The Importance of Disambiguating Adaptive States in Development Theory and Practice

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This article proposes a way to disambiguate the evaluative states currently identified as "adaptive preferences" in development literature. It provides a brief analysis of Serene Khader's Deliberative Perfectionist Approach, and demonstrates that distinguishing between adaptive states has important implications for the theory and practice of development intervention. Although I support Khader's general approach and consider my project to be complementary, I argue that the term preferences *be replaced with four distinct terms:* beliefs, choices, desires, *and* values. *Distinguishing among adaptive states can serve to prevent inappropriate intervention and appreciate the costs of transforming inappropriate adaptations. I argue that adaptive values are especially problematic, given how central a person's values are to their sense of meaning and self. Attempts to transform adaptive values are likely to produce internal conflict, resulting in psychological distress and diminished agency. Furthermore, some values (referred to in moral psychology as sacred values) preclude deliberation and comparison given their communal status as infinitely valuable. To deliberate about sacred values is to violate them. The emotional and psychological damage that may result from value transformation is thus likely to be extensive, and must be taken into account when determining whether, and what type of, intervention is justified.*

This article proposes a way to disambiguate the evaluative states currently identified as "adaptive preferences" in development literature. I begin with a brief analysis of Serene Khader's Deliberative Perfectionist Approach. I then distinguish among adaptive choices, beliefs, desires, and values,[1] and argue that doing so has important implications for the theory and practice of development intervention. I argue that adaptive *values* are especially problematic, given how central a person's values are to their senses of meaning and self. Intervention in and attempted transformation of a person's adaptive values (1) is likely to produce internal conflict, resulting in

psychological distress and diminished agency, and (2) may force the value bearer to violate a commitment the person holds to be sacred. In the former case, intervention may diminish important aspects of flourishing. In the latter, intervention may uniquely wrong the person by causing them to judge themselves as bad or morally corrupt, and alienating them from their moral communities.

I argue that distinguishing among adaptive states demonstrates the need to challenge certain assumptions in development theory and practice, and tailor intervention as appropriate. I maintain, first, that theorists and practitioners must pay careful attention to whether the source of an adaptive preference (AP) is actually the person's psychological state, as opposed to the person's nonnormative beliefs or the choices available, which would suggest different methods of intervention. Second, I argue against the seemingly common assumption that AP transformation is necessarily beneficial for the adaptive preference bearer. If certain adaptive values are deeply held or intimately connected to other commitments in a person's system of values, well-being and agency may be diminished by value transformation. This suggests that practitioners should focus not only on a particular AP, but on the structure of a person's system of values. In the case of sacred values, the critical questioning of which constitutes a violation, the cost of intervention may be the person's moral self-image. I urge practitioners who are confronted with adaptive values to think twice before pursuing value transformation, and to consider alternative methods of intervention besides direct value interrogation and deliberation in cases of sacred values.

KHADER'S APPROACH TO ADAPTIVE PREFERENCE IDENTIFICATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Khader provides an account of adaptive preferences that assists development practitioners in identifying and responding to APs in a morally defensible way, while generally accommodating the current usage of the term *adaptive preferences* in development theory. She develops what she calls the Deliberative Perfectionist Approach to adaptive preference intervention, according to which inappropriately "adaptive preferences [IAPs] are (1) preferences inconsistent with basic flourishing (2) that are formed under conditions nonconducive to basic flourishing and (3) that we believe people might be persuaded to transform upon normative scrutiny of their preferences and exposure to conditions more conducive to flourishing" (Khader 2011, 42). Preferences that appear to meet these conditions ought to be considered "suspect" by practitioners, and subjected to further analysis through active deliberation between the practitioner and the deprived person to determine whether the preference is actually inappropriately adaptive, and how it should be altered.

The Deliberative Perfectionist Approach posits an objective account of basic flourishing, tied to human nature, that is necessary for a good life and ought to be attainable for every human being (Khader 2011, 49). According to Khader (and much of the relevant literature), if no objective account of flourishing were posited, and well-being were instead considered purely subjectively, we would be unable to defensibly advocate for changing a preference that contributes to the bearer's own oppression.

Similarly, Khader's concept of the "Flourishing Claim"—namely, the claim that people generally pursue their own flourishing—makes it possible for us to identify preferences as in some sense imposed on their bearers by oppressive conditions. These characteristics of suspect preferences—that they are inconsistent with a person's well-being, and that they are the result of oppressive conditions instead of being self-authored—are both central to the standard understanding of APs (46).

Although Khader does not provide the content of an account of flourishing, she argues that any acceptable conception will be basic, justificatorily minimal, and vague (Khader 2011, 61). Furthermore, a conception of flourishing appropriate for public intervention must be created through cross-cultural deliberation, specifically through deliberation with deprived people. We cannot read a person's underlying reasons for behavior, or her preferences, from her behavior (29). Thus, to determine whether and what type of intervention is appropriate, practitioners need to engage deprived people in conversation (54). This assists practitioners in avoiding what Khader calls the "occupational hazards" of development intervention: "psychologizing the structural," "misidentifying imposed trade-offs," and "confusing difference with deprivation."

Practitioners "psychologize the structural" when they identify a person's beliefs or desires as the source of their deprivation, when the deprivation is at least partly due to unjust structural conditions (Khader 2011, 11). For instance, a woman may choose not to pursue an education for herself not because she thinks she is unworthy of educational opportunities, but because it is financially possible for only one person in the family to attend school, and sending one of her children would maximize the returns on her financial investment. Similarly, a practitioner "misidentifies trade-offs" when she fails to recognize that gains in one domain of flourishing may lead to losses in another. Finally, "confusing difference with deprivation" occurs when practitioners assume that flourishing will present in a way they are familiar with, and so believe that a person has an AP when she is pursuing flourishing in an unfamiliar way (55–58).

In her more recent work, Khader also distinguishes between "paradigmatic" APs and "look-alike phenomena" (Khader 2013, 311–27). According to Khader, "An individual has paradigmatic APs if she perpetuates injustice against herself because of a near-completely distorted normative worldview" (311). She argues that some development theorists, notably Martha Nussbaum and Susan Moller Okin, have paradigmatic APs in mind when they discuss adaptive preferences. However, Khader maintains that some APs do not manifest in the total distortion of a person's values. To begin with, *APs caused by selective value distortion* (SAPs) are preferences that involve the internalization of oppressive norms or the performance of deprivation-perpetuating behaviors in some areas of life, but not others. For instance, a woman may believe she is entitled to adequate nutrition without believing she deserves an education. Khader also distinguishes paradigmatic APs from *APs caused by forced tradeoffs* (TAPs), preferences caused by situations in which a person "cannot access some threshold level of welfare in all domains of life, so she trades it away in some domains of life to achieve it in others" (317–18). The third type of look-alike,

deprivation-perpetuation caused by factual misperception (MAPs), involves flourishing-incompatible preferences formed due to an error in or lack of nonnormative information (318).

Khader further distinguishes between "deep" and "shallow" preferences. According to Khader, deep preferences are preferences that people "would retain under conditions conducive to flourishing that a person recognizes as such" (Khader 2011, 51). She argues that a person's deep preferences will tend to aim at her flourishing, although she acknowledges that deep preferences are not *necessarily* compatible with flourishing.[2] Thus, the transformation of an AP can be understood as a change that enables the pursuit of a flourishing-compatible life consistent with one's deep preferences (which may also require creating the conditions necessary to pursue them), through the process of active deliberation (Khader 2011, 144).

Because Khader is committed to both promoting basic flourishing and respecting a person's individual choices and cultural values, the distinctions she makes are necessary for morally defensible intervention. I propose that further disambiguating the evaluative states currently classified as APs is necessary for adequately appreciating the costs of preference transformation, justifying transformation, and preventing inappropriate intervention.

ADAPTIVE CHOICES, BELIEFS, DESIRES, AND VALUES

Because the use of the word *preferences* can be misleading in some of the ways that Khader hopes to avoid, I propose replacing the word "preferences" with four distinct terms: choices, beliefs, desires, and values. Although Khader's concepts of TAPs and MAPs are similar to what I call adaptive beliefs and adaptive choices, I argue that a move away from the language of preferences is desirable.

Khader is concerned for both practical and moral reasons with correctly identifying APs and preventing inappropriate intervention. Practically, misidentifying flourishing-compatible preferences as APs can lead practitioners to intervene in ways that "will not improve, and are likely to worsen, the lives of the women they intend to help" (Khader 2013, 320). This is also true in cases where practitioners misidentify the causes of flourishing-incompatible preferences, such as when they attempt to bolster a woman's self-esteem when the problem is her limited options. She further argues that some interventions are not *morally* justified for a variety of reasons, including that they disregard people's closely held, flourishing-compatible commitments and values, and that they "promote unjustified cultural homogenization" (320). Furthermore, she argues that misidentifying the source of APs can lead practitioners to disregard a deprived person's capacity for and exercise of agency.

The distinctions that I recommend making help to avoid these problems by calling attention to the fact that in some cases a person's *preferences* are not the root of the problem. To illustrate the differences among these four types of states—believing, choosing, desiring, and valuing—I will turn to an example Khader uses throughout

her book, of a woman who "undernourishes herself to feed her husband" (Khader 2011, 83).

A person can be said to make an adaptive *choice* when she must decide between what she perceives as undesirable options, even if she would choose a flourishing-conducive option were it available. A preference is by its nature a comparative concept and can be fully understood only in context. If a person has only undesirable options, it is misleading to say that she "has a preference for A" without reference to that to which A is preferred. So, for instance, it is misleading to say that a woman has a *preference* to undernourish herself without acknowledging her alternatives. Imagine that the woman gives her husband a larger portion of food because without that amount he would be unable to perform his job, and so taking more food for herself would actually result in less sustenance overall. In this case, the source of the oppression-perpetuating behavior is not primarily which of the available options the woman prefers, but the undesirable option set. Focusing on the woman's psychological state would therefore be inappropriate; intervention should focus on increasing access to desirable options, ideally through structural change, or through efforts to assist women in securing their own income. This type of case, I take it, is why Khader distinguishes TAPs (APs caused by forced tradeoffs) from other types of APs (Khader 2011, 58). Describing the woman as making an adaptive *choice* reduces the tendency to think of that which she *chooses* (given limited options) as that which she *prefers* (as if the preference were part of her psychological state).

An adaptive *belief* refers to an incorrect empirical proposition that is formed under conditions not conducive to flourishing and provides empirical support for flourishing-incompatible behaviors. Like Khader's concept of MAPs (APs due to misperceptions), the category of adaptive beliefs does not include normative beliefs. Some preferences will turn out to be founded on incorrect beliefs (adaptive beliefs) about empirical facts; these may, in some circumstances, be relatively easily changed by providing a person with the relevant evidence. For instance, explaining to a person that boiling her water before drinking it can prevent disease is likely to change her preference to drink water straight from the well. Changing a person's empirical beliefs is unlikely in many cases to cause psychological distress, provided that it does not require challenging their values. Furthermore, if the belief is the only thing underlying a preference, the preference and behavior will likely change quickly and without a lingering desire to revert back to one's previous belief.

Recognizing that some "APs" are really adaptive beliefs contributes to the correct identification of the impediment to flourishing, and helps avoid inappropriate intervention. As Khader points out, correcting an incorrect empirical belief without challenging normative judgments differs substantially from changing a desire or value: "An intervention that connects an existing notion of harm and benefit to a concrete practice looks quite different from one that attempts to change women's conceptions of harm and benefit" (Khader 2013, 319). Returning to our example, if the woman believes that women need substantially less food than they actually do, regardless of how much labor they perform, presenting evidence to the contrary may be sufficient,

and the deprived woman is likely to correct her beliefs without significant psychological distress or the persistence of the original belief.

Practically speaking, what I am calling adaptive choices and adaptive beliefs line up with Khader's categories of TAPs and MAPs, respectively. However, the term *preferences* ought to be dropped. Referring to these states as preferences implies that the source of the flourishing-incompatible behavior is the normative judgment of the person in question, that something is wrong with her ability to assess and rank options appropriately. This suggests that appropriate intervention will always be psychological instead of structural or informative. Referring to these states as adaptive choices and beliefs helps to avoid Khader's occupational hazards and respect the agential capacities of the people in question.

Adaptive desires are well-captured by Khader's formulation of IAPs, provided that this definition excludes the other adaptive states. I have explained how to distinguish adaptive desires from adaptive choices and beliefs, just as Khader distinguishes adaptive desires from TAPs and MAPs (see Khader 2013). The more difficult distinction to draw is between adaptive *desires* and adaptive *values*; the difference may not always be apparent, and I do not believe that the relationship between the two lends itself to a sharp division. I allow for the possibility, for instance, that desiring may in some instances be a mode of valuing. Still, we can distinguish values from some types or instances of desires. For the purposes of this paper, I take values to be more central to a person's sense of meaning or self than most desires. While desires are expressed by something like "I want to X," values involve the idea that "it is important for my sense of meaning/self that I have, promote, or preserve X." Furthermore, as I will use the terms, mere desires (desires that are not also values) are not sufficient to count as moral attitudes, whereas at least some values are.

People can have desires that are not closely connected to their values, and many people regularly have desires that they reject. For instance, a pacifist may conceivably desire to strike someone who is particularly insulting, even if they are ashamed of this desire and would never act on it. If a desire is inconsistent with one's values, one may be eager to get rid of the desire and welcome another's help in doing so.[3] This tends not to be the case with values. Since values are bound up with one's identity and sense of meaning, values are usually endorsed. When I refer to adaptive desires from here on, I mean to pick out adaptive states that are states of *merely* desiring, and not also states of *valuing*.

APs that are actually desires will likely require more extensive intervention than those based on false beliefs. As Khader argues, group discussion between deprived people may be particularly helpful in this situation, since similarly positioned individuals are likely to hold similar flourishing-compatible desires, and validate or encourage them in one another. This type of intervention is likely to be more useful when confronting adaptive desires than adaptive beliefs or choices. Regarding beliefs, in some cases it may be easier to trust information provided by someone whose background is similar to your own. However, it seems likely that it would be easier for a nonlocal development practitioner to persuade someone of another culture that a nonnormative belief is incorrect than to persuade her to question her desires. This,

however, is an empirical point that must be explored. In either case, intervention ought to involve discussion with the person in question regarding the reasons for her desires and how they might be redirected or changed to promote flourishing.

Returning to our example, if the AP is a desire, such as wanting to be perceived as a "good wife" by her husband or others, deliberative intervention may focus on how the woman's desires are ranked, or how closely they are tied to her strongly held values. Intervention may also focus on the importance of adequate nourishment, potentially making the desire for food more important, subjectively, than the desire to please others. However, conflicts between an old desire and a new (or changed) desire may result in a "remainder" desire (Williams 1973b). Even if the woman's desires are changed such that she now desires adequate nutrition more than the approval of her husband, the latter desire will likely remain, and may be impossible to satisfy if she prioritizes adequate nutrition. This may cause her emotional pain, or internal conflict. Although her flourishing may be promoted in some ways (since she will be better nourished), it will also be damaged in terms of her psychological well-being.

ADAPTIVE VALUE TRANSFORMATION AND ITS COSTS

Much of the development literature on APs has justified intervention on the basis of increasing flourishing, well-being, or autonomy.[4] The focus on the negative effects of APs lends itself to the assumption that changing APs will necessarily and straightforwardly increase the bearer's overall well-being. Of course, this may not be what some of the authors themselves believe—Khader, for instance, acknowledges that trade-offs regarding flourishing must often be made. Debate over the oppressive nature of APs can lead the audience to assume, however, that if APs are not conducive to flourishing (or well-being or agency), their transformation *must* be beneficial overall. Because of this, I believe, little attention has been paid to the potential *costs* of transformation, particularly those involving internal conflict and distress.[5] In this section I argue that, in some cases, value transformation can result in significant losses in terms of flourishing, even according to the terms of the relevant theorists. I further argue that intervention can inflict a unique wrong on a person if the value that is subject to deliberation is held to be sacred, in which case questioning the value is itself a violation of it. In such cases, intervention may cause a person to judge themselves as morally corrupt and alienate them from their commitments and community.

INTERNAL VALUE CONFLICT AND FLOURISHING

Values, as I have defined them, are central to a person's sense of meaning or self. Most people's core values are fairly robust, resistant to change, and interconnected. Because this is the case, value transformation is likely to be a complex and time-consuming process, and may result in the simultaneous holding of conflicting (or contradictory) values. Challenging adaptive values (AVs) runs a greater risk of causing

psychological pain and internal conflict than challenging more superficial desires does. Even successful deliberation that results in the adoption of new values will likely produce a period of internal conflict. This may be because the old value is still in effect through deeply held, automatic intuitions, or because the new value does not readily fit into a person's interconnected value set. Conflict of this sort may damage her sense of integrity, and alienate her from her deeply held convictions (Williams 1973a, 116–17). Such alienation is likely to cause psychological pain, the severity of which will vary. The period of time during which a person holds conflicting values may be brief, but if her original values were deeply held or bound up with other important commitments, it is more likely that internal discord will persist. Assuming that flourishing includes psychological health and some threshold level of subjective well-being, this will negatively affect flourishing.[6]

Inconsistent values (and the corresponding reasons and intuitions) that overlap in terms of domain are likely to recommend different courses of action. It seems probable that a person with internal conflict of this sort will experience some situations as moral dilemmas. In a moral dilemma, a person must do A, and must do B, but is unable to do both A and B. In these cases, any decision may be experienced as wrong, or as violating some important commitment or obligation.[7] In the case of AVs, it is unlikely that the commitment associated with the overridden value can be fulfilled in some other way, given an AV's inconsistency with basic flourishing. The violation of the value associated with the unchosen action(s) may result in feelings of guilt, the betrayal of one's identity or community, and/or the need to make amends. People who experience a situation as calling morally for incompatible, conflicting actions are furthermore less likely to feel confident in their decisions (Mandel and Vartanian 2008, 222), which may further diminish their psychological well-being. Simultaneously holding conflicting values may also interfere with a person's ability to maintain internal consistency, decide how to act, and endorse her actions. That is, internal value conflict may diminish certain types of agency or autonomy.

As is evident from the debate regarding the relationship between APs and autonomy,[8] theorists concerned with the agency of deprived people are not always referring to the same sort of autonomy. To take one example, Khader points out that some authors apparently conflate "welfare agency," or "the ability to enhance one's welfare," with "feminist agency," or "the ability to identify and change sexist norms" (Khader 2014, 224). However, one of the motivating intuitions behind APs is that they do not, in an important sense, belong to their bearers. Instead, they are thought of as imposed by an oppressive society, or as not reflectively endorsed by their bearers, or as conditioned by external conditions. Much of the literature on APs, in fact, is aimed at showing that APs are necessarily autonomy deficits in one of these senses. These concerns strongly suggest that AP theorists are committed to the normative value of consistency between a person's goals and their actions, or personal endorsement, or psychological independence in addition to personal endorsement.

Indeed, some AP theorists explicitly define agency or autonomy in similar terms. Khader provides a general account of autonomy as involving "exercising the deliberative and self-interpretive capacities that allow an individual to sustain her own

normative point of view" (Khader 2013, 306). Elsewhere she posits that agency is "a person's capacity to act in a way that reveals her sense of what matters to her" (Khader 2011, 113). However, a coherent normative viewpoint is difficult to maintain if one's commitments are frequently in tension, as is the ability to act in a way consistent with one's deeply held values if one is uncertain which values are truly one's own. Similarly, Anita Superson argues that self-direction is necessary for autonomy (Superson 2005, 110, 116). Although for Superson this definition includes acknowledging one's equal self-worth, it also includes something like the personal endorsement of one's actions. In fact, this seems to be a crucial component to a variety of accounts of agency/autonomy that insist that autonomy requires some sort of psychological freedom from oppressive socialization—once this condition is met, for an action to be autonomous it must at least be consistent with an agent's corrected, or authentic, goals and values.

Regardless of whether agency is necessarily diminished by APs, adaptive value transformation can potentially diminish agency further. A person holding conflicting values, or conflicting intuitions due to the remnants of a rejected value, may have a difficult time endorsing her actions. When faced with a decision between actions, one may be unable to step back from the situation and identify one of the options as consistent with one's commitments due to this conflict. Even after the fact, no "right answer" may become apparent, which may hinder an agent's ability to make future plans in accordance with her goals and commitments. Although we all experience moral conflicts occasionally, this is often because of facts about the world that bring theoretically compatible values into contingent conflict. The experience of commitments that are necessarily incompatible, in contrast, is likely to increase instances of moral uncertainty, and so impede autonomous action, endorsement, and planning.

Given the importance placed on agency, action endorsement, future planning in a way that is consistent with one's values, and the ability to maintain a relatively coherent normative viewpoint seem like they must be aspects of flourishing. Theorists of APs already appear to assume that this type of agency is important to flourishing, and so the costs to agency of value transformation must be taken into account. In practice, this requires further caution on the part of development practitioners, as the consequences of intervention are unlikely to be wholly positive. If intervention is pursued, it therefore requires that the practitioner engage the deprived person(s) in extensive deliberation in which the practitioner tries to learn how central the relevant value is, how it is connected to other values the deprived person holds, what interventions would cause the least bad subjective loss, and which interventions are likely to be endorsed. These points are lost if we do not recognize that some "preferences" are in fact values, central to a person's identity and sense of meaning.

Sacred Values

The picture of intervention just discussed is further complicated if the value in question has been sacralized. Research in moral psychology has identified *sacred* (or

protected)[9] *values* (SVs) as values that a culture treats as having infinite normative value, and that therefore preclude "comparisons, trade-offs, or indeed any other mingling with bounded or secular values" (Tetlock et al. 2000, 853). SVs may take the form of particular objects, dates, places, people, actions, or ideas. Once a value has been "sacralized" by a person or community, it is invested "with importance far beyond the utility" it possesses, and is usually thought of as absolute (Graham and Haidt 2012, 13); thus, questioning the value, or its worth in relation to other goods, in itself constitutes a violation of that value. People attempt to keep sacred values insulated from the secular domain by (1) refusing to condone value violations regardless of any associated (nonsacred) benefits, (2) expressing moral outrage when such trade-offs are made by others, and (3) participating in symbolic "moral cleansing" (such as advocating for the punishment of offenders, or volunteering to support a cause) after contemplating such trade-offs in an effort to reconnect with strongly held moral commitments (Tetlock 2003, 320).

According to Alan Fiske and Philip Tetlock's research, SVs play a crucial role in facilitating social cooperation. Although the particular values considered sacred will vary across time and culture, the holding of sacred values appears to be universal (Tetlock 2003, 320–21). Fiske and Tetlock maintain that SVs underlie shared understandings about the normative social commitments of a community. As they assert:

> To transgress this normative boundary, to attach a monetary value to one's friendships or one's children or one's loyalty to one's country, is to disqualify oneself from certain social roles. People feel that making such an evaluation demonstrates that one is not a true friend, or parent, or citizen. In brief, to compare is to destroy. Merely making explicit the possibility of certain trade-offs weakens, corrupts, and degrades one's moral standing. (Fiske and Tetlock 1997, 256)

Contemplating, or attempting to make, trade-offs between sacred and nonsacred (secular) values does serious damage to a person's moral identity and conception of themselves as belonging to a moral community (Tetlock et al. 2000, 854).

Empirical studies have shown that contemplating trade-offs involving SVs produces significant psychological distress. Tetlock and his colleagues, for instance, asked respondents to read a story about Robert, the Director of Health Care Management at a hospital, confronting either a *taboo trade-off*, a trade-off between a sacred and a secular value, or a *tragic trade-off*, a trade-off between two SVs.[10] In the taboo case, Robert must decide whether to save the life of a boy, Johnny, who needs a liver transplant costing $1,000,000, or to use the same money to improve hospital equipment and increase salaries. The SV in this case is the value of Johnny's life. Respondents were then asked to assess Robert's decision. In general, respondents judged Robert more harshly if presented with a description in which it took him longer to make a decision (thus showing that he treated the two values as open to comparison), or in which he decided to use the money to update equipment. The stronger the moral outrage of the respondents, the more likely they were to participate in symbolic moral cleansing by volunteering, when asked, to participate in an organ-

donation campaign (Tetlock et al. 2000, 857–59). This demonstrates that contemplation of taboo trade-offs results in feelings of moral contamination and an associated need to reestablish one's commitment to SVs. As Tetlock and his colleagues assert, "it is sufficient for counternormative thoughts to flicker briefly through consciousness prior to rejecting them. That brief prerejection interval ... can produce a subjective sense—however unjustified—that one has been cognitively contaminated and has fallen from moral grace in the community" (855).

Some adaptive values are likely candidates for being SVs. Take, for instance, a woman's preference to perpetuate female genital cutting. In some cases, the values supporting the practice of genital cutting, such as female purity, are likely sacralized by the community and internalized by female members. Some feminist theories on genital cutting "recognize that female genital cutting ... is a means by which women define their collective social identity," and so uphold the normative commitments of the community (Yount 2002, 338). Speaking out against the practice, or refusing genital cutting of oneself or one's daughter (when possible) may demonstrate to the community that a person does not understand or respect the community, her position in it, or the value of purity. Development practitioners may disagree with this value, but they must recognize that for a woman who has sacralized the value, considering breaking with the practice may result in feelings of alienation, moral condemnation, and shame. Consideration of the benefits of refusing, as may be offered by a practitioner in an attempt to transform the value, are unlikely to help as they will make explicit the trade-off between a sacred value and other values such as sexual health. Prolonged deliberation on the topic is likely to worsen feelings of moral violation and prompt moral-cleansing.

Many of the studies on SVs have focused on respondents' reactions to the hypothetical actions of fictitious individuals, institutions, or governments. In some of these studies, respondents qualify the absolute nature of their values or make taboo trade-offs after being prompted by experimenters. As Jeremy Ginges and his colleagues point out, however, these results may be due at least in part to the "nonrealistic hypothetical scenarios" of the experiments. In contrast, Ginges and his collaborators performed experiments that "focused on issues fundamental to a real political dispute, on issues that are centrally important to the lives of our participants who are key players in the dispute, and used tradeoff scenarios that were realistic" (Ginges et al. 2007, 7357). They interviewed three groups of people (Jewish Israeli settlers, Palestinian refugees, and Palestinian students) about their reactions to possible peace solutions between Israel and Palestine that involved sacrificing a value held sacred by the respondent's group. The researchers found that those who sacralized the relevant value expressed moral outrage at these proposals, and that moral outrage *increased* if nonsacred benefits were offered to "sweeten" the peace proposals (7358). This suggests that in some situations, providing benefits of the wrong type (nonsacred) may further entrench the attitude of sacredness, or increase the expression of commitment to SVs.

Thus, a deliberative approach to intervention in cases of SVs may result in both high psychological costs and the reaffirmation of adaptive values. Furthermore,

intervention aimed at transforming AVs asks women not only to hypothetically consider violating SVs for the sake of other gains, but to change their day-to-day attitudes, actions, and habits. To better understand what this would involve, consider an example discussed by James Rachels. Summarized from Herodotus's *History*, Rachels writes:

> Darius, a king of ancient Persia … had found … that the Callatians (a tribe of Indians) customarily ate the bodies of their dead fathers …. One day … he summoned some Greeks who happened to be present at his court and asked them what they would take to eat the bodies of their dead fathers. They were shocked … and replied that no amount of money could persuade them to do such a thing. Then Darius called in some Callatians, and while the Greeks listened asked them what they would take to burn their dead fathers' bodies. The Callatians were horrified and told Darius not even to mention such a dreadful thing. (Rachels 1999, 15)

The Callatians in this story have apparently sacralized the practice of consuming their deceased fathers, whereas the Greeks have sacralized cremation. I assume that most readers will have sacralized the prohibition against eating the deceased, and so be very uncomfortable considering this option. Notice, however, that when thinking abstractly about someone at some time eating a deceased relative, the feelings of disgust or moral condemnation may be muted. In fact, if someone provides reasons to do so, you may qualify your condemnation, for instance by acknowledging that it is acceptable or a necessary evil to do so if the alternative is starvation. Seriously considering changing your values and participating in the practice, however, is another matter. If someone asked you, for instance, to try to imagine yourself consuming the flesh of a loved one, your response would likely be shock or indignation, as well as some level of emotional distress in the form of anger, nausea, repulsion, horror, intense sadness, or some combination thereof. You may want to end the conversation as quickly as possible. If you were pushed to further consider the question, your psychological distress would likely increase, and you may feel the need to strengthen your expression of commitment against eating the deceased.

Attempting to transform an AV that is held sacred risks wronging a person in a serious and unique way. Deliberation about SVs can result in a person judging themselves to be morally corrupt or tainted, and lead to intense feelings of alienation both from their own values and their moral community. The point here is not that transforming an SV means losing a "good" value, or one that contributes to flourishing in some way, but that asking someone to question SVs is likely to be morally disorienting at best, and at worst lead them to judge themselves to be bad and unworthy of belonging in their moral community. Practitioners, therefore, should be extremely cautious both in determining whether an AP is a sacred value, and if it is, whether to interfere with that value.

If intervention is pursued, strategies that avoid direct confrontation with SVs ought to be followed. For instance, practitioners could attempt to find methods of flourishing that leave the SV intact, such as the example of communities who

stopped the practice of physical female genital cutting but retained a ritual called "Circumcision through Words" which served the same symbolic purpose (Khader 2011, 166).[11] An additional strategy may be to organize groups including both people who sacralize a particular value and those who do not, but have similar value and experience sets overall. Those who have not sacralized the relevant value may be able to reframe the issue in a way that allows SV bearers to consider the trade-off as either tragic[12] or routine, resulting in less moral tainting. This may allow the person with the SV to consider such a trade-off without herself having to do the conceptual "violating" (Tessman 2015, 136–37). It may also allow her to witness the consequences of relegating the value to nonsacred status, which, if perceived as positive, may prompt interrogation of the SV.

Differentiating between adaptive states is crucial for justifying and selecting appropriate intervention. I have argued that in the case of beliefs and choices, the language of preferences contributes to a tendency to locate the source of deprivation-perpetuating behavior in the person's psychological state or agential capacity, instead of in structural injustices or the availability of information. Furthermore, I have shown that differentiating between AVs and other adaptive states enables us to appreciate the potential costs of transformation, which has implications in terms of the justification for and potential methods of intervention. When an AV is present, development practitioners should begin by attempting to determine how the AV is related to the person's other values and commitments. They should then attempt to create, in conjunction with the deprived person, solutions that retain deeply held values while expressing them in ways that are more compatible with flourishing, or that minimize the psychological and agential costs of value transformation. In the case of sacred values, resistance to engaging in deliberation about these values should be respected and alternative methods of intervention explored.

Although I believe much can be gained from disambiguating these states, I do not mean to imply that the various adaptive states are completely separable. In many cases, an oppression-perpetuating behavior may be the result of multiple types of adaptive states. Furthermore, beliefs and choices are often closely tied to normative commitments, and desires and values may overlap substantially. Still, I have argued that careful categorization, left open for reevaluation, can assist development practitioners in pursuing justifiable intervention, or determining that intervention may not be appropriate in some, hopefully rare, cases of strongly held values. In cases where value deliberation or transformation leads to significant psychological harm, diminished agency, or the violation of sacred values, practitioners should think twice before pursuing intervention, and proceed with added caution and sensitivity to the costs they may be inflicting.

NOTES

1. The terms *preferences*, *beliefs*, *desires*, and *values* have been the subjects of considerable philosophical discussion and debate. On *preferences*, see von Wright 1963; Sen 1970; Elster 1983; Sen 1993; Sen 1999. On *beliefs*, see Fodor 1981; Davidson 1984; Dennett 1987; Fodor 1990; Marcus 1990. On *desires*, see Strawson 1994; Scanlon 1998; Anscombe 2000. On *values*, see Sidgwick 1907; Williams 1973b; Scanlon 1998.

2. See Khader 2011, 51: "preferences that impede people's basic flourishing are unlikely to be their deep preferences," and 185: "However, I do not claim that either of these steps will reveal with absolute certainty whether people's preferences would change under better conditions." This interpretation of Khader is also supported by her discussion of self-sacrificing preferences, which she acknowledges *can* be deep preferences even though they are not conducive to flourishing. See Khader 2011, 143–44.

3. Take Harry Frankfurt's example of the unwilling addict, used to illustrate his distinction between first- and second-order desires. The addict has a first-order desire for drugs (he desires to take drugs) and a second-order desire not to desire drugs (he desires to get rid of the first-order desire to take drugs). The addict rejects his first-order desire to take drugs, and would likely welcome help to rid himself of the desire altogether. Frankfurt 1971.

4. See Elster 1983; Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000; Khader 2011; Khader 2012; Khader 2013; Stoljar 2014. I focus on justifications based on an account of flourishing. For the debate regarding the relationship between APs and rationality/autonomy, see Elster 1983; Benson 1991; Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000; Narayan 2002; Superson 2005; Baber 2007; Bruckner 2009; Colburn 2011; Khader 2011; Khader 2012; Stoljar 2014.

5. Those who discuss the potential negative consequences of transformation tend to focus on the conflict between a person's new desires/values and the surrounding community. See Khader 2014. Although her point is to show that the choices women make to increase well-being may decrease empowerment (and so potentially contribute to APs), many of her observations illustrate the costs of holding desires and values that diverge sharply from those of one's community. Although this is an important topic, my focus lies elsewhere, in the internal conflicts of the preference bearer.

6. Khader acknowledges that internal consistency in the form of a coherent self-concept is a crucial component to welfare in her discussion of reasons someone may have to internalize oppressive norms. Khader 2014, 231.

7. The *experience* of moral dilemmas is not controversial, unlike their metaethical status. For my purposes, it is irrelevant whether genuine moral dilemmas exist—it is enough that people experience some situations as calling for two or more actions, but are unable to perform all of the relevant actions. For a discussion of this debate, see Gowans 1996, 199–215.

8. See note 4.

9. Empirical research has been performed on both "sacred" values (see Fiske and Tetlock 1997; Tetlock et al. 2000; Tetlock 2003) and "protected" values (see Baron and Spranca 1997; Ritov and Baron 1999; Baron and Leshner 2000; Tanner and Medin 2004).

Although the terminology differs, the subject of inquiry overlaps substantially—both are perceived as absolute, and their violation has negative affective and cognitive consequences. The work done on sacred values, however, focuses more on the affective effects of violation, and so is more relevant to my argument.

10. A trade-off between two secular values is a *routine trade-off*.

11. Khader recommends this type of approach (Khader 2011, 130), but the context of her discussion suggests that she does not have AVs in mind, where this means values that are not, and perhaps cannot be made, fully consistent with minimal flourishing. However, it is possible that she would agree with this point, given her acknowledgment that gaining flourishing-promoting benefits in one domain sometimes means losing them in another.

12. Considering tragic tradeoffs is not without emotional costs, and is more likely to produce uncertainty and moral unease about the final decision. See Mandel and Vartanian 2008.

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