attained at the "universal ethical principles" level (stage six), which was characterised by thinking in terms of "self-chosen *ethical principles* appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency" (Kohlberg and Kramer, 1969, 101, original emphasis). For Kohlberg, "these principles are abstract and ethical rules (the Golden Rule, the categorical imperative) they are not concrete moral rules like the Ten Commandments. At heart, these are universal principles of *justice* of the *reciprocity* and equality of human *rights* and of respect for the dignity of human beings as *individual persons*" (Kohlberg and Kramer, 1969, 101, original emphasis). In this regard, Kohlberg's approach is deemed to focus on 'justice' based moral reasoning, which is framed in terms of abstractness, principles, universality, and individuality – as will be discussed more in this section.

⁸² Heinz's Dilemma was, "should Heinz steal a drug to save his dying wife if the only druggist able to provide the drug insists on a high price that Heinz cannot afford to pay?" (Colby, Kohlberg et al., 1983, 9) After presenting this dilemma, the children were asked a series of probing questions to clarify and justify their answers, the responses to which indicated their place on the moral development scale.

Gilligan concluded that, though boys did achieve higher scores on Kohlberg's criteria, which valued abstract rules of fairness, these omitted the concerns and experience of girls, who perceived dilemmas (such as Heinz's) "not [as] a math problem with humans but [as] a narrative of relationships that extends over time" (28).⁸³ This interpretation of the problem stunted the girls' moral maturity on Kohlberg's scale, but – as Gilligan argued – this was the fault of the *model*, not of the girls.⁸⁴ Given this inadequacy, Gilligan proposed a new approach, an 'ethic of care', which could encapsulate the different moral experiences that were being revealed:

In this conception, the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of

⁸³ For example, Gilligan cites examples of two 11-year-old children, Jake and Amy, taking part in her study. Both are described as intelligent and independent children, and they both offered different types of responses to Heinz's dilemma, which placed them at different levels on Kohlberg's model of moral maturity. Jake was adamant that Heinz should steal the drug: "For one thing, a human life is worth more than money, and if the druggist only makes \$1,000, he is still going to live, but if Heinz doesn't steal the drug, his wife is going to die. (*Why is life worth more than money?*) Because the druggist can get a thousand dollars later from rich people with cancer, but Heinz can't get his wife again. (*Why not?*) Because people are all different and so you couldn't get Heinz' wife again" (Jake in Gilligan, 1982, 26).

In contrast, when Amy was asked whether Heinz should steal the drug, she responded in a less forthright way: "Well, I don't think so. I think there might be other ways besides stealing it, like if he could borrow the money or make a loan or something, but he really shouldn't steal the drug – but his wife shouldn't die either... If he stole the drug, he might have to go to jail, and then his wife might get sicker again, and he couldn't get more of the drug, and it might not be good. So, they should really just talk it out and find some other way to make the money" (Amy in Gilligan, 28).

Jake's response, according to Kohlberg's scale, would place him at the conventional level (stage three and four) of moral development, whereas Amy's response would put her a stage lower than Jake at the pre-conventional and conventional levels (stages two and three).

⁸⁴ Gilligan argued the difference in the moral development levels of Jake and Amy was due to a failure in Kohlberg's model, which could capture Jake's experience but not Amy's: "To the question, 'What does he see that she does not?' Kohlberg's theory provides a ready response, manifest in the scoring of Jake's judgements a full stage higher than Amy's in moral maturity; to the question, 'What does she see that he does not?' Kohlberg's theory has nothing to say" (Gilligan, 31). In essence, Gilligan contended that the results of Kohlberg's experiments were flawed because the questions posed and the model designed was biased towards male experience and the 'justice' account of universals and abstract rules, while it could not capture Amy's more relational, contextual way of moralising. Jake's view is more justice based because, for instance, though Jake discusses the people involved, he principally appeals to abstract principles, such as life being worth more than money, to justify his answer. Whereas, Amy's view is more relational as, though Amy mentions abstract ideas, such as not stealing, her answer is more about the specific relationship, what might happen within it if Heinz steals, and how she might go about preserving it.

thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. This conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centres moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules (19).

The ethic of care reflected, rather than ignored, the moral encounters. Instead of women failing to meet the standards of the “formal logic of fairness” (73) established by Kohlberg’s model (which valued rights, the abstract, principles, competition), this alternative approach enabled the concrete “logic of relationships” (*ibid*) that framed these women’s thinking (responsibilities, context, activities of care, connections) to be acknowledged and appropriately mapped. It is this distinction between rules and relationships that is the psychological theory’s contribution to the relational agent.

Having outlined the influence of developmental research on care, in the second part I consider its ethical parallel. Normative proponents have drawn on Gilligan’s insights to propose a comprehensive moral agent. This is an agent that values relationships and particularity, rather than individualism and abstractness. Taking relationships first, for example, the “self-and-other together” (Held, 2006, 12) and “the moral *relationship* between [such] persons” (Card, 1997, 657) is the ambit of moral concern.⁸⁵ The theoretical structure of the agent involves both self and other and the connection between them because all agents exist in these kinds of

⁸⁵ In the past, the Ethics of Care has been deemed limited to the mother-child dyadic and the private realm, but care theorists have explicitly broadened the relationship such that it includes a range of other actors and spheres. For example, some theorists have argued that it can accommodate a “commitment to a specific person, such as a lover, child, or friend” (Friedman, 1997b, 673) or to “citizens[...]” (Held, 2006, 34), and even wider still to global others and international affairs (for instance, Ruddick, 1990; Hutchings, 2000; Held, 2006; Robinson, 2013).

relations. As Virginia Held argues, “agents are fundamentally ‘encumbered’ and ‘embedded’ in relations with actual other persons” (2006, 84) and that this is the starting point for any moral agent. These are “connection[s] which exists before beliefs about what is right or wrong or which principles to accept” (Blum, 1988, 476) and these links can and should not be severed or detached from moral reasoning.⁸⁶ According to this view, relationships and attachments form part of the agent and are part of moral decision-making. Second, on particularity, care ethics takes morality to be “tied to concrete circumstances rather than being formal and abstract” (Tronto, 1987, 648). As such, a morally flourishing agent looks for the complexity each scenario presents and the unique response it requires, rather than reducing the dilemma to its constituent parts and applying predefined rules of fairness. Nel Noddings, for example, contends that “A and B, struggling with a moral decision, are two different persons with different factual histories, different projects and aspirations, and different ideals. It may indeed be right, morally right, for A to do X and B to do not-X” (1984, 85).⁸⁷ Seeking out distinctiveness permits a more perceptive comprehension of moral quandaries and responses than abstract thinking allows.⁸⁸ Thus, relationships and particularity are the scaffolding of the moral agent in a normative ethic of care.

⁸⁶ Care theories have often been criticised for being too other-focused at the cost of neglecting the self (the carer’s own needs and being subservient). But, a proper conception of care suggests that, “because care-givers are equally deserving of care, caregivers must include themselves in the orbit of care” (Meyers, 1998, 376) and must not become overly engrossed in the other. Similarly Virginia Held argues, “persons in caring relations are acting for self-and-other together. Their characteristic stance is neither egoistic nor altruistic; these are the options in a conflictual situation, but the well-being of a caring relation involves the cooperative well-being of those in the relation and the well-being of the relation itself” (Held, 2006, 12). The self, then, is not subordinated to the other but just as important in a proper relationship of care.

⁸⁷ This particularist view is not a move from universalism into relativism. It does not contend that the moral is different for culture *x* or religion *y*, such that the ethical worth of practices in that culture or religion cannot be appraised from those outside it. Rather, the position is that morality demands paying careful attention to the particularities (not the generalities) of the other; her as a relational self, her context, her needs (Meyers, 1998; Hutchings, 2000; Held, 2006). The morally sagacious person responds in the appropriate ways to these features; she does not ignore them in the way relativism proposes.

⁸⁸ On a particularist view, details about and that surround the specific moral problem and person must be addressed as part of the caring process. Lawrence Blum illustrates particularity (and the perceptiveness it requires) with the following example: “suppose a father has to decide whether and how to deal with a situation in which his daughter has hit her younger brother. He must take into account what various actions, coming from himself in particular, would mean to each of them. Would his intervention serve to undermine (either of) his

Third, the agent of psychological and moral theories of care described so far directly informs the agent of relational models of autonomy. As Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar argue, relational perspectives share “the conviction that persons are socially embedded and that agents’ identities are formed within the context of social relationships” (2000, 4). Following care ethics, this agent is a particular person (with a unique history and social identity) immersed in relationships that are not necessarily chosen (such as the families and communities one is born into) but that constitute (not just influence) the agent.⁸⁹ This account acknowledges the constitutive, not merely causal (as liberal theorists admit), nature of sociality and relations for all agents (Meyers 1989; Nedelsky 1989; Benson 1990; Oshana 1998; Mackenzie 2008; Westlund 2009). The very composition of agents is relational and individuals are “bound up with others, in ways that resist clear-cut divisions between self and other” (Lloyd, 2000, 117). This, then, is a radically, not just superficially, distinct model of the agent to the liberal one. Indeed, as Code argues, this type of autonomy (and agent) is “entirely remodelled: disindividuated, decentered, and reconfigured along patterns of mutual and crisscrossing recognitions and responsibilities [...]; it is multiply, relationally structured all the way down” (2000, 196).⁹⁰ Thus, drawing on developmental and normative care ethics, the agent of the relational account of autonomy is socially constituted.

children’s ability to work out problems between themselves? Would punishing his daughter contribute to a pattern of seeming favouritism toward the son which she has complained recently? How might each of the children’s self-esteem and moral development be affected by the various options of action open to him?” (Blum, 1988, 486) In this regard, the complexity is not removed but delved into. Similarly, Seyla Benhabib argues that it is not the generalised, abstract other that is part of moral analysis, but the “concrete, individual being with specific needs, talents, and capacities” (Benhabib, 1997, 744). Deciphering the particular other is key for morality.

⁸⁹ Persons are embedded in these relationships within contexts. Donna Haraway, for instance, argues, “I have a body and mind as much constructed by the post-World War II arms race and cold war as by the women’s movements” (1997, 519). Note, however, that being relationally comprised (or constituted) does not mean that one is determined – more will be discussed on this in the criticisms section of this chapter.

⁹⁰ What is intended to be conveyed here is that agents always stand in relation, and that there is no element of the self that can escape this, as though *this* part is ‘me’ and relationally untainted (and is the part from which I decide) and *that* part is the social self. Rather, the agent is relationally saturated. Even if, as will be suggested

ii. Agents, as well as acts

The second aspect I emphasise about the agent is the priority that relational models give to persons. Some relational (like most liberal) theorists are primarily concerned with the autonomy of local (or single) acts (Westlund, 2009; Friedman, 2003), others with self-rule in a global (or life) sense (Oshana, 2003), and others still heed both conceptions (Meyers, 1989).⁹¹ There are differences amongst these theorists, but where they all concur is that acts must be contextualised and historicised before a proper judgement about them can be made. While discrete acts or complete lives may (or may not) be autonomous, agents are relational and so who she is and why she decides (and not just the desires themselves) must be considered more fully. Susan Brison, for instance, argues, “to determine whether or not someone is autonomous or is choosing autonomously *now*, we need to know how that person came to have her preferences, including those leading her to the present choice” (2000, 284). Understanding an agent’s history and wider narrative is indispensable for relational autonomy.

This can be illustrated with two examples (that I alluded to in the criticisms of liberal theories): adaptive preferences (for local autonomy) and agential practices (for global self-

later, the relational account requires some justification of one’s desires to others, the claim is not that this is a non-relational self doing the justifying; it is that it is a relational self doing so. In other words, she cannot stand apart from her social self when deciding (which is an extension of the discussion of some of the communitarian and relational theorists in chapter two). Also, Code here draws similarities with and adopts the ecological approach that “reconceives human locations and relocations all the way down” (Code, 2000, 198) in her understanding of relational autonomy.

⁹¹ Westlund, for instance, argues, “my focus is, in the first instance, on autonomous choice or action, as opposed to autonomy as a feature of persons or as a global feature of an entire life” (2009, 27) and similarly Friedman is interested in “a conception of what it is for choices and actions in particular to be autonomous” (Friedman, 2003, 4). Likewise, Meyers notes a distinction between “episodic”, “programmatically” and “narrowly programmatic” autonomy (1989, 48). For Oshana, on the other hand, personal autonomy “is a ‘global’ phenomenon, a property of a person’s life that expresses and unifies the will and choices of the person” (2003, 100). Further, she challenges those (such as Christman and Friedman) who suggest that one can simply aggregate autonomous preferences to make an autonomous person professing, “there is no natural transition from a conception of autonomy that focuses on psychological states, or capacities, to an account of the autonomy of persons” (Oshana, 1998, 85) and arguing that (global) “autonomy is a stable property of an autonomous person rather than a transient characteristic” (Oshana, 1998, 95) attributable at the local level alone.

rule). First, adaptive preferences – desires resulting from what persons expect to be or do (Sen 1995; Nussbaum 2000) – indicate that wants can be assessed separately but do not tell the whole picture. These sorts of preferences emerge from a “quiet acceptance” (Sen, 1997, 309) that something one cannot get is not something one wants anyway. Take, for instance, Jon Elster’s use of the ‘sour grapes’ fable, where the fox who initially desired grapes but could not reach them in the end judges them to be sour (1989). More realistically, consider Amartya Sen’s finding that widows in Calcutta in 1944, who were in poor health, did not judge themselves to be so because they did not expect good health (1997). Or Martha Nussbaum’s example that Vashanti, a sufferer of domestic abuse in India, did not consider herself wronged because she could not conceive that she was owed freedom from abuse (2000). All of these desires, founded upon expectations of what to be or do, are the agent’s ‘own’ (none of them resist these views) but they originate in a particular context and history, which illuminates how and why these come to pass. Without acknowledging the agent’s wider framework, including that of extreme constraint, one distorts or misunderstands these specific desires or acts. Second, some agent’s global lives may be non-autonomous because of social or economic oppression, but focussing on the whole agent helps to identify the ability for, and even instances of, autonomy where none were thought to exist.⁹² In extremely repressive contexts, for instance, agents may not act out their autonomous desires but they may demonstrate autonomous capacities in other ways that should be taken into account. For example, Madhok’s *sathins* (2007, 2013) – a group of development workers in India – who exhibit autonomous faculties in utterances (though seemingly not in what they ultimately do) or Benson’s slaves (1990) who engender self-respect in care practices (though they cannot

⁹² This point relates to degrees of autonomy too, which will be discussed in the third characteristic.

direct their lives) are illustrations of this.⁹³ Though their lives appear to preclude autonomy, closer inspection of the whole agent (their histories and narratives) suggests signs of self-governance, which is important if the aim is to recognise instances of autonomy in constraint. Whether for local acts or global lives, it is the agent, not only her isolated act, which needs to be considered.

The relational agent, then, forms the first feature of relational models. The relational self is connected and embedded (rather than individualistic), and the relational account considers the whole person (rather than just the act) in autonomy.

Socialised autonomy

The second characteristic of relational theories is socialised autonomy. There are two elements to discuss, first, a constitutively relational notion of self-rule (autonomy is not purely an introspective capacity but also about relating to others) and second, a weak substantive method for self-governance (autonomy is not just about formally choosing but concerns the content of those choices too).

⁹³ Madhok (2007) uses the example of one of her interviewees, Mohini, who wanted to contest a local election but who did not in the end because of disillusionment (346) and a veil-wearer who felt she must observe the tradition whether she wanted to or not (345). Though in oppressive contexts, their speech practices indicate their desires (35) and so some agency. Likewise Benson uses the example of the slaves who were oppressed in many ways but who gained encouragement and worth from care practices (1990) and so had space for agency. These two examples will be expanded upon in other parts of this chapter.

Note also that Meyers thinks that an act must be carried out. In relation to self-definition, she argues, “it is ultimately by acting on an option (perhaps, repeated trials or variations will be necessary) that people confirm its advisability or decide they have erred...Unless people are able to carry out the plans they elect, their inquiries will be nugatory” (Meyers, 1989, 83). For her, executing acts are important. This is problematic, however, in situations of oppression, where individuals may not be able to carry out the plans they so wish (Madhok, 2007). This can be addressed by suggesting there is still room for agency in these contexts, as Madhok suggests with her work with the *sathins* and Kathryn Abrams (1998) does in her consideration of domestic violence. This point will also be revisited in the spectrum section.

i. Constitutively relational autonomy

The first component follows on from the relational agent just discussed and is a relationally constituted account of autonomy.⁹⁴ This moves away from the view that self-rule is an internal reflective process alone and towards a model that encompasses the external (contexts and others) too. In this regard, being autonomous includes how persons relate to others and the world around them. Some relational theorists do not accept the external as *constitutive* of autonomy (Friedman, 2003; Holroyd, 2009). Marilyn Friedman, for instance, who takes such a requirement to exclusively mean reporting to others, argues, “on my account, there is no being, rational or otherwise, to whom one must give, or be able to give, an account of that nomos in order to count as autonomous. Autonomy competency might involve such an accounting ability as a coincidental side effect, but it is not constitutively a part of autonomy as such” (Friedman, 2003, 44-45). This dismisses the view that an agent needs to describe her endorsed desires to others as a necessary part of autonomy (though this might be a consequence of it). However, several other theorists do endorse a version of the constitutive relational position.

One such advocate is Marina Oshana, who takes a strong (perfectionist) relationally constitutive stance.⁹⁵ She argues that, for autonomy to exist in any meaningful sense, “the environment must be free of whatever variety of factors destroy the psychological integrity of the person, and disable the person in her relations with others” (1998, 93-94), and one way

⁹⁴ Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) suggest that relational autonomy is an “umbrella term” (4) and though this includes a commitment to various features, the socially constitutive nature of autonomy is not one of them (22). The term, then, is open to those advocating either a causally or constitutively relational account (and indeed some theorists do not indicate which side of the divide they fall). Yet many liberal models would not deny the causal importance of the social to autonomy (Dworkin, 1988; Christman, 2004) and it seems that the relational account – which is rooted in a socially constituted agent – wants to be stronger than this. Thus, for this thesis, the relational approach is characterised as intrinsically social.

⁹⁵ Though not all strong views are perfectionist, Oshana’s position discounts the possibility of autonomy if certain conditions do not transpire (see footnote 96 for these conditions).

this is fleshed out is by assessing the actual “social-relational” (94) conditions that must exist for autonomy to transpire. In her theory, the agent must, for instance, be able to pursue her projects in the confidence that she is free from (or at least has recourse against) psychological or physical assault, have civil and economic rights, and have independent goals and values from those with authority over her (*ibid*).⁹⁶ Autonomy, for Oshana, includes internal capacities of self-reflection but also depends on these external aspects, without which appropriate relations with others are incapacitated and autonomy is not possible.⁹⁷ A different subscriber is Andrea Westlund, who also adopts an external focus through her ‘answerability’ condition but not to the (ideal) extent that Oshana does. She claims that “the disposition to hold oneself answerable to others is, after all, a feature of the agent’s psychology, and thus internal to the agent. But it is nonetheless a disposition to be engaged by what is external to the agent, that is, by points of view other than her own” (Westlund, 2009, 33). This approach requires relating to others by responding to them, and not simply self-reflection and endorsement of preferences (important though this still is, as it is with liberal theories). This inclusion of external factors results in a socially constitutive notion of autonomy. The final of the many supporters to consider is Paul Benson, who stipulates a “sense of worthiness to act” (Benson, 1994, 660) or emotional element (Stoljar, 2014) to self-rule. This focuses on the agent’s attitude towards herself as a responsible agent, an attitude which is contingent on others’ attitudes towards her as someone capable and worthy of responsibility for herself in

⁹⁶ Oshana’s four sufficiency conditions for autonomy are: (1) critical reflection (to determine authenticity in a similar way to most ‘internalists’, such as Dworkin or Christman); (2) procedural independence (where this requires non-coercion or non-manipulation, but also demands certain substantive standards to actually meet the formality stipulation); (3) access to a range of relevant options (the condition is not met by having an endless supply of non-autonomous options or where the options only satisfy brute desires); (4) social-relational properties (the individual must be in a society that allows her to pursue her goals in social and psychological security) (1998, 94-5).

⁹⁷ In this, Oshana thinks that autonomy is both a capacity and about the condition in which one lives. What is key for her is that, though separate, the external matters for getting a full picture of autonomy too, In this thesis, the proposal is that we need to assess both the internal and external together to get a proper reading of how much autonomy exists.

the first place. By recognising that worthiness, to which autonomy is attached, is realised not in isolation but in relation, this represents another constitutive theory.

All these accounts share the proposition that, though autonomy is an internal activity, the external matters for autonomy both causally – in that the social can *impede or enhance* autonomy (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, 22) – but, more important, constitutively – in that autonomy is partly *about* the social too (Baumann, 2008).⁹⁸ To clarify, the social is causal in the way a conducive environment might allow for a high development of autonomy skills or a non-conducive one might increase the chances of coercion, and it is constitutive in how autonomy achievement is fulfilled in relation to others. To expand the constitutive aspect, autonomy is realisable by, or with the ability for, engagement with others in the world, not solely as an individualistic reflective activity. Relational models, thereby, recognise how relations to persons and circumstances more broadly (the external) are intertwined with reflection (the internal), and how these do not come apart easily (as though one could ignore the external and limit autonomy to the internal). Accordingly, relationally constitutive theories centralise the connection between the internal capacity for self-reflection (that liberal views tend to focus on) *and* the external ways agents relate to others in the world (and that is deeply tied to the internal) in autonomy. In other words, autonomy is partly about persons self-reflecting and partly about persons relating to others and the world around them.

ii. Weak substantive method

⁹⁸ Holger Baumann classifies these variations in this way: “causally relational accounts hold that certain relationships and social environments play a causal role for the development and ongoing exercise of autonomy. Constitutively relational accounts, by contrast, claim that autonomy is at least partly constituted by a person’s social environment or standing” (Baumann, 2008, 445).

The second aspect of socialised autonomy is a weak substantive method to self-rule. Whilst in the previous chapter I described how liberal theories unanimously adopted a procedural technique, relational models differ more significantly about whether formal or substantive frameworks for decision-making should prevail. There are three options that are often tendered, first, content-neutrality (which, given the relational agent, is not the strict proceduralism of the liberal account, but has some parallels), second, strong and third, weak substantivism. Though all these proposals factor in the external, I claim that the weak substantive method is most satisfactory for relational autonomy.⁹⁹

Procedural

First, some relational theories adopt a formal approach, which starts with a social agent who is embedded in certain relationships and contexts, and proposes that the agent is autonomous if she reflects in the right kinds of ways, not if she adopts particular desires. Meyers, for instance, argues, “what makes the difference between autonomous and heteronomous decisions is the way in which people arrive at them – the procedures they follow or fail to follow” (1989, 52). Similarly, Friedman contends an agent “might still be choosing autonomously even if she chooses subservience to others for its own sake, so long as she made her choice in the right way” (2003, 19).¹⁰⁰ Likewise, Westlund favours a method that is

⁹⁹ The commonality between formal and strong and weak substantive theories is that there is (to varying degrees) a link to the external. Though the internal is significant (questions about autonomy do, in part, concern the individual’s decision-making after all), the external matters in part too. Westlund (on a formal account – as she describes it), for example, emphasises being engaged with what is external to the agent through her condition of answerability (2009, 33), whereas Oshana (on a strong substantive method) focuses on “what goes on in the world around” (1998, 81) the agent, and Benson (on a weak substantive view) prefers to check the agent’s self-worth and attitude towards herself (1994, 660) which is comprised by that which is outside the agent. The relational view, then, takes very seriously the external world and the role it plays in autonomous decision-making.

¹⁰⁰ Friedman prefers the procedural approach for several reasons, including that it recognises a “major qualitative difference” (Friedman, 2003, 21) between two persons who are both oppressed but where one is able to self-reflect and the other is not. She suggests that the higher threshold of substantive accounts, which would render both non-autonomous, cannot capture this difference. While, for her, both methods can assess whether expressed preferences are autonomous, only the procedural view can offer an answer to “how others should respond to

“formal rather than substantive in nature [and which] carries with it no specific value commitments” (2009, 28). Such theories favour content-neutrality (they do not assess the substance of desires, only the process of decision-making) but, through the relational agent, they are socially rooted and thereby acknowledge the external. For Westlund, for instance, it is not simply the non-coerced, non-manipulated endorsement of preferences but whether, in addition, the agent “has a dialogical disposition to hold herself answerable for elements of that hierarchy in the face of critical challenges posed by other agents” (2009, 33) that means she passes a procedural *and* relational test for autonomy whatever her desire. Differently, Friedman contends that the relational agent achieves autonomy through a “two-way process of integration” (1986, 32) of her desires and principles (in short, her whole socialised self), and this accommodates a social self but, at the same time, does not prescribe the substance of her choice. None of these views restrict the content of desires, and so are formal methods, but they all adopt a relational agent that recognises the significance of the external world on all persons.

Strong substantive

The second means for autonomous decision-making is strong substantive and arises from the criticism that formal methods are unable to capture why an agent’s desire might not be autonomous owing to its content even though the right process has been followed (Stoljar, 2000). In response to this concern, strong substantive theories focus on the agent’s ability to identify and reason according to the correct standards and norms. If the content of an agent’s desires fall short of this benchmark, despite passing the procedural test, they are deemed non-autonomous. Susan Wolf, for instance, argues that desires and selves must be “sane” (2008,

someone once the question has been settled of just what her genuine preferences are” (23) even though they do not correspond with a broader view of what autonomous persons should choose.

270), where sanity is to relate to the world in a particular way and has two conditions: it is cognitive and normative, in that it tracks “the True and the Good” (1990, 71). Beliefs and values (the True and the Good respectively) about the world must be accurate and reason based, reflecting actual cognitive and normative standards, to count as free (or autonomous).¹⁰¹ Wolf’s example of JoJo, the son of a dictator who – given his upbringing – believes that ruling well is to be cruel, or Benson’s illustration of a woman who – given her socialisation in a patriarchal culture – expends a disproportionate amount of energy on her appearance as the source of her value, are persons who fail to track the True and the Good in their reasoning. They lack freedom or have a “diminished autonomy” (Benson, 1991, 388), irrespective of whether ruling sadistically or engaging in beauty practices is what they ‘really want’.¹⁰² These strong substantive accounts “place restrictions on the contents of agents’ preferences” (Stoljar, 2000, 95) in order to filter out desires based on the incorrect (factual and moral) norms, ruling them out as non-autonomous.

Weak substantive

The third method is weak substantive, which falls somewhere between the stipulations of content-neutral and strong substantive positions. Weak views require agents to possess certain traits (a substantive demand) but, if the agent has these, the content of the desire itself is not automatically limited (which honours part of the formal condition). There has been growing

¹⁰¹ As cognitive/truth, “one’s desire to be sane involves a desire to know what one’s doing – or more generally, a desire to live in the Real World – it is a desire to be controlled – to have, in this case, one’s *beliefs* controlled – by perceptions and sound reasoning that produce an accurate conception of the world rather than by blind or distorted forms of response” (Wolf, 1989, 145). To clarify, an agent’s beliefs must reflect the world accurately as it actually is. As normative/good, the sanity requirement is that “one’s *values*” (Wolf, 1989, 145) be similarly controlled by normative standards of the real world. Wolf makes these arguments in relation to responsibility and freedom, but they have applicability to autonomy (which she also discusses).

¹⁰² Similarly to Wolf, Benson arguments rely on accurate normative standards (in his earlier papers). He contends, “one’s action is fully free only to the extent that one has the ability to appreciate normative standards governing one’s conduct and to make competent critical evaluations, in light of those norms, of open courses of action” (Benson, 1987, 475). In later papers, however, he refines this into a slightly weaker version, as will be discussed in the next paragraph.

support for this view. Some theorists, such as Benson, for example, are clear advocates for it, arguing for a self-worth condition (as mentioned earlier) or “normative-competence” (Benson, 1994, 660).¹⁰³ Here, “normative standards for agents’ authority to construct and potentially answer for their reasons for acting enter into autonomy by way of the attitudes toward their own competence and worth through which agents claim such authority” (Benson, 2008, 136). Rather than the substance of the choice being evaluated, it is the agent’s stance towards herself, as contingent on her relational experiences (such as whether others engender a sense of self-worth in her), which is key.¹⁰⁴ Other theorists, in particular Meyers, who originally favoured a procedural method (in opposition to strong substantivism), has subsequently conceded that hers is a weaker substantive theory, but that it avoids the problems of the stronger view to which she was resistant. She argues for those “positions that presuppose certain values [including skills such as ‘self-nurturing’, which involve self-worth and self-respect] but that do not prevent autonomous people from living highly individualised and vastly different lives” (Meyers, 2008, 206).¹⁰⁵ Substantive attitudes or values (self-respect, self-worth, self-nurturing) are required on Meyers’ account but, if individuals possess

¹⁰³ Normative competence is “a complex set of capacities” (Benson, 1990, 48), including self-worth and self-esteem belonging to the agent (Benson, 1990).

¹⁰⁴ This is similar to Westlund’s (2009) account of answerability and responsibility for the self (that was discussed earlier in this section). However, it is distinguished because Benson states his is a weak substantive notion that features self-worth, whereas Westlund argues hers is a procedural account and that the agent “may even manifest a lack of self-respect” (37) and yet still be able to answer for herself. Further, Khader argues that self-worth may occur in some parts of the agent’s life but not others (that a woman may be a confident business woman but unconfident about her body image, for instance – 2009, 181) and that persons belong to and participate in multiple communities that allow for different kinds of self-worth (2011, 20). This is accurate, and one that Benson recognises in his example of the slaves (which will be discussed in this chapter).

¹⁰⁵ Meyers initially rejected substantive theories as “restrictive, value-saturated accounts” (Meyers, 2002, 13), which lead to the position that it is permissible for a woman to challenge repressive norms (as this is more authentically her) but not to endorse them (as this is not authentically her). Further, she argues that they over-exaggerate the threat of socialisation as always inimical to autonomy when it is clear in cases of oppressive socialisation that “some people become oppositional activists, and [...] Other people carve out lives that enact ‘inappropriate’ values in the interstices of society’s constraints [...] and] Still others endorse at least some of the values upon which oppressive constraints are based and on balance accept the constraints and conform their lives to them” (15). She claims that it would be erroneous to automatically assume there is no autonomy in these cases since people have openly challenged or covertly subverted the norms. Later, however, Meyers agrees with Benson’s analysis (Benson; 2008) that her criticism is targeted at strong substantive but evades weak substantive theories. Thus she concedes, “however different our views are in some respects, [Benson] and I are currently advocates of ‘weak substantive’ positions” (Meyers, 2008, 206).

these, they may still endorse a variety of preferences (that allow for plurality in how to live one's life). Other theorists still might be harbouring similar weak substantive traces in their models. Benson, for instance, contends that, though she denies it, Westlund's procedural position might not be as content-neutral as she claims since, "to act autonomously in any actual circumstance is, by Westlund's own account, to be disposed to apply in that situation some normative expectation [of answerability] to oneself. And this is not a purely formal expectation" (Benson, 2011, 3).¹⁰⁶ In Westlund's theory, there are undertones of a non-procedural approach because the normative expectation towards the self is contingent on substantive conditions holding. Being answerable means that suitable background factors (for example, civil and political freedoms that allow the agent a 'voice' or educational and employment opportunities that permit a realistic 'exit' option – Phillips, 2010; Okin, 2002) are relevant – though not exhaustive – for developing appropriate levels of (say) self-esteem,

¹⁰⁶ Benson argues that Westlund's procedural position might not be content-neutral since, "to hold oneself answerable, in any concrete situation, is to hold oneself to an expectation that one answer for one's choices or actions; it is to apply to oneself a standard that calls for one to answer potential criticisms (under certain circumstances). Hence, to act autonomously in any actual circumstance is, by Westlund's own account, to be disposed to apply in that situation some normative expectation to oneself. And this is not a purely formal expectation" (Benson, 2011, 3). Westlund's view of answerability, then, has substantive leanings. Benson also argues that her conditions for deeming critical challenges to an agent's action legitimate "brings to light the fact that the disposition to hold ourselves answerable carries with it an implicit, substantive commitment to norms of legitimate challenge. In this respect, Westlund's theory cannot remain wholly neutral on the character of the application justificatory practices" (Benson, 2011, 4). Again, it is a substantive approach.

Westlund, however, attempts to defend against this, suggesting that while her conditions of 'legitimate challenge' may be substantive and normative, it is not a particular problem for *her* account anymore than it is for other formal accounts. She argues: "while my account does seem to imply a commitment to some standard governing legitimate challenge, the shape of that norms is as much up for grabs (and as much the subject of justificatory discourse) as anything else...I submit that, in this respect, the requirement I defend is no more substantive than the conditions given by other defenders of 'formal' views. Reflective endorsement theorists, for example, do not require that the autonomous agent actually endorse the criterion of reflective endorsement itself; reflective endorsement is held to be constitutive of autonomy, regardless of whether the agent would, at some level, fail to reflectively endorse that very requirement" (Westlund, 2011, 3). In this regard, she does not consider her account to be at fault. Equally, however, she does not consider there to be a vast difference between weak substantive and procedural accounts at all: "the formal views might all involve more of substance than we have thought, and there might be nothing at all worrisome about that" (Westlund, 2011, 4).

In short, though Westlund denies any substantivism, her theory is, in fact, value-laden and so not purely procedural.

upon which answerability depends.¹⁰⁷ Although this debate is still in flow, the weak substantive approach both values diverse conceptions of the good and filters out intuitive instances of non-autonomy (stemming from – socially imbued – attitudes towards the self). This view, then, is gathering support generally, and it forms part of the relational account I characterise here.

Yet another account that could be labelled as ‘weak substantive’ is a capability approach to autonomy, which takes influence from Nussbaum (2000), Susan Brison (2000) and James Rocha’s (2011) work. I briefly set out the relevant features of each to describe the position. Starting with Nussbaum, her theory separates capabilities, on the one hand, and their exercising or functioning, on the other. One can have a capability (to bodily health, for instance), whilst choosing (a good in itself) not to be functional in it (by partaking in fasting).¹⁰⁸ Nussbaum dictates the capabilities (it is substantive and they must be available to persons), but acknowledges that the agent might not choose them (it is not strongly substantive). Second, Brison adopts a version of the capability approach for matters of autonomy.¹⁰⁹ Her view is that “one has to be capable of achieving some – yet to be specified – set of functionings in order to be autonomous...It is the capability, rather than the achieved functionings, that is necessary for autonomy...[and] A person’s capability set...is determined in large part by her relations to others and the functionings they enable or prevent her from

¹⁰⁷ The non-exhaustive aspect of the substantive conditions is what differentiates it from more perfectionist accounts that categorically deny autonomy if those background conditions do not exist. Here the claim is that external conditions are weighty factors (and inform how much autonomy can be exercised) but not the only ones in determining the amount of autonomy. This will be discussed more in the spectrum characteristic below and in the final chapter.

¹⁰⁸ Nussbaum argues that the capabilities theory asks not “about people’s satisfactions, or how much in the way of resources they are able to command, we ask, instead, about that they are actually able to do or to be” (Nussbaum, 2000, 12). In so doing, it focuses on the fact that persons are entitled to a minimum, “interlocking set” (294) of capabilities and that “the failure of a person to have various basic human capabilities is important in itself, not just because the person minds it or complains about it” (144).

¹⁰⁹ Brison subsequently uses this capability theory of autonomy to consider whether unrestricted hate speech (to both speak and have access to the speech) should be defended on autonomy grounds (which is an argument that is often mounted to allow unfettered hate speech in the USA) (2000).

achieving” (2000, 283). Though the capabilities are not fleshed out, it is a relational account of autonomy that focuses on capabilities as significant indicators of self-rule.¹¹⁰ Finally, Rocha, though not directly referring to capabilities, claims that one can distinguish (1) the ability for autonomy whilst (2) reserving the title of ‘autonomous’ to those who are not hindered by oppressive norms. This encompasses a substantive view that subordinating contexts can obstruct autonomy but also that the (social) capacity for autonomy ought to be distinctly recognised in discerning whether an agent is self-ruling. Taking these three positions together, this kind of approach would demarcate the *capability* for self-governance (which in turn allows respect for persons), *functioning* (which is what persons choose), and *flourishing* (which is how well or fully the agent achieves a highly functioning life).¹¹¹ In other words, it distinguishes the ability to be self-directed, the exercising of that self-directedness, and the most self-directed life. However, what is key is that various elements need to be considered together for a fuller assessment of autonomy.¹¹² This capability-influenced proposal, then, provides the outline of another weak substantive theory.

The second feature of relational models of autonomy, then, is more contentious, with different theorists offering procedural, strong substantive, and weak substantive positions. I endorse a weak substantive method, which is gathering support, for the purposes of characterising relational autonomy and favour a hybrid approach, with elements of self-worth (Benson), the social achievement of self-rule – such as responsibility or answerability for self (Benson; Westlund) – and capabilities (drawing on Nussbaum, Brison, and Rocha).

¹¹⁰ Though the content of Brison’s capability set is not specified (so she aligns herself more to Amartya Sen than Martha Nussbaum), she claims hers is a substantive position (that the set just needs to be defined).

¹¹¹ The benefits of this proposition will be discussed more in the criticisms section of this chapter, but – in brief – these distinctions allow for both respect for persons and that the external can limit the agent’s flourishing in autonomy. In other words, an agent’s desire, formed in oppressive conditions and itself subordinating, can be deemed not conducive to a flourishing life and labelled as such, but where the agent is respected and engaged with nonetheless.

¹¹² The idea of considering several elements together will be explored further in the spectrum in chapter five.

Autonomy spectrum

The third element of the relational account is two-fold and comprises minimal and degrees of self-rule, which complements socialised autonomy above. The minimal and degree aspects overlap, to some extent, with liberal theories, and though relational models have attempted to develop the idea of the spectrum more, there is still room for expanding it.

i. Minimal

First, some relational theories advocate an ideal level of autonomy. Oshana, for instance, concedes that her four-part sufficiency criteria sets the bar very high for who can, in fact, achieve autonomy, but defends this result: “whatever the case, I believe the conception of autonomy I describe is most plausible” (1998, 98). Most models, however, reject the restrictiveness of perfectionist standards like Oshana’s and propose instead a minimal conception.¹¹³ For example: Friedman, in a similar vein to some liberal theorists, argues that “a self that is at all minimally self-reflective” (2003, 7) is important to distinguish from a self that is not; likewise, Meyers (1989) recognises minimal skills, including those of reflection, which are significant markers of some autonomy; and differently, with a more relational tone, Benson (2000) employs the self-worth condition as a minimum for autonomous persons. These are less onerous levels than Oshana’s ideal notion, and emphasise that self-governance is possible (to some extent – as the next part will discuss) for many persons because it is a minimal rather than maximal conception.

ii. Spectrum

¹¹³ Meyers (2008), Westlund (2009) and Benson (2011) explicitly reject Oshana’s perfectionist account.

Second, the notion of the minimal just discussed is not the totality of autonomy for most relational theories since they also regard autonomy to be chartable on a spectrum. While this is not distinct to relational models (the liberal account also recognises a range of autonomy, as discussed in chapter two), various relational theorists have sought to embed the spectrum in the mainstream relational model. The approach, in other words, moves away from a view that “conflates personal autonomy with political autonomy” (Oshana, 2006, 102) or with medical or legal autonomy, and which tends to lead to a binary notion of autonomy, and instead moves towards autonomy being a “social phenomenon” (*ibid*), which tends to be more nuanced. Though having a minimal conception is important (for practical purposes), then, there is also value in plotting autonomy on a spectrum when autonomy is discussed in this broader way.

Relational theorists (of either ‘thin’ or ‘thick’ varieties) make an autonomy scale explicit. Meyers and Friedman (in the thin, procedural camp) both acknowledge the spectrum. Meyers, for instance, argues, “people do not live entirely autonomously or entirely heteronomously. Autonomy is a matter of degree” (Meyers, 1989, 205) which, for her, depends on how well they exercise the “*autonomy competency*” (53) – a set of skills for “*self-discovery, self-definition, and self-direction*” (20).¹¹⁴ Similarly, Friedman (though acknowledging the need for a threshold) contends that “when women affirm contra-autonomy norms, such as those of traditional femininity, this diminishes the degree of autonomy such women can attain but it does not absolutely preclude it” (2003, 24).¹¹⁵ These are procedural admissions of the spectrum. Likewise (in the thick, substantive camp) Benson’s pronouncement that agents can

¹¹⁴ The skills that make-up the autonomy competency are not purely minimal, as will be discussed in the next characteristic. They are: self-discovery (identifying what the agent wants, values, etc.), self-definition (acting on those wants, values, etc.), and self-direction (correcting her actions or understanding of her wants, values etc. if they are mistaken) (Meyers, 1989; Dodds, 2000)

¹¹⁵ Friedman’s claim is that content-neutral and substantive accounts differ only in where they fall on the autonomy scale, with the latter exhibiting more autonomy than the former.

have a “diminished autonomy” (Benson, 1991, 388), as mentioned earlier, indicates that a gradation exists. These views attest to a range of autonomy.

The spectrum is significant because it permits a more accurate representation of autonomy. Though liberal models rarely consider autonomy to be an either/or binary (even if, for the practical purposes to which judgements about autonomy are put, it tends to be discussed in this way), degrees of autonomy are interwoven into relational accounts. In other words, the understanding of autonomy as degree-based is made “explicit and central through [the] elaboration of partial autonomy” (Abrams, 1998, 817) in the relational approach. This is not to suggest that liberal models could not develop a spectrum by moving beyond the practical aims, but that it is already part of the goal of and so fused into the relational model. As Abrams argues, by incorporating a scale:

the designation of autonomy is not a patronising or empty gesture; it is an alternative conception that reveals autonomy to be capable of more complex, varied definition than previously has been thought. It takes partial or qualified forms of autonomy not *simply* as deficient – though they are clearly deficient in some respects – but as illustrative of the continuum on which autonomy and heteronomy can be found (1998, 816).

As a result, a conceptual space for individuals to be more or less autonomous exists in relational models.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Moreover, all the other features of relational autonomy that the first part of this chapter outlines (the social agent, social autonomy, broad motivations and complex identities) accompanies the spectrum.

However, though most relational theorists endorse a spectrum as part of the fabric of the account, little theorising about what the spectrum might look like or how autonomy might be measured along it has been done. Meyers does distinguish minimal, medial and full autonomy, where full self-governance is rare, medial achievable by many, and minimal by most.¹¹⁷ Yet, this stops at plotting autonomy along such a spectrum, and so there is a need to theorise and demonstrate this further. As a way in which to redress this, my proposal for conceptualising this space and gauging the autonomy of the female suicide bombers will be set out in chapter five of this thesis.

The autonomy spectrum is the third aspect that relational models of autonomy tend to share. Here, autonomy is not an onerous requirement, and the exercise of autonomy is a degree-based notion. The spectrum, then, allows the possibility of a more detailed mapping of autonomy.

Broad motivations

The fourth trait of the relational approach is a broader motivational awareness in self-governance. Though rationality is required for autonomy (for being able to weigh up options or consequences, for example), the relational account denies that these alone are significant.

¹¹⁷ Meyers' characterisation of the levels of autonomy are: "I shall say someone is *minimally autonomous* when this person possesses at least some disposition to consult his or her self and at least some ability to act on his or her own beliefs, desires, and so forth, but when this person lacks some of the other skills from the repertory of autonomy skills, when the autonomy skills the person possesses are poorly developed and poorly coordinated, and when this person possesses few independent competencies that could promote the exercise of available autonomy skills. I shall say that someone is *fully autonomous* when this person possesses a complete repertory of well developed and well coordinated autonomy skills coupled with many and varied independent competencies. *Medially autonomous* people range along a spectrum between these two poles" (Meyers, 1989, 170). Meyers's framework relates to her notions of "episodic", "programmatically" and "narrowly programmatically" autonomy (1989, 48) that were mentioned earlier. She illustrates that in oppressive situations (such as feminine socialisation) high degrees of episodic autonomy can be achieved (doing what one most wants in a particular situation), and narrowly programmatically autonomy can be achieved (decisions on a life partner for instance), but programmatically autonomy (whether to marry at all or whether to be a mother) are compromised (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000).

For instance, Meyers argues that, in addition to rational skills that give pre-eminence to psychological processes, there are other skills pertinent to autonomy – including those originating in the “self-as-social, as-relational, as-divided, and as-embodied” (Meyers, 2005, 40) – that ought to be analysed too. Similarly, Dodds contends that “choices made on the basis of principles of rationality, display some of the skills of autonomy competency but do not constitute autonomy” (Dodds, 2000, 227-8), where autonomy competency refers to Meyers’ conception earlier.¹¹⁸ Being autonomous involves rational decision-making, but autonomy is by no means synonymous with, or especially exemplified through, rationality. Rather, varied forms of reasoning are given credence in relational models, particularly – following the emphasis on relationships in the care-influenced agent – emotions and concrete connections. Agents reason in multiple ways, and sentiments and character-based intentions are just as significant as rational justifications (Hursthouse, 1991).¹¹⁹ These broader motivations, often downplayed but certainly not absent in the liberal approach (as discussed in relation to Frankfurt, 2009, in chapter two), are part of the suite of valid reasons that agents may hold in relational theories.

¹¹⁸ Dodds continues, “being able to make rational choices does not necessarily reflect full autonomy; rational choosers can make rational choices if they have developed their capacity for rational deliberation in light of rational principles, even if they lack skills in self-direction” (Dodds, 2000, 228). In this regard, an agent that is rationally savvy and chooses to best suit her plans may not yet be an accomplished self-director; she may be logical but poor at correcting her life or values if mistaken (which, for Meyers and Dodds, are part of the autonomy competencies and so relevant for autonomy).

¹¹⁹ Hursthouse discusses, for instance, arational desires (that do not have a desire-belief correlation), such as Jane tearing at a photograph of Joan and gouging out the eyes in hatred (1991, 59-60). She argues this action does not involve a belief of actually causing Joan harm, nor is it for the purpose of relieving the emotion, nor for causing pleasure (which are ‘reasons’) but it is done arationally (without reason) (66). Other examples include tearing one’s hair in grief, posturing in the mirror in pride or hiding one’s face in the dark in shame (58). She argues of such desires that “we value ourselves and each other as emotional creatures – not as *rational*-emotional in the way pinpointed by Aristotle, but as just plain emotional – and do not believe that the perfect human being would never act arationally” (68). (Note, however, that she also argues that passions need proper training, which might not be misaligned to reason). In a similar way of recognising the breadth of human experience, Friedman argues that “emotions, desires, passions, inclinations, or volitions – in short, any mental state involving any motivation or attitude at all – would all constitute reasons” (2003, 10) in autonomous decision-making. This is reminiscent of Nussbaum’s claim that there are no clear distinctions between choices (where these are considered to be rational) and desires (deemed irrational): “emotions, desires, and even appetites of a human being are all humanely significant parts of her personality, deserving of respect as such” (2000, 155). In this way, a broader understanding of reasons is important for relational autonomy.

Moreover, the emotional might serve as a better way of deciphering what one ‘really wants’ or can be the more appropriate response in a particular situation.¹²⁰ Friedman argues that, in patriarchal contexts, women can develop higher-order desires that perpetuate oppressive norms. While a rational view might continue to endorse these subordinating values (because it reduces conflict in her social world, for instance), it may well be that it is her emotions that uncover her preferences. To expand, “her frustration, grief, and depression, and the motivations to change her life which spring from these sources, may be her only reliable guides” (1986, 31) that the norms of patriarchy are not what she ‘truly wants’.¹²¹ Likewise, Meyers argues that ‘excessively’ emotional reactions might, in some instances, owe more to an acute perceptiveness of unfairness than a failure of rationality, and so is the proper (not the improper) motivation. If a man behaves in an unwanted sexually aggressive manner, for example, this might result in anger, bitterness, and resentment on the part of the woman, but these are not ‘illegitimate’ or ‘irrational’ feelings.¹²² Rather, “such perception is heterodox relative to traditional patriarchal norms and values, but it is not heterodox relative to feminist norms and values...It is dissident moral perception” (Meyers, 1997, 210).¹²³ The emotional, rather than purely rational, then, can be a more befitting response.

¹²⁰ Frankfurt (2009) argues that this can be the case, as discussed in chapter two.

¹²¹ This is why Friedman wishes to eliminate the ‘top-down’ authenticity approach of the ‘split-level self’ of hierarchical models (such as Frankfurt and Dworkin’s). She instead advocates an integration theory that is based on a ‘two-way integration’ between the agent’s principles and motivations, thereby enabling not only desires (typically the lower-level) but also more importantly values (usually the higher-level) to be tested for authenticity (1986).

¹²² Meyers notes that the woman’s response of anger or resentment is often dismissed as her being ‘over-sensitive’ and not an acknowledgement that the harasser has done wrong (1997).

¹²³ To explain, ‘heterodox moral perception’ involves seeing situations that go unchallenged (such as discrimination) in a non-orthodox way, such that the emotion (often deemed heterodox) that can accompany it (anger, bitterness, resentment) is not only a more appropriate response but also a way to effect change. In this way, rather than assuming that feeling resentful after suffering racial abuse is a disproportionate response, it is an insightful one. Meyers argues, “when people have become hypersensitive, paranoid, angry, or bitter as a result of being subjected to a devastating injustice (or series of injustices) or to disabling systemic oppression, they become preternaturally sensitive to unjust practices and oppressive conditions” (1997, 209) and these responses are not illegitimate or unreasoned, but rather perceptive.

Broader motivations are the fourth feature of relational accounts. Rationality at a basic level may be one important form of reasoning, but other motivations (including emotions or passions) can also be valid self-directing reasons.

Complex self-identity

The final characteristic of the relational approach is the complexity of agent identity. As already discussed in the first trait, the relational agent is shaped by “intersecting social determinants, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity” (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, 4) and these features move away from an interchangeable agent to one that is fundamentally unique. Shifting to this kind of agent, however, has an impact on expectations around the consistency of desires. The relational understanding of this can be examined by, first, contrasting intersectional and schizophrenic agents and second, discussing the structure of autonomy that follows.

First, relational agents are complex and distinctive. This is evident in agents with multiple aspects to their identities, and I examine two examples – intersectionality (which is common in agents) and schizophrenia (which is less so). Starting with ‘intersectional identity’, this refers not to identity per se but to those “specific relations of class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, region, language community and subculture” (Barvosa-Carter, 2007, 6) that exist within societies of privileged and non-privileged social groups. In addition, intersectionality is where “these multiple ascriptions interact – sometimes compounding one another’s effects and sometimes creating inner divisions and conflicts” (Meyers, 2000, 153) in

the agent.¹²⁴ Such identities are complex, resulting in varied and diverse preferences that occasionally collide, and the internalisation of socially assigned roles. On the one hand, then, intersections are part of the fabric of one's make up and "these identities influence what [agents] believe, how they deliberate, and how they conduct their lives" (157) and, on the other, they are also likely to result in mismatched preferences and loyalties because of their convoluted nature (158). Further, though the characterisation of these identities imply that they only apply to specific marginalised groups, many persons would, in fact, count as intersectional to some extent as few wholly escape being classified and, so, subordinated in the diverse ways intimated. The second example is the schizophrenic and, though more limited in its applicability, is still an instance of complex identities. Individuals suffering from schizophrenic episodes will have lucid moments, and while the former onset is not thought typically to be the 'real' agent, the latter is (Mackenzie and Poltera, 2010). Yet, collectively, this identity is also one that is intricate, with different, often conflicting and some alienated, parts of the self but which are not always easily distinguishable. Both the intersectional identity and schizophrenic identity, then, are complex.

Second, these identities, and the desires emanating from them, must be addressed in the relational approach (indeed accounting for conflict and complexity in autonomy given this kind of self is a concern of relational models).¹²⁵ The emphasis placed on the relational agent has led some to argue that a "failure to own up to and to own one's intersectional identity – undermines autonomy" (Meyers, 2000, 159) and that one should pay attention to the

¹²⁴ Intersectional identities have been discussed by various theorists (Anzaldúa, 1987, 1999; Lugones, 1987; Meyers, 2000; Barvosa-Cater, 2007).

¹²⁵ Recall from the previous chapter that liberal theorists also recognise that there will be conflicts (for instance, Ekstrom and Frankfurt). Relational theorists usually aim to take into account the social/relational self and what kinds of conflicts this might entail in particular, such as about identity or in order to preserve specific relationships.

multifarious whole she is, including any inevitable discord in desires, since these are a genuine part of her (Anzaldúa, 1999). Such conflicts and complexity of identity must be acknowledged in relational autonomy. In a different way, with the schizophrenic, Mackenzie and Poltera (2010) argue that there is a difference between authenticity in ‘narrative identity’ (which they suggest is wide in scope) and authenticity in autonomy (which is narrower). They claim to “see no inconsistency between accepting an aspect of one’s practical identity as ‘one’s own’ in the first sense while feeling alienated from it” (2011, 5) in the second sense.¹²⁶ Further they argue that, even if the schizophrenic does feel alienated from her illness, it does not mean that the condition is inauthentic. Rather, “to be authentic is to be true to oneself, and being true to oneself may sometimes require acknowledging that aspects of oneself from which one feels affectively alienated are nevertheless central to one’s practical identity” (*ibid*). There is a need to admit of the friction between (schizophrenic and lucid) identities, and even to accept (the schizophrenic) one as a facet of the (narrative) self though it is also

¹²⁶ Mackenzie and Poltera (2010) argue that autonomy and authenticity can be pulled apart and that authenticity can relate to identity too. They separate a narrative self-constitution (comprised of – synchronic and diachronic – agency or identity) as having a wide scope and something most individuals (including schizophrenics) are able to develop, and autonomy (comprised of competency and authenticity) as having a narrow scope that fewer agents can achieve (the schizophrenic falls short of this).

Mackenzie and Poltera argue that agents connect their past, present and future in a diachronic way through narrative identities and this constitutes the person’s self-understanding and a flourishing life. They use this to critique Galen Strawson (who argues that such accounts of narrative identity are false because they exclude those who define themselves in an episodic or time-sliced way) by drawing on the example of Elyn Saks (a college professor who has schizophrenia). They claim that Saks is unable to attain narrative identity *while* suffering from schizophrenic episodes, but she can incorporate this as part of her wider self-narrative and authentically part of her when not suffering her delusions. Further, they argue that though Saks can do this and so the illness is authentically her (in a narrative – identity – sense), she is unable to achieve the greater degree of authenticity (and competence) required for autonomy suggesting that she would feel alienated from her illness and so it is not authentically her (in an autonomous sense). Thus, Saks can achieve a narrative identity but falls short of autonomy.

In this regard, the relevance of authenticity is much broader than to just autonomous desires and extends to identity and agency too. As Westlund argues, “the notion of authenticity is more naturally and more clearly associated with the question of integrated identity than it is with autonomy. If this is so, then one upshot of my argument (like Mackenzie and Poltera’s) would be that autonomy and authenticity can come apart” (2011, 2). These views suggest, therefore, that authenticity can relate to identities or agency as well as desires.

detrimental and inauthentic to the (autonomous) self. These views suggest that complex identities may conflict but are still a part of the whole person.

The similarities in the examples of intersectionality and schizophrenia (with whether the conflicted desires and identities are suitably authentic), however, end when autonomy is considered. While Mackenzie and Poltera argue that the narrower scope of authenticity in autonomy (over narrative identity) means schizophrenic agents in moments of psychosis fall short of the standard required in autonomy, intersectional theorists claim authenticity for autonomy remains possible with intersectional identities. In this regard, Meyers insists that “autonomy is best advanced by placing minimal strictures on the ordering of the autonomous personality” (Meyers, 1989, 62) since intersectionality precludes stringent structuring and consistency of desires where these deny aspects of one’s identity. In other words, to integrate or rank desires by favouring one conflicted identity over another in a static way “would be to betray one’s authentic self” (Meyers, 2000, 170), if one endorses both (Barvosa-Carter, 2007).¹²⁷ Rather, structures of autonomy should be flexible so that different conflicting (though endorsed) desires can take priority in different situations, thereby retaining authenticity of the self in self-rule by embracing, not rejecting, her complexity.

¹²⁷ These points recognise the importance of the flexible will. Meyers, for instance, argues, “there are no desires or characteristics that should always take precedence in any individual’s life. Insofar as intersectional subjects are subordinated, they need to be on the qui vive for unanticipated opportunities... If integration is understood as a wholehearted and lasting commitment to a self-chosen hierarchy of desires, personal traits, values, interests, and goals, and if an integrated self is an authentic self, integration and authenticity are often inimical to autonomy” (2000, 171). In this regard, such consistency and integration can be problematic for intersectional (most) selves. In addition, Barvosa-Carter (2007) argues that intersectional selves are likely to be ambivalent towards social identity (but not necessarily towards self-chosen endorsements), and this only when the agent’s hierarchy is flexible and can accommodate different preferences in different situations. Likewise, following Aristotle, Friedman (2003) notes that an individual’s life can only be fully assessed once she dies; selves evolve over time and circumstances change and demand different responses from the autonomous person. Though being minimally consistent or having cohering attitudes, such as were discussed in the previous chapter on liberal theories, can manage conflicts and disintegration, these attempts do not primarily do so to reflect and capture the complexity of intersectional agents, which is the relational concern here.

We can illustrate this using Kristeva Luker's work (1975). Luker studied pregnant girls and women, who chose to undergo an abortion after refusing to use contraception, despite it being freely available from their physicians. Analysing the research, Stoljar (2000) distinguishes two types of agent. On the one hand, is an individual who risks sexual intercourse without contraception because of "paralyzing ambivalence" (104). On the other hand, are Luker's subjects, who have conflicts between equally endorsed first-order desires (refusing to take contraception might be a way of not choosing between a strong desire to have sex and a strong desire not to reveal her sexual life to her father, who will be informed if she asks for contraception). For Stoljar, the former is a clear case of lack of autonomy since there is failure to 'own up to' the incoherent conflict, whereas the latter is simply a conflict of endorsed desires and is not entirely autonomy-undermining. She argues:

the ambivalence experienced by Luker's subjects is often a product of an attempt to liberate themselves from the oppressive norms of sexual agency that are applied to the group of women [to maintain norms of chastity on the one hand but also, through different norms, to be sexually active on the other]. It does not constitute a manifest breakdown in the capacity for critical reflection, which would be incompatible with autonomy. Rather, a proper exercise of critical reflection requires acknowledgement of the incoherence inherent in one's circumstances (105).

On this reading, the complexity of the self and inconsistencies of one's desires requires proper recognition and conflict is neither symptomatic of non-autonomy nor necessarily inimical to autonomy. With intersectional identities, relational models suggest that, though ever-fleeting

selves are not the mark of autonomous persons and some integration and consistency is required, it is also a significant feature of relationally autonomous agents that they are sensitive to the complexity of who they are. As Benson puts it, “if one is genuinely torn between competing commitments in such a way that to reconcile one’s concerns would be to repress what one stands for and who one is, then the freedom one wants is a freedom that can preserve some motivational disunity” (1994, 667).¹²⁸ In this regard authenticity of identity, not simply authenticity of desires, is significant for complex selves. As Gloria Anzaldúa argues, characterising self-rule in this way is a move away “from convergent thinking, [and] analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterised by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes” (1999, 101). In aiming for this expansive approach to identity and desires, there is some degree of flexibility in the consistency required of the autonomous self, and an authentic identity, not just an authentic desire, is valuable.

Here, I have considered complex self-identity, intersectionality, schizophrenia, and the conflicts these may cause for autonomous persons. The relational account tends to favour a consistency approach that preserves the authenticity of the agent’s identity, while recognising that autonomy does require a stronger type of authenticity (that the schizophrenic fails to attain).

In the first part of this chapter, I have discussed five characteristics of the relational account: the socialised agent, socialised autonomy, degrees of autonomy, broad motivations, and

¹²⁸ Here, Benson argues that, properly understood, “free agency tolerates far more ambivalence and unresolvable motivational conflict than [the] picture of freedom’s value is willing to allow” (Benson, 1994, 667).

complex identities. Though I have indicated that in places there is some overlap, these features generally distinguish theories of a relational sort from those of the liberal kind discussed in the previous chapter.

Critiques

Having discussed the core features of relational theories, in this section I explore two sets of conceptual criticisms that are raised about the model: first, problems about the agent and second, difficulties about autonomy. I will argue that these critiques are either misinterpretations, and that a proper reading of the account avoids the problems, or that they can be addressed, and so are not debilitating in the end. I will claim that, given that these theoretical worries are neither devastating nor insurmountable, the relational account offers a helpful way in which to represent the female suicide bombers, a suggestion that will be further illustrated in the next chapter.

Agent

The first criticism regards the agent and, in particular, that the thoroughly social agent of the account is socially determined.¹²⁹ If the agent is determined, the problem is she cannot

¹²⁹ This is a variation of the criticism that agents are powerless to define themselves that is often levelled at communitarian theories of the self. Barclay and Friedman have tried to make a distinction between a strong communitarian view and a relational one about the socially constituted agent, claiming that the former suffers from the criticism of a determined self while the latter does not. Barclay, for instance, renounces a strong reading of the communitarian view of a (descriptively) constitutively social self, where “the self is so constituted by her social ends that she is unable to reconsider or reject them” as “very implausible” (2000, 63). She is, however, sympathetic to a weaker communitarian interpretation: “our starting point will always affect where we end up, so that even if some particular shared values are rejected by the individual, she will continue nonetheless to bear as part of her identity some marking of her original communities of family, nation, and tribe...Nobody makes radical choices from an empty starting point” (64). In this way, individuals are socially constituted and, at the same time, those social constituents do not determine them – though they remain a part of them to some extent and intensity, even if not endorsed.

challenge (particularly oppressive) social norms or change (especially subordinating) prescribed values to which she is subjected. However, the fact is that agents do dispute these, as those who subvert norms and values demonstrate (Friedman, 2000). In addition, if determined, individuals with the same influences would think and behave identically and yet they do not, as the plurality of values and beliefs in societies indicates (Christman, 2004, 145). Moreover, if determined, the implication for us is that the bombers could not decide differently, which is problematic when we wish to consider them agential, and attribute them with degrees of autonomy. Given that agents are not determined, the constitutively social agent of relational models is incorrect (it does not reflect individuals) and, further, unhelpful (to emancipatory, including feminist, movements to inspire resistance). I address this concern by first, clarifying that the relational agent is socially rooted, but non-determined and second, by discussing examples of how relational agents can confront repressive norms or values.¹³⁰ I

Friedman, on the other hand, suggests that identity is tied to the surroundings and communities an agent is born into (such as family, race, nation, gender) and distinguishes “perspectival identity” and “trait-based identity” (2003, 10). Whereas perspectival identity – the relational self – is where the agent is constituted by only those aspects she cares about or values through critical reflection (the attitudes she adopts about her identity), trait identity – the communitarian self – is where the agent is constituted by these very categories (irrespective of her attitude towards them). She argues that “communitarians are right to think it implausible that someone would have no concern for *any* of the humankind categories ascribed to her, but wrong to ignore how she might easily be indifferent to *some* of them” (12), and since her interpretation of autonomy is “based on someone’s perspective and not on the humankind categories that fit or are ascribed to her, community membership and other humankind traits are inessential to, and may well be occluded by, the ideal of personal autonomy” (*ibid*). In this way, she claims individuals are socially embedded but that she can still choose their attitudes and values towards the (voluntary and involuntary) desires and preferences she comes to have by reflecting on them. Yet, this appears, on closer inspection, to be a causally social agent, since Friedman acknowledges the significance of “humankind traits” (*ibid*) to the agent, but not a constitutive one, since she thinks that some can ultimately, even “easily” (*ibid*), be unimportant, and it is also one that seems to consider trait-identity and autonomy to be incompatible. While this might allow for a non-determined view of the agent (the particular criticism with which this section is concerned), it is less clear that this remains an agent that is relational “all the way down” (Code, 2000, 196).

¹³⁰ Hutchings questions how far procedural or substantive relational models are successful in moving beyond the either “choosers or losers” (Hutchings, 2013, 18) – that is, autonomous-or-not – binary precisely because of their “nostalgia for a feminist revolutionary subject” (2013, 14) that regards resistance as the primary indicator of autonomy. She calls for understandings of agency where ends are plural and there is humility in recognising ends to avoid this preoccupation with resistance (25). The resistance point is addressed here because it is often a concern of feminists, but this thesis argues that resistance is one – but not the only – way of demonstrating self-governance and broader manifestations of agency exist. It also contends, however, that a proper interpretation of agency must consider both the internal and external; these factors together are plotted on the spectrum that, as a whole, captures the limitations and breadth of autonomy. Both of these points will be elaborated more over the remainder of the thesis.

will argue that the critique is not damning to the theory because it is a misreading; the relational agent can and does act upon and affect the world.

i. The relational agent re-stated

First, I reiterate and elucidate the agent of the relational approach. I do this by setting out first, the social elements of the agent then second, that such individuals are not non-agential and third, that rejecting or revising values does not make them asocial. Using standard relational responses, I will contend that the relational self is fully social, but not socially driven (in a strong sense where driven equates to determined).

In the first part, I reemphasise the deeply social dimensions of the relational agent; that they are selves rooted by and within contexts and relationships that form their foundations – not only who they are (as seems indisputable), but also how they choose and what they do. Barclay, for instance, argues, “our starting point will always affect where we end up...Nobody makes radical choices from an empty starting point” (2000, 64). Individuals are not detached entities deciding disinterestedly, but rather firmly socially embedded. Likewise, Mackenzie contends that individuals discover (they do not choose or self-generate) what is important to them:

what we are and what matters to us are not simple matters of choice. [...] to a certain degree, we just find certain things mattering to us. This may be because we are disposed in certain ways by the manner in which different aspects of our identities, for example, our temperament and talents, reinforce one another; what matters to us may be connected with

commitments to others, for example parents, that are not entirely of our choosing or, what matters may be the result of the significant events in our particular histories or of decisions we made in the past that are now no longer a matter of choices (2000, 135).

The things that matter to persons, then, are often uncovered by virtue of their histories and connections, and are not selected dispassionately or created outside of this framework. In short, the things that are valued emerge; we do not invent them. Accordingly, the relational agent is unreservedly social.

Second, this said, it is not the case that agents are socially determined. The suggestion that “the self is so constituted by her social ends that she is unable to reconsider or reject them” is “very implausible” (Barclay, 2000, 63) and not one many relational theorists would wish to defend. Rather, the relational claim is that, individuals are social beings, but this does not preclude them questioning their social makeup for “each of us, whatever our cultural heritage, is shaped in some way by our culture. To be shaped, however, is not to be determined [...] We are all shaped, but not many of us are driven” (Phillips, 2010, 67). The deeply ingrained social starting point does not leave anyone unaffected, but neither does it render many pawns, unable to confront unjust standards or alter values or beliefs. Indeed, Held, argues:

thinking of persons as relational does not mean that we cannot make autonomous choices to resist various of the social ties we grew up with or find ourselves in and to reshape any relations we maintain. On the contrary, it often requires that we do so...Moral agents guided by the Ethics of Care

are ‘encumbered’ and ‘embedded’ in relations with actual other persons, but they can still be free moral agents (Held, 2006, 84).

There is no contradiction, then, in being socially constituted and being able to revise values, ends, goals, ties, and backgrounds (for example) deriving from these conditions.¹³¹

To achieve this balance, in the relational account, active reflection (from the agent’s relationally constituted starting point) is required. To elaborate, “both the autonomous and the nonautonomous are conditioned by the forces of society. The difference is that the autonomous person is not a passive receptacle of these forces but reflectively engages with them to participate in shaping a life for herself” (Barclay, 2000, 55). There must be evaluation of social norms, but this assessment is never from a detached or objective point of view, rather it is always embedded, as persons are fundamentally relational. Indeed, Held argues, “we can conceptualise these choices as taking place within social relations that partially constitute us as what we are. We maintain some relations, revise others, and create new ones, but we do not see these as choices of independent individuals acting in the world as though social ties did not exist prior to our creating them” (Held, 2006, 84). Agents are thoroughly social, but they are not automatons unable to make self-governing decisions. In this way, (socially rooted) agency is possible, and it is (relational) persons – not communities or groups or cultures – who act upon the world (Phillips, 2010, 126). Thus, relational selves are not determined but rather are capable actors.

¹³¹ Being able to revise such reshape these values and ends is still social in conception because the self doing this always stands in relation to others, as the next few paragraphs will make clear.

Third, it is not the case that agents who have autonomously rejected or revised some of their ends thereby escape or circumvent their social or relational origins. Rather, they retain those impressions because they run “all the way down” (Code, 2000, 198). In this way, “even if some particular shared values are rejected by the individual, she will continue nonetheless to bear as part of her identity some marking of her original communities of family, nation, and tribe” (Barclay, 2000, 64). Though certain aspects of the social self may not be endorsed, this neither means that all traces of that feature are removed (it remains a part of the agent to some extent and intensity) nor, more importantly, that the agent is closer to being less social (she is always a relational being). Similarly, Mackenzie contends, “we cannot simply choose to abandon our cares or to give up what matters to us. Or rather, we cannot do so without forfeit or loss. Certainly what matters to a person may change...But something that has mattered usually cannot simply cease to matter. It can only do so, or come to matter in a different way, as a result of a process of readjustment of the elements of the self” (Mackenzie, 2000, 135). Some components of the social agent can be de-emphasised, but selves are unrelentingly social. In other words, *if* the social world were shed, there simply would not be a self that remains, since such a self does not exist. I contend, then, that it is impossible to remove the social self (since there would be no self left), even if the importance of certain socially prescribed values can be reduced.

In this part, I have clarified the theoretical underpinnings of the relational agent. I argued that the agent is social, but not determined by that sociality, and is always relationally constituted despite revisions to her ends. This is the relational approach’s understanding of the self as unreservedly social.

ii. The relational agent illustrated

I now demonstrate the points raised so far in this second section using three examples – a nauseous nurse, an Indian woman with adaptive preferences, and persons with intersectional identities. These cases illustrate how the relational agent can evolve and reshape her social construction without escaping it, and so ultimately how she can affect the world around her.

First, using the example of Ellen, a woman who wishes to become a nurse but who is squeamish, Meyers defends a view of the socially constituted agent who is able to indirectly amend some of her discovered ends after careful work. She explains:

having enrolled in nursing school with the aim of becoming a surgical nurse, Ellen realises that she is more squeamish about gore than most of the other students. She has not chosen to become fainthearted in this way. Socialisation into femininity with the premium this gender norm places on fragility and helplessness has imparted this quality to her, and so her squeamishness is constitutive...Still, in order to achieve her career goal, Ellen might choose to overcome her squeamishness by witnessing additional operations. If her desensitisation program is successful – that is, if she reaches a point where she could only fake being upset by the sight of an open wound – Ellen will have eradicated a constitutive quality, and she will have replaced one constitutive quality with a chosen, yet equally constitutive one (1989, 95).

This example affirms that the agent can recast some of her socially derived ends and values and remain relational. She does not acquire a space for critical reflection outside her socially constituted self, but rather from within.

A second example is the modification of adaptive preferences, and here Nussbaum's case study of Vashanti (2000) is instructive. Vashanti is from a 'good' Hindu caste, so she expects to take on the role of a domestic caretaker (rather than financial contributor) after marriage. However, she separated from her drunken and unsupportive husband after he became physically abusive, returned to her brothers for a short period, and then took a loan from the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) to make a living for herself. In this instance, the constitutive values and ends are of a certain type (to marry young, to be a homemaker, to raise children) and Vashanti does not reject these, but her encounters have transmuted these ends and she chooses differently to how she was raised to be. She is now someone who "look[s Nussbaum] straight in the eye, and her voice is strong and clear" (17), when such directness is not part of her custom, and she is someone who aims to work within SEWA to assist other women, when this is not a role she is expected to hold.¹³² Still, these revamped goals are not selected by an individualistic self, deliberating in an unencumbered fashion, but rather by the social self and the very concrete circumstances she faces. Relational selves then are socially constituted, and ends can be dampened, amplified, or overwritten, but their relational origins are never bypassed.

The third and final example are intersectional identities, where being a constitutively social agent does not preclude critical evaluation of her various identities, but nor is this relational

¹³² Nussbaum notes that women who work with SEWA are taught to look the people with whom they speak in the eye, rather than, as custom dictates, looking down or away in deference (2000, 17, footnote 20).

rootedness ‘overcome’ (since this is an impossibility). Though bearers of such identities suffer multiple oppressions (as outlined earlier), Meyers adopts Maria Lugones’ (1987) analysis that intersectional selves are on the cusp of different worlds; that they are “border dwellers [that] occupy an epistemically favourable vantage point, for the virtues and the defects of each community are easier to spot from the border” (Meyers, 2000, 155). These agents can critically assess their constitutive identities from a unique standpoint, though one that is still firmly embedded (the ‘vantage point’ is never neutral or detached).¹³³ An even more repressive situation is that cited by Benson of female slaves who were doubly subordinated first, by slavery and capitalism, where black women, like black men, were forced into demeaning work by their white owners, and second, by patriarchy, where black women, unlike black men, were also expected to function as housewives and homemakers too. Using Angela Davis’ work, he argues:

that very domestic labor which marked the peculiar extremity of the slave woman’s bondage also became a fundamental means of resistance to slavery (as well as to sexism). It gave women responsibility for virtually the only meaningful labor available to slaves – the work of caring for one another – and for activities that were most difficult for overseers to monitor. It also assigned to slave women responsibility for that task which is always most basic for resistance against extreme oppression, the task of securing the survival of the oppressed. The norms embedded in the domestic care practices by slave women produced a vantage point from which these women

¹³³ Similarly, consider Uma Narayan’s (1997) experience of both a traditional Indian upbringing where she was taught to be subservient to men, on the one hand, and her mother’s protests at such treatment, on the other. These are both constitutively part of her and she is able to draw on these different ‘worlds’ to challenge subordinating norms.

could achieve some measure of self-revelation to fellow slaves and to themselves...At a minimum, these women's domestic practice provided them with signs of their own power, a power that slaveholders and slaves alike counted on. It also provided constant reminders of what was so wrong about the values undergirding the institution of slavery (1990, 61).

Though these women were socially conditioned to hold a particular view of themselves (as inferior to whites and men), this is not a stance that cannot be disputed, reappraised or repudiated. Indeed the 'other world' that these women occupied provided a way in which to detect injustices as well as the mechanisms and self-worth necessary to resist them. Accordingly, relational selves can critically reflect from a thoroughly socially submerged starting point, even about that very genesis itself and even in oppressive contexts.

The agents in these three examples from the relational literature are socially constituted, but can still question, endorse, re-evaluate or moderate their ends, and this does not mean that they somehow evade or transcend their social roots. Further, they are not precluded from being able to identify oppressive norms from this embedded place. In short, the claim is that they are not non-agential, determined beings, but rather can act upon the world, in these theories. This is positive for the female bombers and the aims of this thesis, as it is plausible that we can recognise them as (social) agents, even if they are constrained in many ways.

In this section, I have examined the criticism that the relational agent is socially fixed in her desires. I argued that agents are indeed socially ingrained, but can challenge or change their ends without this moving to a non-social notion of self. The relational agent is not socially

determined since she can choose differently to her society and resist subordinating norms, but she is inherently social nonetheless.

Autonomy

The second conceptual problem that the relational approach might encounter regards the construction of autonomy, first, in terms of the link to the external and substantivism (broadly non-will related issues) and second, concerning ambivalence (will related worries). Both criticisms charge that relational theorists have formulated autonomy in ways too far removed from autonomy's remit of *self-government*. This is by either veering away from the individual's will (so the *self* is tangential) or by permitting an unstable will (so *governance* becomes perplexing), and these are mistaken conceptions of autonomy. I will argue that neither objection besets the relational approach because its task is to properly represent – encompass as many relevant factors in mapping – the extent and quality of autonomy. Where the goal is to allot the bombers with appropriate amounts of autonomy, this is a strength of the account as it identifies how much autonomy may be occurring overall (internally and externally).

i. Non-will issues

The first problem is the relational preoccupation with the domain outside the will and, in particular, that concentrating on these features is misguided for self-governance. I explore this in three parts, first, by discussing the external, second, by considering the substantive and third, by exploring both together through the spectrum as an example of how, contrary to the criticism, the relational account is about autonomy. I will argue that focusing on the external and substantive is not problematic because the relational approach is concerned to correlate

theory to actual states of affairs and to attribute the appropriate amounts of autonomy to agents given this.

External

The first issue is about the inclusion of the external. When assessing self-rule, constitutively social theories incorporate relations and contexts (by having, for instance, an answerability or self-worth condition). According to the concern, however, this shifts the nucleus of autonomy, which in essence is an internal capacity entailing the authentication of desires by competent persons, too much to the external (Christman, 2004). In so doing, the linchpin for autonomy is not the will – as this criticism contends it should be – but these other, distinctly non-will-like, components. Friedman, for example, argues, “if the self’s determination of itself is subject to the approval or recognition of others, then the self is no longer the reference point for its own determination; recognition by others becomes the governing standard for what constitutes autonomy” (2003, 43-44). This leads to the bizarre result that, if others do not recognise the agent as worthy of autonomy (as Benson – 1994 – proposes) or she cannot answer for her self (Westlund, 2009) or she is not situated in the appropriate socio-relational surroundings (Oshana, 1998) then, whatever her internal state of reflection, she is not autonomous. According to this criticism, whilst looking to the external may be a valuable endeavour causally (such as how it improves or disrupts the acquisition of autonomy skills), the constitutively relational account moves the locus of autonomy away from the self and so is not an explication of autonomy proper.

To allay this concern, I explore how the relational account moulds itself to actual agents and circumstances in order to better reflect and represent their autonomy. I consider, first, the

merit of an inner and outer, degree-based, approach and second, the responsiveness of an externally theorised approach to instances of autonomy in oppressive contexts.

(a) Capturing the external on the spectrum

First, I discuss the advantages of representing autonomy on a spectrum. The concept of autonomy in relational accounts has been reframed for the relational agent (who is thoroughly social), such that recognising external features complements and thereby more satisfactorily maps her autonomy. Autonomy, undeniably, involves internal self-reflection, but the utility of a constitutively relational theory is that the external is an integral element of self-rule and factoring it in better indicates the degree of autonomy the agent has in reality. Benson, as described in chapter two, for instance, argues that internal coherence and consistency alone does not reveal that the will suffers undue interference (owing to oppressive norms) and that this affects the agent's autonomy (Benson, 1991). Being able to capture this constraint via an external focus attests to the extent of autonomy. Moreover, it is not that the internally coherent or aligned agent fails entirely to be autonomous because of the external hurdles (a perfectionist view), but that the degree to which she can be so is diminished because these impact one another. For instance, a slave can be aligned in her preferences, but it is nonsensical to regard her act as autonomous without also taking stock of the degree to which it is limited by her contextual lack of freedom. Or, one can (internally) decide to sell a kidney, but the actual plotting of autonomy is mitigated (externally) by a circumstance of poverty (Widdows, 2011). The external oppressions in these examples do not entirely preclude self-rule, but it ought to be part of the discussion of how much autonomy is possible, despite a

perfectly structured internal psychology.¹³⁴ Further, if autonomy is about governing oneself, then the various elements, including external ones, that contribute to or thwart this endeavour should be included in assessing the extent of the agent's autonomy. The relational account, that is, factors in the internal and external in a bid to encompass the complexity of the agent and situation, and properly represent the amount of autonomy being exercised.

A constitutively relational autonomy does not erroneously move the focus for autonomy away from the internal, then. Rather, I argue that, both the internal and external are relevant since, in conjunction, these better reflect the extent of autonomy that is realisable. If the concern is to accurately represent the amount of autonomy for the bombers, the relational approach does not fail on this count.

(b) Broad manifestations of autonomy in the external

Second, because the socially constitutive approach is sensitised to how the external can limit autonomy, it has a broader conception of how autonomy can manifest itself in adversity, and so is most appropriate for tracking autonomy in oppressive contexts. It widens autonomy by including a range of ways in which to demonstrate it; in which agents can engage with others, justify themselves, or engender self-worth. Both Westlund (2011) and Benson (1994; 2011), for instance, advance the answerability expectation, but argue it is a normative disposition that can be evinced in various ways (critical where the agent is, say, a “Taliban woman” – Oshana, 2006, 60 – or slave and so limited in how she can interact).¹³⁵ It does not require

¹³⁴ In doing this, the relational approach is not aiming to conflate the internal and external, but rather the suggestion is that both together are needed to provide an accurate assessment of autonomy overall. The spectrum in the final chapter indicates one way in which this might be realised.

¹³⁵ Responding to Westlund, Christman (2011) argues that answerability cannot be a constitutively relational concept because Westlund's view is an inner dialogue, which can occur in the absence of others. Westlund, however, argues that answerability is normative and relational: “answerability...is normative in the sense that the autonomous agent holds herself to an *expectation* or *demand*, and relational in the sense that an expectation

actual dialogical engagement (articulating and justifying a desire to another), but answering attuned to “*context-sensitivity*” (Westlund, 2009, 40). Such sensitivity could consist of recounting stories that uphold her view, seeking information to rethink desires, changing the dynamic of relationships (Westlund, 2009), or of practicing general speech (Madhok, 2007, 2013), or of carrying out preparatory acts, though not the end goal (Abrams, 1998).¹³⁶ We might add to these examples those of using metaphors to explain, pointing out features of stories, and sharing salient experiences. All of these indicate a normative expectation to be ‘responsible for self’ without executing reasons-based discourse, which is but one narrowly prescribed manifestation of this (Westlund, 2009). In so doing, this understanding expands ways in which autonomy can be demonstrated. Of course, to remain faithful to the spectrum, the limitations to this expansive notion must also be borne in mind. For, though these instances of answerability occur, the external context is extreme and thereby reduces the

or demand is something that one party is subjected to by another, or by one party to herself when she manifests sensitivity to what others can legitimately ask of her” (2011, 2). In this regard, answerability is about the agent having an expectation to respond and others having that expectation too. It is constitutively relational in this regard. This will be considered again in chapter four on the application of theory to practice.

¹³⁶ Westlund notes that answerability to legitimate challenges involves “*relational situatedness*” (2009, 39) (it must be clear why it is important that the agent must answer the critic) and, more importantly, “*context-sensitivity*” (40) (a broad range of responses are permissible). In terms of the types of response, she argues, “the direct citation of reasons in response to questioning may, for some otherwise competent agents, be an alien practice in which they do not know quite how to engage. (For others, it may feel alien only in some contexts, such as the more personal ones.) But there are certainly other ways of demonstrating that one holds oneself answerable to appropriately situated critical challenges. Within the realm of the broadly conversational, one might do any of the following: provide a life-narrative that manifests one’s reasons; provide an interpretation of relevant experiences, putting them in the context of a wider pattern of meaning; describe the actions of an admired other in a similar situation; tell parables or other stories that are chosen and recounted in a way that demonstrates responsiveness to the question; and probably much more besides. Outside the realm of the conversational, an agent may give explicit or implicit signals that she intends to reflect on what has been said, signs that she has re-deliberated in relevant ways or sought more information as a result of the challenge, or that she is attempting to repair, restructure, or terminate a relationship or practice that has come into question. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but merely to give a sampling of the array of possible responses that manifest a disposition to hold oneself answerable to external critical perspectives” (40). Thus, these are diverse ways in which to engage with and answer to others.

Differently, Madhok (2007) argues that though the *sathins* are not able to put into effect certain desires, they indicate autonomy through their speech practices with one another. Alternatively, Abrams (1998) contends that a woman who suffers domestic violence may stay in an abusive relationship whilst having made the decision and then slowly making preparations to leave (such as, over time, gathering enough funds without arousing the suspicion of her partner or rebuilding enough support with others so she has somewhere to go), which also suggests self-direction. These are different ways of manifesting autonomy, all of which suggest that there must be sensitivity to agency within oppressive conditions.

amount of autonomy achievable. Still, the account opens up the possibility that some degree of autonomy could be achievable and demonstrable even in very repressive situations.

In some oppressive circumstances, an agent may not be able to answer in a specific way or carry out a certain act, but she might be able to signal her normative-competence in other ways. By being responsive to the agent, the skills she has, and her surroundings, it is suggested that this is a broader understanding of self-rule, since hitherto unrecognised instances of autonomy may be made visible. Persons who may not initially be thought to be autonomous, in other words, may turn out to be so to some extent. This is particularly valuable under restrictive conditions, such as the ones the bombers are likely to be in, since the opportunities to indicate autonomy may be sparse. Further, it is relevant where the overall aim is to attribute autonomy, however limited, to these women.

In this part, I have discussed the criticism that the relational approach is too focussed on the external and so too removed from understandings of autonomy as an internal notion. I argued that, though the account does include the external, it does so unapologetically as this both better reflects the degree of autonomy exercisable and theorises signs of autonomy in oppressive contexts. These tendencies are useful for the bombers of the case studies, who are in restrictive settings and whose autonomy we are keen to identify and represent in a nuanced way.

Substance

The second problem relates to the first and is that relational autonomy, with its weak substantive construction, shifts too much from the processes to the content of decision-

making. This is disconcerting because the goal of autonomy – in procedural theories – is to respect persons who are capable of deciding for themselves, which includes accepting, though not necessarily agreeing with, the substance of their decisions (Dworkin, 1989; Christman 1991; Friedman, 2003; Westlund, 2009).¹³⁷ The weak substantive account is perturbing – according to this criticism – because focusing on content undermines the fact that a competent agent made an explicit (procedurally compliant) decision, which is an affront to self-governance. Put differently, autonomy is about self-rule not “ideal or right rule, or ‘orthonomy’” (Benson, 2008, 132) and agents should be able to rule themselves and rule themselves badly if they so wish.¹³⁸ The relational approach, with its substantivism, is unsuitable because autonomy is about determining the authenticity, not the excellent calibre, of desires, and by prioritising the latter it neglects to identify instances of the former. With the bombers in particular, we may end up dismissing their desire to bomb because we disagree with its substance, and this would eliminate rather than facilitate our goal of recognising their autonomy. I will counter, however, that substantive accounts do not sidestep the purpose of autonomy or fail to identify authentic desires. On the contrary, they are more discerning at sifting out and weighting such desires based on the totality of the agent’s experience.

Relational approaches accept the procedural intuition that respect is owed to competent persons and that agents are likely to endorse a multitude of desires, and they also concur that strong substantive and perfectionist theories (that decisively reject certain desires) are to be

¹³⁷ Relational procedural theorists also hold this view. Friedman, for instance, notes that, desires must be respected if persons cross an autonomy threshold, even if the degree to which they can be autonomous varies if they endorse “contra-autonomy norms” (2003, 24). Likewise, Westlund argues that the dialogical abilities of servile women must be recognised and respected so that they can be engaged in a discussion or “*argued with*” (2009, 43) over adopting certain norms.

¹³⁸ Though Benson is an advocate of weak substantive theories, this criticism (2008) is part of his rejection of strong substantive relational views (such as Oshana’s). He argues that the strong substantive method ignores that autonomy sometimes involves making mistaken decisions, oppressive situations can sometimes enable possibilities for autonomous agency despite the circumstances, and that self-rule cannot be conflated with right-rule.

avoided (though for the different reason of potentially falling foul of the spectrum).¹³⁹ I argue that weak substantive accounts, however, are superior to content-neutral ones because assessing the content of desires (insofar as this reveals attitudes towards the self) offers another tool for distinguishing multiple kinds of preferences. It is because the model recognises the subtleties of some forms of oppressions, which procedures alone do not capture, that it stipulates that the content of desires illuminate autonomy too. Instead of ignoring the substance, then, it is better to incorporate it into the assessment. In this regard, despite an agent's process of reflection passing the procedural test, the content (that exposes beliefs and principles of a diminished self-worth, for instance) is also important.¹⁴⁰ The subject matter unveils a stance towards her self (from the oppressions she suffers) – that the process of reflection does not – and that must be acknowledged, if the aim is an accurate assessment of autonomy for those in constrained contexts.¹⁴¹ To fail to make these correlations between the substance of desires and autonomy, as the procedural approaches (of either the liberal or relational variety) tend to do, undermines a proper representation of how much autonomy is being exercised, and so is likely to be problematic when it comes to appropriately recognising the bombers' autonomy.

¹³⁹ Stronger models are to be avoided because they undermine the principle that autonomy is on a spectrum, not an either/or concept. If relational theorists are committed to a degree-based characteristic of autonomy, which many are, then it is problematic to disregard desires altogether (as stronger theories do), and it is much more efficacious to claim (like weaker theories) that these may result in a partially (in some cases a manifestly) diminished autonomy. While the strong theories disregard the spectrum by dismissing desires outright, the weaker ones do not.

¹⁴⁰ More strongly, Rocha considers the agent who endorses sexist or racist views about herself. He argues, "surely it is central to feminism and anti-racism that we can accept the wrongs of sexism and racism as objective facts. In particular, it makes sense to think there is something wrong with a putatively autonomous agent whose actions derive from values that undermine her very self-worth...I believe...as feminists and anti-racism theorists, we need more convincing that we should be happy with a formal account...[and] I wonder whether some of our reasons for preferring relational accounts may have been lost in the process" (2011, 5) of trying to formulate a content-neutral theory.

¹⁴¹ Suggesting contrariwise that self-worth is not a relevant consideration – as Westlund does when she claims that an agent's desires "may even manifest a *lack* of self-respect" (Westlund, 2009, 37) – radically misconstrues what it means to be self-governing. For instance, even Westlund's own proposal of autonomy (reflecting on desires and answering to others who challenge that desire) is not disconnected from having sufficient levels of self-esteem to do the reflecting and answering.

The claim, then, is that the competent and their desires ought to be respected, but that this is not the sum of autonomy. There must also be weight given to the ways in which values or attitudes affect the substance of desires, as this proves more useful in accounting for the overall amount of autonomy that agents, including highly constrained ones, have. Relational models, therefore, do not misdescribe, but rather more accurately represent autonomy.

External and substance: spectrum

In the third part, I bring together the observations made about the external and substantive in the preceding two parts and (briefly) consider how they might be encompassed through a spectrum. I will suggest that a relational spectrum allows us to factor in the internal reflective states, look to the external as a constitutive part of autonomy, and regard (attitudes behind) the substance of desires, in order to gauge autonomy properly. This view will be explored in greater detail in chapter five, but, here, when trying to identify and plot autonomy, however restricted, for persons such as the bombers, I argue that this model is encouraging.

From what has thus far been discussed, it is possible that the relational approach allows a spectrum that takes into account internal and external states of affairs. For example, we might imagine that external norms (of, say, sexism) are oppressive and may engender subjugating sets of attitudes or values in an agent, which results in her desiring (for argument's sake) plastic surgery. In this picture, the external state of affairs reduces her autonomy, despite an internally aligned will (though this need not diminish respect towards her).¹⁴² Indeed, what is

¹⁴² Rocha, for instance, argues that respect for persons is a separate concern, achievable by a plethora of individuals and thereby as maximally inclusive a notion as possible. Though it is unnecessary to accept his account for this thesis, Rocha's view is that "Substantive accounts of autonomy need not reserve respect only for the autonomous, for whom they set a high bar. A simple fix is available: assign respect to the capability for

relevant here is that “the severity of the harm done to [such] agents lies precisely in the fact that their deeply internalized values *prevent* the full achievement of their autonomy” (Rocha, 2011, 4), and it is this hindrance that must be acknowledged. Whatever ‘full’ autonomy is (the final chapter will suggest that reaching this state is not a likely possibility), such a proposal allows space to recognise the ability to be self-reflective (so distinguishes, say, the comatose and the non-comatose person) and withholds some degree of autonomy from those who are amid repressive norms and suffer attitudinally (thereby separating the endorsement of sexist from non-sexist norms where this affects self-worth, for instance).¹⁴³ Further, it neither disallows the decision nor labels a person non-autonomous altogether. In this regard, this envelops the agent’s internal states and the external situation and together better depicts the degree of autonomy that she realises. Where the focus is to recognise and attribute some autonomy, no matter how limited it might be, to those in constrained settings, this approach is promising for the bombers. The spectrum will be explored further in chapter five.

autonomy and don’t count as autonomous those agents whose core values are turned against them from without...It is only those that cannot achieve autonomy on their own, such as the comatose, that we can acceptably treat differently. Making respectful treatment conditional on the capability shows we must treat the non-autonomous, who remain capable of change, in respectful ways: that is the only way to help them change autonomously” (2011, 4). For Rocha, most people (including deeply subservient agents) have the autonomy capability (it is only individuals like the comatose, who “cannot achieve autonomy” (*ibid*), who do not). Accordingly, the subservient agent is deserving of the respect that comes with autonomy (she cannot be paternalistically overridden) in a way the comatose person (incapable of achieving autonomy) is not. This leads to a situation where the subservient and non-subservient agent are both treated with respect but, according to Rocha, the former still may be regarded as non-autonomous (owing to the content of her desires) whilst the latter may not. The subservient agent is treated with the respect relating to the autonomy capability and so may only be ‘argued with’ in the hope she will be persuaded about alternatives to her desires. By contrast, the comatose person, who does not have the equivalent respect (because she cannot change), can, as maintained by Rocha, have paternalistic choices made for her.

Though there may be concerns with Rocha’s proposal – it would be prudent, for instance, to add: that the comatose person is still owed respect in a general sense by virtue of being a human being (irrespective of whether she has the autonomy capability or not, so she should not be abused in any way while in the comatose state, for example); that it is not possible for anyone, comatose or non-comatose, to achieve autonomy “on their own” (*ibid*) (in a socially constitutive notion of autonomy or where this implies the non-relational self); and that casual attribution of the label ‘non-autonomous’ can be debated (especially if the spectrum is to be taken seriously) – this is an attempt to conceptually distinguish respect for persons and the content of desires in a substantive theory. That is, individuals deciding substantively non-autonomously (in Rocha’s terminology) can still be respected. Again, this need not be accepted for this thesis, but it is a way to bring in concerns about respect into substantive accounts.

¹⁴³ Here the concern is not to ‘blame’ the endorsers but to properly recognise the circumstances, as will be explained more in the final chapter.

Thus, such an approach includes both the benefits of the external and substantive focus of relational autonomy and thereby permits a better, not worse, representation of the self-governance that actually exists for agents. This is a strength for individuals, like the bombers, whose autonomy, even if restricted, we are concerned to represent appropriately.

ii. Disunity and ambivalence

The second problem I discuss is the ambivalence of intersectional selves and, in particular, the criticism that a discordant will does not typify the autonomous agent. Ambivalent agents are assumed to have ‘unstable’ foundations and so are uncertain and indecisive about their desires, whereas token autonomous agents are thought to be stable and know what they want and so hold authentic and coherent desires. The concern might be that the intersectional self, more akin to an agent with a dichotomous will, is qualitatively incomparable to an agent with a consistent will. To treat a non-consistent and consistent will as equivalent in autonomy is false and misunderstands the way the former fails, whilst the latter succeeds, at being autonomous, so the criticism goes. I address this by first, embracing the non-static will and, second, making plain the boundaries of adaptability in the intersectional will. I will contend that though a flexible will is important to relational models, this does not extend to countenancing a disparate will for autonomy. If the concern is to identify autonomy for those in constraint, like the bombers, this kind of flexibility is a helpful approach.

First, then, I discuss the constantly evolving will (and, for clarity, recall that the will discussed here is a social notion) in relational models. The relational structure of the will reflects the fluidity of self-development and self-realisation of relational selves and which, following an

Aristotelian view, is never static or fully complete until death. Mackenzie, for instance, argues, that integration is an “ongoing and dynamic process precisely because of inevitable tensions and inconsistencies within the self and because the different elements of the self are constantly undergoing transformation” (2000, 135). Such a will is likely to be in conflict when it is in flux (which is probably often on the relational reading). Requiring a condition of a stable and consistent will for desires to be authentic, then, is too demanding. Indeed Meyers argues, “it is a mistake to conflate authenticity with personal integration and to regard integration as a state persons must achieve as a precondition for autonomy. Instead, we should understand personal integration as the emergent intelligibility of an individual’s autonomous self-discovery and self-definition” (2000, 172). A unified will or self might surface eventually, but a fully unified will or self is not a prerequisite for autonomous decision-making. Thus, selves develop over time, and a fixed will, from which one picks and chooses, is less representative of autonomy.

At the same time, and second, relational theorists do acknowledge that some constancy from which to decide is essential. This recognises that “an agent who is persistently internally divided or whose sense of self is seriously fragmented cannot achieve the kind of reflective equilibrium necessary for unified agency. By unified agency I mean the kind of practical unity necessary to deliberate, make decisions and choices, and act” (Mackenzie, 2000, 135). A stable or non-disparate will is still part of the relational conception of autonomy, but so too is the fluid and complex will, since this reflects relational selves. Such a broad view is captured in part by Mackenzie and Poltera (2010) when they detach authenticity from autonomy and extend it to narrative identity (as I described in the first section of this

chapter).¹⁴⁴ This permits a clearer delineation of the kind of will required in relational autonomy. For instance, intersectional selves may have authentic identities and ‘practically unified’ wills (even if there is ambivalence in either identities or the will).¹⁴⁵ However, the person who suffers schizophrenic episodes may have an authentic identity but may not achieve authenticity for autonomy (because while she accepts schizophrenia as part of herself, her will is not stable enough to decide, and so to count as autonomous). Here, there is a two-pronged notion of authenticity (one for identity, the other for autonomy) that allows for a better understanding of the amount of flexibility in the will that is permissible for these different purposes. For the relational account, authenticity of identity and a stable (enough) will – not just authenticity of desires – is key for agents. At the same time, the latter – where this is understood as emanating from the social self – is still a part of autonomy.¹⁴⁶ This sets out a fuller conception of authenticity that simultaneously complements the complex constructions of wills, desires and identities.

Accordingly, I argue that relational accounts tolerate an ambivalent will (such as the intersectional agent may experience) to a certain (practically unified) extent, but also accept that a radically disunified will (such as the schizophrenic in the midst of psychosis may present) is too far removed from the autonomous agent. Further, the level of stability in the will is less demanding for determining the authenticity of narrative identity than it is for autonomy. In making these distinctions, I contend that the relational approach comprehends, and so can more accurately map, the bomber’s (as a relational agent, who is likely to be

¹⁴⁴ The point here, recall, was that authenticity does not belong exclusively to understandings of autonomy but to narrative identity too.

¹⁴⁵ For instance, intersectional identities might allow persons in, say, homophobic, sexist and ethnic minority groups (such as Anzaldúa’s (1987) Mestiza women who are – Latino lesbians and – part of a group that typically hold anti-gay sentiments and value conservative female roles) to decide fluidly between which aspects of their identity they wish to amplify and which to reduce, given the context, and in order to retain authentic identities (Meyers, 2000; Barvosa-Carter, 2007).

¹⁴⁶ In this regard, both kinds of authenticity are important for relational autonomy.

restricted as the intersectional self is) flexible (but not unstable, like the schizophrenic self's) will.

In this part, I have examined critiques about autonomy, relationally conceptualised. I have argued that taking account of the external and ambivalence in the will certainly reframes autonomy, but it does not shift it so drastically that it is not identifiable as self-rule, and the reason it does do it is to better reflect the agent's autonomy. If the goal is to represent the bomber's autonomy properly, the account offers a useful method for doing this. In this way, relational models do not fall victim to the charge that they are no longer about self-rule; on the contrary, they are conceptually encouraging for those in constrained contexts.

Two criticisms have been examined in this section, that relational agents are determined, and that relational autonomy is too far removed from common notions of self-rule. I have argued that these concerns stem from misunderstandings (a social self does not mean a determined self) of the approach or that they can be overcome (the conception of autonomy is certainly different but it is a more accurate account of autonomy). As such, they are not insurmountable problems for relational models and, as such, I contend that these conceptualisations of the agent and autonomy are preferable for the women of the case studies.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the relational account of autonomy. I characterised this approach as having five core features: a relational agent, social autonomy, a spectrum of autonomy, broad motivations, and complex identities. I outlined some common concerns with the relational model in order to map the existing debate and argued that there were responses to

criticisms concerning the agent and autonomy, since socialised agents are not precluded from challenging norms, and a spectrum permits a nuanced allotment of the exercise of autonomy. By conceptualising the agent and autonomy as relational, we can appreciate the social constitution of persons, and how internal and external factors together allow for a more detailed picture of autonomy functioning. In this regard, and where the aim is to recognise autonomy and distinguish degrees of it, and to do so in a representative way, I contend that the approach offers useful foundations in its theorisation of the agent and autonomy for the bombers. Again, this is not to say that liberal autonomy could not offer a conceptualisation of the agent or autonomy. Rather my claim is that – given the main features and critiques of both accounts – that the relational account offers more beneficial conceptualisations for our purposes. In conclusion, then, I argue that relational theories are a preferable approach to autonomy (though some areas – in particular, the spectrum – have been under theorised and require more attention) for the bombers. The next chapter will build on this and demonstrate further how adept the conceptual relational account is at representing the concrete cases of the bombers (leaving the final chapter to expand the approach with a spectrum).

4. APPLICATION OF THE RELATIONAL MODEL TO THE CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Having argued that the relational approach is likely to be more helpful for our purpose of representing and measuring the autonomy of the women, my aim in this chapter is to illustrate the first part of this in more detail. Specifically, I bring together the theoretical and practical facets of the thesis by applying the relational account (discussed in chapter three) to the case studies of female suicide bombers (presented in chapter one) in order to indicate their ‘fit’. I explore the suitability of two elements of the account – first, the agent and second, autonomy – to the bombers so that the relevance of the approach overall can be examined. In so doing, the precise task here is not to estimate the amount of autonomy the bombers have (which will be investigated more fully in chapter five), but rather to show how well the characteristics of the relational model complement the characteristics of the women as agents and their autonomy (as a first step to the primary task of gauging their autonomy properly).¹⁴⁷ In other words, my aim here is to demonstrate how successfully the theory recognises various features in the case studies (so that it might be able to map and compare these – a possibility that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter). In a final third part, and as an addendum, I move beyond the suicide bombers and consider whether the relational account might be suitable for other kinds of agents and their autonomy too.

¹⁴⁷ To clarify, my aim is not to apply necessary and sufficient conditions (as has already been stipulated for both the liberal and relational model – see pages 76 and 134 respectively) but to explore the characteristics of the relational approach further.

To do this, I draw on information from two places. First, I use particulars from the case studies, but in doing this I recognise that the ‘facts’ I describe about them are from secondary sources (such as interviews with friends and family, and interpretations by academics and journalists), and so are likely to be problematic in several ways (including in how far they are reliable testimony and how much is selective reporting). However, these sources are the ones most available and so, while being aware of their limitations, form the basis of the analysis for this project. Second, because sometimes the details are sparse, I also employ imaginings about the women and their autonomy. I do this because the goal is not to set up a wholly factual view but to examine possible and plausible pictures of different women who embody different elements and extents of autonomy. Of course, other imaginings are possible but this would not make the exercise futile so long as the constructions presented here are reasonable and they go on to show why the features identified within them (and which individuals in similar circumstances could have) make relational autonomy appropriate. It should also be noted that, in this chapter, I aim to use most of the cases from chapter one, and owing to space constraints this means that I will only be able to go into so much depth for each. However, the next chapter will narrow the cases down so that a more detailed interpretation using a handful of the examples (to illustrate the spectrum) will be offered.

Having clarified the nature of the case studies, I can outline the three-fold argument of the chapter. First, with regard to the agent, I will contend that relational model recognises these bombers to be particular, complex, and social persons, which reflects the kind of selves we can imagine them to be. Second, in terms of autonomy, I will argue that relational theories grasp the connections and significance between the internal and external factors in these women’s lives and to seek out evidence of autonomy in less conventional forms, and this

represents the type of autonomy we can expect the bombers to have. Again, to reiterate from chapters two and three, though some liberal theories could offer readings that identify some of these aspects and on both of these counts for the bombers, I argue – based on the characteristics and standard critiques already discussed – that the relational account overall is well placed to recognise the extent of the social and constraint for the women. Third and finally, I will signify that these conclusions about agents, autonomy, and the applicability of the relational model could be extended to all persons, because we might suppose that agents and their autonomy more broadly are relational. However, this is but a possible expansion of the argument presented here and not one that must be endorsed for the view about the bombers to hold. What is key, then, is that we can be convinced of this for the women of the case studies in particular, irrespective of how far the conclusions might stretch to others in general. In the final analysis, I will argue that, because of its social foundations, the relational account offers a befitting interpretation of these women as agents and of their autonomy.

Agent

To start, I examine the bombers as agents in two parts, first, with regards to the construction of agents and second, with regards to how agents operate. In each part, the agent focus of relational accounts is applied to the case studies to draw out their compatibility. I argue that as the approach prioritises the socially embedded agent, it identifies the bombers as persons who are connected and complex well. Further, as the account has a rich conception of the whole agent, the specific framework and trajectory of their acts is discernible, so that how and why they operate as they do can be appreciated. In sum, I contend that, since the bombers are

thoroughly social selves functioning in a particular structure, the agent-focused relational account is well suited to reflecting them and their acts.

Construction of agents

In the first part I explore the appropriateness of the approach, which makes the fundamental assumption that persons are social, for the bombers.¹⁴⁸ I consider, first, the construction of the self and second (and related), the construction of the autonomous self. I argue that the relational agent offers a credible notion of the self and an achievable conception of the autonomous self for the women, who we can suppose are socially embedded individuals and capable of autonomy nonetheless. In this regard, the relational construction matches, and is a realistic characterisation of, the bombers. Consequently, the relational model is apt for the bombers as agents.

i. Construction of selves

The first element I consider is the effectiveness of the relational account when it comes to accurately reflecting the kinds of selves that the bombers are. I do this by discussing, first conceptions of self and second, identity. I contend that the relational approach, which emerges from an embedded and connected self, is well placed to represent the women's inherently social features and complex identities.

Selves

¹⁴⁸ Recall from the characteristics and critiques of chapter 3 that theorists in the relational camp do fundamentally accept the social self as the kind of self that autonomous persons are and as the starting point of the debate. As this thesis focuses on the relational model (and gaps within it), this leaning is explored in general terms (rather than in any necessary and sufficient sense – as has already been stipulated in note 147) here. Criteria for measuring autonomy that falls out my spectrum is, however, set out in chapter 5.

First, I compare the conception of the relational self to the kind of selves we can suppose the bombers to be. The model takes individuals to be something like the ‘self and other’ together, rather than the ‘self’ as separate from ‘other’. In this picture, persons are deeply attached and intertwined with others to the extent that they are constitutively, not trivially, social beings. In this way, persons are relational “all the way down” (Code, 2000, 196) and this underscores that there is not a categorical distinction between ‘self and other’.

When applied to the bombers, we can imagine that Idris and al-Riyashi, for instance, are the sorts of individuals who do stand in relation to others, and that these relations hold without the women choosing for them to transpire. To elaborate, we can easily suppose that they are connected to others in a fundamental (not marginal or detached) way, since the (family, religious, ethnic, cultural, national) ties *are* the origins of the selves these women are. Moreover, given this starting point, we can envisage how this social constitution is not formally desired but that it inherently affects them and their values. With Idris, for example, it can be suggested that she has intense bonds with her family and nation that form her and that certain ends matter to her because of this. Reports indicate that she is someone who “didn’t care if the Israelis killed her, she would always try to see [her imprisoned brother] on visiting day” (Itimad Abu Lidbeh in Victor, 2003, 38) and she “wanted to help her people” (Malbrook Idris in *BBC News*, 2002, 1) whose plight, her mother asserts, she felt “very deeply” (Malbrook Idris in Victor, 2003, 40). It appears that she is attached to others such as her brother and community deeply and, while these could be subsequently self-affirmed bonds, they exist from the very beginning without her first choosing them to be significant. In this regard, it is likely that various ends, such as about helping her fellow Palestinians, may well ‘just’ seem to have weight for her because of her connections. Similarly, we can suppose that

al-Riyashi is embedded within a number of social relationships (with her immediate family, but also the community, and wider still her country and even globally). These relations occur without her agreeing to be associated with such persons or groups, and before she can assess them. We can identify these as constitutive relational ties that do not suddenly manifest themselves after al-Riyashi decides they are important but prevail, and are inescapable, from the outset. It can be imagined, too, that such roots form the basis of al-Riyashi's values. It is not difficult to claim that others are needed and matter to these women, but more than this the relational claim is that Idris and al-Riyashi are, from the start, relational selves, and that this relationality and sociality permeates them. In this regard, a clear line between Idris and al-Riyashi and others – as well as their social expectations (about the acceptable behaviour and role of women), moral duties (voluntary and involuntary obligations to her family, husband, nation), or cultural mores (about the interaction between men and women) – is not easily discernible. There is no separable 'them' to others, or to these mere peripheral influences.

To grasp just how relational these women might be, imagine for a moment that the women rebuff their connections; that Idris and al-Riyashi, for example, came to regard their ties as unimportant (they wished them to be insignificant, as some individuals might – more about this in later sections of the chapter). It can easily be imagined that Idris *may* not want to care about those around her or that al-Riyashi *perhaps* wants to disassociate herself from others. Yet, we can also suppose that these discovered relationships would not cease to mark these women altogether, and that the imprints of the connections and social roots endure as part of their histories, whether they regard them as important or not. More importantly, however, we can suggest that even if the bombers wanted to spurn their connections that, quite aside from not leaving them completely, this would not transform them to being selves who no longer

stand in relation or only do so marginally. As the women are always social selves, such a disentangling of 'self' and 'other' is not possible. Instead of the suicide bombers being asocial or tangentially social, the relational model regards them as integrally relational and that they remain so even if they wish to disregard those bonds. Since it is not implausible to suppose that the women are these kinds of social selves, a relational approach that assumes that the agent is thoroughly social is a model that fits them well.

I have argued that it is conceivable that the bombers are relational selves, have connections and ends that they discover (rather than detachedly choose), and that ties to others and their social roots persist (and are not escapable). These, then, are strong social features of the bombers. The relational agent emphasises social interrelations as integral to any picture of the self and makes no clear division between the 'self and other'. In this regard, the relational account is well suited to representing the women who we can suppose are these kinds of relational selves.

Identity

Next, I illustrate how apt the model's conception of the self is at accounting for the identities of the bombers. I discuss how compatible the theory that relational selves are likely to first, have complex identities that may be confounded further still by second, being intersectional, is with the case studies of the bombers. I will argue that the account recognises, expects and mirrors the complexities of self and so offers a richer representation of the women who fit this model closely.

First, I assess whether the women do have a set of complex identities that characterise them. From what we know from media reports and academic research, we can put together reasonable pictures of the bombers as having particular identities. Dhanu, for instance, is a Tamil, Sri Lankan, soldier, while Daraghmeh is a student, devout Muslim, Palestinian, and Degauque is a Belgian convert to Islam, and widow twice over. From these documented features it is clear that these women have multiple identities. In addition to this we can imagine some of the distinct and varied ‘pulls’ that these women are likely to experience. For instance, we can suppose that Degauque has certain obligations owing to her identity as a Belgian and others from her commitment to Islam. Likewise, Dhanu could have duties stemming from being a soldier and different ones arising from being a daughter. Regardless of how the women might feel about these labels and burdens, it seems that these manifold identities not only signify these particular women descriptively (who they are) but they are also likely to have a tangible effect on their lives normatively (through associated expectations of how to be who they are). In short, these identities are not likely to be inessential facts about the bombers but significant ones that frame their lives both for how they see themselves and how others do (and even if they later go on to denounce these identities). Of course, these specific pictures might be inaccurate of these particular women – as we are extrapolating from limited evidence – but that does not mean, for the purposes of this study, that the relational account is not valid. The aim here is to show that these women do have mixed identities and related ‘pulls’, irrespective of the content of them. I argue, then, that the relational account, based on the constitutively social self, recognises and presumes that the bombers have complex identities (which, as has been indicated, they are likely to) of this general sort.

More particularly, and second, we can consider whether there is evidence of intersectional identities. Again, the background facts about these women suggest that there may be crosscutting factors at play relating to their identities. We know, for instance, that the context for bombers such as Muzhakhoyeva and Dhanu is (typically) not only one of patriarchy, where women are often considered inferior to men (as women in many societies are), but also one of war, where the groups involved are subordinated by the other side because of their (nation, racial, ethnic, religious) identities (and to a much greater extent than in non-war zones). It is not difficult to suppose that these factors alone mean that these women have intersectional identities. We know, for instance, that Muzhakhoyeva lives in a society where Russians are intolerant of her people's demands for sovereignty, where there is a perception of Muslims as inferior, and where Chechens are prejudiced against widows (Eager, 2008; Groskop, 2004). Given this, it can be imagined that Muzhakhoyeva's social experience generates an intersectional identity along the lines of nationality/religion/gender (as a Chechen/Muslim/woman). Equally, we know that Dhanu is part of a society where Sinhalese marginalise Tamils, and where both Sinhalese and Tamils have conservative views towards women (Reuter, 2004; Alison, 2003). So it can be envisaged that Dhanu's social experiences engender an intersectional identity across ethnicity/gender lines (a Tamil/woman). In other words, I contend that it is plausible that these women have intersectional identities because of the various ways in which they are marginalised along social strata.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, it is not difficult to see that the various identities can interrelate in complex ways for the women.¹⁵⁰ For example, if it is assumed that Aishen has an intersectional identity along the lines of nationality/gender, it can be imagined that these, at some point, will interact

¹⁴⁹ Internalising norms relating to identity will be explored in the autonomy section of this chapter.

¹⁵⁰ More will be discussed on conflicts and disunity in the will in the autonomy part of this chapter.

with each other and lead to further complexity in identity. This can be seen when, on nationality, Aishen's friend Nano Abdul describes her as a staunch Palestinian and claims she said, "within the limits of my ability...and in the conditions in which I was raised, I will try to do everything possible to contribute to the liberation of Palestine, and in turn that will liberate me" (Nano Abdul in Victor, 2003, 104). This hints at a deep connection between Aishen and her land and a strong affinity between her and other Palestinians. At the same time, however, on gender, from interviews with others, it is also evident that she felt aspects of her identity to be a burden. Her sister, Muna Abu Aishen, recalls, "[Dareen] always said that in our society, human relationships were like a steel form into which we are poured by our family and which don't allow us to liberate ourselves from it and from the rules, dictated by tradition, which are so strict" (Muna Abu Aishen in Victor, 2003, 105). This statement reveals Aishen's unease at the way her family and Palestinian society treated her as a woman. When these interact, it can be imagined that Aishen is someone that considers these identities both as defining her (in the way she closely connects the liberation of Palestine and herself) and restraining her (not allowing her to liberate herself as a woman). These, then, are the bombers with intersecting identities, multiple and interrelated in elaborate ways. The relational model presumes these types of (typically non-chosen) identities exist and pays particular attention to the demands they are likely to have on (thoroughly social) agents. This kind of complex self is reflected and expected in the relational construction of the agent, and so, I argue, fits the bombers well.

Intricacies of identity exist, either in a general or intersectional form or indeed both together, for the suicide bombers. I argue that the relational agent, which is connected and complex, can go a long way to correspond with the bombers' social and multiple identities since such

intricacies are assumed to fundamentally characterise the self in this model. The relational approach, thus, complements these women well.

ii. Construction of autonomous selves

The second (and parallel) point I consider is the suitability of the account's construction of the autonomous self, based on its construction of the self (just discussed), to the bombers. I will argue that, as the relational conception of the self is connected, and appropriately so, the autonomous self rooted in this agent is suitable for the bombers.

The relational account proposes that agents decide what they want by looking to the social self, as this is the only self there is. Agents decide (and, so, can potentially decide autonomously) because being inherently social does not preclude this. When applied to the cases, the bombers are plausibly social (as has already been discussed) *and* (as will be explored here) likely to be able to consider what they want from such a self. It is true that Idris, for example, needs to appraise her wants and desires and that this is relevant to a proper conception of autonomous persons (it is doubtful that Idris could be autonomous without some process, however defined, of reflection).¹⁵¹ However, no amount of self-reflection can prise apart or sift her non-social self and autonomous wants on the one hand and her social self and non-autonomous desires on the other, since such a separation is unintelligible. It is possible to accept that Idris is not asocial and, certainly, that self-reflection is necessary, but the relational model insists that such appraisals only occur from a thoroughly social self. Idris can assess her desires and do so (potentially) autonomously from the relational self. In this way, Idris can be a (relational) autonomous self.

¹⁵¹ As stated in note 148, my aim here is to explore how the social tendencies of relational model might apply to the bombers rather than set out autonomy conditions.

More concretely, we can imagine that Dhanu might ponder over her decision to become a suicide bomber or (let us suppose) a doctor for the LTTE, but – if she does so – it is from a constitutively interdependent self (since, as has been argued above, this is all there is). Similarly, we can suggest that al-Riyashi may agonise over whether turning to suicide bombing or (say) remaining alive to raise her two children is what she wants, but this is contemplated from the only self she has; the intrinsically connected self. In these instances, Dhanu and al-Riyashi's decision-making is initiated from the relational self because any other (notably the individualistic) kind cannot materialise. As long as Dhanu and al-Riyashi meet relationally compatible reflective criteria (however that is contoured), they are able to decide autonomously. Having a relationally composed self, then, still allows for decision-making about what these bombers want, and moreover these are the types of autonomous selves we can suppose the women, who we argued are social selves, to be.

Further, the relational self neither means that the bombers are not authors of their desires nor that they could not decide differently. On the first point, the absence of a non-social self and presence of a social self does not imply that the women are somehow not the architects of those decisions (and so they cannot really be autonomous after all). For instance, it can be imagined that Dhanu comes to have certain preferences because of the deeply embedded agent she is, such as about becoming a soldier in the LTTE or about exacting revenge for being (allegedly) raped by Indian peacekeeping troops. These are not in any sense less her desires *because of* her socially constituted self. They simply are Dhanu's desires, and moreover the only type of desires available. On the second point, the bombers are not fixed by their social constitutions. Indeed, there are plenty of women who have markedly similar social

connections and identities that do not opt to do what Daraghmeh, Barayev, and Dhanu did.¹⁵² All these women decide differently but to recognise relational selves is not to say they are determined. Their social origins contribute deeply to those desires, but they are factors, not determinants. Though Barayev, for instance, is intrinsically relational and the connections and identities she has moves her toward becoming a bomber, she can desire not to do this (just as non-bombers do) without making this decision from, or thereby becoming, a less social self. Barayev, then, is undeniably socially constituted and, though this may conspire to lead to a particular outcome, it does not determine her decision but rather the context, influences and constraints of her decision. In these regards, I contend that the relational autonomous self matches and is possible for the socially rooted bombers to achieve.

I argued that the women are likely to be social selves and could potentially be relational autonomous selves. Such a construction accepts that persons are always social and connected, but that this does not prevent them being the authors, as well as challengers, of desires. In other words, autonomous decision-making by the bombers is possible from this relational and embedded self. The relational view, then, offers a compatible and plausible account of the bombers as autonomous selves.

The first part of the agent section considered selves. I argued that the bombers were social selves and able to be autonomous selves too from this starting point, and that the relational agent – theorised upon the connected self – is able to reflect both of these understandings of

¹⁵² For instance, there are women who do not consider becoming bombers at all (countless Palestinian or Chechen or Tamil women), and women who aim to carry out an attack but then renege (Tauriya Hamamra, a 25-year-old woman who withdrew from an attack in Israel, for example – Skaine, 2006) despite an analogous sociality to the bombers.

the bombers. In this way, the relational account represents the female bombers as agents and (potentially) autonomous agents well.

Operating agents

In the second part of the agent section, I illustrate the suitability of the relational approach for the bombers as operating agents. I discuss, first, how agents decide and second, why they do so. Owing to the emphasis it places on agents, I contend, that the particularities of the women's lives, including the genesis and trajectory of suicide bombing act, are revealed under the relational lens. In so doing, the account enables not only a convincing depiction of how the women as agents decide but also illuminates why they do so. I will claim, then, that the relational model is appropriate for accounting for how and why these women act.

i. How agents operate

First, I explore how satisfactorily the account describes how agents operate and decide. For the relational account, the agent as a whole is an important and dominant assessment point for autonomy. The relational approach recognises that single decisions of agents are best understood not only in relation to other decisions but contexts more broadly, such that they must be analysed in a holistic way. When applying this to the bombers, of course it is possible to think about evaluating the act of bombing alone. For instance, one could inspect Idris detonating the ten-kilo bomb in her rucksack, or Mehaydali driving a Peugeot filled with explosives into military vehicles, or Dhanu kowtowing and triggering a bomb before her target (all of which actually transpired) and ask whether making *that* decision was autonomous. However, focussing on the single act is less helpful than considering the whole agent because these women do not act in isolation – either internally (acts disconnected from

other acts) or externally (acts disconnected from contexts) – and so this is less conducive to an accurate interpretation of how they act. To expand, we can imagine that Dhanu’s act is part of her careful preparation as a Black Tigress, which connects to her desire for a free Tamil Nadu. Likewise, we can suppose that Kaplan’s bombing in front of Adana Police Force headquarters is linked to her other acts during the political conflict and also to the death of her comrade. Dhanu and Kaplan’s acts are better appraised and more representative of how agents decide when we factor in these other acts and contexts. Prioritising the agent – and so these links – to this extent is the norm in relational models. In this regard, Kaplan’s desire – to bomb – is more *meaningfully* assessed with her preceding acts. Equally contextualising Dhanu’s act – of bombing – allows for a *proper* understanding of it. Single acts are connected to other acts (and those to others still) and to contexts, and looking at the bombers as a whole better reveals this, and so how they act.

Of course, not all the bombers may think about specific decisions in an extensive way. In fact, some may actively try to distinguish one act from others when ascertaining what they want. Take Degauque, for instance, a recent convert to Islam and someone who, let us suppose for a moment for the purposes of argument, attempts to reject all other considerations of her pre-religious life to focus on whether bombing is a path she wants to take now. In this fabricated example, she is purposely separating a preference (about bombing) from other preferences (such as pre-religious views about not committing suicide or being a pacifist) so deliberately does not connect her prior desires to her current ones. Yet, given all of the analysis of the types of persons these women are, it is argued that these agents *cannot* sever their other desires or preferences from present ones, since histories and contexts remain. Degauque’s aim of not consciously considering her earlier desires are in vain since they ultimately do affect

what she ends up deciding (even if it is in opposition) in this specific case. So, even if the content of desires change, the bombers cannot evade the influence of prior acts or contexts in their lives. These features are part of the whole package that is the agent and which, no doubt, impact their future decision-making, whether they know it or not. Thus, I argue that both the bombers approach to deciding and the relational, agent-based, model are aligned.

The suicide bombers, then, operate by reference to other acts and contexts, so an account of the agent that encompasses these elements is necessary to reflect how agents actually operate. I contend that relational theories consider the bombers broadly, including previous acts and background, and this closely reflects and fits how these women decide.

ii. Why agents operate

Second, I consider how well the relational approach illuminates why agents operate. A local (act) focus has certain benefits if trying to attribute some autonomy to the women as it does not deny anyone, even extremely unfree or globally non-autonomous persons, the possibility of autonomy since a single act of such a person could still meet autonomy criteria. However, the global (agent) notion, where this includes recognising the particularities of the bombers and their contexts, allows a better understanding of the act and its trajectory, which is likely to help make sense of what they do. Applying this to the bombers, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the particular people these women are – the backgrounds, biographies, characters, duties, obligations they have – and desires they have – to be a fighter or mother or pacifist (for example) – is significant in grasping why they decide to bomb. From what we know about the women, it can be imagined that these factors had some relevance to their decision-making. It matters, for instance, that Idris and Barayev were born into or raised in a climate of

political violence, that Israeli and Russian authorities respectively humiliated their communities, and that they had certain obligations to others as women (Victor, 2003).¹⁵³ It matters that Degauque was a Muslim convert from Belgium, that she had two deceased husbands, that she was bereaved, angry and politicised (Smith, 2005). It matters that Daraghmeh was deeply religious, that she was frustrated by the war and her prospects, that she was resentful towards the IDF (Ghazali, 2003). These facts and subsequent suppositions about the women are likely to contribute to why these women became bombers, and these particularities cannot be overlooked without concealing or warping their reason(s). This is true of any act and any agent, but is especially obvious in the case of suicide bombing as this act – owing to its extremity – can be best unravelled with reference to the broader agent and the contexts in which it occurs. Clearly such a radical act is the end point in a long trajectory of the particular bomber's life, such that understanding the specific bomber and her circumstances is pivotal if a comprehension of why she acts and what this means for her autonomy is important. By encompassing the particularities of these women, a more accurate and complete picture about why the act happened is discernible. The relational approach, with its agent-focus, routinely judges the broader agent and so can potentially satisfactorily interpret and illuminate the bomber's act. In this regard, I argue the model is a suitable fit for determining why they decide.

I have discussed the efficacy of the relational account for representing how and why agents act. I argued that the primarily agent-based, relational model recognised that the bomber's decision-making occurs in a connected way within a framework, and that other acts, contexts and specifics about the self are important for appreciating the trajectory of the bombing.

¹⁵³ More will be discussed about constraints and their affect on autonomy in the next section and the next chapter.

Accordingly, I submit that the relational approach works well for reflecting how and why the bombers operate.

In this section, I have explored the agent, and in particular the construction of agents and how agents operate, in order to demonstrate the suitability of relational autonomy to the bombers. I claimed that the bombers were social, complex selves who decide in a connected way, and that the model is social and comprehensive and so adept at representing the bombers and how and why they operate. Therefore, I argue that the relational approach is a good fit for these women as agents.

Autonomy

In the second section of this chapter, I apply the relational conception of autonomy to the suicide bombers in order to demonstrate their compatibility further. I explore how accurately the account represents the bombers in three respects: first, their internal will and external constraints, second, their inner constitution and third, their experiences of self-rule. For the purposes of this section, I assume that the women are competent (that they have minimal rationality to assess options and consequences, for example), and so the relevant characteristics of the model I will discuss here are socialised autonomy, authentic identities and a spectrum. I argue that the relational approach, with tendencies towards a social and extensive autonomy, is a parallel notion for the bombers who are social selves, and that it is well placed to recognise the breadth of concerns (internal and external) that feed into the women's autonomy. For the suicide bombers, this has two advantages. First, in addition to the internal activity relating to self-reflection, the external constraints of oppression that they face are a constitutive part of their autonomy. Second, the inclusion of broader factors, which

affect these women, licences a (potentially) comprehensive account of their autonomy (a suggestion that will be merely alluded to here but that I will explicitly explore in the final chapter in my spectrum view). These benefits, I contend, indicate that the relational model is suitable for representing the bomber's autonomy.

Relationship between the internal and external

First, I consider how proficiently the approach recognises the interconnections between the internal will and external constraints of the bombers. I examine first, inherently social autonomy, second, the social agent to autonomy fit and third, examples of interaction that is compliant with social autonomy. I will argue that, together, these demonstrate that the approach goes beyond the internal will and includes the external when assessing autonomy, and that this is relevant for the women who are constrained, often in extreme ways, by their contexts. In so doing, I will claim that it is a befitting and realistic model for representing the relationship between the internal and external in autonomy for the women.

First, recall that the relational conception of autonomy is intrinsically and primarily social, whereby the external is part of the characterisation of self-rule. Autonomy is a *thoroughly* relational (causally and constitutively) concept. When this is applied to bombers, it is possible to imagine that their autonomy is part of both of these categories; causally and, more importantly, constitutively social. Take Degauque, for instance, whose autonomy skills, we can suppose, were learned from others in the relatively secure environment of Belgium (here we can suggest that autonomy may be instrumentally social since it is enhanced because of these positive social factors – Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000). Yet we can also recognise that (for argument's sake, and as one way in which the relational conception could interpret

autonomy) how she interacts with others and how others see her as someone capable of answering for herself is a deeper conception. It is this latter component that is the, at least, partially socially intrinsic feature of autonomy (Baumann, 2008). For example, we could momentarily suppose that Degauque could reflect on her desires internally while we accept that social influences will affect her causally. But it does not seem that autonomy is this sort of skill, capacity or concept. Rather, I suggest that we could imagine more readily that Degauque engages with others and the external world constantly when deciding about what she wants, such that the internal and external are perpetually interlinked. That is, of course the initial and ongoing autonomy development cannot be detached from the external world for Degauque (a causal notion), but autonomy *is* also a social practice for her (a constitutive notion) in this model and this, I argue, complements Degauque well.

Using the example of interaction to illustrate this point further, we can imagine that Degauque must participate with others and, in this regard, the socially constitutive feature involves (let us suggest here) justifying or answering, not merely separately deciding, for her self. Likewise, using another bomber, we can suppose that Barayev's autonomy abilities that lay behind her decision to become a bomber were inseparable from her social context (of ongoing war that resulted in a relatively unstable setting for, and impediments to, the cultivation of autonomy skills). Yet, we can also identify that her autonomy also *is*, at root, a social feature, as it inherently requires (for instance) 'responsibility for self' such that Barayev must regard herself as someone who can be accountable to others and that others must hold her to this standard too. Degauque and Barayev, then, both superficially and deeply depend on others for autonomy, and this mirrors how relational autonomy is constructed. In other words, relational autonomy is not *only* dependent on others for the acquisition and development of autonomy

skills (causally) but is social in a more fundamental way, as autonomy is a social capacity and practice (constitutively). By including this constitutive social element, I argue that the approach pays attention to the external and internal link and (as will be indicated momentarily) can match the type of autonomy these bombers exercise.

Second, I discuss how appropriate the relational account is for the kind of agents these women are. Since, as I have already argued, Degauque and Barayev are selves that are fundamentally related to their worlds (intrinsically social), we can infer that any capacity they have for autonomy is also likely to be equally social. In this regard, the external element (the socially constitutive characteristic) of autonomy suits the (inherently social) selves the bombers are more convincingly than an internal-only (a socially casual) account of self-governance that regards them as (incidentally social) selves. For instance, to be autonomous to some extent Degauque and Barayev's desires must (in a relationally compatible manner) be internally reflected upon and endorsed but, as social selves and continuing the example above, we can suggest that these women must also regard themselves as being able to externally justify their desires or hold themselves answerable to others. These bombers are agents that are thoroughly social so a conception of autonomy that is likewise thoroughly social, like the relational, is suited to them. In this regard, relational autonomy has been reconceptualised for the relational self; the internal will and the external world are intrinsically and intentionally connected (such that the division between 'internal' and 'external' is much more fluid). The tie between the internal and external is strong, therefore, in the relational account since it is not only underpinned but also infused by a social characteristic, and this, I contend, complements Degauque and Barayev as agents.

Third, I consider how attuned the model is to how these women might demonstrate autonomy. Running again with the examples above, ‘responsibility for self’ is contingent on justification to others, but this need not be narrowly construed. Indeed, given the sensitivity to the external in the relational account, the ways in which the bombers can interact with others in their repressive circumstances, and so satisfy the socially constitutive notion of autonomy, is manifold. The bombers, for instance, need not first, have others to whom to respond to (in general) nor second, engage with others through dialogue (in particular). First, oppressive contexts, such as those that the bombers are in, do not always lend themselves to allowing access to appropriate others for justification to occur. Recognising this, the answerability condition is a deliberately normative *expectation* of ‘responsibility for self’, even if it is never actualised (Benson, 2011; Westlund, 2011).¹⁵⁴ Compare, for instance, Degauque and Barayev, neither of whom (let us imagine) account for themselves to others. Suppose that Degauque regards herself (by virtue of the beliefs she holds about her place in the world and her standing as a moral agent) as someone who *could* so justify herself. By contrast, assume that Barayev has never thought of herself as answerable for who she is or what she does (partly because others refuse to see her as such). In this example, though neither woman overtly exercises this justificatory requirement (so the extent of her autonomy is still up for debate, as will be discussed in the next chapter), Degauque holds this disposition about herself to some extent, whereas Barayev we have suggested does not. The relational approach recognises the significance of the external on the internal, and so the lack of others to answer to (which is likely in oppression) does not automatically eliminate autonomy since the expectation of

¹⁵⁴ The degree to which these women exercise their autonomy given their inability to actualise it is a separate question that will be addressed in the final chapter on the spectrum of autonomy.

justification is the key.¹⁵⁵ This appears to work for the bombers who are in extremely difficult situations, not least because of the war, and who we can suppose are likely to have few people with whom to engage. Second, the women need not articulate an answer to a question about what she does since the ‘responsibility for self’ condition is open to an array of interaction methods (Westlund, 2009).¹⁵⁶ For example, it can be imagined that Magomadova does not formally converse in justificatory dialogue with others, but that she could exhibit answerability about herself through informal story telling, emulating the lives of those she admires, expressing (either verbally or by embodying) pertinent features of metaphors, or changing her behaviour following tests to her way of thinking. These are not direct answers to specific questions about wanting to become a bomber, but it indicates the kind of decision-making and relation to others that is appropriate to a relationally constitutive autonomy. The relational approach, then, appreciates the relationship between the external and the internal and how dialogue (as one form of interaction with others) is not always possible in oppression such that the kinds of interaction can be broader in type. This seems to suit the bombers who, we might imagine, are likely to exercise justification in diverse ways given their extreme circumstances. Relational theories weave the significance of the external into the model and are more sensitive to how autonomy might be exercised in difficult circumstances because of it. The relational account, then, does depend on engagement with others – it is socially constitutive – but – since the importance of context is equally recognised – this is both dispositional and extensive. Thus, I claim that the external and internal interconnections permeate the relational account, and are taken seriously through the various (social) possible

¹⁵⁵ Though the absence of others could lead to other problems (it is unlikely that these women would develop sufficient autonomy skills in the first place – since others are instrumentally important for autonomy – for example).

¹⁵⁶ Footnote 136 in chapter three, recall, listed a variety of ‘context-sensitive’ ways in which to respond to critical challenges, including modifying behaviour, telling stories that emphasised the point the narrator endorses, and emulating the lives of those they admire (Westlund, 2009). The relational account would indeed be flawed if it implied that lacking communication skills or suffering a health condition that prevents speech makes the bombers non-autonomous, but it does not make this demand.

ways the bombers might manifest their autonomy, even in their difficult situations. This, I propose, fits the bombers who are likely to be highly constrained.

By being constitutively social, congruent with the social agent, and broad in expected interactions with others, the relational conception of autonomy intrinsically captures the gravity of the external in self-rule. Since the bombers are social selves and depend on others for autonomy, and as their circumstances make engagement difficult, I contend that the relational account – that appreciates the extent of the external-internal relationship – is well suited to representing their autonomy.

Inner constitution

In the second part, I examine how appropriately the account reflects the level of certainty in the bomber's will. In particular, I consider whether expectations about the constitution of the will (given the kinds of settings the women are in and the types of agents they are) are reasonable and representative in the relational approach. I discuss this, with reference to the bombers, in two parts, first, authentic identities and conflicting desires and second, reflective endorsement given disunity. I will argue that, since the bombers are thoroughly social and in oppressive contexts, the architecture of their wills is likely to be complex (conflicting and ambivalent, perhaps to a great extent), but that reflective endorsement from a stable self can occur nonetheless. Further, I will contend that the relational conception offers a flexible though stable constitution of the will and (since it develops a useful characterisation of ambivalent desires in oppression) is apt model for representing the bomber's inner constitution.

i. Authentic identity and conflicting desires

First, I discuss conflict of desires, owing to authentic identities, and the suicide bombers. The relational approach acknowledges the inherent complexity of relational selves (as described in the agent section above) and thereby the disparate and sometimes discordant desires that may follow (as will be discussed here). The approach advocates that these kinds of clashes are not necessarily the sign of a failure of the will – indeed the conflict is not necessarily one that agents that value authentic intersectional identities would wish to escape – but symptomatic of the social selves that persons are. When this is applied to the bombers, it is not difficult to envision that they hold many competing desires because of who they are. Recall from the agent section above that we supposed that Aishen, for example, had an intersectional identity (we suggested, using reports from her family and friends, that she had an unbreakable bond with her nation while also being cautious of the traditional role of women as wives and homemakers within it). It can be imagined, that this identity leads to a range of desires, some of which conflict. For instance, we can conceive that she de-values and feels alienated by elements of her identity and harbours desires that run contrary to it (not wanting to be a homemaker because she is a woman), and that she simultaneously values much of her identity and has desires that are compatible with it (wanting to be a good Palestinian). At the same time, we might suppose that she values and holds corresponding desires to conflicting elements of her identity (wanting to dress conservatively as a Muslim woman while rejecting traditional roles of womanhood, or wanting to liberate Palestine while being somewhat religious and favouring non-violence). In this example, if she does not wish to reject parts of her identity outright, which – by valuing some aspects that are intertwined with those she de-values – we might be inclined to believe she is unlikely to do, then without heeding and acknowledging these conflicted desires, there is a danger that Aishen is not being ‘true to her

(relational) self' (Meyers, 2000; Anzaldúa, 1987). The relational approach is able to appreciate how the social dimensions of self might intensify inconsistency in the will. The relational account, I contend, accepts (diversity in identity and the resultant) discordant desires as a legitimate or authentic part of the intersectional, relational, complex, self that Aishen is.

Likewise, with Daraghmeh, it can be postulated that she was both angry at the plight of her people as a Palestinian (so, let us imagine, held a preference to take a symbolic political stand) and also hesitant to carry out violence given her faith (so, let us assume that, while peacefully protesting may be more in line with her religious views, carrying out a suicide bomb attack is appealing to her given its perceived effectiveness and the pressing needs of her country). Though her identity leads Daraghmeh to these supposed clashing desires, arbitrarily harmonising these desires would risk disregarding elements of her identities and undermining the goal of being 'true to her (relational) self'.¹⁵⁷ Instead, in differing ways, these may both be what she wants (with one desire applying in one context and the other in a different situation while both are commitments she does not want to give up, for example), so to adopt one over the other from the outset prematurely limits her and might not reflect the complexity of Daraghmeh's identity. The relational model is adept at recognising how the social and relationships in particular can magnify these complexities. The relational approach, then, takes conflict to be common because maintaining authentic intersectional identities – the kind of identity we have argued that Daraghmeh has – is likely to be important for relational selves. The notion of high uncertainty of desires given the social selves agents are is one that

¹⁵⁷ Though her desires need to be reflected on to count as ones she endorses. This is considered further in the part below.

is prevalent in the relational model and one that appears to mould itself quite closely to the bombers.

My claim, then, is that since relational approaches are rooted in the relational agent, they are able to recognise why women like Aishen and Daraghmeh may well be very ambivalent or in conflict. A relational approach, therefore, that is sensitive to this complexity of agents, and accordingly the constitution of their wills, is well suited to representing the women.

ii. Reflective endorsement

Second, I demonstrate how relevant the concepts of reflection and endorsement in the relational account are for the bombers. While, for the relational approach, autonomy is not solely about the internal will (there is the external aspect too), some reflection and endorsement of desires is still required (as has been hinted at in various places so far). This is often balanced in the form of acknowledging flexibility of the will, and the need for “practical unity” (Mackenzie, 2000, 135) of the will for reflective endorsement. These distinct components can be applied to the women of the case studies in turn to assess their fit.

First, on the flexibility of will, it is easy to imagine that the bombers change with experiences and over time, and do not possess a permanently static or non-social will from which to reflect and endorse. Take, for instance, Jamil Qassas, a neighbour of the bomber al-Akhras, who recalls how, after seeing Qassas’ brother being shot by Israeli soldiers, her motivations were very different to what they once were. He states:

At the funeral, Ayat came up to me and said that the death of my brother had changed everything for her. She believed it was a sign from Allah that she had to do something [...] I knew then that she was destined for great things. She had too much emotion and hatred inside her to just sit quietly while our people were being massacred like that (Qassas in Victor, 2003, 209).

We can discern that this incident changed al-Akhras' life from, what we can suppose was, a promising student with firm career aspirations to be a journalist to that of becoming a bomber for the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade with other goals (Victor, 2003). We can suggest that these altered desires are not something she reflected on from a fixed will or endorsed by surveying all the facts about her situation from an individualistic point of view. Rather, it is perhaps more accurate to propose that al-Akhras' will emerges and develops in different directions over time (it is flexible) and is socially rooted (not non-social nor marginally social). The relational account identifies that the will is thoroughly social and that this may bring more fluidity. Given this, I contend that the relational model that acknowledges, as the norm, the non-fixed and social constitution of the will is suited to describing the autonomy of these women.

Yet, and second, recognising this does not imply the non-existence of a stable enough base from which to reflectively endorse. For instance, we have already suggested that al-Akhras has a self (and thereby a will) that is relationally embedded, complex, and flexible (and we can state that this obtains quite aside from determining how much autonomy she has). Thereafter, however, the self (and will) may or may not be constant enough or have "the kind of practical unity necessary to deliberate, make decisions and choices, and act" (Mackenzie,

2000, 135) (and so enable her to be autonomous to some extent).¹⁵⁸ Relational autonomy does not permit an unlimited level of fluidity in the will, as this would leave al-Akhras too disparate, with no basis from which to decide at all. In this regard, it is argued that though one can accept a conflicting authentic identity (discussed in this section under ‘authentic identity and conflicting desires’) and an adaptable will given this (the point immediately above), al-Akhras’ desires must not emanate from too fragmented a self or too malleable a will since this precludes the ‘practical unity’ necessary for reflecting and endorsing. It can be supposed, for example, that al-Akhras may have an intersectional identity, conflicting desires, and an inconsistent will. If, amongst this, we imagine that she is unable to hold some (relationally embedded) perspective about her self, then we can propose that she fails to achieve the practical unity for the purposes of reflective endorsement in relational autonomy. By contrast, if we assume that she does secure this unity then the likely outcome would be that there is a stable enough basis from which to decide, despite those other states holding.¹⁵⁹ Though some stability of the will is of course required, the concern that relational accounts have is in recognising the extent of this stability for intersectional, social selves. In short, al-Akhras’ relational self (and will) cannot be more in flux than it is stable because she would not be able to reflectively endorse any of her desires. The relational model presumes that individuals are social and accordingly acknowledges this more flexible base. In this regard it is a good fit with the bombers.

¹⁵⁸ The extent of autonomy is a separate question that will be dealt with in the final chapter.

¹⁵⁹ The aim in stipulating this is less to set out necessary and sufficient conditions for autonomy but to distinguish intersectional agents and schizophrenic ones, both of whom, we have imagined in chapter three, have high levels of conflict in authenticity of identities and the will. Further to this, the point about ‘practical unification’ will be discussed again in relation to measuring autonomy in chapter five (although, again, this will not be in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions).

Accordingly, the female suicide bombers must reflect on and endorse desires from a (relationally connected and) sufficiently stable will. If, for example, we suppose that Degauque does not reflect and endorse a desire to carry out an attack (that may well conflict with others given the disunity or ambivalence in the will) at all from this relational base, then it does not meet the requirements for relational self-rule. If we imagine, on the other hand, that she does reflect and endorse the desire then it goes *some way* to it.¹⁶⁰ A flexible but sufficiently stable constitution of the will, then, is key for relational accounts, and given the nature of persons as relational with sometimes conflicting desires, I argue that this view of ‘practical unity’ of the will is a comparable model for the bombers.¹⁶¹ The relational account, thus, is suited to the structure of the bomber’s will.

In this section, I have considered the inner constitution of the will. I argued that the relational approach recognised that reflective endorsement occurs from a practically unified, connected will, which – owing to its social roots – is complex, sometimes conflicting and ambivalent. I demonstrated that this reflects the kinds of agents the bombers are and the type of inner constitution they can be expected to have in social complexity well, and thus the relational account is appropriate for representing their autonomy.

Experiences of self-rule

In the final part of this section, I consider the women’s experience of autonomy and how adept the approach is at representing it as a whole. I will argue that the relational model,

¹⁶⁰ It only goes some way because the question of autonomy, recall, does not end with the internal reflective endorsement of single desires (since – as the first part of the autonomy section argued – there are other external requirements and – as the next chapter will expand – an assessment of just how autonomous she is pending) but it is an important component nonetheless.

¹⁶¹ Though a precise theory for reflectively endorsing is out of the scope of this thesis, recognising how the will is constituted is within its remit. In this regard, it stipulates a flexible, but sufficiently stable, will from which to reflectively endorse.

which advocates a spectrum, offers a helpful way in which to reflect the women's overall experience of autonomy.

The relational account recognises the importance of moving beyond a binary view (important though this might be for practical – legal, medical or political – purposes) to a more nuanced spectrum one (that can represent the social nature of autonomy and as much of the women's experiences as possible). When this is applied to the bombers, we can easily imagine that the bombers go about their affairs not to satisfy minimal legal or political thresholds but for broader moral and social reasons. When thinking about bombing, for instance, we can suppose that Idris may well be competent, have reflected in specified ways and has not been interfered with. However, we can also suggest that Idris' decision-making probably wavers a great deal, is of a particular quality, or is linked to her feelings of worth, and that these kinds of subtleties characterise her autonomy. It is these details that a binary-only position misses but that is made more visible through a spectrum. Further, by moving beyond a binary, it is easier to detect different, even very small, degrees of autonomy, that Idris might have given these various factors. Where the aim is to attribute some autonomy to the bombers this type of approach is likely to be beneficial. In these ways, a more extensive assessment – which could include (as we shall see in the next chapter) how reflection was impacted by low self-worth or that she was constrained by war, both of which colour Idris' overall experience of autonomy – makes it possible to better discern and measure the grade of her autonomy, even if it is limited. Relational theories have leaned towards a spectrum in order to facilitate an in-depth understanding of autonomy, though (as has already been discussed in chapter three) this still requires some expansion (a proposal for which will be discussed in the next chapter). Such an approach is an important aid for more completely capturing the totality of the bomber's

experience, but the spectrum itself must also be part of a model that recognises how the internal and external interrelate for the social selves we have already submitted that these women are. I argue that the relational approach – in advocating a spectrum and a relational basis for autonomy – offers a method for illuminating and representing as much of the bomber’s social autonomy as possible and so is a befitting model for them.

I have argued that a binary is less suited to reflecting the women’s decision-making in detail or to allotting even limited amounts of autonomy to them, whereas a spectrum is more attuned to this task. The relational approach, which offers a spectrum that is socially rooted, then, is well placed for representing the bombers’ autonomy in its complexity.

In this section, I applied the relational conception of autonomy to the suicide bombers to ascertain whether it is a befitting account. I demonstrated that it was a constitutively social concept so could decipher the connections between the external and internal and that this was relevant to the bombers decision-making. In addition, it developed a flexible but stable constitution of the will that suited the bomber’s complex identities and oppressive contexts. Finally, I indicated that it included a spectrum that was social in conception and that could reflect the whole of the women’s experiences well. As such, I submitted that the relational approach is compatible with the bombers.

Beyond the female suicide bombers

So far, I have sought to demonstrate how well the characteristics of the relational approach fit the bombers. In the final part, I briefly expand this focus by discussing whether the model has broader applicability by being relevant to *all* persons, not just the women of the case studies.

Such a question, however, is ancillary rather than core to this thesis and, here, I am simply exploring (rather than making a firm judgement about) the potential and prospects of the relational account. In this regard, we need not accept the outcomes of this section for other persons to endorse those in preceding sections about the bombers. Having made this clear, I will investigate the possible expansion by employing the fictional example of the New York banker to discuss whether she first, is a relational agent and second, has a relational notion of autonomy. I will contend that since the banker, bomber and, by extension, every individual is likely to be social and autonomy is likely to happen to some extent and within constraint for everyone, it might be that the relational account applies to all, not just the bombers that are the primary focus of this project. In other words, while the relational approach works especially well for the bombers (because they are constrained to a great extent and the model is designed to discern such limitations) it is potentially apt for others (because, though they may be less restrained, the account can also recognise this). Again, this is a tentative and possible conclusion, and not one that need be adopted for this thesis.

All agents

To start with agents, I consider whether the banker from New York is just as socially embedded and complex as any of the bombers of this thesis. It is not difficult to suppose that the banker is some sort of social self. We might recognise that she is someone who is immersed in and cannot stand apart from her identities (as, let us imagine, a daughter, sister, worker, Christian, Republican), social roots (an impoverished upbringing, for instance), or ends (say, to be wealthy or to provide for her parents). Though the details are different, these social features are similar in type to those we discussed for al-Riyashi (for example) in that they seem to be socially significant for both women. In this respect, neither the banker nor al-

Riyashi are individualistic selves but rather are relationally suffused “all the way down” (Code, 2000, 198) (not only at the outskirts or superficially). Further, we can imagine – just as we did for al-Riyashi – that these social elements are linked in various ways. We can suppose that they interrelate (her origins propelling her desire to be a banker and her motivation to be generous to her parents prompted by her religion, for instance) and also intersect (the drive to succeed as a banker cutting short the time she can spend with her parents and her political leanings jarring with the charity of her religion, for example) in a multitude of ways. In a similar fashion to al-Riyashi, it appears that a connected self that embraces this kind of complexity of relations and identity is an apt concept. We can propose, then, that the banker, bomber and, by extension, every agent may well be a connected and complex self.

Given this presumed social understanding of the banker, it is also plausible that she, like al-Riyashi, has a social will. We can suggest, that the banker’s relational constitution just discussed cannot be shed to reveal a will that is the core of al-Riyashi because, as she is profoundly relational, this socially devoid component of the self is not likely to exist. We can also suppose, however, that the potency of her sociality does not imply that the banker lacks self-directive abilities anymore than we thought it did for al-Riyashi. It is possible to imagine that she acts upon the world and make decisions about her life (about progressing in her career, moving city, having a child, for instance) from her relational origins, as this is the only self there is, and that such decisions are attributable to her. Equally, it is feasible to suppose that these decisions are undeniably constrained (the norms of banking life – to work long hours, to attend networking events in her free time, to compete for promotion – coupled with the demands of parenthood limits her in her decision to have a child, for example), but that

they are hers nonetheless.¹⁶² Just as with al-Riyashi, there is no automatic presumption of an absence of agency because the banker is socially constituted and constrained. In these ways, it is likely that the banker and bomber – and so potentially all persons – are both thoroughly social and able to be agential.

It is possible to suggest, then, that neither banker, bomber nor, by deduction, any person is the kind of agent that is (at worst) asocial or (at best) causally social, but rather is socially saturated, with a rich and complex inner life, and acts upon the world nonetheless. A suitable autonomy approach should be able to mirror this inherent sociality, and I argue that the relational account, with its theoretically but thoroughly social self, meets this criterion. Thus, since all persons (not only the banker and bombers) are plausibly social, I contend that a relational account is potentially well suited to representing every agent.

Autonomy of all agents

Second, I explore the autonomy of the banker and in particular whether her autonomy is first, linked to the external and second, a degree-based notion. With regard to the former (whether there is a social autonomy at play), we can suppose that the banker from New York, just like al-Riyashi, is likely to be dependent on others to learn skills of and to practice autonomy. The banker, we can imagine, does not self-generate her self-reflective, self-sufficiency, self-defining skills anymore than al-Riyashi, but rather acquires, develops and practices them through social experiences, relationships and interactions. In this way, we can suggest that her upbringing (in poverty and with authoritarian parents, for example) and ongoing life (in a mixture of superficial and meaningful relationships, for instance) affect attaining and thriving

¹⁶² Constraints will be discussed again in the part on all agents' autonomy below.

in these skills differently. Likewise, we can suppose that her self-esteem (engendered from, say, her religion, work and friends) enables her to reflect and engage with others in the world, and her (what we might imagine secure but stressful) environment means that she fulfills some of her desires at the expense of others. These interdependencies draw attention to the banker's autonomy as causally and constitutively social. We can propose, then, that it is likely that the social matters for the banker, just as it does for the bomber and perhaps for any individual. This makes an approach to autonomy that recognises these various social aspects of autonomy important. I argue that the relational account is inherently social, and so can possibly offer an accurate representation of the banker's and any person's autonomy.

With regards to the second point on the relevance of a spectrum for the banker, we can suppose that the banker, like al-Riyashi, has many influences that affect the quality of her autonomy. While the bomber has restrictions that include a climate of war and patriarchy, we can imagine that the banker is restrained by a culture of capitalism (and, within that, the financial sector) and patriarchy (and so what is expected of her as a woman). The banker's autonomy occurs within and is permeated by these realities (her reflections about applying for a promotion are situated in and saturated by patriarchy where she feels she must work harder for recognition and make time to care for her elderly parents, for instance). We can suggest that the internal and external are interlinked for the banker and, in this regard, the banker, bomber and, by inference, every individual is likely to experience autonomy in this complex, rather than a binary, way. The relational account, with its spectrum that attempts to capture these kinds of details (more about which will be discussed in the next chapter), is, I argue, potentially well placed to account for every person's autonomy.

In these ways, I suggest that it is likely that all agents' – not just the bomber's and banker's – autonomy is linked to the external and on a spectrum. As these social features are part of the relational conception, I submit that a relational approach is possibly a suitable way of characterising the autonomy of all persons.

Using the example of the New York banker, I explored whether a potential expansion of the argument so far is that the relational account might be suitable for persons other than suicide bombers. I argued that the banker, and by extension every person, is likely to be a social self with a social autonomy. Given this, a plausible conclusion is that a relational approach, with its social roots, could aptly describe and appraise everybody's agency and autonomy. In other words, the relational view can recognise (and, as will be explored in the next chapter, measure) the extreme restrictions that the bombers face and so it is possible that it can pick up (and gauge) moderate or slight constraints that frame most people's lives too. However, expanding the argument to all persons (with fewer constraints) in general is merely suggestive and we need not adopt this conclusion to accept that the relational account is appropriate for the bombers (with higher constraints) in particular.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I applied the relational account to the suicide bombers in order to show how appropriate it is for representing the women as agents and their autonomy. I have argued that since the relational account is social, comprehensive and realistic, and because the bombers are thoroughly social selves with complex decision-making, the model matches the women well. Further, I considered whether this argument could be expanded by applying the approach to the New York banker. I argued that since the banker and by extension all persons

and their autonomy are likely to be social, the relational model might be suitable for everyone. However, this is but a possible conclusion and not one that needs to be endorsed for it to be the case that the account is appropriate for the bombers. Consequently, I claim that the relational approach is a good fit for the female suicide bombers of the case studies (and potentially for all individuals), since it not only offers a proper picture of the women as persons and their autonomy, but also promises a more robust way to track the degree of their autonomy (a proposition we shall explore further momentarily). I have demonstrated, therefore, that the relational approach is a befitting model for the bombers.

5. A SPECTRUM OF AUTONOMY

Introduction

In this thesis, I have set out the case studies of female suicide bombers and examined the ways in which their agency is either under- or over- stated and, so in both instances, distorted. I have considered the liberal and relational accounts of autonomy and argued that the relational is better at representing the kind of agents the bombers are and their autonomy. In this final chapter, I will interrogate the relational approach still further by developing the spectrum in some detail as, while relational models offers the foundations from which to do this, exactly how the spectrum is to be framed and what this means is under-theorised (as was highlighted in chapters three and four). I aim to show that a relational spectrum offers a new way to measure the autonomy of the female suicide bombers since it can indicate the extent to which they are autonomous in some approximation and it can differentiate between and compare degrees of autonomy.

In other words, so far I have suggested that relational autonomy promises a more comprehensive way in which to capture the complexity of the bombers' autonomy through the spectrum, and suggested that this model could better show degrees of autonomy and distinguish between amounts of autonomy. In this part of the thesis I aim to make good on such a claim by setting out the details of my view of autonomy on a spectrum. I will propose that this account deciphers various features of autonomy and so gauges the amount of autonomy the bombers have in an approximate and comparative way. In order to do this, I

first, present the theoretical components of my view, second, assess how successful it is by applying it to some of the bombers, before I third, consider the implications of the approach for narratives of the women. My aim is to demonstrate how the spectrum approximates degrees of autonomy and to indicate who, using the earlier case studies of the female bombers, is more or less autonomous on it.

I argue that this new proposal enables us to plot constraints (external elements) as well as self-regard (external and internal) and reflection from a stable enough relational self (internal). Charting these three variables together then allows an estimation of the degree of autonomy that is being exercised overall. While such a plotting is suggestive rather than absolute, this approach not only shows that autonomy is a complex concept where varying extents and types are possible, but, moreover, that by isolating features and evaluating and mapping these first separately and then together, that a mechanism to estimate this extent in a detailed way is possible. While approximate, then, it does offer the ability to estimate autonomy, differentiate between levels and types of autonomy, and compare and distinguish extents of autonomy. Accordingly, my spectrum view measures (elements and the totality of) autonomy for individual persons and enables us to compare cases against each other in a nuanced fashion. In so doing, I argue that my spectrum meets the aims of the thesis of avoiding the victim or agent dichotomy (discussed in chapter one). It provides a concrete way of understanding agents as operating in constrained circumstances, where autonomy is limited by many features and yet practiced to varying degrees by particular individuals, and importantly makes an attempt to approximate the extent of the exercise of this autonomy by such persons in a given situation.

Before we proceed, it is important to note two caveats regarding the aims and scope of this chapter. The first is that I intend to describe clear criteria for the spectrum view as a whole and to assess the bombers against it in order to outline how my proposal might work. To this end, my goal is not to delineate necessary and sufficient conditions (for instance, on how the reflection element might be satisfied) but rather to reveal how my view measures autonomy and captures differences in these women's lives. The aim is to show that this view permits a refined picture of the elements of autonomy, which allows us to estimate levels of autonomy and types of autonomy and so to approximate how much autonomy is being exercised overall. The second proviso is that the estimate of autonomy for a particular bomber is illustrative and indicative. The aim is to show how such estimation is possible and that it is useful in understanding different women's autonomy in different circumstances. It is not a claim of an absolute or exact plotting for any particular individual. Accordingly, I am creating provisional, rather than definitive, pictures and offering examples of how to estimate autonomy. For this purpose, and similarly to the previous chapter, I will draw on a range of sources – including the case studies from chapter one, newspaper articles, background facts, and conjecture – to support my conclusions. I recognise this method has its defects and that the 'truth' about such women in 'real life' may be different from the picture we are able to construct from the evidence available. These are, then, speculative judgements about the women and their autonomy, drawn from the available evidence and reasonable, given what we know, or can plausibly imagine, about them. Accordingly, even if such assessments turn out to be flawed and empirically disputed, this does not undermine this exercise in terms of both showing that points along the spectrum can be identified and in testing the parameters of my position. It would simply mean we were wrong about the details of some elements and we would need to revise our estimates. My intention, then, is simply to explore how autonomy

viewed on a spectrum might differentiate between degrees of autonomy and so take seriously the notion of being autonomous to certain extents and in certain ways, and to show how the bombers' autonomy might be ranked relative to each other. With these provisos out of the way, we can now begin with the conceptual account.

The spectrum view of autonomy in principle

To start, I discuss the theoretical elements of my spectrum view of autonomy. I set out, and underscore, how the account I propose is different from other relational theories in the literature, after which I will show the criteria for autonomy that emerge from my view. In the second section of this chapter, this conceptual account will be applied to the bombers to demonstrate how estimates of autonomy can be derived.

Situating my account of relational autonomy

In this part, I locate my approach amongst current relational theories and also distinguish it from them. The model that I offer in this thesis is distinct in three principal ways, each of which manifest separate concerns about the external and internal understandings of autonomy: constraints, self-regard, and reflection. Though present relational theories discuss some of these individual elements of autonomy, my view differs in a number of ways and more importantly differs in its aim as a whole, and I will consider these variances in turn here. My hybrid approach aims to build on the strengths of existing views and plug gaps in them and so produce a valuable contribution. The details of my spectrum view, which can measure various features relevant to autonomy and so estimate autonomy, will be considered in more detail in the next part.

First, though (by appealing to constraints) my view, like some other strong relational accounts, focuses on external dimensions to autonomy, I do not take these to eliminate the possibility of autonomy in the way some of those theories do. To expand, I am concerned with extrinsic factors and take these as seriously mattering for autonomy in a similar manner to strong substantive accounts. But, I do not deny autonomy simply because external conditions are oppressive: a criticism that strong views often suffer from (as discussed in chapter three). Rather, by adopting a weak substantive account, I claim that external constraints reduce (or enhance) autonomy, but that autonomy is still achievable to some degree. Accordingly, while oppressive conditions unquestionably curtail autonomy, this is different in different circumstances. My suggestion is that the extent to which autonomy is possible can be considered and estimated in such contexts. In this way, my view is distinct from that of objective theorists (like Wolf, 1990, who thinks the content of desires are nonautonomous if they do not map onto the world in the right ways) and socio-relational theorists (like Oshana, 2006, who thinks certain de facto conditions must transpire for autonomy to exist). My account makes neither of these claims but rather I seek to utilise the external to make factors that are significant for decreasing and increasing autonomy explicit. Further, I then take these features with other relevant factors and provide a mechanism by which to approximate the degree of autonomy on the spectrum. This enables me to both estimate levels of autonomy, to distinguish between degrees and types of autonomy and to make comparisons between individuals regarding their autonomy.

Second, my view encompasses the external and internal notions of self-worth and responsibility for self (together I take these to symbolise self-regard). While some relational

positions incorporate these concepts too, my aim is to identify the extent of self-regard, which these other views do not typically describe. To elaborate, some existing weak substantive and procedural theories require a normative stance of self-worth or responsibility towards the self (that depends on others too) and state that autonomy is possible where this exists because, unlike strong substantive views, they remain silent on the content of desires (as discussed in chapter three). My theory is somewhat similar in recognising this stance towards the self but I mean it to be a more substantive notion (though not strongly substantive) so that we can gauge the degree of self-worth. It is different, then, to dialogical accounts (Westlund, 2009, thinks answerability is a disposition toward the self and the content of desires can allow subservience as self-worth is not necessary) and emotional accounts (Benson, 1994, 2008, thinks there must be ‘proper’ notions of self-worth and the content of desires could allow subservience because normative competence does not require perfection or orthonomy). I claim that self-worth is a thicker notion (it is ‘proper’ in the way Benson describes) and this means we must take seriously how much self-worth *actually* exists (thereby extending Benson’s view by aiming to acknowledge and judge the rough impact of subservience to the amount of autonomy functioning). In short, my position is that the content of some desires (such as those to be subservient) may be instances of a radically diminished autonomy where this brings into question the stance towards oneself as worthy. This distinction between other relational positions and my spectrum view allows me to identify the quality and quantity of self-regard as one aspect of thinking about the complexity of autonomy, and to weigh up this feature with other features, and against different agents. Again the aim is to be able to distinguish, however approximately and tentatively, between different degrees of autonomy.

Third is the requirement of critical reflection, where the agent thinks about and decides on preferences from a stable enough relational self, which is more of an internal notion. Other relational theories of course discuss critical reflection from an embedded self, so to draw out similarities and differences with my approach, I split this into three sub-parts: critical reflection, the stable enough relational self, and the will. First, as with other relational approaches, in my view there does need to be *some* critical reflection insofar as this connects certain goals or ways of living to the agent. This is similar to other theorists (like Westlund, 2009, who thinks reflective endorsement is needed to link a desire to an agent, and Stoljar, 2000, who thinks that critical faculties of some description are required for autonomy). I argue for some reflection for autonomy and again this can be understood as a continuum and plotted on a spectrum. Further, I echo the thought that self-worth matters for the agent's judgements (to weigh up options from one's values, ends, and goals, for instance). This is a similar claim to other relational theorists (like Benson, 1994, and Meyers', 2008, views about *reflection from* a position of self-worth, and Stoljar's, 2000, idea that oppressive forces can damage reflection insofar as it affects aspirations for oneself). However, while similar in these ways, my view also recognises that the agent's evaluation or assessment of what she wants is itself saturated (by the external, by values, and by relationships, for instance) that are not necessarily chosen such that it is only one part of the whole picture of how much autonomy is occurring. I aim, then, to explicitly highlight the impact of the external on internal reflective processes, including by recognising under what conditions preferences were formed and what this reveals about the agent's stance towards herself and how far this exhibits a sense of self-worth. I suggest the extent of these must be evaluated in analysing and estimating autonomy in theoretical terms (it is not a stipulation that the agent practically does this) as part of critical reflection. The critical reflection requirement is one component of autonomy and, alongside

other criteria, allows us to estimate, or perhaps guesstimate, higher or lower degrees of autonomy across and between agents. Second, in terms of the stable enough relational self (from which critical reflection happens), my view is similar to other relational ones (such as Mackenzie's, 2000). I recognise the complexity of the self – including the evolution of the self through different experiences such that integration is likely to happen over time rather than be the base from which we start – but that 'practical unity' (to use Mackenzie's, 2000, phrase) for judgment, evaluation, and action is also required. I do not intend to differentiate myself on this ground. Finally, as intimated at the beginning of this chapter, my account is silent on the precise ways in which internal psychology of the agent is to be framed. I am not concerned with satisfying myself that a desire passes something like the 'authenticity' criteria synonymous with liberal accounts and with some relational views (it neither adopts an integration approach, like Friedman, 1986, nor a competency approach, like Meyers, 1989, for instance). Rather, (and as with any theory under the "umbrella term" – Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, 4 – of relational autonomy) what is important is to be attuned to instances of reflection by the relational agent in oppressive conditions (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000; Stoljar, 2014) not the strict architecture of their psychology. I follow this broad relational approach but notably deviate in that I take the nature and amount of this reflection into account to plot the degree of autonomy overall. My focus, then, is to discern how much the agent judges that goals or desires are better or worse for her given her particularity (of self, context, relationships, for instance) rather than show that they fit a pre-defined internal arrangement. I identify how much reflection is taking place in these terms, and moreover, my spectrum view places this measurement next to the outcomes of other criteria to gauge autonomy as a whole for that agent. In so doing, not only do I aim to offer an appraisal of that agent's autonomy, but also to compare this with approximations of other agents' autonomy. The overarching

way in which my view is different from other relational positions with regards to critical reflection, then, is being able to evaluate and contrast higher and lower degrees of autonomy.

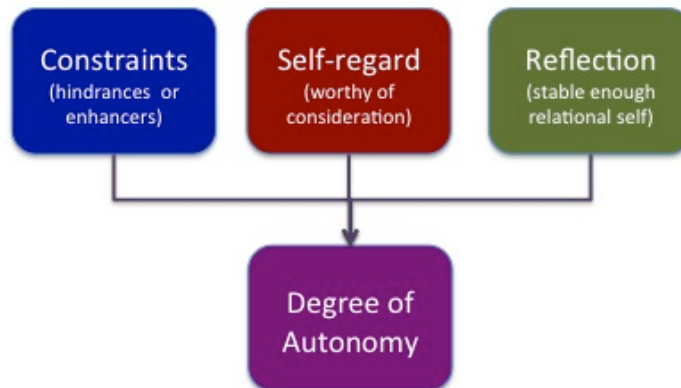
The focus on external constraints and the interrelation between the external and internal for self-regard and self-reflection *and* the way all this contributes to a proper understanding of how much autonomy there is distinguishes my account from other relational ones. In short, I aim to identify how much autonomy is possible using a range: I propose that autonomy, correctly viewed, is on a spectrum. I now go on to set out the three criteria that make up my approach more clearly and in detail before applying these to the female bombers in order to illustrate how the approach might be applied.

Three axes for relational autonomy on a spectrum

The three points of divergence outlined above feed into my criteria for relational autonomy viewed on a spectrum. The elements that emerge for my conception, and which I capture on three separate axes, are: (1) effects of constraints, (2) self-regard, and (3) reflection from a relational self. These axes individually measure each respective feature and, more importantly, collectively gauge an approximate degree of autonomy.¹⁶³ My view can be depicted in the following way:

¹⁶³ I use the terms ‘feature’, ‘criterion’, ‘element’, ‘component’ and the like interchangeably with ‘axis’ in this chapter to refer to what is being measured in one of the three parts of autonomy as a spectrum view.

Autonomy on a Spectrum



1. Constraints
 2. Plus self-regard (such as answerability/responsibility for self)
 3. Plus reflective endorsement from a stable relational self
- = Degree of autonomy

Before explaining each axis in more detail, in order to ensure clarity it should be highlighted that the three components are always relational notions: constraints recognise the socially immersed self; self-regard the significance of others in forming self-perceptions; and self-reflection that deliberation and judgement only happens from and by a connected self. Moreover, given the relational undertones, these three features are likely to impact one another, and though – again for purposes of analysis – they will be discussed separately, I recognise the somewhat artificial delineation and endeavour to draw out the links where relevant here too (and I will do this explicitly in the application section of this chapter). Having explained the intrinsically relational and connected character of these axes, I now consider each in more depth as well as how they work together and set out a rough scale.

The first element is appreciating the constraints that the agent faces. To elaborate, it is recognising the external constraints (where this includes identifying contextual features, such as the physical environment, institutional frameworks, socio-economic and political policies,

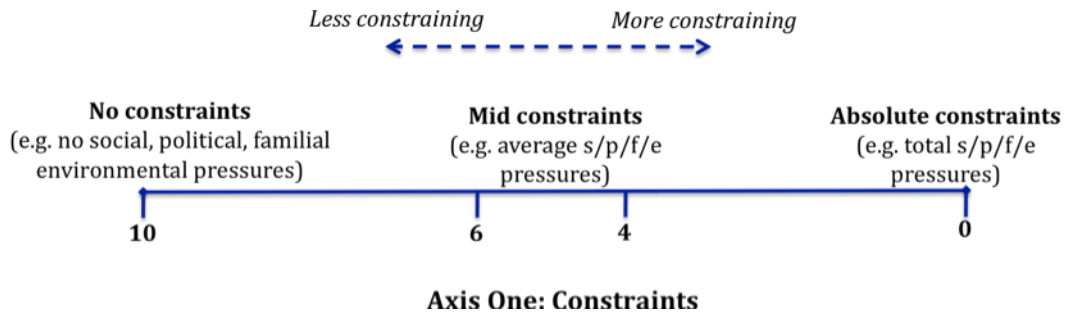
and communal, familial and dyadic dynamics) in which the agent is immersed. This ascertains the kinds of restrictions that surround and saturate the social agent and the impact of this on autonomy, and so it is a constitutively relational view. The constraint element of my account, then, foregrounds the ways in which these external aspects affect the relational agent. This feature can be summarised as:

- (1) Recognition of constraints in which the agent is immersed.

In order to capture constraints on the first axis on my account, I offer an estimated scale, which I take to be inversed. Here, at one end, '10' indicates no constraints (a position that is extremely unlikely for anyone to attain on my view given that the relational conception of persons is partly that they always embedded in contexts). At the other end, '0' represents maximal constraints (which I take to mean the condition of absolute restraint, which again I suggest is unlikely for the vast majority of persons since one's context must completely paralyse the agent. However, it will no doubt include some, such as the person who is kidnapped and confined to a cramped cellar forever or someone who is perpetually sedated for the entirety of her life). The range is inversed because greater constraints will generate a lower score of functioning.¹⁶⁴ In other words, I envisage that events such as war, famine and extreme poverty are likely to be on the lower end of this axis (so more constraining), and everyday pressures that relate to the kinds of selves we are (where we have grown up, expectations of who we are to be, factors about intersectionality) are in the middle range (so

¹⁶⁴ The aim of the spectrum is to measure the amount of autonomy overall, and constraints is but one element of this, as I explain later in this section. The goal is to capture and represent the totality of the bomber's experience, and in this regard I seek to plot the level of constraint that the bombers can be supposed to face on this axis (while different elements are recorded on the other two axes). Where the suggestion has been that some constraints enhance autonomy, I mean that some constraints will be less impeding of autonomy. For instance, most persons have the constraint of family relationships, but in some cases those relationships will be very supportive (this would be when constraints might, depending on the scores on the other axes too, enhance autonomy) and in others much less supportive (this would be when constraints might restrain autonomy). These sorts of examples are fleshed out for the bombers in the application section of this chapter (from page 248).

less constraining but constraining nonetheless). The grades on my first axis, then, look something like the following:



Of course, as we will see when we come to the cases, constraints may not fall out this way. For example, in some ways individuals may be protected from the effects of their contexts and in some instances social and family pressures may be extremely strong. In such instances, estimates for each person based on their circumstances would need adjusting accordingly. However, while this needs to be case-by-case and will always be rough (the aim, recall, is to indicate degrees not to provide an exact account), such varieties merely indicate that this is complex and suggestive. However, even if tentative this does not make it an unimportant exercise as it does allow approximate measurement, differentiation and comparison. Given my goal is a more graded account that allows autonomy in constraints, any ability to provide nuances and recognise autonomy variances and differences is useful. Thus, the first axis seeks to capture varying levels of constraint that surround the agent and the ways they limit or enhance her.

It should also be noted that I do not take the maximum to be the ‘best’ possibility and so a prescriptive notion, rather it simply fleshes out the higher extreme of the scale and so is a

descriptive notion. For instance, having absolutely no constraint should not be considered the optimal case where the implication is that this is the level to which all agents should strive and that this is a 'good' end. Not only is this impossible on the relational account of autonomy I endorse (which always sees human beings operating within constrained contexts of varying intensity) but it is different to the purpose of the axis which is to record degrees of constraint. In this sense, the upper limit of the scale is not directive (it is not stating what should be aimed at) but expressive (it outlines a boundary at the other end and so a set of states between which agents may fall).

The second element is about self-regard. This requires that the agent hold self-regard (where this is about seeing oneself as valued and as someone that matters in moral considerations to some extent). Ways in which self-regard might be indicated include the level to which the agent feels she can allow for her needs in her deliberations or how far she thinks she will be listened to when justifying (understood broadly, as has already been discussed in chapter three and four of this thesis) herself to others. Self-regard is, in part, derived from others and practiced in relation in how one interacts with others, and so is a constitutively relational account. Put differently, this requirement recognises the social dimensions and intricacies at play in *self*-regard: even if others don't treat the agent this way, the agent may still think of herself as having self-worth (and vice versa, so even if she considers her self as worthy, others may not share this conviction). Decoding these interconnections is important for my account since it recognises that self-regard is not purely self-generated but rather a relational notion. In short, then, this element is about appreciating that one has some worth as a human being. This feature can be set out as:

- (2) To hold self-regard.

is evident. In other words, this component of autonomy, like all these in my account, is a continuum and not a threshold concept. More substantive accounts of relational autonomy than mine may demand a stronger notion of self-worth (such that it encompasses a bolder normative claim, like a commitment to feminist values – however that is cashed out – before even getting onto this axis), but this is not a stipulation of the model I am proposing. Rather, my account is about measuring, and so it aims to capture fine distinctions between (for instance) low and lower still self-regard, which is why the scale is set out as it is to include a wholly eroded and preserved disposition. In this way, the focus is to indicate degrees of self-regard and as it actually is for the agent in order to respect and account for limited and partial understandings; something which is crucial if those who are lacking in some elements are not to be automatically deemed lacking in all.

In addition, and slightly differently to axis one where the higher score of removing all constraints was neither possible nor desirable, the upper extreme of the self-regard scale recognises that a world in which selves and others regard themselves as fully worthy should be theoretically possible (and desirable). But, more like axis one and as already been alluded to above, it also appreciates that, in the real world that is full of complex interactions, it is highly improbable that an agent and others will see her as a complete equal let alone fully worthy.¹⁶⁵ This means that, once again, the purpose here is to report the degree of self-regard in current non-ideal conditions rather than demanding that it meet a non-existing ideal level or threshold.

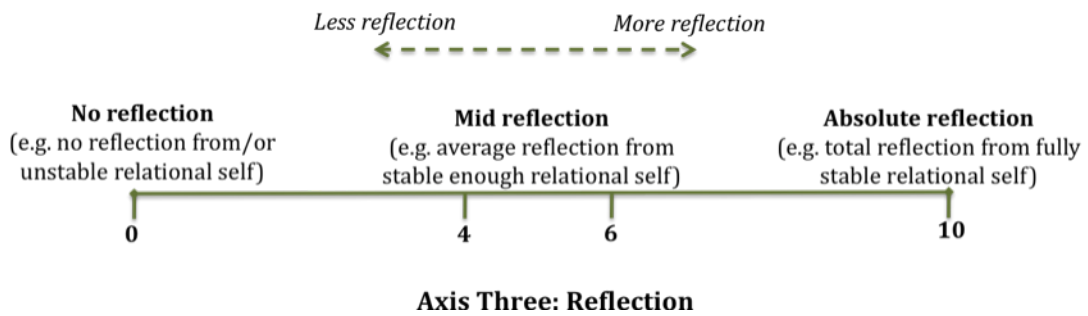
¹⁶⁵ Even someone who regards themselves as fully worthy would still need to have their score adjusted with how much others regard them as such.

Thus, this range covers the self-regard element of my account and captures how much worth the agent has, as recognised by her self and others, and as may be manifested in various ways. For instance, it may be demonstrated by justification, or dispositions of answerability or responsibility for self (where this may in turn be evinced by divulging certain features of her experience that give away her attitude, by using metaphors that convey her view, or by sharing stories that reveal her values).

The third and final element is reflection, understood relationally. This requires the agent to reflect (from a relational, stable enough, self) and critically evaluate goals or plans (from a position of self-regard such that she sees herself as worthy or answerable to some extent), and affirm that she wants those goals or plans to be hers (where 'her' is a relational her). Examples of such reflection include when an agent finds herself valuing an end she already has and appraises it (from a relational self) as one she likes having. Or when she judges (based on a sense of self-regard) that this goal is better for her than another. Or when she assesses and reaffirms her plans (within and from an ever-evolving though practically unified self) as ones she wants. So, reflection or evaluation is rooted in a complex relational agent, with a sufficiently stable (practically unified) self – and such reflective evaluation is also practiced in relation, such as through justification (which is part of the second axis) – making this a constitutively relational view. In essence, it is about some engagement with one's commitments from a connected self and endorsement of those commitments. The feature, then is:

- (3) To reflect, and evaluate one's goals or plans, in a relational way.

I suggest that this axis starts from '0', where there is no reflection whatsoever or the self is too unstable to know who (the relational) she is against which to do the reflecting, such that the commitments espoused are not hers (relationally understood). The range ends at '10', where there is absolute reflection from a fully stable self and the commitments are entirely hers (relationally understood). Between these two ends is where we record some reflection (there is some engagement with the agent's goals) from a stable enough self (the complex self is somewhat unified), whereby the commitments can be recognised as hers. Again, it is unlikely that the extremes will be attained (since all relational selves fluctuate and only reach a fully static position when life ends and rarely are so conflicted that there is no practical unity. Further, it is plausible that there will be some reflection and evaluation from this kind of self ranging from a cursory acceptance of goals to in-depth meditation on and discussion with others about one's goals). In this regard, it is much more likely that agents operate within these points. Crucially, though most agents seem to fall within this intermediate space, such a scale captures varying degrees of critical reflection, including the very low. An agent, for instance, could assess her goals but do so from an intensely wavering intersectional self, such that what she wants constantly changes depending on to whom she talks and their aims for her. This would place her lower on the scale than if she were evaluating from a more stable self (where this still accepts that selves do alter over time and in differing relationships and given various identities). The third scale, then, can be presented as:



To avoid confusion, what I mean by the goal and the goal being the agent's should be made clear. First, though I focus on *a goal or plan*, and so it may initially appear that I favour a local conception of autonomy, this is but one feature of overall autonomy functioning and is to be balanced with other axes, which means that my spectrum view is broadly global. In other words, the goal or plan it is not the only site for determining the question of autonomy and, in this respect, it is never assessed in isolation from the agent as a whole. Second, though my view is based on identifying which goals or plans are the *agent's*, this is only insofar as recognising that the agent judges them as ones she wants, not about them being self-generated or socially untainted (the very possibility of which has already been discounted in this thesis).

Further, and similarly to the first and second axes, the upper end of this scale does not aim to stipulate the optimum position, but rather to indicate an extreme and to plot reflection along these points. It is not the case that absolute contemplation about one's goals from a fully stable self is the end towards which agents should move. Not only is this impossible (given the kind of selves we are and as already discussed) it is also undesirable (as the relational conception is rooted in the actual world). Someone who thinks about what she wants all day long but is unable to put this into practice because this is her sole activity or because her circumstances constrain her seems to be lacking somewhat in *living* a life that is her own

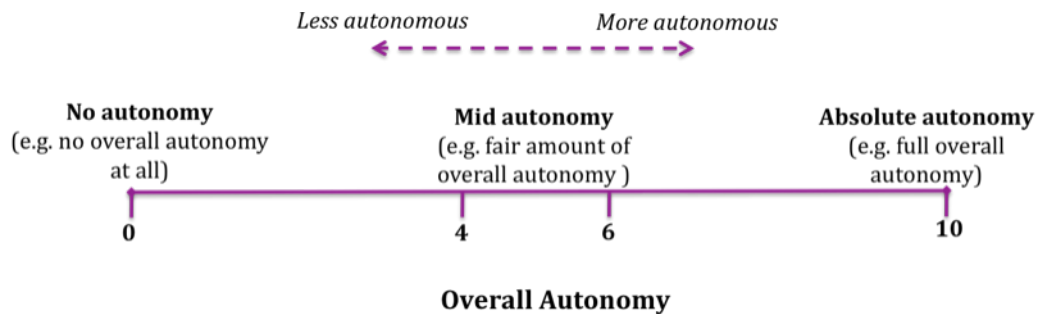
(relationally understood). In other words, while contemplation is an important skill to cultivate, the purpose of the scale is to record differing degrees of reflection, not to suggest that total reflection (at the expense of being in the world) is the best state.

The final element, then, assesses the amount of reflection that occurs from a relational self and how stable the complex the self from which reflection takes place is. This captures and measures one part of autonomy.

Three features of autonomy viewed on a spectrum therefore emerge: constraints, self-regard, and reflection. As has already been noted, all of these aspects themselves are degree-based concepts: there can be more or less constraints (axis one), there can be more or less self-regard (axis two) and there can be more or less reflection from a relational self (axis three).

Having set these elements out separately, I now briefly discuss how they function collectively. Individually, each axis provides a reading for the core features of my view, and together they provide an estimate of overall autonomy. Though there may be various ways in which to calculate this total amount, I use a simple method of averaging the scores of the three axes out in order to generate a rough number. Of course, there may be other and more complex ways to do this, and I would be open to alternatives and improvements. My claim is not that this method is *the* method, but merely that degrees of autonomy can be estimated and ascribed to individuals and so individuals distinguished and compared. Accordingly, the purpose is less what the number is and more that it allows a consistent and so comparative measurement. Though the figure will always be approximate and can be argued over,

averaging the three scores out meets this aim. The scale for measuring overall autonomy can be set out as:



Let me clarify again that this is not a threshold view. It is very unlikely that someone will have ‘0’ autonomy. Nor at this juncture am I proposing that a particular amount of autonomy is needed to qualify for anything like medical consent or legal responsibility, although it may be possible that the view could be developed to be used in this way. For now, the aim is to show that the autonomy of an array of persons, both agent-by-agent and across agents, can be estimated and differentiated in a nuanced way. Of course, if someone did score ‘0’ on all three of the axes, and so a ‘0’ overall, it could be supposed that they would not be autonomous.¹⁶⁶ In this way, one could develop this view into a threshold account for various decisions for medical or legal purposes – by requiring that consent only be deemed possible if an individual reached a given number on the scale, for instance. However, more work would need to be done using evidence from the medical and legal contexts to determine what this point would be and in what cases. Therefore, while more practical applications are possible – and it is hoped this understanding of autonomy will have such practical applications – this is not part of the remit of this thesis. Here the goal is simply to show that a spectrum view can represent various features relevant to autonomy, to measure autonomy such that it reflects this

¹⁶⁶ A related point will be addressed again in the next section of this chapter.

complexity for individual persons so that degrees of autonomy can be differentiated, and to contrast one person's autonomy with another.

My view of autonomy as a spectrum, then, is thoroughly graded and interrelated: it can allow for a combination of variable inputs (constraints, self-regard, and reflection) and result in a specific output (the amount of autonomy in this particular case). That is, I argue that these three axes in turn identify and gauge elements of autonomy and inform how autonomous the bombers are on the spectrum overall. Together, this enables us to distinguish degrees of autonomy, describe the cases of female suicide bombers in detail, and to compare these women's autonomy.

The spectrum view of autonomy in action

Having described the ways in which my account differs from current theories of relational autonomy and set out the three axes, I now apply the view to the cases of the female suicide bombers. As already discussed, but is worth reiterating, these case studies are limited. There is little primary data, such as first-person interviews (because most of the women died in the attacks), so the cases presented here are from what we do know; the women's back-stories, interviews with family and friends and case histories, as well as imagined scenarios developed and extrapolated from the information available. As we have already noted, relying on these restricted sources has some drawbacks – for instance, they are necessarily interpretative, require conjecture and, as such, may well be inaccurate in some regards (such as about the women's motivations and thoughts). Yet, as the aim is to show the possibilities of the spectrum view, this in itself is not problematic for demonstrating the way the view works. What is key is not that these particular women's autonomy is pinpointed with precision, but

that women like these – constrained and curtailed – can have their autonomy (however limited) estimated. The important result is that some consistent assessment about their autonomy can be generated. In this regard, the cases I use will show the spectrum in operation rather than make definitive claims about these individuals per se. In short, if the facts or imaginings about these women were changed, the result may be different but this would still serve to show that the degree of autonomy could be approximated and measured.

In this section, then, I use four cases from chapter one to illustrate different and relative extents of autonomy. I consider Dhanu (as someone who exercises high degrees of autonomy), Zina (as someone who indicates medium ranging degrees of autonomy), Muzhakhoyeva (as someone who has lower degrees of autonomy), and Kaplan (as someone who is severely restricted in her autonomy), before I finally discuss the women together in order to compare them explicitly. These examples will put different pressures on the individual axes and will demonstrate the view as a whole and claims associated with it, such as being able to describe the bombers in detail and to contrast them. Following this discussion, I will end this section by addressing a worry about who should be on the spectrum. Thus, here, I intend to show how my spectrum view of autonomy can be applied.

Case 1

The first case is Dhanu and I will take the three axes in turn and then assess them together to indicate how much autonomy she exercises on the spectrum view.

We start with the first axis of constraints. Particularly relevant for Dhanu are the restrictions emerging from the context of the war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government.

This specific war started in July 1983, when Dhanu would have been in her early teens, and involved the LTTE seeking a separate homeland for the Tamils in the north and east of Sri Lanka following years of discrimination by the majority Sinhalese government. Part of this unfairness included reduced opportunities for Tamils before the war (because Sinhalese was the official language and the best jobs were reserved for those who could speak it, for instance). It also involved the deeply patriarchal nature of the society more generally (where women were expected to hold roles as homemakers and child bearers, no matter which ethnic group they came from) (Alison 2003; Reuter 2004). Such a background, where there is prejudice toward a group of people and bias towards another set within it, is already a restrictive one for Dhanu (and other Tamil women). However, we can recognise that the war itself introduced further constraints. There was, for instance, the lack of opportunities because of the disruption caused by the conflict, such as maintaining regular occupations and the normalcy of everyday life (since many individuals were diverted to the war effort, including by transferring munitions, delivering messages, and enlisting as combatants). In addition, there was the more serious instability given the likelihood of loss of life due to the fighting (indeed some 100,000 people were estimated to die during the – almost – 26 year war, most of whom were civilian women and children) (Kanagasabapathipillai, 2014; Alison, 2004). Dhanu, then, faces stronger restrictions because of the war in the form of the probability of a shortened and radically disordered life. These add to the difficulties of more general ethnic and gender intolerance in the non-war setting of which she is part too. For Dhanu, the armed struggle is *another* constraint that adds to all the other ways she is constrained because of the social agent she is (her role as a woman and Tamil, for instance).

Moreover, these various factors are not separate but are likely to interconnect and exacerbate each other in different ways. For instance, being a woman and living in a civil war affects Dhanu's security and bodily integrity. That this is the case is evidenced by the widely held belief (it has never been conclusively ascertained – Rajan, 2011) that she was raped by Indian Peacekeeping Forces, who were brought in as a regional peacekeeping force between 1987 and 1990, after which it emerged they were guilty of various human rights violations (Amnesty International, 1990; Skaine, 2006; Pape, 2006). If this is true, it indicates that Dhanu experienced a great deal of harm because of who she is (a Tamil woman) and this particular context of war (involving the use of this abusive peacekeeping force). Differently, being a woman in a war impacts what types of roles she can play. As has already been discussed in chapter one, the predominant role for women has been one of non-violence or indirect violence, but the LTTE was one of the first insurgencies to systematically use women in their ranks (Reuter, 2004). This might generate a different kind of expectation where violent involvement becomes a viable option for some women. Indeed, it could be imagined that this could be the case either if Dhanu became politicised to fight for the cause or if, as some of the reports have asserted (as discussed in chapter one), that she wanted vengeance or to redeem herself because of the alleged rape (Beyler, 2003b; Skaine, 2006; Pape, 2006). Either way, it can be suggested that this might become a course of action deemed appropriate by her in her context. Here, Dhanu has restrictions on her because of the specific overarching climate of conflict in Sri Lanka for a free Tamil Nadu, which curbs and shapes what she as a woman can do in that society. These, then, are examples of a multitude of constraints on Dhanu that are complexly connected.

Thus, the war limits Dhanu (in what she can do or become) in a more apparent way than the comparatively more muted, though still hampering, forces of gender, ethnicity, and social status that otherwise contextualise her life in a non-war setting. However, these other pressures are not absent in war but interlink in various ways, and together constitute Dhanu's particular restraints. The first axis, then, indicates that Dhanu experiences many constraints, the severest of which is the civil war but where this intersects with other limitations, which suggests that she faces extreme curtailments.

On the second axis of self-regard, the facts around this are less certain, but – like most persons – it can be posited that Dhanu had numerous (positive and negative) influences in her life that affect how she and others see her. For instance, though little is known, we can speculate that, on the one hand, Dhanu has grown up in a familial and communal setting where those around her value her as a person. Perhaps for the discussion we can suppose that: she is regarded by her parents as being of comparable worth to her siblings and cousins, she is encouraged to express herself amongst her peers, she is recognised as a high-achiever in school, and she is commended for her political beliefs for a Tamil homeland. However formulated, such examples are likely to fall in the category of positive social experiences, where Dhanu has accumulated feedback from a young age that has contributed to her self-perception that she is someone significant amongst, and whose views matter to, her family and community. On the other hand, we can equally imagine (and assuming for a moment that we accept the reports about her rape) that she has suffered a sexual violence. This – as many women who have undergone such abuse relay (Brison, 2002; Burgess-Jackson 1996) – might cause her to feel degraded as a woman and might shake her belief that she is a person with inherent dignity – a conviction (given her suggested supportive upbringing) we can suppose

that she held for a long time.¹⁶⁷ We can propose, then, that this sensation of self-doubt and the ordeal of rape that she underwent erodes her self-worth greatly, and that others (in a society that prizes chastity for unmarried women – Alison, 2004) see her as ‘tainted’ (as described in some of the responses in chapter one) and less worthy too. Together this may move to undermine the regard she once had for herself.

Of course, we could easily suggest that Dhanu never recovers from this damaged position of self-regard, and that this leads to a very low reading on the axis. However, it can also be imagined (for the purposes of this case) that Dhanu’s self-regard may well improve. Suppose that some others (like her family) recognise that she was mistreated and, over an extended time, encourage her to build up her fragile sense of self (indeed, this is similar to Brison’s experience since she is supported by her loved ones to regain her self-confidence in time). In this kind of scenario, through her relationships, she may come to view herself, once again, as worthy of consideration, as entitled to hold a dissenting opinion that will be acknowledged and responded to seriously, and as someone that is important too, even though she has suffered adversity that is likely to affect her for a long while. Here, though of course there could be different readings, we could hypothesise that, it is this renewed self-belief that enables her to see things in a particular way. That she can identify that the offensive led by the Sri Lanka army is an affront to her personal dignity, for example, and that this reignites her previous political stance that it is an injustice against her fellow Tamils (who, due to their ethnicity, are regarded as inferior). In this instance, Dhanu may well have a lower self-regard than before, but overall we can speculate that it is still relatively high because of her (imagined) subsequent and generally positive interactions with others and, from this, her

¹⁶⁷ Regarding the effects of rape, for instance, Susan Brison (2002) indicates that she went through a form of post-traumatic stress disorder including feelings of anxiety, and Keith Burgess-Jackson (1996) describes how the fear of rape can inhibit women’s self-respect and self-esteem.

recognition that she is worthy of respect. Overall, we can suggest, this enables her to see that she is someone who deserves moral consideration. As far as the second condition for autonomy on the spectrum goes, then, this indicates that Dhanu has a high self-regard. Again, other readings are possible and with more evidence this could be more accurately approximated. However, the point is to show how estimates for this type of woman can be made. Thus, even if this proved to be a misunderstanding of Dhanu, it would still show how autonomy can be measured for women like Dhanu as constructed here.

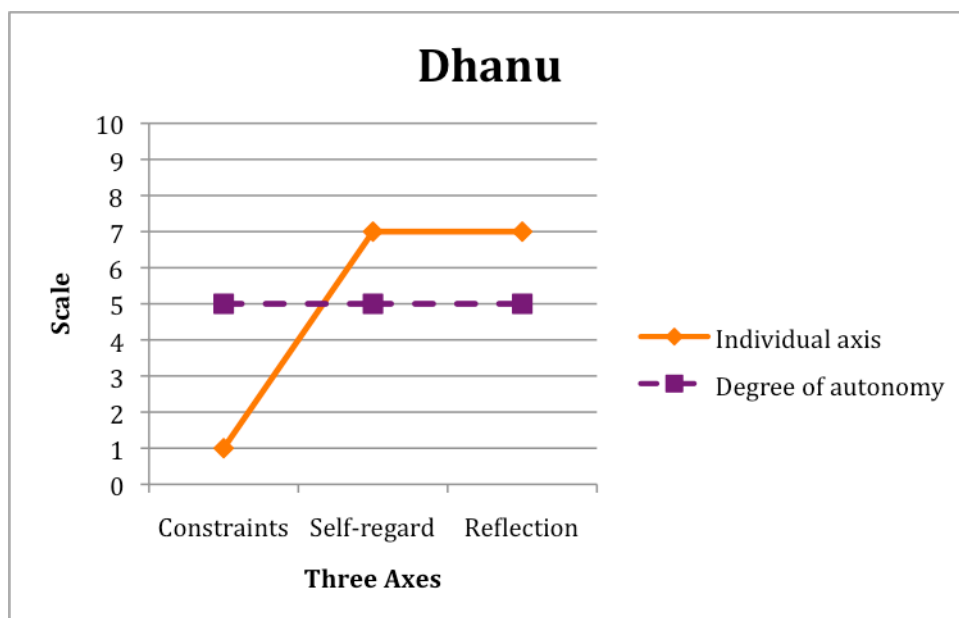
The third axis measures reflection from a relational self. As will be the case with most of the women, very little is known about Dhanu's process of critical reflection, so much of this analysis here will be conjecture simply to demonstrate how the spectrum works to estimate different degrees. It can be suggested that – as is likely with all persons – Dhanu holds various conflicting goals because of the relational self she is, and that it is possible for her to decide between and about them from this connected and complex self. We could accept somewhat trivially that Dhanu, for instance, has a diverse intersectional identity (as a woman, daughter, pro-LTTE nationalist, and war victim). We could also imagine, less trivially but not necessarily unrealistically, that she wants to 'stay true' to this identity because it is important to her. In addition, it is conceivable that she can critically reflect and endorse her desires from a somewhat unified self (parts of her identity and desires might conflict, but we can suppose – at least for argument's sake here – that her self is not so severely disparate as to preclude decision-making). This is a situation where there are conflicts that lead to some uncertainty because of the complex identity that Dhanu embraces (since, it can be imagined that she both wants to die for her cause as a Tamil and look after her parents as a daughter in a culture that values family). Yet, we can still suggest that she has some 'practical unity' (it can be

supposed that she is not pulled in so many directions or torn between being a Tamil and daughter to such an extent that she has no stable base from which to reflectively endorse).

In this scenario, then, the assumption is that she contemplates and assesses these different positions, evaluating whether being a suicide bomber matches up to who (the relational) she is and how (the relational) she wants to live, while always remaining connected. By reflecting in this way and endorsing the goal to bomb, we can propose that she is affirming that that desire is hers (relationally understood). So, though in the midst of hostilities between the LTTE and Sri Lanka, limited in her opportunities, and with an identity that makes conflicting demands of her, there is critical reflection. In other words, in this kind of setup, Dhanu still decides (from a relationally embedded perspective) about whether she wants to bomb from a sufficiently unified self, irrespective of the ambivalence she experiences, and this confirms the desire as hers. By reflectively endorsing about her goal to bomb from a practically stable and relational self, as we have inferred here, Dhanu scores highly on this axis so far.

Further, based on the discussion in the second axis, we can imagine that she can appraise the aim to take a stand against the Sri Lankan army from a position of strong self-regard. Since, as was speculated above, she (through others) has built up her self-worth after her abuse, it is likely that she holds the background judgement that she herself is owed freedom from maltreatment and her people are owed freedom from persecution. Given this, we can suppose that her reflection occurs from a sense that she is someone that is worthy of some consideration. In sum, these thoughts allow us to suggest a high level of reflection from a relational self on the third feature of my view.

Collectively, the individual axes present a clearer picture of Dhanu’s autonomy. So far, for instance, we have imagined that Dhanu both has fairly high levels of self-regard and can reflect upon and endorse her decision to be a bomber to a significant extent, and so we can suggest that she exhibits a good amount of autonomy functioning in these respects. Yet, we have also supposed that her background conditions – of war, and gender and ethnic inequity – limit her to a great extent, and so we can propose that the practicing of autonomy is also affected negatively by the severity of her situation. On my spectrum, then, we can represent this since the reflective endorsement (the third axis) and self-regard (the second axis) elements assess how much autonomy Dhanu has by these sets of measures. However, these must be counterbalanced by another set of measures of the constraining forces (the first axis) she experiences too. In conjunction these gauge the degree of autonomy being exercised by her. Using all of the assumptions so far, this position can be indicated on the spectrum thus:



In short, our construction of this case suggests that though Dhanu (1) is in a situation that is characterised by excessive violence and conflict, she is also someone who demonstrates (2) advanced levels of self-regard and (3) evidence of a good deal of reflection from a relational self. Together these indicate that autonomy is being exercised (relative to some of the other bombers – as we shall see) to a high degree (where, recall, this is estimated by finding the average) on the spectrum view.

This, then, is a case of relatively strong autonomy functioning. In the next two cases, we will explore examples where the constraints are high (as they have been suggested to be here), but where one or more of the other features are low (in a way they have not been supposed with Dhanu).

Case 2

The second example I consider is Zina and, again, I discuss where she is on each of the axes before putting them together to indicate her overall level of autonomy.

With regards to the first axis of constraints, Zina, just like Dhanu, lives in a situation of political and military hostilities, but in her case the specific conflict is in the Palestinian territories. Zina was born in approximately 1983 into an environment where there has been constant fighting between the Israeli government and various Palestinian insurgents.¹⁶⁸ For her, the immediate events that contextualised her life include those of general unrest involving the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon (1983), the killing of Israeli civilians on a yacht off Cyprus by the PLO and reprisals by the Israeli army (1985), and hijackings of the Achille

¹⁶⁸ Though the exact date of her birth is unknown, the assumption here is that it was at least 1983 given that in 2001 she enrolled into Bir Zeit University (Victor, 2003), so had to be 18 at that time.

Lauro cruise ship in Syria by the PLO and El Jet airplanes in Rome and Vienna by Fatah (1985). The bulk of Zina's childhood was during the First Intifada (in 1987, when she would have been at least 4-years-old) and, despite ending with the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993, there continued to be fighting between the two sides after it. For example, there were suicide and bus bombings by Hamas in 1995, 'Operation Grapes of Wrath' by the IDF against Lebanon and retaliation by Hezbollah in 1996, and, of course, the Second Intifada, set in motion after Ariel Sharon's controversial visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque when Zina was at least 17, started in 2000. Though her life has not been beset with constant official wars, because of the ongoing fighting there has been plenty of unofficial conflict, such that Zina has never known a time of peace with neighbouring Israel. This suggests that the context in which she is immersed is one of extreme instability and difficulty. For instance, her circumstances include that she has been limited in her daily movements through security checks (though, because she carried a Jordanian passport, these checks were not as cumbersome as for other Palestinians – Victor, 2003), and thwarted in her efforts to find proper work in Palestine (partly because of delays by Israel in transferring money to Palestine which has harmed the economy and job creation – Al Jazeera, 2013). Further, she has been bombarded by routine attacks by the IDF and reprisals by various Arab fighters, which have affected her outlook (Zina states "I could study...But I also realised how difficult life was under occupation. A lot of people I knew were injured, and several had even been killed" – in Victor, 2003, 135). These forces combine to lead to an environment that is highly restrictive to Zina, both in the positive activities she can perform (continuing her education or finding employment) and the negative ones she is forbidden from engaging in (free movement between Israel and the Palestinian territories). We can imagine that such externalities impose on Zina's life and what she can do, and these are hindrances from which she cannot easily escape.

Moreover, the constraint of war is also one that adds to the other restrictions she faces because of who she is (a woman, Muslim, daughter, mother). For instance, it seems as though she felt that she was not allowed a political voice (after her involvement in Hamas, she states “I was free and doing something meaningful for myself and for a political cause” – in Victor, 2003, 135 – indicating that she was not free or could not align herself politically before). It also appears that she felt pressure to be a good daughter from her family (as suggested by her being confined to her father’s home because she fell pregnant and because she had to give up the child, which she sees as a punishment for failing at this role: “What did I have to lose [by becoming an insurgent]? I already lost my baby” – in Victor, 2003, 136). We can infer that the belief that she cannot hold a political view or that she is her father’s responsibility if unmarried are some of the boundaries of being a woman in her society and from her kind of family. They frame her life in very real and tangible ways, such that we can assume that they restrict what she can and cannot do in actuality (she cannot keep her baby, for instance). These factors, then, already limit her and they add to and intersect with the bigger constraint of the conflict (since it is an overarching and constant threat to her life, as discussed above). One such complex interconnection is that between Zina as a woman and the war. On the one hand, Zina believes the war has opened up opportunities for her in an otherwise patriarchal society. She, for instance, discusses how she fell in love with Hassan, an operative in Hamas, and this gave her options: “He opened my eyes to life and to the possibilities that a woman could take advantage of, even within a religious environment. It was something my father never gave me. Suddenly, I had choices” (in Victor, 2003, 137-138). Of course, such ‘opportunities’ are likely to be temporary (recall from chapter one that female bombers are regarded as non-permanent aberrations) but this indicates that she felt the war provided

women with more of a role than usual. On the other hand, getting involved with Hamas and the war was a way to redeem herself for her pregnancy and not being a ‘good’ woman in her society in the first place (again a narrative we explored in chapter one). She states, “Everyone knew about me and my baby and they understood why I had been sent to live with my cousins. I just wanted to be able to prove to him [Hassan] that I was better than his wife or any other woman he ever met” (in Victor, 2003, 142) by becoming a bomber. Here, one interpretation of Zina might be that she joined Hamas because she did not meet expectations of being a ‘good’ woman and this role provided a way for her to do so. Though other understandings of Zina’s words are possible, the aim here is purely to highlight examples of conceivable complex pressures on her (or women like her). These intersecting pressures of Zina as a woman and the war indicate some strong and credible constraints and ones that affect what she does.

In all these ways, then, Zina experiences constraints, including because of the war and who she is. Just like Dhanu, we can infer that the war for Zina is the most repressive constraint, though there are links across these various restrictions. Unlike Dhanu, however, because there is no indication or reports that Zina was raped, it is possible to suggest that she may suffer slightly less constraint, though she has other pressures as an unmarried mother. Though the details of the case could be framed differently (perhaps the constraints are equivalent or more than Dhanu’s), what is important is that the particular details set out here can be recorded. We can imagine, then, that using the example as it is, this is a case a high constraints, though perhaps slightly less than Dhanu.

The second axis concerns self-regard. Again, just as with most people, it is plausible to suggest that Zina has both fruitful and problematic forces in her life that have a bearing on her self-regard (in how she and others see her). From a number of her statements, for example, we can see that she has some positive influences. She feels valued by her partner (she states “He told me that he was organising a bombing operation that would include me” and since this was an admired role, she asks “How much more proof did I need?” that he loved her – in Victor, 2003, 138). She gets worth from her role as a facilitator (she claims of her involvement that “It was an honour and I understood that from the beginning” – in Victor, 2003, 136). She is more esteemed in the eyes of some others when she takes on more violent activities on behalf of Hamas (reflecting on a meeting in Hassan’s apartment in Ramallah, Zina recalls “I understood that evening that my job was to kill civilians because I could pass by security. I also understood that killing civilians affected Israelis more than anything else” and so it was an important job – in Victor, 2003, 138). Taking all this into account, it is not improbable, then, to suggest that these experiences lead her to have a strong sense of self-worth and to think of herself as someone that is somewhat important in moral considerations, such that this is a substantial amount of self-regard. One way in which this might be seen more clearly is with how Zina relates to the world and reveals a strong sense of answerability (broadly construed) to others. Although Zina lives in a conflict zone *and* gave birth to a child out of wedlock *and* had an affair with her operator (and so is portrayed as easily manipulated in our analysis in chapter one, and so not necessarily responsible for self), she exhibits fair amounts of the accountability disposition. When asked whether she regrets that her victims died, for instance, she lacks remorse and instead affirms her belief that she did the right thing. In her words, “They [the victims] should go back to Poland or Russia or America where their parents came from...If they hadn’t come here to take our land, they would be alive today” (in

Victor, 2003, 152). This defence suggests that she sees herself as accountable, and we might be able to infer from this that others see her as answerable too. Similarly, in an interview conducted by Schweitzer in 2006 (when she was serving her prison sentence) Zina showed herself not to be a woman short on responsibility for self. His impression of her is of “an educated and opinionated young woman who, in the spirit of Islam and its decrees, clearly articulates the reasons that justify committing violence [...with] self-control [...and] interpersonal skills [...that] makes it difficult to perceive her as ‘damaged goods’” (Schweitzer, 2008, 140-141). Though this is Schweitzer’s opinion and so it may be less reliable, this corroborates her lack of regret and justification above. We can provisionally suggest, then, that by responding to questions from others, such as Schweitzer, about the path that led her to work for Hamas, Zina indicates a high degree of self-regard since she was expected and able to explain herself.

However, there are other factors to bear in mind, and particularly about how these negatively affect the quality of Zina’s self-regard. Since what matters for self-regard is not just what Zina thinks of herself but also what others think of her (since these are connected), we might think that it would be worrying if the worth she experiences is deceptive or manipulative. To expand this idea, we have already seen above that Hamas and her role within it gives Zina a sense of esteem, but now let us imagine a scenario where Hamas and Hassan regard her as strategically useful but ultimately dispensable. Here, the supposition is she is somewhat or trivially, but not especially, respected. The basis for this thought might be gleaned from Zina’s disclosure that Hassan “told me that if the attack was a success, which means that more than twenty people were killed, he would finally consider me a valuable part of the organisation” (in Victor, 2003, 142). This may indicate that Zina was not important until she

killed enough people and her worth from others in the group was contingent on following its aims. If this is the case, we could question the integrity of the admiration she gets from Hamas, which in turn implies that in reality she is worthy of much less consideration than she otherwise thinks. It could be suggested, in other words, that the portion of her self-regard that comes from Hamas and Hassan is skewed to some extent and though she feels worthy of consideration because of it, it is a suspect kind of esteem that erodes some of the quality of self-regard. Of course, this must be balanced with the value that we can imagine that Hassan might genuinely see in her as someone who is important and irreplaceable as a partner, and Zina's own interpretation that she is worthy of some consideration (as discussed above). Relying on all of this, we can propose that Zina has a mixed source of self-regard: though some of her worth might emerge from problematic roots (Hamas and Hassan) much of it does not (Hassan and her beliefs), so she measures highly overall on the axis of self-regard. This is but one way in which to interpret the facts and imaginings presented here, and others are possible. The point is that the alternative readings can still be gauged on this axis. Taking the case as it is, however, when compared with Dhanu's experiences (which have also been both positive and negative), we can suggest Zina's position is somewhat on a par, and so it is a good amount of self-worth.

The third axis I discuss is reflection from a relational self. Again, here it is difficult (for the most part) to point to evidence of critical reflection, so here I will offer various scenarios and examples building on the judgements made so far. Starting with the self from where reflection emerges, it can be imagined that Zina has and accepts her conflicting intersectional identities and desires to a high degree. She wants to be a good Palestinian (recall from above that she identifies with her people's suffering under occupation), but does not want to adopt traditional

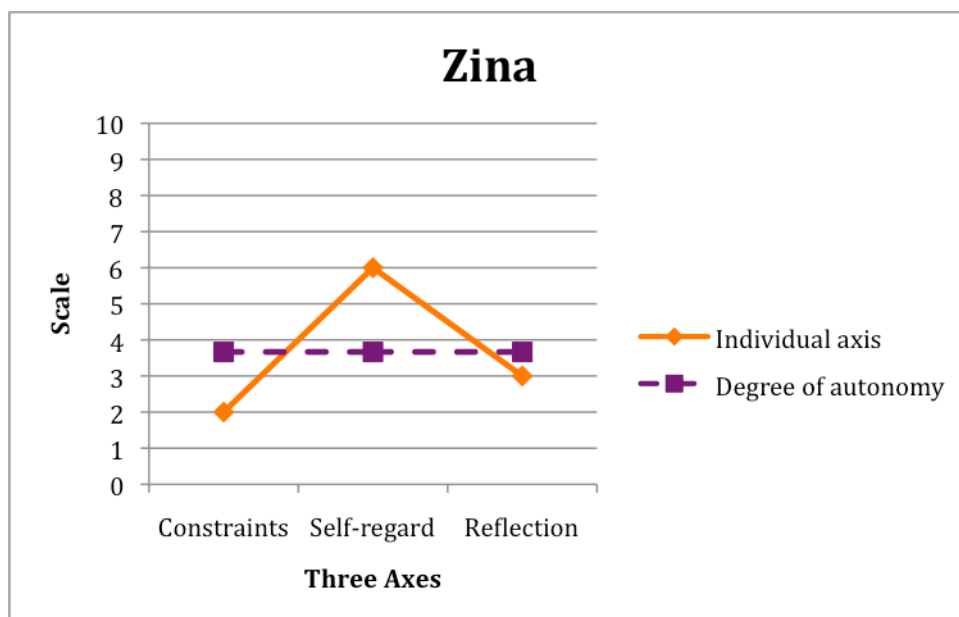
Palestinian female roles (again, above, she describes herself as being free for the first time to pursue a political cause rather than being a homemaker). However, she may end up enduring some of the conventional norms because she wants to subscribe to being a ‘good’ Palestinian woman (recall that she complies with her confinement, first at her father’s home and then at her cousin’s, following the birth of her baby to uphold norms about women being chaste in her society. Further, she suggests she has something to prove to Hassan because of her ‘misdemeanour’). Here, it could be feasible to submit that Zina is a relational self that is complex and with diverging preferences, some of which are difficult to reconcile, others of which are more easily compatible. In addition, reflection from such a self may occur. Indeed, Zina claims “There was no doubt in my mind that I wanted to join and kill my occupiers and even, some day, if circumstances called for it, to blow myself up in an attack as well” (in Victor, 2003, 136), and this suggests a firm goal and one that may well have been reflected on to a significant extent from her stable enough relational self. This, then, is one way to construct Zina’s reflection.

We can, however, picture a different scenario too. In this case, we might imagine Zina’s sense of self or will is too pliable (so she changes her desires on a whim with no overall unity about who she – as a relational agent – is) such that she cannot reflectively endorse her desires from an anchored (enough) base. It has already been suggested, for instance, that (at the time of the interview with Schweitzer and with Victor above) Zina is adamant about why she wants to bomb. Yet, we might also believe that this stance, as firm as it appears, might be less critically reflective and from a less stable sense of self. Zina, for instance, says about Hassan that “He inspired me...and soon I came to believe in everything he believed in and everything he did” (in Victor, 2003, 137) such that this may cast some doubt on the extent of her reflection

despite her forthright responses to interviewers. Further, suppose that her desire to please (or, as she put it above, to prove herself to) Hassan becomes the overwhelming focus of who she is or her sense of self, such that being a staunch Palestinian or good woman (which are important to her above) become lesser concerns. Given that Hassan later became problematic – he allegedly “denounced her when he was arrested [and...] also implicated her in the attack when she placed a beer can in a supermarket in Jerusalem” (Victor, 2003, 156) – it is possible to suggest that this might destabilise Zina’s sense of self. We can imagine her darting around her commitments because she now has a poor sense of her relational self from which to reflect, and this could be an instance of some instability of the self. In this case, it can be suggested that Zina’s intersectional self is not as reconciled as we originally thought. So, in either of these alternative understandings, Zina could be unsure about who she (understood relationally) is and/or whether the goal to bomb is a commitment she evaluates and makes hers (again a relational ‘hers’). Whether or not we accept the possibility of this more unstable self, it seems that we could infer, at the very least, that there might have been less critical reflection than we supposed given the obsequiousness to Hassan, suggesting a lower score on this axis.

All this, of course, must be balanced with the view that the reflection that does occur happens from a state of quite high self-worth (which was the proposed outcome of the discussion of the second axis). Though we have hypothesised here that the decisions Zina makes may not always be reflected on to a high degree (and/or they are from a very flexible a relational base), there is some reflection and that from a good position of self-regard. In Zina’s case, then, we can suggest there is a lower degree of reflection from a relational self occurring than with Dhanu, but it is a fair amount nonetheless.

Bringing the three axes and all these observations together enables us to record Zina’s overall autonomy. We can measure the high constraints that frame Zina’s life, with the war playing a dominant force but also her pregnancy outside of marriage and feelings of being trapped contributing to the difficult circumstances she faces. It also allows us to plot Zina’s quite strong sense of self-regard since she is able to answer for herself and she expects others to listen, though others (such as the leaders of the cell at Hamas) may see her as someone who is instrumentally worthy (for the goal of bombing). In addition, it permits us to map Zina’s complex relational self that is somewhat stable and from which some lower levels of critical reflection to make her commitments hers occurs. This can be represented on the spectrum in the following way:



Here, we can see there are (1) very high constraints, (2) high self-regard, but (3) lower reflection from a relational self. When compared with Dhanu, she scores less well on axis

three and this gives her an overall lower degree when exercising her autonomy on the spectrum view, but this is still mid-ranging as a whole.

Zina, then, provides an example of someone with a fairly good amount of autonomy though it is not as high as Dhanu because her reading on the third axis is lower. This brings us to the next case, where the agent scores lower on the second axis too.

Case 3

The third bomber we will consider is Muzhakhoyeva. Once again, each axis of the spectrum will be discussed in turn before they are assessed together.

The first axis of constraints is not dissimilar to Dhanu and Zina, in that there is an overarching climate of war, but here the conflict is between the Chechen rebels and the Russian state. Muzhakhoyeva, along with her fellow Chechens, is amidst a longstanding territorial and political dispute for sovereignty, running from at least the 1850s to the present day. The most recent phase of fighting, which took place when Muzhakhoyeva was around 10-years-old, intensified with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, after which Dzhokhar Dudayev (the presidential leader) declared the autonomous region of Chechnya independent (in 1993). Since then there has been constant conflict, both official declarations of war (such as the First and Second Chechen Wars) and unofficial fighting (including Russian and insurgent perpetrated violence) (Eager, 2008; *BBC News*, 2011). As we have seen with the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Palestine, over the years the war in general leads to many hardships for ordinary people, and this is similar in Chechnya. Muzhakhoyeva, for instance, has seen economic instability (though Chechnya is located close to the Black Sea and is oil rich, the

ongoing dispute has meant Chechens cannot control or benefit from this resource, and GDP per capita corresponds to that of Ghana – Adomanis, 2012; UNC, 2014. Muzhakhoyeva herself is classed as someone in extreme “poverty” – Groskop, 2004, 32 – with not very many prospects for work – *The Scotsman*, 2004). She has experienced violence perpetrated by both sides (Muzhakhoyeva’s husband died in 1997 in an attack by the Russians, and she herself was affiliated with the rebels who target the Russian state). She has lived in a climate of upheaval and displacement (around a third to a half of Chechnya’s 1.3 million population have fled their homes since the first conflict – Shah, 2004 – and Muzhakhoyeva’s home region of Achkoi-Martan was destroyed in it too – Groskop, 2004). Grave violence, economic discontent, and daily volatility; such is the context that surrounds Muzhakhoyeva and underpins the basis of her everyday experience. From this, we can suggest that the war is a severe constraint to her person, since it forestalls a life of security (to her person and to the kind of life she can live).

In addition, we can imagine that Muzhakhoyeva faces constraints simply by virtue of who she is and her particular circumstances. Though the veracity of her testimony and interviews may be problematic because she was caught by the Russian authorities and there may have been duress or plea-bargaining involved (Rajan, 2011), there are some facts in her reports that hint at the kinds of limitations she faced.¹⁶⁹ Muzhakhoyeva, for instance, is a young widow in a society that regards this as a lowly status (some reports suggest that “according to Chechen

¹⁶⁹ There is some suggestion that Muzhakhoyeva changed her story. During her police testimony, she claimed she was drugged but during an interview in 2004 she said she actively participated in preparing for and organising her attack (Rajan, 2011). This change may be because of plea-bargaining – it is possible she gave the police the story they wanted (see footnote 170) in the hope of a reduced sentence of 5-6 years, but when she was given a hefty custodial sentence of 20 years decided to tell a different story. After hearing her sentence in court, she reportedly said: “I trusted you. I thought you were good. I hate Russians. I did not want to blow up anyone. But now I will serve 20, 25 years. Then I will return and blow you all up” (in Strauss, 2004). This suggests perhaps she was not drugged at all, or that she genuinely did not want to bomb, or that she has become radicalised because of her treatment (which are amongst several possibilities).

tradition, she and her baby daughter, [after her husband's death] 'belonged' to her husband's family" – Groskop, 2004, 32 – whereas others claim she was rejected by them – *The Scotsman*, 2004). She owes money to her in-laws (she supposedly stole and borrowed money as well as jewellery while trying to runaway – Groskop, 2004; Strauss, 2004). She has a child, Rashana, whom she cannot afford to raise herself (and apparently there is no way the family would allow her custody anyway – *The Scotsman*, 2004). If these self-disclosed reports are accurate then they are very real restrictions based on the specific person she is (a Chechen widow and mother) and they are likely to matter to and frame her life, since this is the context in which she is immersed. Further, just as with Dhanu and Zina, it is not farfetched to suggest that these factors may well intersect with the broader constraint of war that we have already discussed. This can be seen in how, for Muzhakhoyeva, suicide bombing is a possible option for her to undertake precisely because she is a widow and there are precedents from the recent conflict for such women in particular to become bombers (at least 6 attackers before her, for instance, met this criterion – CPOST, 2011). There are other more controversial allegations about the pressures Muzhakhoyeva was under (for instance, she claims that she was drugged regularly and had the threat of 'Black Fatima' – the woman charged to look after her – remotely detonating the bomb if she backtracked. Both of these, however, seem inconsistent with her statement that she attempted to activate the bomb numerous times. Julie Rajan, 2011, asks if she was drugged could she be so composed to travel to 4 cafés and press the button 20 times, and if the device was faulty, which it was not because a bomb disposal expert died when deactivating it, then why did 'Black Fatima' not trigger it?) Irrespective of whether elements of Muzhakhoyeva's testimony, such as these, are true, such a background of war and her particular circumstances are constraining factors nonetheless.¹⁷⁰ Based on this, we can

¹⁷⁰ Speckhard suggests that reports of 'Black Fatima' and being drugged may have been fabricated by Muzhakhoyeva in order to play up to the Russian stereotype that women are coerced into becoming bombers

propose that a group – like the Chechen rebels – that expects widows to be suicide bombers is more pressurising for Muzhakhoyeva than an insurgency that prohibits the use of women altogether. Together these are strong constraints, and the conflict especially, is extremely limiting for Muzhakhoyeva, but the fact that she is a widow compound these difficult circumstances too.

So, on the first axis, we can suggest that she is highly constrained, perhaps even more so than Zina (who suffers from the war and is an unmarried mother) and about the same as Dhanu (who experiences war and is an alleged rape victim).

The second axis we consider is that of self-regard. With Muzhakhoyeva, as with the other women discussed, it is plausible to assume that there are various influences in her life that frame how she and others see her. From what we know, for instance, though her parents did not raise her (her father died when she was 7 and her mother did not have contact with her), her grandparents cared for her a great deal (*The Scotsman*, 2004). Further, we can suppose that though she stopped her education young (some reports put this at 15 – Groskop, 2004) because she fell pregnant and so she could marry her partner (other reports put this at 19 – *The Scotsman*, 2004), she felt significant in her role as a mother (she said she “love[d] Rashana very much” – in *The Scotsman*, 2004). We might also imagine without difficulty that she gained some self-worth as wife and that she looked forward to raising a family with her husband before he died. These are likely to be positive forces in generating a good level of self-regard, and based on these experiences we can suggest that she sees herself as worthy of consideration to some extent.

(Rajan, 2011) and Andrezej Zaucha makes a similar claim about drugs, brainwashing and blackmailing being excuses that suit the Russian authorities because they overlook that the women might be ‘desperate enough’ because of the war to act of their own accord (Groskop, 2003).

However, it is easy to suppose that these sentiments are hampered by other factors, especially with the death of her husband. Since, as mentioned above, being a widow and single mother is a disvalued position in her society, we can imagine that Muzkhakyeova's sense of self-regard may be eroded because others do not expect her to answer for herself given her status. Remember that she was essentially a "household slave" (Groskop, 2004, 32) after he died, so was there to assume the life of a servant, not to have a life of her own. In such circumstances, and given that self-regard is connected to the way others sees the self, it is not difficult to claim that her own belief that she should answer for herself is also reduced. We may accept her story that she ran away to repay her debts and hypothesise that the rebels see her more positively (which is not impossible given that she supposedly formed a close bond with one of them – *The Scotsman*, 2004). However, staying with the insurgents may not have revived this belief in herself to the same extent given the negativity of worth associated with a position of servitude. For instance, imagine that Muzhakhoyeva had the opportunity to engage with others (like the Chechen rebels around her) about what she wanted, which is likely to have been a positive experience for self-regard. But, as a widow who still feels her role in life, according to Chechen tradition, was to serve and that she has no entitlement to her daughter, she is also likely to retain a diminished self-worth, and we can surmise that this affects her answerability disposition. In other words, thinking of herself as a slave and as someone to whom no-one will or should listen, she is less likely to regard herself as someone of moral consideration. Though we could interpret Muzhakhoyeva differently, if we base our judgement on this particular scenario, then we can plot where she falls on this axis. We can suppose that she exercises a much lower degree of self-regard than Dhanu (who, though experiencing rape, we supposed did manage to regain her self-worth to a relatively high

level). Likewise, she scores far less than Zina (who, though we suggested did not receive much from Hamas insurgents, still has a good deal of self-regard from other parts of her life). This is because Muzhakhoyeva started with some worth but ended up with very little, and this former state was not satisfactorily replenished. Thus, the proposal is that, when balancing the positive and negative influences, Muzhakhoyeva scores quite low on the self-regard axis.

The final axis is that of reflection from a stable enough relational self. Based on some of the evidence we have, we might suppose that Muzhakhoyeva is an intersectional self with various conflicting identities and desires. We know that she is a Chechen widow and could imagine that she feels a mixture of emotions and preferences (she grieves for her dead husband and her role in society, and wants retribution – Groskop, 2004). At the same time, she appears to hold a commitment to non-violence (she could not bring herself to activate a suicide belt on a bus on a previous mission, she pulled faces at men in the various cafés in which she was to detonate her bomb to attract attention and thwart the attack, and at her trial, she says “I did not want to blow up anyone” – in Strauss, 2004). Further, she feels she has responsibilities to her child (she tries to escape from her in-laws with her daughter so she can take care of her – Strauss, 2004). Though some of these desires and identities might be compatible and others might clash, she could nonetheless have a sturdy sense of herself from which to decide about bombing. If she critically reflects on this aim, from this base, then this may score well on the third axis.

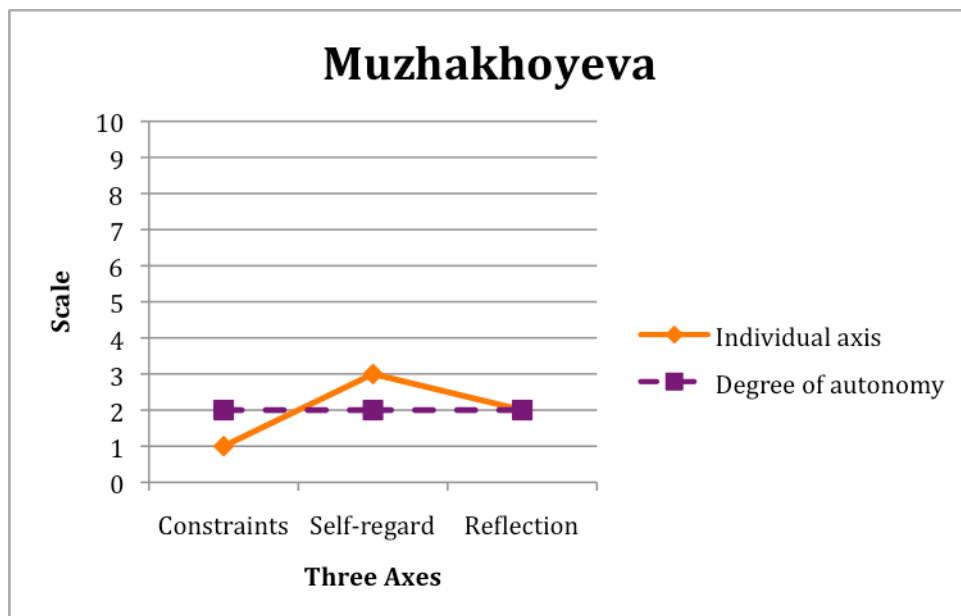
However, given the concerns that have already been raised about Muzhakhoyeva’s testimony, it seems she may have trouble with evaluating her goals from a stable self. We can suggest that a different way to interpret the evidence above is that she is deeply conflicted. She both

seems to want non-violence and wants violent revenge (at her court trial, she followed up her statement about not wanting to kill people with “I will return [after her sentence] and blow you all up” – in Strauss, 2004 – though this may well have been in anger). Further, she wants to repay her debts and be a good mother while killing herself (a position that she claims the Chechen commander allegedly dismissed as not a reason to die – Strauss, 2004). Here, we might suppose that though she has a clashing intersectional self because of her various identities, which is not necessarily problematic, her sense of who she is for functional decision-making might also be very unsteady, which is more worrying. Given this precarious state, we may imagine her to be too wavering and with limited practical unity from which to critically reflect. The reflection (thinking and valuing) itself, then, may be too uncertain since it cannot be pinned to who (the relational) she is (her values, for instance, may be somewhat erratic) and so it is less clear whether various commitments are more hers (relationally understood) than others. We might read these kinds of reports and imaginings differently, but from this standpoint, Muzhakhoyeva signifies a very low kind of reflective endorsement.

Moreover, this assessment of her reflection is consolidated when we consider that it is not from a place of high self-regard (as pointed out in the discussion of the second axis). There we judged that she feels a low worth and disposition to answer for herself. Here we can follow that her reflection is not particularly critical since she feels the need to justify herself to others (and others only expect it from her) in small amounts. We can intuit, in other words, that her reflection about whether to bomb is done in a cursory and not meaningful way (which fits her testimony of changing her mind constantly about detonating the bomb, for instance) partly because her responsibility for self is diminished.

In this respect, we can suggest that Muzhakhoyeva may have done some, but not very much, reflection to make the commitment (relationally) hers, and that this is to a lesser extent than either Dhanu (who scores highly here) or Zina (who does less well, but better than Muzhakhoyeva). Muzhakhoyeva, then, has a low score on the reflection axis.

Bringing the three axes, evidence and assumptions together, I propose that it is plausible that Muzhakhoyeva is quite low on the spectrum of autonomy. We can gauge, for instance, that she is highly constrained because of her context of war as well as being widowed and in debt. We can weigh up that she holds little self-regard because she and others see her as a servant and not responsible in any serious way for herself. We can calculate that she reflects somewhat poorly from a shaky relational self, as she is conflicted in lots of ways and is uncertain of herself. Collectively, these measurements can be depicted on the spectrum as such:



This shows that Muzhakhoyeva (1) experiences high constraints, (2) has limited self-regard, and (3) can reflect somewhat but her relational self fluctuates a great deal. Together this indicates a low degree of autonomy on the spectrum, and certainly much lower than either Dhanu or Zina.

So far, the cases have suggested that Dhanu, Zina and Muzhakhoyeva appear at different points at the spectrum relative to each other, whereby such a measurement represents the complexity of their external circumstances as well as their internal reflection and the interconnections between them through self-regard. This leaves us with the case of acutely low scores on the spectrum (lower, even, than Muzhakhoyeva) and the question of what my spectrum view has to say about someone who scores so minimally across the axes that they effectively exercise negligible autonomy overall. It is to this final example that we now turn.

Case 4

The last case is that of Kaplan, about whom little is known, but whom I will suppose is severely restricted in her autonomy, so that we can test the parameters of the spectrum. To do this, I suggest Kaplan (a) is coerced (which, based on the evidence, is likely to have transpired), and then tweak the actual scenario to assume she (b) falls into a comatose state (there is no evidence that this occurred – the move is purely conjectural to explore the view). The latter supposition (b) is admittedly extreme and not one that I imagine will transpire very often or will be best use of my view, which is instead to measure the autonomy of (conscious) persons in conditions of high constraint. However, while I recognise these limitations, (b) is also deliberately extreme in order to examine the lower end of the scale and to clarify the

view; this is the only reason for its inclusion.¹⁷¹ I will claim that a key benefit of my approach is that even low-ranking people can be represented on (they do not fall outside) the spectrum.

We start, then, with axis one and constraints. Just as with the other women, we know that Kaplan lives in a context of a war for independence. For her, though, the struggle is between the PKK, who (since 1984 to the present day) have demanded an independent Kurdistan, and the Turkish authorities, who have denied them their goal. Being situated in a war can lead to several problems, some of which should now be familiar. Take, for instance, harm to persons: in this war, both sides have caused some 30,000 deaths in total, mainly civilians of Kurdish ethnicity (Watson and Comert, 2012), which indicates an increased risk of death. There are restricted opportunities due to discrimination, such as the banning of the Kurdish language as well as Kurdish schools by the Turks (Watson and Comert, 2012), suggesting fewer prospects for this group. There has been some \$88million spent on the war instead of infrastructure and jobs (*Today's Zaman*, 2011), implying greater poverty all round than without the war. We can imagine that Kaplan was constrained by the conflict in various ways because of these factors. Given the statistics, for instance, it is probable that she lost family members due to the war and that she potentially underwent prejudice because of her ethnicity, which is part of the reason for military action. These, then, we can assume, are high constraints for Kaplan. In addition to this, and again as with the other women, it is not unreasonable to recognise that Kaplan is a relational self and that this brings other limitations. At 17-years-old, for instance, she is a young Kurdish woman, and this is likely to bring certain expectations from others, (such as around her ethnicity and what being a woman within it means), and commitments she finds herself holding (including having some sympathies with the PKK and for wanting an independent homeland). We can suggest that these details contextualise her life, but more

¹⁷¹ See this part but also the part on 'A Concern' (page 284) for how the comatose example clarifies my view.

importantly that, just like the other bombers, the particularities of who she is intersect with those of war. We might imagine, for instance, that being a young woman and Kurdish in the conflict brings other problems, such as the probability of even greater poverty or a heightened risk of sexual violence (since women routinely suffer more of these kinds of harms in such circumstances – Jaggard, 2013). Both the war and the person she is, then, are part of the fabric of her life and constrain her greatly.

These constraints may not be the only ones that Kaplan faces, however, and I will outline two further possibilities of (factual) coercion and (fictional) falling into a coma. There are, for instance, reports that Kaplan was subject to some form of (a) coercion. In particular, and as discussed in chapter one, following PKK custom, it is believed that Kaplan met, and had an opulent dinner, with the leader Abdullah Ocalan before her mission, and moreover that she saw her former colleague, Turkan Adiyaman, shot dead in front of her for refusing to carry out her assignment (Reuter, 2004). If true, it is not difficult to imagine that both the lavish dinner and the execution could be seen as a coercive threat, since it can be interpreted as grooming Kaplan and as an ultimatum, thereby making it extremely difficult for her to say ‘no’ (the formal option to decline is there, but substantively it is not). This is a heavy burden that places her very high on the axis of constraint on the spectrum. Now, in addition to this, suppose that Kaplan (b) accidentally gets hit on the head and falls into a deep coma the night before her attack. So far, our scenario has taken us to the point where, owing to her context and the coercion she faced, we suggested that there was a great deal of constraint, but now we can conceive of another set of factors that compound her limitations. These are that something struck her head (an external object induced her condition), she is confined her to a bed (she cannot move), and she has to be drip-fed (she cannot eat or drink), for example. Since she was

harmful by an outside force, cannot voluntarily move, and is obstructed in her daily endeavours, we can envisage that these impediments are even higher for Kaplan than those that have thus far been imagined for her.

Of course, some of this is conjecture and so alternative speculation is possible, and this could lead to a different score. Yet, if all of these pressures (about who she is, the war, coercion, and being in a coma) are attributed to Kaplan's life, then, it is not unreasonable to submit that she undergoes grave constraints, which are certainly more limiting than Dhanu, Zina and Muzhakhoyeva's situations.

The second axis is that of self-regard, and we might suspect that this is not as straightforward in Kaplan's case as some of the others. We could imagine – for argument's sake – that in her pre-comatose state, Kaplan had 'average' levels of self-regard (that she had a range of both positive and negative influences in her life and she and other people saw her as answerable to varying degrees right up to the moment of the bump to the head and onset of her condition). However, our concocted comatose state suggests that her level of self-regard is now minimal and she definitely cannot engage with others around her in the way this notion, relationally understood, requires. In other words, while in the coma, we can presume that she does not remember how she and others see her pre-coma, and that she does not have the level of awareness to form a new judgement about the extent to which she is morally considerable now. In this setup, she does not exercise the disposition to answer or be responsible for self, which are signs of self-regard in my view.

We might add to this picture yet another complexity: suppose, as would be consistent with the actual symptoms of some comatose patients (NHS, 2013c), that Kaplan hears the voices of loved ones around her. These voices remind her of her worth to them, that they expect her to pull through, and that they intend to contribute to making her life go well when she does. If we assume that she can discern the positive tone of the voices, there may be some sense of value and importance being conveyed to her by others (on waking some coma patients report this feeling of reassurance – *ibid*), such that it indicates some self-regard (since others play a role in generating this too). However, it can also be suggested that, given her fragile state, Kaplan cannot properly interact with these messages (we can imagine their content not being entirely decipherable or that she cannot fully interpret their meaning because of her lack of awareness, for instance). Indeed being sensitive to others is usually a sign that patients are in the process of emerging from a coma (more on this in the next section) rather than being in the depths of one (*ibid*), as we presently imagine Kaplan to be. Here, her sense that she is someone of moral consideration is not likely to be apparent to her (given that she is not conscious) though others may see her as such. If we accept this, we can propose that her score is incredibly low on this axis and this is different to all three of the women considered so far who achieve a higher reading.

The final axis is that of reflection and, in Kaplan's case, we might foresee some difficulties given the states we have presumed for her. If we imagine Kaplan in a pre-coercive, pre-comatose condition, we can tentatively suggest that she may well have engaged in some critical reflection because there was some evaluation, from a stable enough relational base, of her desire to bomb. When she experiences coercion in the form of the murder of Adiyaman and the dinner with Ocalan, however, this suggests there are strong constraints on her and her

decision-making. If she agreed to carry out the attack in this scenario, we might have cause to think that her judgement was not very robust because of these factors. Some reflection may have occurred – we can imagine her making assessments from a stable relational self related to the bombing, including about her life and the political cause – but in this instance it does not seem like it is a commitment she wants to make hers. She would score some amount for critical reflection but it could not be very high as far as endorsing this goal is concerned.

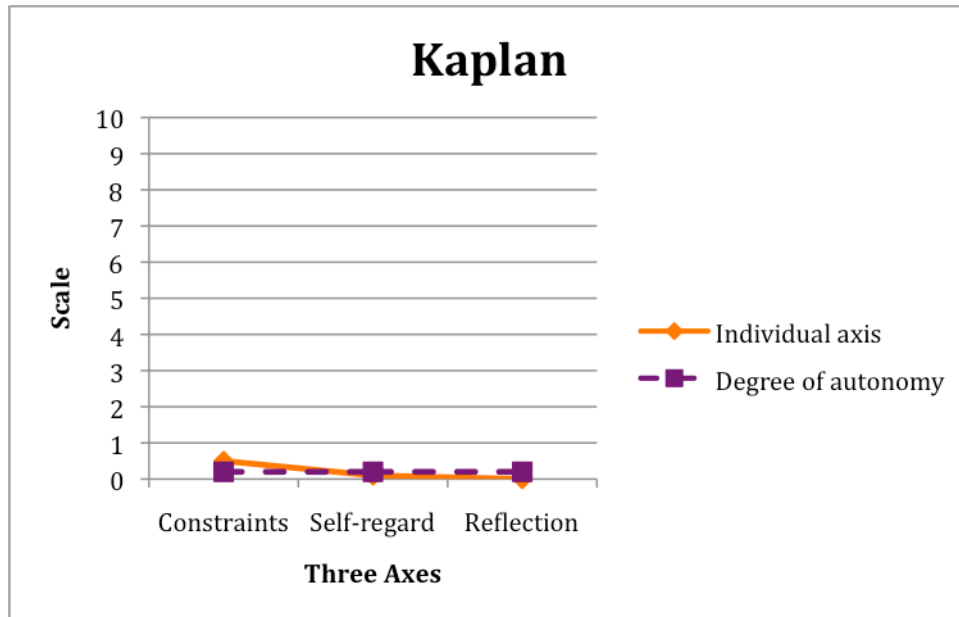
This can be contrasted with the comatose position, where it is not difficult to accept that reflecting from a stable enough relational base is an incredibly difficult feat. Here, let us assume, for example, that Kaplan does not have even hazy memories of her relationships, identities and other commitments while in her condition. It can be imagined that this would leave her with a meagre, perhaps no, sense of self (since she is unaware of who she is) so that reflection is not possible (since the baseline against which all her judgements are made cannot be discerned and reflection itself is frustrated because of her condition). Similarly, even though she has very low levels of self-regard because of how others see her (the output of the second axis) from which to reflect, the process of reflection itself is impossible owing to her lack of consciousness. In this instance, we can suggest that Kaplan measures so low on this axis that there is scant exercise of critical reflection from a stable enough relational self, and this is distinct from Dhanu, Zina and Muzhakhoyeva, who all do exercise reflection from such a self to varying but, relatively, significantly more degrees.

Again, though the example could be set up differently and lead to a different result, we have imagined it in a particular way for the purposes of discussion. We have suggested that, even though the amount of reflection from a stable self was low in the coercion scenario, there was

at least some functioning on this axis. However, in the comatose state, there is likely to be very little, if any, exercise of critical reflection.

All these axes can be drawn together on the spectrum view to estimate the overall level of autonomy. We can plot how, before the inducement of the coma, Kaplan exercised autonomy in a limited way on the spectrum (she had strong constraints in the form of war and coercion, she had ‘average’ self-regard, and she reflected in small amounts from a broadly stable self). However, we can also gauge how, while in the coma, her autonomy reduces much more significantly. We can measure that she experiences higher constraints still (because she is hit on the head and in a coma), she holds a imperceptible self-regard (since there is some positive influence of others but little engagement with her self or others about her moral worth), and she practices undetectable degrees of critical reflection (because the self is extremely limited in its practical unity for reflection, making it difficult to ascertain who she is or what she wants). This reading of Kaplan’s case is deliberately extraordinary and entirely hypothetical in order to show one extreme of the spectrum. Undoubtedly, in practice, such cases are rare. But having a spectrum view does enable us to plot Kaplan’s self-regard (which is very limited) against her constraints (which remain incredibly high) and her reflection (which is the lowest of all). This allows the painting of a fuller picture of Kaplan’s autonomy than solely relying on any one measure.

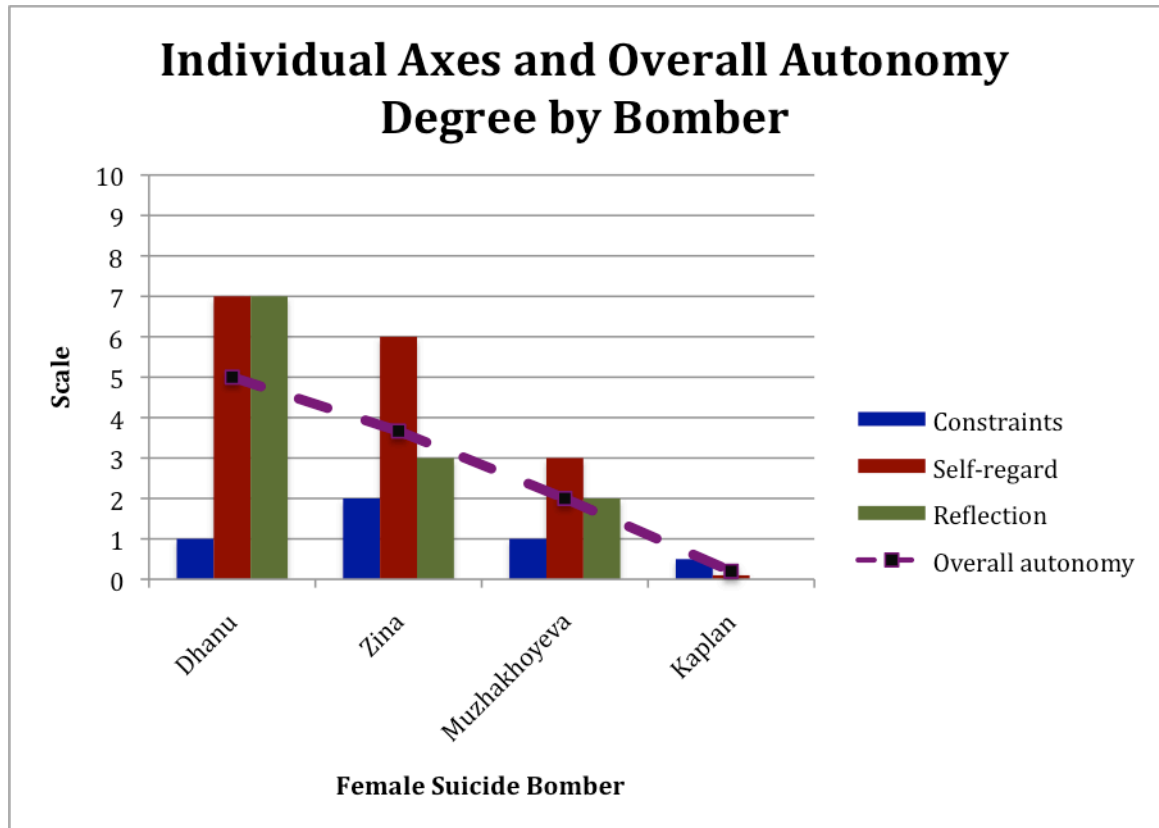
Graphically, Kaplan, in the more drastic comatose state, can be represented in the following way:



Here, we can surmise that there are (1) seriously high constraints, (2) highly reduced self-regard, and (3) a strongly fluctuating relational self with no reflection. Together this indicates that Kaplan scores so poorly across the three axes that, in effect, she exercises a severely depleted autonomy overall, though it is still more than someone who scores '0' across the board. In short, the fictitious example of Kaplan in a comatose condition is an illustration of a radically curbed, though perhaps still existent, autonomy on the spectrum view.

All the cases

So far I have, in the main, presented the four cases individually and plotted each bomber's autonomy on the spectrum separately. Here I will briefly bring the cases together and suggest that a key benefit of my view is that the women's autonomy can be measured against each other too. A side-by-side comparison of the women based on the discussion in this chapter can be depicted as such:



In this graph, and to précis the analysis thus far, we can see that all the women have high constraints (such that they score very low on the first axis) as all of them have lived through their particular wars. Zina, however, has the least restrictions (she had a child out of wedlock but we suggested that she had not been raped like Dhanu or regarded as a slave like Muzhakhoyeva) and Kaplan the most (she is both coerced and, we imagined, in a coma). The women all have some self-regard, with Dhanu and Zina (who, we supposed, think of themselves as worthy of some consideration) scoring higher than Muzhakhoyeva (who we suggested thinks of herself as less worthy), though these three do better than Kaplan (who we proposed does not recognise herself as such, though others might). Finally, Dhanu, Zina and Muzhakhoyeva reflect from a stable enough relational self to some extent so are between the mid and lower ranges of the scale whereas we imagined that Kaplan struggles to do this, and so she gets zero. Taking all of these assumptions, facts, interpretations and axes together one

last time, we can submit that the overall picture of autonomy (recall that this is estimated as an average for illustrative purposes) for the women can be summarised as follows: Dhanu (5.0) has more autonomy functioning than Zina (3.7) who has more than Muzhakhoyeva (2.0) who, in turn, has more than Kaplan (0.2). In sum and relatively, we can propose that Dhanu exercises greater, and Kaplan lower, degrees of autonomy. This thereby enables a nuanced (factoring in constraints, self-regard, and reflection) assessment of the autonomy of the four bombers individually and comparatively.

A concern

In this part, I conclude the exploration of my spectrum view by outlining a possible concern. I stated earlier that my view is not a threshold one and that while others may take '0' across the board or a certain number to indicate something like non-autonomy or minimal competency respectively, this was not my goal, which was rather to estimate the autonomy of the bombers. I have also suggested that someone like Kaplan, who is in a comatose state, still scores on the spectrum though this is at negligible levels. All of this implies some underlying tension with the idea of who should be on the spectrum; is it meaningful to advance that Kaplan scores on it *at all* given her condition? I address this worry here.

There are two things to say about this. The first thing is that moving beyond a nil rating is very easy to do; scoring 0.01 (or an equivalently low number) on any of the axes does this. I have already illustrated this using the example of Kaplan in her coma (who scores marginally on two of the axes). We might also imagine other individuals who would appear towards the lower end of the spectrum overall, such as if Kaplan awoke from her coma and fell into a

minimally conscious state so she fluctuates in and out of awareness – Kaplan_M (where M = minimally conscious).¹⁷² We can suppose that she is someone who is (1) highly constrained (since she is limited in and cannot control her movements consistently, but she can do so to some extent from time to time.). We can also suggest that she (2) has some self-regard (as others may regard her with a great deal of worth and she may recognise and respond to this, but her perception varies intensely depending on what state she is in). We could also imagine that she (3) has some reflection (since she does hold a sense of self when conscious, but it is not a stable enough one because of her condition, and though she might be able to form or endorse commitments, this is also done in a haphazard way). All of these suppositions are similar to others in this kind of condition (NHS, 2013b). We can suppose that Kaplan_M makes it beyond a zero on the spectrum because she scores on each of the axes but that this allotment of autonomy is minuscule. Such a measurement, though small, fits my aim, which is to plot how much autonomy is occurring, and it would not be inaccurate to suggest that, according to the axes of my spectrum, traces of some of the relevant features may be evident. Many persons will get more than a nil score because the goal is to gauge the exercise of various elements of and overall autonomy.

The second related thing to say is I do not draw a line for where concepts like ‘competence’ or ‘responsibility’ can be identified, as my hope – as just stated – is that the spectrum can properly represent the overall extent of the bomber’s autonomy. Let us imagine the hypothetical example of Kaplan_P who has stabilised and is now conscious but, as a result of her trauma, is severely disabled (where P = profound learning disabilities). She might be (1)

¹⁷² Such a minimally conscious person is expected to be higher on the spectrum than both someone in a coma (who is neither awake nor aware) and someone in a persistent vegetative state (who is awake but not aware), but lower than someone who has locked-in syndrome (who is both awake and aware but completely paralysed) (NHS, 2013b; Highfield, 2014).

very constrained in terms of her physical movements but empowered through support services on which she is nonetheless reliant. She might (2) have limited self-regard since she is not considered by others but she does consider herself to be responsible. She might (3) have tiny amounts of reflection since she can identify what kinds of things she wants to eat or wear but cannot make life plans (NHS, 2013a). This is someone who scores higher than Kaplan_M, given the relatively (and more stable) lower constraints and higher self-regard and self-reflection, even though these may in turn be relatively lower scores than someone with moderate or no learning difficulties. While some could question whether anyone in Kaplan_P's condition should be on the spectrum, my intention is to better portray the bombers' overall autonomy, not to label her competent or responsible. While a threshold for these sorts of capacities might be drawn for medical or legal purposes somewhere, my goal is to map functioning even if such levels are not reached. That I do not propose where such a threshold falls is not to say that determining this is not an important endeavour, merely that I do not intend to explore it here since this would require further empirical work and this is not the goal of this thesis. Rather, my aim is to measure the women's autonomy in detail and to distinguish amounts of autonomy for the bombers individually and to compare the bombers' autonomy.

Thus, if we can take our imagined examples of Kaplan in the comatose state (case four) and the ones presented here one final time, we can see that a better representation (and comparison) of the women is possible. To illustrate, we can plot that Kaplan's score of '0' on reflection puts her on a similar level with Kaplan_M and lower than Kaplan_P. In addition, we can map that Kaplan may be more restricted than both on axis one (constraints) and have less worth than Kaplan_M and Kaplan_P on axis two (self-regard). Finally, we can gauge that all

these cases score higher than someone with '0' across all three axes. It is these differences that the spectrum hopes to not just pick up but also to measure. The benefit of my view, then, is that even low-ranking people, such as Kaplan (and Kaplan_M and Kaplan_P) can be represented on the spectrum.

In this part, I sought to put my spectrum view into action by applying it to the bombers in order to make good on the claim that my view allows for a detailed interpretation of the women's autonomy. Using a mix of background facts, secondary sources (such as newspaper interviews with family or with the women themselves), and hypotheses relating to four bombers, I devised a set of scenarios to test my view. I argued that my spectrum view could measure constraints, self-regard, and critical reflection, and generate an overall estimate of autonomy for Dhanu, Zina, Muzhakhoyeva and Kaplan individually, and it could compare the bombers against each other on any of these elements or indeed their autonomy as a whole. The scenarios I presented here could be modified and this would affect the outcome (Dhanu may end up having the least autonomy and Kaplan the most on an alternative reading, for instance), but the point is less about establishing an absolute score for particular women and more that such changes could still be mapped on the spectrum and their autonomy approximated. Though the precise result may be different, then, what is key is that the details remain measurable. Thus, I contend that my view is able to characterise the bomber's autonomy appropriately and to grade their autonomy in a nuanced way, both in theory and in practice.

Implications of a relational spectrum for narratives about bombers

Having discussed my spectrum view, in this final section, I briefly consider the possible consequences of such an approach for portrayals of the bombers. In particular, I explore implications for societal and media narratives of the women as either ‘victim’ or ‘ideal woman’ (the two extremes into which they fell, as presented in chapter one) in terms of first, the agent and second, autonomy. I will argue that adopting the relational account on the whole with a spectrum view implies that mainstream representations of bombers can shift from being simplistic and cursory to more intricate and detailed. In other words, I contend that the relational model undermines these binaries and serves to complicate them instead.

Agent

To start, I consider the implications of the broad relational view for portrayals of agency. Specifically, I ask what consequences adopting the relational agent – which includes understanding the trajectory of acts and the particular agent as well as recognising selves as social and complex – has for narratives of the bombers first, as ‘victims’ and second, as ‘ideal warriors’. I will argue that it allows for more convincing representations of these women.

First, then, I discuss the ‘victim’ archetype that is common in societies that reject the use of bombers. It might initially seem that the relational conception of agents – which, through its focus on contributing factors to the act or construing the agent, searches for reasons behind suicide bombing – falls into the trap of victimising the bombers. However, endorsing this view of the agent is not to suggest, as the ‘victim’ frame does, that if previous acts or the

particular person and why she acted are assessed that agency is being eliminated or eroded by ‘explaining away’ the bomber’s action. To expand, some of the empirical evidence relating to the ‘victim’ frame seems to suggest that references to why she acted – she was bereaved, angry, damaged, suffered state brutality – are excuses for why her acts were not agential. Yet, the relational account takes these experiences as part of who she is – this is the (non-chosen) starting point from which she makes (non-detached) decisions – so it aims to give a more accurate account of her, and why she did what she did. The relational view does not consider this history and particularity as mitigating factors that automatically deny her agency (as the ‘victim’ narrative implies). Rather it recognises, more appropriately, that these women are socially embedded and encumbered, and that by acknowledging these details, a better understanding of her and her act is possible. In this regard, while relational theories look for the impetus for the act and to the particular agent, this does not preclude the possibility of agency by excusing the act in the way the ‘victim’ responses tend to do. On the contrary, I argue that it more accurately represents the way the bombers go about deciding within their social and contextual framework.

Second, I consider the ‘fully agential’ trope of societies that permit the bombers. This societal response is more communal than it is individualistic in how it assumes persons are constructed and how they operate. The narrative emphasises, for instance, the women’s wider reasons and specific obligations to the community, religion, and family as positive and typical (rather than tainted) reasons for their involvement, and this echoes the relational view of the socially constitutive nature of agents. At the same time, however, such responses are (contradictorily) more individualistic than in societies that disallow the bombers. They hint, for instance, that these women can transcend, and are ‘unblemished’ by, social problems and

that they remain 'pure' and even apotheosised, thereby seemingly asocial. Accepting the relational agent would move beyond regarding selves both as always positively constrained by their constitutions and as able to stand apart from their social world in the way the 'ideal warrior' frame insinuates. It would recognise that selves are usually constrained by who they are in a variety of ways (not just favourably as these representations suggest) and they can never be detached (as the 'ideal' narrative partly implies). The relational approach, I contend, aims to complicate the narrative by recognising the connectedness, restrictions and particularity of these women and that their acts only make sense by reference to this wider picture.

Drawing these findings together, by adopting the relational agent, "the female offender is no longer necessarily innocent or biologically flawed" (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, 18) as the 'victim' portrayal suggests, or alternatively an impeccable demi-god as the 'ideal warrior' depiction implies. Rather, she is, more realistically, "a complicated construct" (*ibid*). This understanding of the bombers moves away from making (at least) three (false) assumptions about these women. First, that referencing anything outside the isolated attack, such as reasons behind the act or the particular bomber, reduces agency by default. Second, that the bomber can never challenge her social constitution and so has no agency. Third, that it is possible for a bomber to choose from a 'pure' non-social self. None of these suppositions, which are present to differing extents in the 'victim' and 'ideal warrior woman' societal responses, describe how the women decide or are constructed. By moving towards a relational model, then, many more possibilities for how the bombers are presented can be realised. They need not be limited to being wholly unable to manage their social constitutions as the 'victim' or fully in control of their lives as 'ideal warriors'. Rather, they can be considered as complex

women with backgrounds and identities that root and restrain them, while they act upon, and in, the world in a multitude of ways. Given that the key concern of this thesis was making the ‘victim’ and ‘ideal warrior’ narratives more nuanced and permitting better representations of the bombers, I argue that this is a clear strength of the relational account.

Autonomy

The second set of implications I consider are about representations of the bombers’ autonomy. The relational conception – that focuses on a constitutively social autonomy, reflective endorsement from a ‘practically unified’ self, and a spectrum – has various consequences for the ‘victim’ and the ‘ideal warrior’ narratives. I contend that the account allows a non-binary estimate of the bomber’s autonomy.

First, in the ‘victim’ portrayal – which typically focuses on individual and psychological explanations for the bomber’s behaviour – there is usually an underlying assumption that autonomy is defined as the bombers ‘deciding for themselves’, without force or interference, whether the desire to carry out the attack was what she wanted. Recognising that the bomber’s autonomy is an internal and external practice, the relational account regards self-governance as always constrained but exercisable in degrees. In this way, few of the women would fall into the wholly ‘victim’ frame, where this is taken as the view that anything external compromises the bomber’s will and makes her non-autonomous by default. Rather, the will is always social, but this does not mean the bombers are non-autonomous ‘victims’. Further, it moves away from only searching for psychological and individualistic reasons behind the bomber’s acts that are so prevalent in the ‘victim’ narrative to a thorough exploration of the contextual factors, since these are relevant to how far she can function in autonomy. By

drawing together the will, contexts and others, the relational account, then, maps multiple elements and their interrelations on a spectrum to determine the extent of the bomber's autonomy, and this allows a more complicated understanding of the women than the 'victim' depiction.

Second, the 'ideal warrior' narrative – which usually focuses on broader community reasons for the women's acts – often draws on some external factors, such as communal goals (thereby moving away from less social conceptions) but at the cost of downplaying the individual's will and broader constraints. With regard to the women, for instance, the will of the bombers in the 'ideal warrior' narrative is simply substituted for the will of the community, and this both disregards the significance of the individual and whether the bombers can internally reflect at all. With regard to broader constraints, while the 'ideal warrior' portrayal does consider external elements in a descriptive sense (the war being what makes the bombing necessary) and because the community will is paramount (the war is what matters to the community), the women – by carrying out a cohering desire – are ascribed a full autonomy. Yet, such an attribution fails to include any proper consideration of how far the bombers are restricted by their contexts. By adopting the relational conception of autonomy, however, both problems are addressed and the 'ideal warrior' narrative undermined because the women must reflectively endorse from practically unified wills, and constraints are relevant in determining the degree of autonomy. In this regard, the bombers are likely to have ambivalent and conflicting wills, and autonomy involves reflection and is not naively adopting community values, as the depiction suggests. Moreover, there is no maximum autonomy that these women achieve, as the trope presumes, because contexts always constrain the extent to which autonomy is exercised. The account, therefore, moves

away from the wholly autonomous frame of the ‘ideal warrior’, who acts as someone entirely unlimited and is assumed to be fully or perfectly autonomous.

Bringing this analysis together, adopting relational autonomy moves away from two assumptions that are present in the ‘victim’ and ‘ideal warrior’ portrayals: that autonomy is a narrow internal capacity of the women, and that the bombers are autonomous-or-not. These understandings misdescribe the women’s autonomy by overlooking the importance of the individual, the internal and external together, and that it is achievable in degrees. The relational approach avoids these problems and so is able to offer more complex narratives. It implies, for instance, that the women do not have zero autonomy if their will is social and constrained as the ‘victim’ trope suggests, or a maximum autonomy if they are acting in a god-like capacity as the ‘ideal warrior’ hints at. Rather, it recognises that all agents’ autonomy falls along a relational spectrum that resists these non-social, binary portrayals. Since the relational approach is able to bypass the ‘victim’ and ‘ideal warrior’ narratives of the bombers, and instead focus on degrees of autonomy, I argue it is a promising way in which to complicate representations of these women’s autonomy in society, which was a core aim of this thesis.

In this section, I have considered the implications of a relational approach for the ‘victim’ or ‘ideal warrior’ portrayals. I argued that these narratives are dichotomies and rarely describe the agency or autonomy of these women, and that a relational conception (with a realistic picture of agents and autonomy as relational) allows a more nuanced representation of them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated how my spectrum view measures and compares different but relevant features of autonomy both for individual bombers and across the bombers as a group. By assessing the three axes of the spectrum separately and then together, I have demonstrated that it is possible to capture both internal and external elements that are pertinent to autonomy, and how they interrelate, in order to form a clearer impression about the overall amount of autonomy the bombers exercise. This is because my approach weights the factors that contribute to determining the autonomy functioning of these women. It, for example, maps an expanded picture of how much autonomy is demonstrated by the bombers (in how they reflect, endorse, and justify themselves to others) as well as the extent of the contextual limitations that they face (how a war context radically curbs their preferences and intersects with other constraints in their lives) and, through this dual-pronged approach, more rigorously estimates the degree of autonomy they practice. In so doing, my view approximates the amount of autonomy that is exercised without claiming it is a full autonomy (which the relational model takes to be an impossibility) or precluding it altogether (since autonomy only happens within, not in the absence of, constraint). Further, I argued that this kind of approach implies that there will be more nuanced representations of the bombers; portrayals that move away from the ‘victim’ and ‘ideal warrior’ to much more complex narratives. In short, my spectrum view gauges the appropriate features important for autonomy, allows a comparative assessment of these features individually and overall, and permits more gradation in the plotting of the women’s autonomy.

CONCLUSION

At the outset, I suggested that female suicide bombers were denied a proper attribution of agency, and that relational models of autonomy had thus far under-theorised a spectrum. Bringing these two elements together, the purpose of thesis was to seek out a nuanced way of measuring the autonomy of the bombers. I undertook this task over the course of five chapters.

First, I outlined several case studies of female suicide bombers and discussed how they were portrayed as either ‘victims’ or ‘ideal warriors’. I indicated that these women were not expected to be violent, and that when they were aggressive they had to be ‘explained away’ in order to preserve the dominant gender stereotypes of ‘peaceful woman’ and ‘violent man’. I argued that these explanations served to distort their agency; they were either non-agential or wholly agential, and both misrepresented them.

Second, I characterised liberal models of autonomy as having five features: authentic desires, procedural independence, local and basic autonomy, consistent desires and a distinction between autonomy and responsibility. Using standard critiques, I mapped the debate and indicated that other accounts that were less individualistic, reductive, and internal might be more useful for the female bombers of this thesis.

Third, I classified relational models of autonomy as sharing five traits: the relational agent, socialised autonomy, a spectrum, broad motivations and complex self-identities. I defended

the relational approach against concerns that the agent was socially determined and that the account was too far removed from the internal will. I maintained that the social agent did not preclude agency and that social autonomy did not ignore the internal will but rather included the external too. I argued that the social emphases of this model could potentially represent the bomber's autonomy properly, as these women were often highly constrained.

Fourth, I applied the relational approach to the female suicide bombers of the case studies to further explore its suitability. With regards to the agent, I contended that the relational account aptly represented the bombers as social persons and that they operated in a connected fashion. With regards to autonomy, I argued that the relational approach was compatible with the bomber's socially constituted self-rule. In this regard, I claimed that the relational approach offered a plausible and rich representation of the type of agents the women were, and a faithful depiction of the kind of autonomy the bombers had. Further, I contended that the relational model might be well suited for all persons, who were social agents with social autonomy as much as the bombers. However, I noted that one does not have to endorse this argument to accept the primary claim that relational autonomy is better for female suicide bombers given their extreme constraints.

Fifth, I proposed my spectrum view as a way in which to map the autonomy of the bombers. I offered three axes (constraints, self-regard and reflection), which individually gauged different significant features of autonomy and collectively estimated how much autonomy was occurring overall. I plotted the autonomy of Dhanu, Zina, Muzhakhoyeva, and Kaplan, and – based on a particular set of scenarios – argued that Dhanu had relatively high and Kaplan relatively low levels of autonomy, with the other women falling somewhere between

them. In this way, I argued that my spectrum view was able to distinguish and approximate the separate elements and total autonomy of the bombers in detail, and to contrast each woman's autonomy against the others. Finally, I submitted that the relational spectrum facilitated more nuanced representations of bomber's agency than the binary narratives of the 'victim' or 'ideal warrior' would permit.

I conclude that the relational account is a good fit for the suicide bombers (and possibly for persons more generally), and that my spectrum view allows us to measure the autonomy of the bombers in some detail, and so to differentiate between degrees of autonomy and to distinguish the levels of autonomy of individuals and to compare them against each other.

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