Despite controversy over how to conceptualize the notion of autonomy, nearly all theories of autonomy contain a ‘competency’ dimension. The competency dimension includes not only a requirement of well-functioning rationality. It also includes the ability to have what autonomy theorists call ‘effective intentions.’ As Gerald Dworkin puts it, “the idea of autonomy is not merely an evaluative or reflective notion, but includes as well some ability both to alter one's preferences and to make them effective in one's actions and, indeed, to make them effective because one has reflected upon them and adopted them as one's own” (Dworkin 1988). It is often assumed that only psychological impairments - e.g. brainwashing, addiction, compulsion, hypnosis, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol - block the effectiveness of intentions. This assumption supports ‘internalist’ conceptions of autonomy. I draw on literature from feminist philosophy, particularly literature on the phenomenon of ‘silencing,’ to argue that the effectiveness of intentions can be blocked by social and interpersonal conditions as well as by psychological ones. This argument suggests that purely internalist notions of autonomy can’t be sustained.