UNDERSTANDING NARRATIVE AND CAPABILITY, A TYPE OF FREEDOM, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONS

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A Literature Review Tutorial Paper

Submitted to:

Bryant Myers

Winter Quarter

March, 2012

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

S/D Method   Story Dialogue Method

CA   Capability Approach

CST   Catholic Social Teaching

CR   Critical Realism

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this tutorial paper is to identify a methodological framework for further understanding the intersection of narrative and capability, a type of freedom, within the African American context.[1] This framework is developed with a particular focus on the integration of three streams of discourse: African American congregational counseling, as presented by Edward and Anne Wimberly, Amartya Sen's capability approach and critical realism, with particular reference to Margret Archer (Wimberly 2005; Sen 2000; Archer 2003).

In chapter one, I examine the underlying issue of the interaction between structure, culture and agency through identifying limitations and resources in the capability approach and critical realism. More specifically, this chapter summarizes and critiques the conversation in the capability approach in regards to structure and agency issues through examining the ongoing discussion between Amartya Sen and Severine Deneulin regarding this theme. After arguing for a more robust ontological and methodological theory of structure and agency within the capability approach, I introduce several key elements from the critical realist perspective - stratified reality, emergence and agency – which, I argue, contribute toward a more substantive approach to the "vexatious issue of structure and agency" (Archer 1995, 1).

Chapter two presents a model of the narrative identity process through integrating the work of key narrative theorists, from both antiquity and the modern day, with the findings from the prior chapter. The goal is to further clarify the emic process by which an identity narrative is constructed within African American congregations. The thesis which is advanced is that the African American narrative identity process is a multi-leveled, interacting phenomenon, which involves the selection, plotting and interpretation of events. This process, it is argued, is deeply affected by issues of power dynamics and agency.

The central purpose for the third chapter is to compare and contrast three visions of freedom - two of which have European roots in Aristotle, and a third which is rooted in the

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[1] The purpose of a methodological framework, as I use it here, is to: (1) Explicate the conceptual logic and direction of the research project, (2) Engage leading ideas in the field, (3) Acknowledge prior theoretical works, (4) Position the researcher's work in relation to other theories, (5) And, explain the significance of original concepts (Charmaz 2006, 169).

African American congregational tradition. The outlines of the first approach are traced through the work of Aristotle and Aquinas to contemporary Catholic social teaching (Paul IV 1965). The contours of the second strand are traced through Aristotle to the capability approach, as interpreted by Amartya Sen (Sen 2000). The third approach introduces the understanding of freedom from the work of the Wimberly's (Wimberly 2005; Wimberly 2006). Through the findings in this chapter, I hope to better connect the European conversation on freedom, as found in Catholic social teaching and the capability approach, with the understanding of freedom which is implicit in my area of doctoral studies among African American congregations in South Los Angeles.

In regards to the general structure of the aforementioned chapters, after the topic is introduced, I present the relevant data, discuss integrative principles from that data and identify ways in which these findings may affect my future research.

The fourth and final chapter includes a summary of my key findings and some concluding thoughts on the relevance of these findings for my continuing research focus.

CHAPTER I - STRUCTURE AND AGENCY: THE CAPABILITY APPROACH AND CRITICAL REALISM IN DIALOGUE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the complex interaction between structure, culture and agency, both at the individual and collective level, with specific reference to the African American context. More specifically this paper will summarize and critique the conversation in the capability approach in regards to structure and agency issues through examining the ongoing discussion between Amartya Sen and Severine Deneulin regarding this theme. It is argued that, while many key elements are present in the capability approach for conceptualizing structure and agency, there is a need for a more robust and embracing ontological and methodological theory of structure and agency. After introducing several key elements from the critical realist perspective, such as stratified reality, emergence and agency (Archer 2003), the paper concludes with an integrative framework for structure and agency which seeks to complement and further the insights from the Sen-Deneulin conversation.

Considering the Data

Structures and Agents in and African American Context

In his 1899 study of the African American population in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, W.E.B. Dubois discovered four typologies: the well-to-do, the hardworking, the worthy poor and the submerged tenth (Du Bois 1899, 1995, 5).[1] In *The Code of the Street*, contemporary urban sociologist Elijah Anderson researched low-income, African American families in his

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[1] He defined the working poor as those that are "trying to work but barely making ends meet" and the submerged tenth "those beneath the surface of economic viability."

ethnographic study of a neighborhood on the south-side of Philadelphia (Anderson 2000). As a first step in understanding this community, Anderson argues that one must approach it "from a *structural as well as a cultural standpoint*" (emphasis mine, 2000, 110). Along with so many other urban neighborhoods, this neighborhood has been devastated by the effects of deindustrialization as manufacturing jobs were discarded in place of service and high-tech employment (2000).

As Anderson, researched the African American families in the neighborhood he built on DuBois' work to argue that there were two, general social identities which were available to local residents. For Anderson, these two identities form a continuum in which at one end is the "decent family," and at the other is the "street family" (Anderson 2000, 35). He notes that these two terms are used by the residents themselves to describe their community (2000).

Anderson describes the "decent family" as having a "real concern with and a certain degree of hope for the future," a tendency to "accept mainstream values" and to "derive great support from their faith and church community" (2000, 37-38). At the other extreme, is the street family which has a relatively "superficial sense of family and community" as members must struggle by themselves, not with the community's encouragement (2000, 65).[2] A sense of alienation, distrust and nihilism are defining traits of this group (2000, 36-37, 325). While Anderson does recognize the reality of "code-switchers", those that "behave by any set of rules in any situation", he recognizes that most household members choose between the two orientations (2000, 36). Anderson defines "codes" as, "a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior" (2000, 33).

As his narrative ethnography unfolds, Anderson describes the challenges which community members face as they navigate the contested "public spaces" in which different cultural codes threaten or empower one's individual's agency and the respective corporate agencies of the "decent" household and the "street" (2000, 324-325).   Through Anderson's urban ethnography the reader is provided a window into a world in which agency is constrained and empowered by cultural factors and economic structures.

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[2] The author recognizes community as "a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings" (MacQueen et al. 2001).

The Sen-Deneulin Debate on Structure and Agency

Amartya introduces his book *Development as Freedom,* with the claim that, "We live in a world with remarkable deprivation, destitution, and oppression. Overcoming these problems is a central part of the exercise of development…Indeed, *individual agency* is, ultimately, central to addressing these deprivations" (Sen 2000, xii). Within the book, Sen defines an agent as,

> Someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be
> judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess
> them in terms of some external criteria as well. (*Development as Freedom*) is
> particularly concerned with the agency role of the individual as a member of the
> public and as a participant in economic, social and political actions (2000, 19).

Sen recognizes that there is "*a two-way relation* between (1) *social arrangements* to expand individual freedoms and (2) the use of individual freedoms not only to improve the respective lives but also to make the social arrangements more appropriate and effective" (emphasis mine, 2000, 31). In addition, Sen notes the role of "community relationships, as the social capital literature recognizes" (2000, 71).

In 2002, in a review of *Development as Freedom*, Frances Stewart and Severine Deneulin critically examined Amartya Sen's contribution to development thinking (Stewart and Severine 2002). At the time, Stewart was a professor of development economics at the University of Oxford[3] and Deneulin was one of her doctoral students (2002, 1).

In their review, the authors argue that, "[Sen's] capabilities approach shares the individualism of the utilitarian approach, where individuals are assumed to be atoms who come together for instrumental reasons only, and not as an intrinsic aspect of their way of life" (2002, 66). In short, Stewart and Deneulin interpret Sen's approach as "methodological individualism" in that he takes a position in which, "all social phenomena must be accounted for in terms of what *individuals* think, choose and do" (emphasis mine, Bhargava 1992, 1; Stewart and Severine 2002). The authors argue that this focus affects both the end *and* process aspects of development evaluation.

In regards to the end of development, the authors argue that "the task of development policies should not only be to enhance 'valuable' individual capabilities, but *also* to enhance 'valuable' structures of living together" (2002, 68). Building on the work of the French

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[3] Dr. Frances Stewart currently serves as the president of the Human Development and Capability Association.

philosopher Paul Ricouer, the authors describe these structures as conditions (i.e. social norms, cultural practices) which can tend toward flourishing or oppression (2002, 70; Ricoeur 1994).

Based on these definitions the authors claim that, "No human being could live without such collective living structures, since they constitute the very conditions for individual human existence. The nature of society in which a person lives is therefore an essential component of his or her [quality of life]" (Stewart and Severine 2002, 67). In addition, Stewart and Deneulin argue that individual agency "is not a tabula rasa; it is influenced by and develops according to particular structures of living together, so we need a way to distinguish the type of structures that help promote individual agency and determine which objectives people value" (2002).

In regards to the process aspect of evaluation the authors argue that the role of group agency is marginalized. They commend Sen for his recognition of, "the advantage of group activities in bringing about substantial social change" (Sen 2000, 116; Stewart and Severine 2002, 69). However, they argue that "the individualism of the approach tends to divert attention from collective political action, giving it only a minor role" (2002).

In Sen's response to this "perspicacious" critique (Sen 2002), Sen makes two arguments which are directly relevant to the structure and agency discussion. First, Sen claims that he avoids methodological individualism because he does not endorse the "artificial view that individuals are 'separated' and 'detached' from their social surroundings" (2002, 80). *Detachment* is for him the distinguishing mark of methodological individualism. By way of illustration, he affirms that such socially-influenced phenomena as "false consciousness" deeply affect the individual (2002). Sen also provides the example of women in sexist societies who have internalized the belief that they are "naturally inferior to men" (2002).

Secondly, while Sen does recognize the existence of collective capabilities, he mysteriously restrains from expanding the scope of evaluation beyond "socially-dependent individual capabilities" (2002, 85). For example, he states that "the capability of Hutu activists to decimate the Tutsis is a collective capability in the genuinely integrated sense, since the ability to do this is not a part of any individual Hutu's life (interdependent as it is)" (2002). However, after stating this, he says, "Surely, they are very important individual capabilities that are socially dependent (like most individual capabilities are)" (2002).

In 2005, Ingrid Robeyns, a research fellow at the University of Amsterdam, entered the conversation and proposed a framework for distinguishing between three types of individualism within the capability approach (Robeyns 2005). In her article she distinguishes "between ethical individualism on the one hand, and methodological and ontological individualism on the other"

(2005, 107). Ethical individualism, "postulates that individuals, and only individuals, are the *ultimate units of moral concern*" (emphasis mine, 2005). In her framework, methodological individualism is the explanatory argument that, "everything can be explained by reference to individuals and their properties only" (2005, 108). And, finally, ontological individualism, proposes that "society is built up from individuals only, and hence is nothing more than the *sum of individuals and their properties*" (emphasis mine, 2005). From this framework, Robeyns argues that the capability approach requires ethical individualism, however, ontological and methodological individualism are open to debate (2005). The reason that ethical individualism maintains priority is that, "if the smallest fundamental unit of moral concern is any group, such as the family, the social group or the community, then analyses will systematically overlook any existing or potential inequalities *within* these units. For example, the deprivations particular to women and children have regularly been overlooked by analyses that focus on the household" (Deneulin and Shahani 2009, 35).

Robeyns also makes the observation that, "[T]he capability approach is not a theory that can *explain* poverty, inequality and well-being; instead, it rather provides a tool and a framework within which to *conceptualize* and *evaluate* these phenomena. Applying the capability approach to issues of policy and social change will therefore often require the addition of explanation theories" (Robeyns 2005, 94). As Sen did not directly respond to Robeyns arguments it is unclear if he fully concurs.

Deneulin's Search for a "Supra-Individual" Subject

After the initial dialogue with Sen, Deneulin continued to consider alternative ways of discussing "supra-individual" subjects within the capability approach (Deneulin 2006, 35). One of the most in-depth treatments by Deneulin of the structure-agency issue can be found in her chapter titled, "Beyond Individual Freedom and Agency: Structures of Living Together in the Capability Approach" (Deneulin 2008). In this piece, Deneulin recognizes that, "Individual freedom for Sen is a social product because there is a 'two-way relation' between (1) social arrangements and (2) individual freedoms" (Deneulin 2008, 108); However, she observes that "Sen is very reluctant to approach development with a 'supra-individual subject'" (Deneulin 2006, 35).

Building on the work of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, Deneulin argues for the ontological and ethical reality of "irreducibly social goods" (Deneulin, 2008). She argues that there *are* "objects of value which cannot be decomposed into individual occurrences, or expressed in terms of individual characteristics" (2008, 109). To illustrate this point from the opening narrative, consider "the decent family" which can "be understood, and has a meaning, only against a further background of meaning" (Anderson 2000, Deneulin 2008). Without the social good of a language code and cultural practices, an individual uttering the word "decent family" would be incomprehensible (2008). In light of these types of social goods, Deneulin argues that, "Individuals are not the only unit of moral concern. Structures of living together are units of moral concern too" (2008, 115).

Exploring Agency

In regards to the process aspect of evaluation, Deneulin argues that an excessive focus on individual agency is problematic as the individual is *deeply conditioned*. She states, "Sen has written extensively about the deformation of preferences and how these could be socially deformed, but *capabilities* could be socially conditioned and equally severely deformed, even after providing adequate information concerning the wrongness of the choices" (emphasis mine, Deneulin 2008, 118). In other words, agency and a sense of self *emerge* from a particular context. Deneulin states that "[Community] is what gives meaning to the life of its members and gives them identity, in the sense that it is only from their attachment to communities that human beings draw their moral development, their identity, and the meaning of their life" (2008, 120).

Building on this, Deneulin argues for the recognition of "socio-historical agency" (2008). She writes, "it seems that if the aim of the capability approach is to address deprivations, it will have to place not individual agency as central to addressing deprivations but rather socio-historical agency (what individuals can do in the socio-historical reality in which they are living) as central, and this unavoidably entails a careful consideration of the particular structures of living together that constitute this socio-historical agency" (2008, 121).

Justice, Public Reasoning and Multiple Memberships

In 2009, Sen published *The Idea of Justice* in which he devotes a section to the conversation on "Capabilities, Individuals and Communities" (Sen 2009, 244-252). In this section, Sen expands on two prior claims. First, he distinguishes between an analytical (ontological) and a practical (methodological) reason for a focus on group capabilities. He states, "There is indeed no particular analytical reason why group capabilities must be excluded a priori from the discourse on justice and injustice. The case for not going that way lies in the nature of the reasoning that would be involved . . . *Ultimately,* it is individual evaluation on which we would have to draw, while recognizing the profound interdependence of the valuation of individuals who interact with each other . . . In *valuing a person's ability to take part in the life of society, there is an implicit valuation of the life of the society itself, and that is an important enough aspect of the capability perspective*" (emphasis mine, Sen 2009). Once again, it would appear that Sen desires to practically limit the methodological evaluation to the frame of individual agency.

Furthermore, Sen argues that this is a necessary direction as individuals belong to different groups. He states that, "Individual human beings with their various plural identities, multiple affiliations and diverse associations are quintessentially social creatures with different types of societal interactions" (2009, 247).[4]

Deneulin and the Limits of Sen's "Idea of Justice"

In Deneulin's review of *The Idea of Justice* she contends that the book falls short in that it does not recognize that, "remedying injustice requires an understanding of how justice is structural, which recognizes that discussion of justice is inseparable from reasoning about the nature of the good society" (2011, 1). In addition, Deneulin clarifies her definition of a structure as, "something which *emerges from interpersonal relations but which, over time, becomes irreducible to these relations* and yet remains bound up with them" (emphasis mine, Deneulin 2011, 797n14).

This discussion between Sen and Deneulin on structure and agency has uncovered profound, underlying issues for the capability approach on the nature of social reality. Are there supra-individual subjects? If so, how are they to be evaluated? Are they to be considered only in the process of evaluation or also as part of ultimate, ethical evaluation? How does one evaluate socio-historical agency? Can we appreciate the recognition of an individual agent with multiple

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[4] There will be more on this point in chapter two as we discuss the implications of multiple, narrative identities.

associations and recognize of supra-individual entities? The answers to these questions will deeply affect the present and future direction of evaluation within the capability approach.

Structure and Agency in Critical Realism – A Parallel Conversation

The purpose of this section is to introduce several key concepts from critical realism such as stratified reality, emergent properties, and a model for understanding agency. In addition, this section will examine how these concepts might inform the Sen-Deneulin debate. Margret Archer will serve as the primary conversation partner from the field of critical realism.[5]

Stratified Reality

Critical realism is a post-positivist, constructivist framework which was originally articulated by British Philosopher Roy Bhaskar (Bhaskar 1975, 2008). The central tenet of the field is that, "reality exists independently of human consciousness of it; that reality itself is complex, open, and stratified in multiple dimensions or levels, some of which come to exist through the crucial processes of emergence; (and) that humans can acquire a truthful, though fallible knowledge and understanding of reality…" (Smith 2010, 92-93). In addition, critical realism seeks to avoid the shortcomings of empiricism/positivism and embrace both the "being and doing" aspects of the person (Smith 2010; Sen 2000, 75).[6]

Critical realism advocates the need to press beyond ontological and methodological individualism in the quest to understand social reality. In contrast to Sen's emphasis on detachment, Margret Archer points toward a reliance on the *individual frame of reference* as the defining characteristic of methodological individualism. Archer defines methodological individualism as the view in which, "ultimate constituents of the social world are individual people who act" (Archer 1995, 22). For this type of theorist, she argues, "Every complex social

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[5] Margret Archer is a professor of sociology at the University of Warwick and is the President of the International Sociological Association. Christian Smith is the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Sociology and executive director of the Center for Social Research at the University of Notre Dame.

[6] This paper builds on Christian Smith's understanding of a person as, "a conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending center of subjective experience, durable identity, moral commitment, and social communication who-as the efficient cause of his or her own responsible actions and interactions-exercises complex capacities for agency and intersubjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own incommunicable self in loving relationships with other personal selves and with the nonpersonal world" (2010, 61).

situation, institution or event is the result of a particular configuration of individuals, their dispositions, situations, beliefs and physical resources and environment" (1995). In this view, the methodological individualist will argue that "we have not arrived at 'rock-bottom explanations of such large-scale phenomena until we have deduced an account of them from statements about the dispositions, beliefs, resources and inter-relations of individuals'" (1995, 22).

As an alternative, Archer and colleagues employ a stratified view of reality. In this view, the social world is understood to be multi-leveled "by virtue of the distinctive emergent properties and powers which develop and prove relatively enduring" (Archer 1995, 190). Critical realists introduce the term analytic dualism to distinguish between the different "properties and powers" of structure and agency (1995). Structure and agency are viewed as interrelated but not mutually constitutive since each possess distinctive properties (Archer 1995). What becomes critical is to examine the *interplay* between structure and agency.

Figure 1.1 – Stratified Reality

System Integration				Social Integration
Systemic	———	Interplay	———	Populations
Institutional	———	Interplay	———	Organized Groups (Corporate agency)
Roles	———	Interplay	———	Individual Actors
Positions	———	Interplay	———	Collectivities (Primary Agency)

Archer, Margaret Scotford. 1995. *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*: New York, 190.
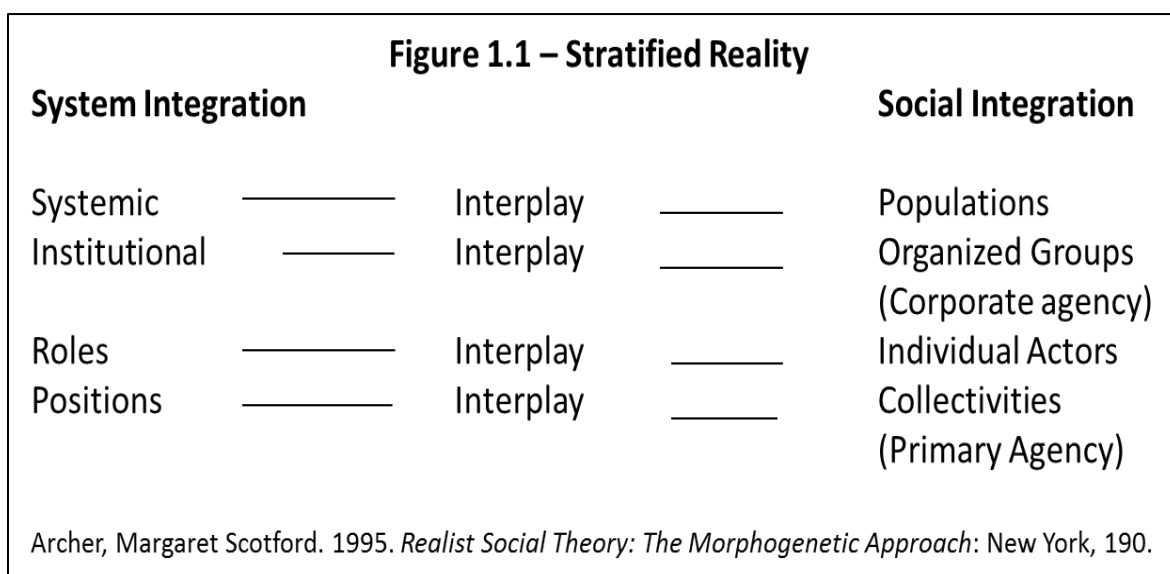
Emergence

Archer defines the process of emergence by three propositions:

- Properties and powers of some strata are anterior to those of others precisely because the latter emerge from the former over time, for emergence takes time since it derives from interaction and its consequences which necessarily occur in time;

- Once emergence has taken place the powers and properties defining and distinguishing strata have relative autonomy from one another;

- Such autonomous properties exert independent causal influences in their own right and it is the identification of these causal powers at work which validates their existence, for they may indeed be unobservables (Archer 1995, 14).

Archer continues that the focal concern for social science is on the *interplay* of the different strata, not necessarily on the *interpenetration* (1995, 15). For example, the question becomes, how do the roles available to an individual affect her agency or, at a different level, how do institutional constraints or enablements affect a group's sense of agency (See Figure 1.1)?

Sociologist Christian Smith provides an example of the process of emergence at the molecular level is the creation of water from separate particles of hydrogen and oxygen (Smith 2010, 27). "Wetness", he says, would be an emergent characteristic of this new entity through the combination of particles (2010).

Critical realists argue that, within society, the process of emergence is responsible for structural emergent properties (SEPs) (Archer 2003, 4). Properties of this type have their "primary dependence upon material resources" (Archer 1995, 175). In other words, they occur when "the internal and necessary relations between its constituents are *fundamentally* material ones" (1995). Examples of SEPs are "roles, institutions and systems" (1995, 179).

This fundamental dependence on material resources is what distinguishes SEPs from Cultural Emergent Properties (CEPs). An example of a CEP would be the term "street people" or "decent people," which have particular, shared cultural meanings in a particular neighborhood in south Philadelphia (Anderson 2000). Critical realists understand CEPs to be such entities as theories, beliefs and values which have an "objective existence and autonomous relations amongst its components" (Archer 1995, 180). The cultural system is understood to be "the product of historical Socio-Cultural interaction, but having emerged it has properties of its own" (1995, 181).

It is important to note that emergent structural and cultural properties are considered to be objective and to exist apart from an agent's recognition. It is only as these properties stand *in relationship* to particular agents that *causal* powers of constraint or enablement are realized (Archer 2003, 8). It is this point that leads to the final emergent property - Personal Emergent Properties (PEPs) (191).

PEPs emerge within individuals, groups, collectivities and populations (190). The emergent relations of agents – "modify the capacities of component members (affecting their

consciousness' and commitments, affinities and animosities) and exert *causal powers* proper to their relations themselves vis-à-vis other agents or their groupings" (emphasis mine, Archer 1995, 184). In line with this argument, philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff presents the example of a street gang which comes upon an object which is too heavy for one member to lift. However, by working together they can lift the object. He argues that, "Member A of the gang did not lift the object, member B did not lift the object; the group lifted it" (Wolterstorff 2008, 365). Wolterstorff builds on this example to make the case that groups and organizations are capable of "rational agency" (2008). Mudslides do things but are not capable of rational agency, however, "groups and organizations can act for the reason that the action is thought to be good, just or obligatory" (2008, 365).

Figure I.I illustrates how the various levels of PEPs, which involve social integration, interact with CEPs and SEPs, which involve system integration.[7] In the neighborhood in South Philadelphia for example, the interplay of the structural emergent properties of deindustrialization acted as a constraint on the corporate agency of the Germantown community. At the individual level, the available employment role options for the working adult have vastly shifted from manufacturing opportunities to high-tech and service jobs (Anderson 2000, 110).

In Archer's view, culture as a whole is taken to refer to "all intelligibilia, that is, to any item which has the dispositional capacity of being understood by someone" (Archer 1995, 180). Archer recognizes the importance of narratives. She states, "We do not live by propositions alone...we generate myths, are moved by mysteries, become rich in symbolism…But these are precisely the stuff of [socio-cultural] interaction, for they are all matters of inter-personal influence whether we are talking at one extreme of hermeneutic understanding (including religious experience at the furtherest extremity) or of the manipulative assault and battery of ideas used ideologically" (1995, 80). This issue of the narrative process will be further examined in the following chapter.

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[7] Christian Smith and Micheal Emerson have pointed out that white evangelicals have a tendency to disregard the personal impact of larger structures due to their individualism, relationalism and anti-structuralism (Emerson and Smith, 2000). Individualism argues that "Individuals exist independent of structures and institutions with freewill" (2000). Relationalism is the proposition that "human nature is fallen and salvation and Christian maturity is only through personal relationship with Christ" (2000). This conviction is easily transposed onto an excessive emphasis on interpersonal relations, to the point of neglecting the effect of social structures (2000, 78). Finally, anti-structuralism shifts the blame from sinful humans to the system (2000).

Returning again to Archer's description of emergence, while first-order properties involve the results of past interactions, second-order SEPs and CEPs involve "relations between the results of the results of past actions" (1995, 213). Out of this level third-order properties emerge which affect large segments of the population, if not the whole of it. Consider the systemic effects of globalization which enable high-tech companies in India and economically constraining for people in Germantown, PA (1995).

As "people" interact in relationship with the various structural and cultural "parts" at different levels they can reproduce patterns or they can transform them (Archer 1995, 184). Archer points out that in transformative structural and cultural struggles, "consciousness is raised as collectivities are transformed from primary agents into promotive interest groups; social selves are re-constituted as actors personify roles in particular ways to further their self-defined ends; and corporate agency is re-defined as institutional interests promote re-organization and re-articulation of goals in the course of strategic action for their promotion or defense" (Archer 1995, 191). Archer recommends that one take a "narrative" approach in researching these complex, stratified phenomena

Mediating Structure and Agency - Archer's Internal Conversation

In this section, I will build on Archer's understanding of emergent properties, and examine her understanding of the internal dynamics of individual agency. I will address such questions as how does Archer prevent the individual from being subsumed into the corporate agent? And, how do personal emergent properties contribute to deliberative action and commitments? To address this question we will examine Archer's matrix which describes the process by which an individual agent reviews himself or herself as social object (Archer 2003, 124).

Figure 1.2 – Internal Conversations
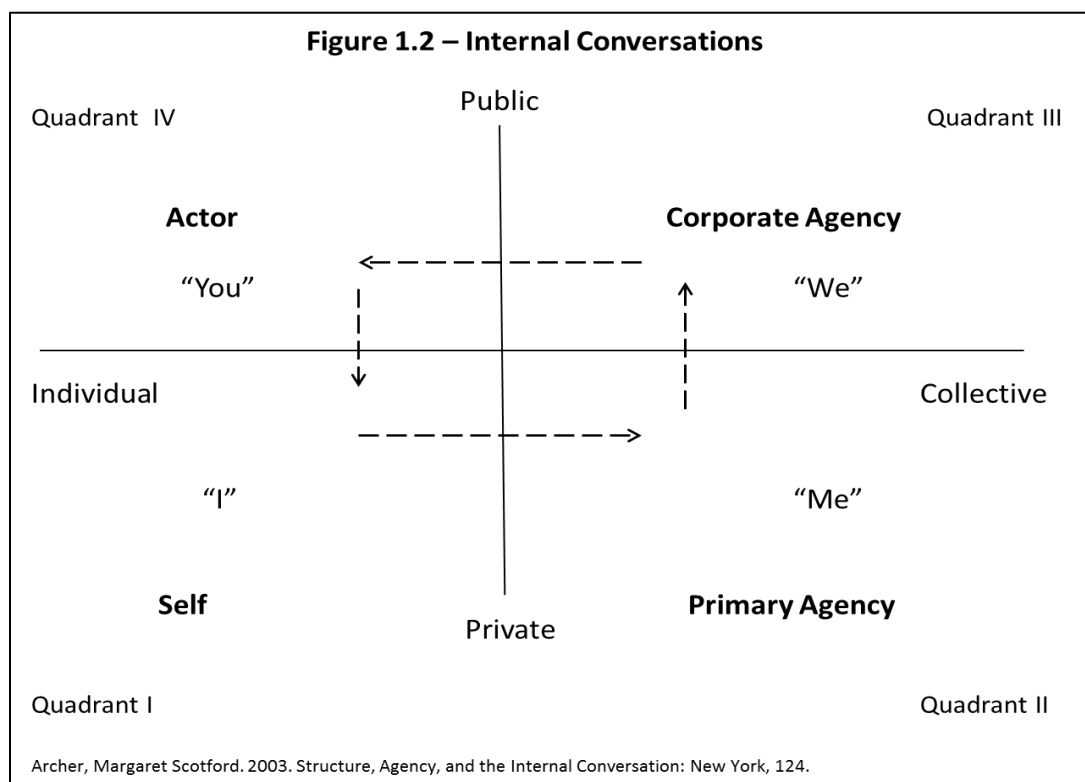
In Quadrant I (lower-left corner) the life-course of an individual begins with the private and personal "I" – the continuous self (Archer 2003, 124). In the first step of the internal conversation, the private self moves into Quadrant II. As one does this, they discover his or her *involuntary* social characteristics. For example, a young girl begins to discover what it means to be born as a female, in a family of African American descent, which lives in a low-income neighborhood in the city of Philadelphia and regularly attends church. These "object properties" are shared by the collectivity that are similarly placed in society (2003).[8]

Quadrant III is concerned with the individual's *voluntary* participation with available corporate agents (Archer 2003). For Archer, primary agents are distinguished from corporate agents as corporate agents "have articulated their aims and developed some form of organization for their pursuit" (2003, 133). In this quadrant the key issue is, "Who are we?" As the sense of self matures, the individual may adopt various social identities. Therefore, "social identity is necessarily a sub-set of personal identity" (2003, 120).

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[8] For Archer, although primary agents have internal conversations this is not her criterion for designation of this title. One is a primary agency by simply *being* in a position with others who have the same life-chances (2003, 133).

As Quadrant IV is entered, "the subject becomes an Actor by taking on those roles that are most expressive of her dawning concerns" (2003, 124). The young child may adopt the role of a good student or that of a jaded gang member. However, the process does not end with the emergent actor choosing their roles in society.

In the important, final step, the "You" of the public actor returns to influence and form the private self (2003, 124). In other words, the *commitments* that have been made by the public actor return and affect the internal, reflective self. For example, these commitments may involve roles of marriage and family, career and vocation, associations and social movements.

As we mature, the "I" continues to evaluate what type of "You" will be projected into the future (2003, 127). Archer argues that this description of the "internal conversation" is a critical element in understanding the mediating process between structure and agency.

Building on this framework, Archer conducted an ethnographic study in which she examined the internal conversations of twenty, randomly-selected individuals (2003, 159). From this project, Archer identified four general types of internal conversations. The types where identified in terms of reflexivity or their "stances toward society and its constraints and enablement's" (2003, 342).

The various modes of reflexivity were *evasive* (communicative reflextivity), *strategic* (autonomous reflextivity) and *subversive* (meta reflextivity) (2003). Archer than added a final category which she termed *fractured reflextivity* (2003). She argued that, "What distinguishes the fractured reflexive is that his or her internal conversation has no instrumental orientation at all…The fractured subject merely dwells with increasing misery and frustration upon the impossibility of realizing any of his or her concerns" (2003, 303).

Discussion and Interpretation

In this section I will discuss particular principles which emerged from this presentation of the capability approach and critical realism. In addition, I will offer directions for further research from these interpretations.

The critical realism approach adds to the capability approach in that it clarifies the distinctions between higher-order personal properties (PEPs) and cultural and structural properties (CEPs and SEPs).

Sen appears to conflate supra-individual phenomena within the general category of "social arrangements" (Sen 2000, xiii). Deneulin, on the other hand, defines a structure as "something which emerges from interpersonal relations but which, over time, becomes irreducible to these relations and yet remains bound up with them" (Deneulin 2011, 797n14). While Deneulin recognizes the importance of multi-leveled, *interpersonal* relationships, a further distinction can be made between CEPs and SEPs (See Figure 1.3 below). In other words, structural emergent properties such as roles, institutions, systems are distinguished from theories, beliefs and values, which are also distinguished from groups, associations, populations (PEPs).
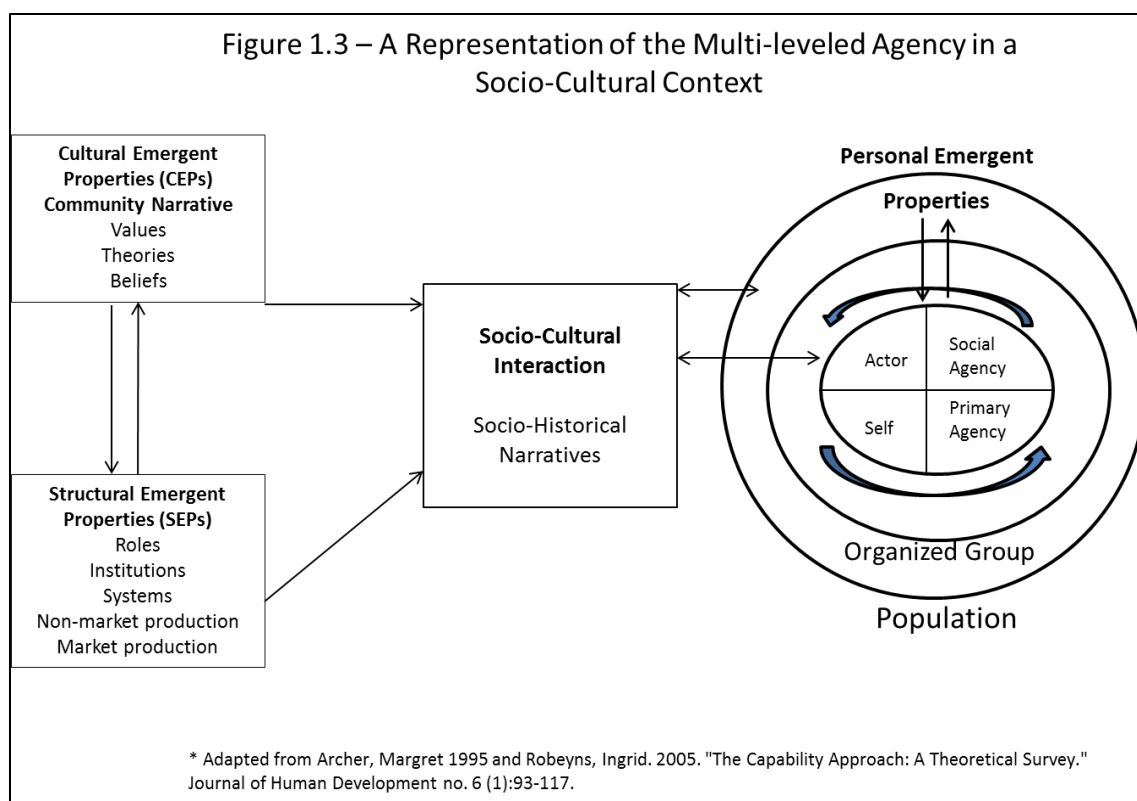
Figure 1.3 – A Representation of the Multi-leveled Agency in a Socio-Cultural Context

* Adapted from Archer, Margret 1995 and Robeyns, Ingrid. 2005. "The Capability Approach: A Theoretical Survey." Journal of Human Development no. 6 (1):93-117.

Critical realism provides a more stratified definition of "Structures of living together" for the capability approach through the articulation of the process of emergence.

One of the important elements which critical realism contributes to the capability approach is an articulation of the *process* of emergence. A process in which first-order properties involve "the results of past interactions," second-order properties involve "relations between the results of the results of past actions" and so on (Archer 1995).

While Sen does recognize the role of downward causation, his methodologically evaluation is focused on the individual level and the corresponding roles of individuals, and secondarily on secondary and tertiary realities which profoundly influence individual capabilities (Sen 2000). Deneulin provides a more dominant role for structures, however, she does not directly distinguish between the multiple levels of the individual, institutional and systematic for SEPs or the corresponding agent/actor, corporate and population levels for PEPs. Nor does Deneulin define the process of emergence.

In addition, while the capability approach and critical realism do recognize the existence of other levels (Sen 2002, 80-81), it would be helpful to further articulate the various ecological levels (Archer 1995). One helpful outline of ecological levels which is presented in the field of community psychology looks at societal levels in terms of individuals, microsystems (families, Sunday school classes, choirs),[9] organizations (schools, congregations, localities (neighborhoods, cities) and macro-systems (cultures, corporations, social movements, internet, belief systems) (Dalton, Elias, and Wandersman 2007, 21).

Archer's framework for internal conversations addresses Sen's concern on the multiple affiliations of the individual agent and provides a framework for understanding the individual as a private self, an agent and an actor, while remaining consistent with the broader critical realist theory of stratified reality.

A theme in Sen's writing has been his concern for the multiple memberships of the individual (Sen 2000, 8; 2009, 246; Sen 2006). While Archer's matrix recognizes the importance of social agency, it places social agency as a *subset* of individual agency. This point will be of particular interest in the following chapter as we examine the identity of the actor both at the individual level and at the corporate level.

Archer's framework incorporates a mode for considering several forms of "reflexivity" of individuals, however, this dynamic needs to be explored at higher levels of social integration (Archer 2003). Of particular relevance for poverty evaluation would be how "fractured reflexivity" affects high-order agency (2003).

Archer's work provides a helpful tool for analyzing the process by which individuals evaluate themselves as social object. One element which, surprisingly, did not have a stronger element in her research was the role of the socio-cultural context in determining a person's

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[9] These micro-systems can possess "settings" which are defined as "an enduring set of relationships among individuals that may be associated with one or several different places" (Dalton 2007, 21).

stance. For example, if a person is from a communally-orientated culture would they not naturally gravitate toward the communicative reflexive stance?

In addition, the role of the passive agent which is incapable of assuming purposeful roles as an actor is a helpful connection and expansion of the capability approach view of this as a case of severe capability deprivation or "unfreedom" (Sen 2000). One may wonder, however, if the "street people" in Germantown represent a version of this fractured reflexivity. Although I would argue that the group demonstrates fractured reflexivity, I would also argue that Archer's articulation of reflextivity is inadequate when applied to this group, as the members are not "passive" toward society but are noticeably "violent and aggressive" (Anderson 2000, 11).

Implications for my Research

In regards to my role as a researcher, this paper has made me more self-aware. In studying the work of the critical realist Christian Smith, I further understand my personal background in regards to race relations issues as a "primary agent" in the collectivity known as "white evangelicals" (Emerson and Smith 2000). According to Smith and Emerson's survey they found this group to be characterized by "individualism, relationalism and anti-structuralism" (see note 8, 2000, 78). These cultural characteristics lead one toward individual level explanations in regards to race relations (i.e. "I am friendly, I don't see what the problem is.") as opposed to African Americans who tend to understand race issues in more communal and structural terms (2000, 89).

The dynamics of South Los Angeles are complex, however, the critical realism approach has provided more analytic tools in understanding and explaining this stratified and interconnected urban context. In addition, Archer's approach to stratified agency, specifically in terms of communicative reflexivity, has important similarities to the "communal-analogy-storytelling-listening process" which has been historically present in the African American congregation (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986). This process will be further explored in the next chapter and in my tutorial with Daniel Walker.

In regards to a theoretical framework I think the main points are expressed in the prior section on discussion and interpretation. It would seem that in Archer's model my focus is on "socio-cultural interaction between cultural agents" as understood through analytic narrative (Archer 1995, 180).

Also, while Archer's model for internal conversations was helpful, I am looking for a better way to articulate the fractured reflexivity which occurs among aggressive and violent agents ("the street household"). In addition, I am wondering how internal conversations can be understood at the micro-setting level, which is the level at which I will do the story/dialogue groups. How can narrative analysis be most effectively used to research group-level agency?

In regards to method, the focus group allows one to study the dynamics between individuals and community within a particular setting. The story-dialogue method which I plan to use is a focus group method which brings together multiple individual stories into a shared narrative (Labonte 2010). This allows me to value the individual *and* recognize the unique emergent realities of a story/dialogue group.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the complex interaction between structure, culture and agency, both at the individual and collective levels, with particular reference to the African American context. More specifically this paper summarized and critiqued the conversation in the capability approach in regards to structure and agency issues through examining the ongoing debate between Amartya Sen and Severine Deneulin regarding this theme. While many key elements are present in the capability approach for conceptualizing structure and agency, it was argued that there is a need for further development. After introducing several key elements from the critical realist perspective, such as stratified reality, emergence and Archer's model of agency, the paper concluded with a proposed framework for structure and agency which will hopefully contribute toward a more intentional dialogue between the capability approach and critical realism (Archer 2003).

In the next section, I will build on the findings from this discussion and discuss the stratified narrative process which is a particular application of the structure-agency issue. Again, the primary focus of this discussion is in the area of evaluation of poverty and development among African American congregations, specifically in regards to the freedom of individuals and a community in telling their own identity narrative.

CHAPTER II - THE NARRATIVE IDENTITY PROCESS AND AGENCY IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONAL CONTEXT

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a model of the narrative identity process through integrating the work of key narrative theorists, in both antiquity and the modern day, with the findings from the prior chapter. The theorists include Aristotle, Paul Ricouer, Stephen Cornel, Arthur Frank, Isaac Prilletensky and Amartya Sen. The thesis which will be advanced in this section is that the African American narrative identity process is a multi-leveled, interacting phenomenon, which involves the selection, plotting and interpretation of events. This process is deeply affected by power dynamics.

The chapter will begin with a presentation of the historic African American narrative process from the work of Edward and Anne Wimberly. Then there will be a presentation of key elements in the history of reflection on the narrative process. Although this chapter proceeds in a fairly chronological manner, the primary organization of the material is around the theme of clarifying a framework for the narrative process. Therefore, at points I will connect ideas from antiquity with contemporary narrative theorists and then return again to a chronological presentation.

Considering the Data

The Conversion Narratives of Black People in Slavery and Freedom

Edward and Ann Wimberly are an African American couple who have dedicated their professional careers to researching and empowering the African American church (Wimberly 2008; Wimberly 2005). Their co-authored book, *Liberation and Wholeness: The Conversion Experiences of Black People in Slavery and Freedom* is particularly relevant to this chapter's focus

on the narrative process in the African American community (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986). The purpose of the book was to research the "contemporary significance of conversion in the slave tradition in the period of 1750-1930" in the United States (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986, 15). As data, the Wimberly's utilized the narratives of slaves who escaped before slavery's abolition, and the narratives of ex-slaves who participated in the Federal Writer's Project in the 1930s (1986, 21). The authors include biographies from Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and Richard Allen in their data materials (1986, 22).

From careful theological and sociological analysis, the Wimberly's made several important observations regarding the narrative process among African Americans. First, they observe that this population operated primarily through a rich, oral tradition which depended on "projected meanings" (1986, 75). In other words, images were frequently used to communicate meanings which were taken from the African heritage and the Bible (1986). In the story of Sojourner Truth, when she attained political freedom, she still had a desire to return to "Egypt" – the place of familiarity and bondage (1986, 95). However, through a vision of Jesus, as a presence which was "beaming with love," she decided to embrace her role as an "authentic, responsible person" (1986, 96-97).

The speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. also demonstrate this point on the importance of images in the African American tradition. For example, on the steps of the Washington Monument, King spoke of his "dream" of a future which is "transformed as an oasis of freedom and justice" (King 1998, 226).

A second key observation which the Wimberly's made was that sociologically there were two dominant factors at work in the conversion narratives: a "spiritual guide" and the engagement of the individual-in-community (1986, 67-68). The spiritual guide was an individual whom the "person could turn to for interpretation, verification and support" (1986, 68). The guide is analogous to a medical practitioner in Western society or "the preacher" in many black congregations (1986, 67).

The communal dimension was also seen as a critical part of the conversion experience, particularly in discerning the validity of the transforming "vision" for the convert (1986, 72). As the Wimberly's state, "Although God worked through personal encounters with individuals, God also worked through the community to assist the person toward wholeness" (1986, 75). The Wimberly's summarize the narrative process in these African American communities as follows:

The faith community's hermeneutics was a communal, participatory process of mutual story-telling, drawing on images indigenous to the particular culture. The experiencer brought his or her experience to the community in the form of a story. The community listened to the story to ascertain whether or not the story was consistent with other stories heard in the community of faith. If the story was analogous to other stories shared in the community, then the vision and its interpretation were communally confirmed" (1986, 75).

This model was termed the "communal-analogy-storytelling-listening process" (1986). It was a process in which the individual conversion narrative was discerned interactively, in community. In recent years, the Wimberly's have built on these findings to argue that the story-telling process has important implications for transformational efforts in our broader postmodern context and, more specifically, in the African American congregation (Wimberly 2005; Wimberly 2008). Anne Wimberly has developed an intentional method for linking people's "everyday stories" with exemplary stories from the Christian faith and African American heritage (Wimberly 2005, 27). This paper will share Wimberly's emphasis on "everyday stories" (2005, 27). These types of stories are the "folk" stories which are shared by "common people in any socio-religious context" (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999, 391-2).

A Historical Perspective on the Narrative Process

Mimesis (Imitation) and *Muthos* (Plot)

The scholarly discourse which is dedicated to thinking about narrative has a long history in the Western tradition. The Greek philosopher Aristotle is one of the earliest, recorded scholars to record his thoughts on the nature of story-telling (Aristotle 1984). Aristotle spoke of narrative as *mimesis* or, the *imitation of action* (1984 1250b25; Barnes 1995). In contemporary terms, these fundamental actions compose the events which make up a story.

What are these events that compose a story? A simple definition would be, "Things that happen" (Casati and Varzi 2010). Events can be such things as, "births and deaths, thunder and lightning, explosions, weddings, hiccups and hand-waves, dances, smiles [and] walks" (2010). In regards to time, events can be short in duration or rather lengthy. Consider the example of conversion narratives from the Wimberly's research. Some of the conversion narratives were

rather instantaneous, while others claimed to occur over an extended period of time (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986, 40; Wimberly 2006, 81). This leads to two further distinctions which philosophers make when speaking of events. They can also be material or meta-physical; or they can be individual or social (Casati and Varzi 2010; Cornell 2000). For understanding these distinctions, we turn to critical realist theory.

As was described in the prior chapter, critical realist theory provides the full scope of the elements which may be included in a narrative. Archer describes this scope as, "any item which has the dispositional capacity of being understood by someone" (Archer 1995, 180). Critical realist theory is built upon a fundamental distinction between three categories - "the real, the empirical, and the actual" (Smith 2010, 93). The real is what exists. This includes SEPs (roles, institutions, social structures), CEPs (values, cultural beliefs) and PEPs (Individuals, groups and populations) (Archer 1995). The actual, on the other hand, is what *happens* as events in the world. This is the material of which stories and narratives are composed (Casati and Varzi 2010). Finally, there is the empirical which is the observable or what "we experience, either directly or indirectly" (Smith 2010, 93). With this understanding of the nature of events we return to Aristotle's framework for narrative.

Aristotle understands a story to be made up of a "beginning, middle and end" (Gibbs 2007, 66; Aristotle 1984, 1450b25). It is the arrangements of these different parts which, for Aristotle, make up the *muthos* or the plot (Barnes 1995, 273).

The Narrative Process and Narrative Identity with Paul Ricouer

In more contemporary times, the French philosopher Paul Ricouer (1913-2005), built on Aristotle's reflections in order to compose a general theory of the narrative process (Ricoeur 2006). For this, he identified the three movements of narrative as *Mimesis* I, II, and III.

Paul Ricouer's Phases of Mimesis

In Mimesis I, Ricouer recognized that there is a *pre-understanding* of what human acting is in terms of a symbolic system (Ricoeur 1984, 64). For example, the action of raising one's arm, depending on the context, may be pre-understood as greeting someone, hailing a taxi or voting (1984, 58).

In the second movement of imitation, Ricouer argues that a narrative "must be more than just an enumeration of events in serial order; it must organize them into an intelligible whole" (1984, 64). In this second stage, which he calls "emplotment", there is an "operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession" (1984, 64). "Poetics", Ricouer says, is "the art of making plots", the art of "grasping together" different events (1984, 33, 66).

The *plot* is a critical part of the narrative process. In the history of narrative theory there are at least four types of plots. The first is the romance/adventure plot (Gibbs 2007, 67). In this organization, the hero faces challenges in route to a goal and *eventual victory* (Gibbs 2007, 67). A second plot-type is the comedy. In this organization, the goal is *restoration of the social order*. The hero must have the skills to overcome hazards that *threaten that order* (2007). The third plot type is tragedy. In this configuration, the hero is defeated by forces and marginalized from society (2007). Finally, there is satire. This genre is marked by a cynical perspective on social power (2007).

For Ricouer, the third step of *mimesis,* or the narrative process, involves the listeners of the narrative. The listeners receive the narrative according to their own receptive capacity which itself is "both limited and open to the world's horizon" (Ricoeur 1984, 77). Consider an example from the biblical narrative in Exodus. The Hebrews in Egyptian captivity received the message of deliverance from Yahweh, through the mouth of Moses. Yet, the text states that, "they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor" (Ex. 6:9, NIV). The message was delivered but their receptive capacity was too limited by oppression to receive it.

Ricouer's Concept of Narrative Identity

In 2006, in a book edited by Severine Deneulin, Ricouer expanded on his outline of the narrative process through defining the nature of narrative identity (Ricoeur 2006). In his chapter he argued that "the connection between plot and character may be held to be the conceptual matrix of our modern notion of narrative identity" (2006, 19). Ricouer than built on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre to argue that this understanding of narrative identity provides the narrative unity of a life and supports Aristotle's vision of the good life (2006; MacIntyre 1981, Chap. 15).

The Narrative Identity Process at the Group-level - Stephen Cornell

The sociologist Stephen Cornel tells the story of visiting an Indian reservation in order to research economic development (Cornell 2000, 41). He and his colleague met with a senior executive of the Indian nation and asked him what the economic strategies were for his nation. Cornell writes that, "The executive was quiet for a few moments. Then, without preamble, he sat forward, looked at us intently, and proceeded to relate to us a history of his people. The heart of his account was some key events that had shaped his nation…all of it had to do with how this particular people had descended into the poverty and powerlessness from which they were trying to rise" (Cornell 2000, 41).

Building on this vignette, Cornell makes four important observations which will frame this section. The first is that identity, specifically ethnic identity in this case, often take a narrative form (2000). Secondly, narrative identity is "especially salient during times of rupture" (2000). Thirdly, narrative identity is "intimately bound up in power relations" (2000). And finally, narrative identity can have a hybrid nature.

In regards to the first point, Cornel points out that for the Indian executive, ethnicity served as an organizing principle for his narrative (2000, 44).[10] In regards to the current focus on the African American congregational context, theologian Love L. Sechrest extends Cornell's articulation of the organizing principle for a narrative process through arguing that, like ethnicity, religious beliefs can also serve in this organizing role (Sechrest 2009). Sechrest argues that in narratives of this type, ethnic particularity may still be appreciated however the unifying theme is religious belief (2009, 224). For example, a community may see itself as part of the "Body of Christ," instead of as "a community bound together by the common experience of being 'dark-skinned in a country that worships whiteness'" (2009, 224).

Steps in the Narrative Identity Process

Cornell argues that a group's narrative evolves through three steps, which he emphasizes may or *may not* occur in a chronological order (Cornell 2000, 42). The three steps in a group's construction of narrative identity involve the *selection* of events, the *plotting* of those

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[10] This organizing principle is similar to what the Brazilian educator Paulo Frerie identified as a "generative theme" (Freire 1970, 81). The generative theme serves as the organizing principle for the story-dialogue method (Labonte, 1999).

events and the *interpretation* of the events and meanings for the group's identity (2000). Cornell's description is remarkably similar to Ricouer's stages of *mimesis*; although there are important distinctions as Cornell is focused on narrative in terms of ethnic identity and Ricouer is focused on a more general model of the narrative process (Ricoeur 1984).[11]

Selection of Narrative Events

In the first step of the process the group *selects* which events will compromise the narrative, Cornell argues that constructing an ethnic identity involves, "a gradual layering on and connecting of *events and meanings*, the construction of a collective narrative" (emphasis mine, 2000, 42-43).

Plotting of Narrative Events

The second step in the narrative process involves *plotting*. This phase of narrative construction tells how the events are linked to each other and the group. To illustrate and further define the plotting phase, I will present two examples – one at the individual level and the other at the communal. These examples provide illustrations on how individuals and communities organize event data.

At the individual level we will look at plotting in terms of illness self-stories. The sociologist-physician Arthur Frank builds on Ricouer's emphasis on plot and character in his research on the "self-stories" of individuals who encounter the challenge of personal illness (Frank 1997, 76-123). Through his research, he noted that there are three primary structures or plots which people share when they are telling their stories in respect to a personal illness (1997). The structures of these stories tend to present the experience of illness in terms of "restitution, chaos or a quest" (1997, 63-128).

Restitution stories involve plots of dependence on an outside agent (Frank 1997, 92). An example of this would be the pharmaceutical television commercial. In this familiar plot, someone is in helpless misery, the "remedy" comes and then, personal comfort is restored

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[11] It is unclear if Cornell was directly influenced by Ricouer as he does not provide references for this description of the narrative process.

(1997, 80). The chaos narrative on the other hand loses all sense of agency, as no one is perceived to be in control (1997: 105-107). Here the story dissolves into a disordered array of random events without a central purpose.

A quest or journey narrative focuses on the agency of the patient as they face the suffering or challenge and move toward the *telos*, the goal (1997: 115). For Frank, the characteristics of this plot involve a departure - the symptoms in illness stories; an initiation or challenge - the sufferings that must be endured; and finally, a return – the individual is changed and brings the marks of that change, usually in the form of new insight or character, back the ordinary world (1997, 118).[12] Frank points out that in contrast to the other narrative types, "The quest narrative recognizes ill people as responsible moral agents whose primary action is witness" (1997, 134).

Table 2.1 - Comparing Plot Structures in Illness Narratives			
	Restitution	**Chaos**	**Quest**
Structure	Yesterday I was healthy, today I am sick, but tomorrow I'll be healthy again	No structure - "and then..and then"	Departure - Initiation and Challenge - Return
Role of Agency	Dependent on outside agency	Submerged in the chaos	Personal Agency
Example	Pharmacetical TV Commercials	Job's wife - "Curse God and die"	J.R. Tolkien's "Frodo", George Lucas's Luke Skywalker

Research on illness narratives has also pointed out the importance of narrative which the *listener* brings to the dialogue. Two researchers examined individual's responses to the telling of a chaos narrative of a man who suffered from severe depression from a severe spinal cord injury (Smith and Sparkes 2011). They noted that when individuals heard the man's story there were four general responses: depression-therapy restitution stories; breakthrough

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12 Frank develops these aspects of "the quest" from the book, *The Hero of a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell (Campbell 1972).

restitution stories; social model stories; and solace stories (2011). The first two responses focused on some outside agent helping the man through either psychology or bio-technology (2011, 41-42). The third response focuses on the man moving out of the chaos through removing external, underlying causes (2011, 43). The fourth response, focused on *listening* to the man's story (2011, 44).

While plotting can clearly be recognized at the individual level, it can also be observed at the communal level. In an article which explores the role of collective trauma in six Guinean communities which were attacked by Sierra Leonean and Liberian RUF forces, Harvard anthropologist, Sharon Abramowitz, argues that the structure of the community narratives were an independent variable in the village's responses to the crisis (Abramowitz 2005, 2110). In her research she found,

> …lower rates of distress among communities that had developed *collective narratives of resistance to violence*, or had concertedly resisted post-conflict social change. Communities with higher rates of *distress* tended to report community narratives of violence and post-conflict social life, which *emphasized abandonment, isolation, disregard of community rituals and social supports, and the dislocation of local moral worlds* (emphasis mine, 2005, 2110).

Interpretation for Group-Level Identity

The third and final step in Cornell's framework for the narrative identity process is *interpretation* (Cornell 2000, 42). This step involves the description of the significance of the narrative for group identity and the recognition of what degree this interpretation has on the group (2000). Cornell writes that, "The problem of collective identity is the problem of creating an account of who "we" (or "they") are that makes sense of the larger matrix of social relations in which the group finds itself and of its place within that matrix and its experience of those relations (2000, 44).

Power Dynamics and Narrative Identity

The third general observation which Cornell makes is that "power relations lie at the heart of the narrative process" (Cornell 2000, 43). He builds on the work of Patrick Ewick and

Susan Silbey to argue that there are two types of narratives in regards to power relations – hegemonic and subversive (Cornell, 48-49). Hegemonic narratives are those that "reproduce existing relations of power and inequity" (Ewick and Silbey 1995, 197). Subversive narratives are those that reveal "the connections between particular lives and social organization by making visible and explicit the connections between particular lives and social organization" (1995, 197).

Both the narrative process and the researcher studying that process are not independent from the dynamics of power (Barrett 1996, 141; Prilleltensky 2008, 117). Within a small group context, it has been argued that social power is at work with five important sources – reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990, 44).

In interpersonal conversations and small groups, which is the context of the story/dialogue method, it is assumed that the effects of power will never be completely ameliorated; however, its effect can be reduced. Jurgen Habermas, a German sociologist and philosopher, has proposed specific "rules" for reducing power inequities in communication (Habermas 1984). Habermas' complex theory of power relations in society hinges on the role communication plays in maintaining or transforming social systems with power inequities. For Habermas, transformative communication occurs under conditions he describes as "ideal speech situations" (1984).

Habermas' guidelines for these type of conditions are that speech is "comprehensible (understandable to others), true (they are not logically or rationally false and can be defended by argument or data), appropriate (justified by a shared purpose among participants) and sincere (people state what they mean)" (Labonte, Feather, and Hills 1999, 44; Habermas 1984). Ronald Labonte, one of the architects of the story-dialogue method, has argued that, "Truth and appropriateness can only be defended in open dialogue. An open dialogue, in turn, is facilitated by open questions such as those developed for the story/dialogue method" (Labonte 2010, 159).

The Multiplicity of Individual Narrative Identities

A final observation which Cornell makes is in regards to the multiplicity of narrative identities. In this observation, Cornell critiques the category of "African American" through providing the example of one of his students, a young woman of German-African American descent (Cornell 2000). She is the daughter of an African American man and a German mother

who met while her father was stationed at a military base in Europe. She was raised to value both identities and she gladly chooses both (2000, 50).

Amartya Sen's Multiple, Individual Identities

Cornell's observation of the multiplicity of identity has also been noted by Amartya Sen in multiple publications (Sen 2006). It seems that much of Sen's commitment to recognizing the diversity of individual identities comes from witnessing a traumatic murder when he was eleven (2006, 42). The murder was associated with the Hindu-Muslim riots in 1944 in Dhaka, Bangladesh (Sen 2006, 170). The man's name was Kader Mia and he was killed by Hindus, as he was walking to work because of a perceived, monolithic identity as a Muslim (2006, 171).

In this example, Sen shows the tragedy of group identities which reduce the individual to a stereotype. When Sen shares what he sees as key elements in his own self-concept he states that, "I can be, at the same time, an Asian, an Indian citizen, a Bengali with Bangladesh ancestry, an American or British resident, an economist, a dabbler in philosophy, an author, a Sanskritist, a strong believer in secularism and democracy, a man, a feminist, a heterosexual, a defender of gay and lesbian rights, with a nonreligious lifestyle, from a Hindu background, a non-Brahim, and a nonbeliever in an afterlife (and also, in case the question is asked, a nonbeliever in a "before-life" as well)" (Sen 2006, 19).

So it would seem that whether one is a Christian, African, American woman named Sojourner Truth or an Secular, Asian economist, Sen would argue that their multiple identities be appreciated in a way which they have reason to value.

Discussion and Interpretation

In this section I will discuss key principles which are derived from the prior data. I will utilize these principles as I develop an integrative framework for defining narrative identity, freedom, and capability.

The scope of narrative involves "any item which has the dispositional capacity of being understood by someone" (Archer 1995, 180). Key sub-elements in identity narratives involve events, meanings, images, contexts and relationships

Archer's social reality model provides the broad scope of narrative. Cornell argues that constructing an identity narrative involves, "a gradual layering on and connecting of *events and meanings*, the construction of a collective narrative" (Cornell 2000, 42-43). The Wimberly's add to this the importance of images, social contexts and relationships (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986; Wimberly 2005, 27-28).

The narrative identity process of the individual and the group involves the selection, plotting and interpretation of key elements. Narrative identity is understood as the conceptual matrix of the plot and the character.

An identity narrative is a story that an individual or community tells itself and others through a narrative process of selection, plotting, and interpretation (Cornell 2000). The narrative identity of an individual or community is defined as the conceptual matrix of the general plot and the character (Ricoeur 2006). The plot or structure of a story can be one of restitution/dependency, chaos/marred or quest.

Although the plotting of narratives in terms of a quest, restitution or chaos are taken from illness narratives, they can also potentially be applied to a person or community's response to poverty, both in terms of those in poverty and those that are assisting those in poverty.

It seems that both the restitution and chaos narrative is similar to the concept of "marred identity" from transformational development (Myers 2011, 141, 280). In the restitution narrative the "non-poor" or the development worker has become the story-teller for the poor (2011). In the chaos narrative, the poor deny their ability to tell a story due to a conviction that "we cannot control much" (2011, 135-141, 280). This marring can also affect those that try to assist those in impoverished situations (2011). As was noted by the research from Smith and Sparkes, individuals who encounter someone who is telling a chaos narrative may immediately seek to provide bio-medical therapy to the "patient" instead of primarily *listening* to their story (Smith and Sparkes 2011; Myers 2011, 306). This is an area for further research.

Power dynamics lie at the heart of the narrative identity process, and thereby deeply affect the personal, relational and communal dimensions of the process (Prilleltensky 2008). These distortive effects can be reduced, in the small group context, through pursuing "ideal speech conditions," which the story/dialogue method hopes to facilitate (Habermas 1984).

Paulo Freire argues that each person must win back their right to "name the world" (Freire 1970, 13). To do this, hegemonic power relations must make space for subversive narratives which are often hybrid and do not fit into stereotypical categories. For example, an African American girl is simple to categorize; however, understanding the emic self-categorization of a German-African American girl requires that one listen to her story.

At the individual level, within the African American congregational context in South Los Angeles this concept of the multiplicity of identity is important. For example, many congregants are in mixed, Latino-black marriages. How does this affect the historic narrative of the African American church? In regards to intra-congregational narrative identity, what about first generation African congregants from Botswana or Uganda who share a pew with third and fourth generation African Americans? How is narrative identity defined in this context?

A primary dimension of the ability to narrate at the individual level involves the story-teller/agent asking different questions in the different quadrants of Archer's matrix.

In the first quadrant is the self, with the capacity for self-conscious narration. This quadrant represents the internalized narrative identity which is both private and personal. Here the critical question is in light of my commitments, "Who am I?"

Figure 2.1 – The Narrative Process for the Adult Agent
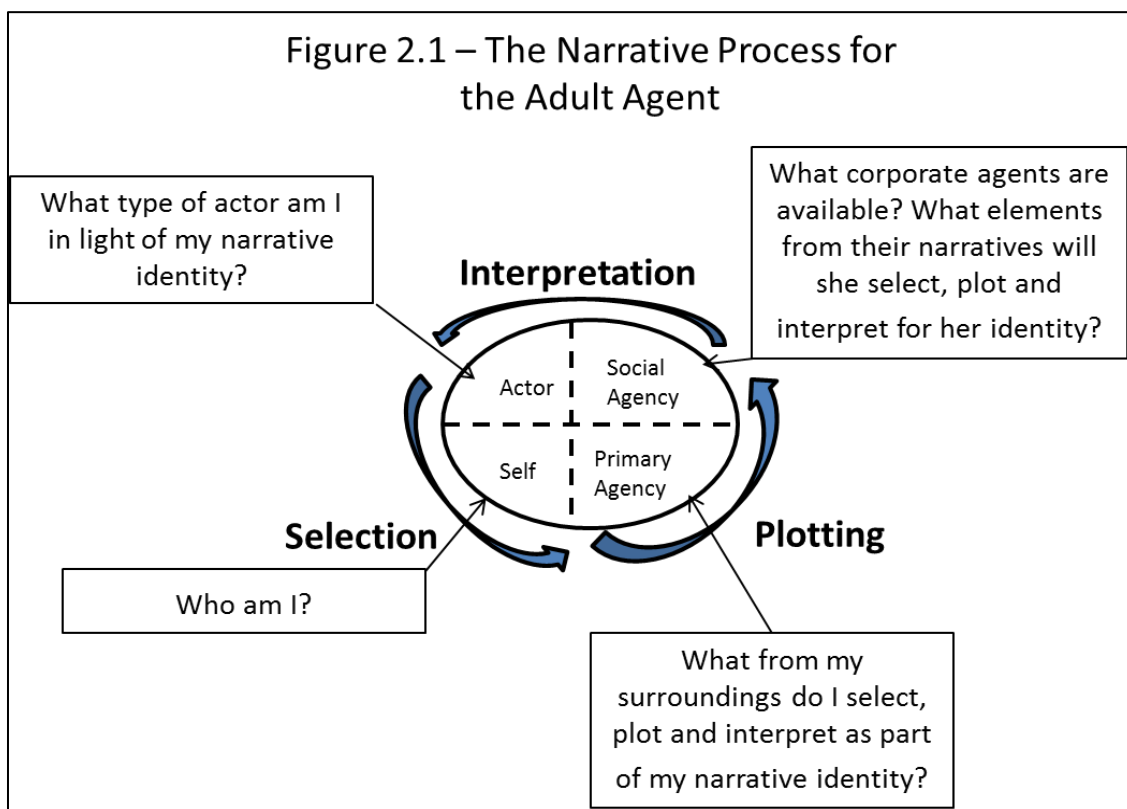
In the second quadrant, the reflective "self" surveys the context and examines the collectivities that they are, involuntarily, a part of as a result of being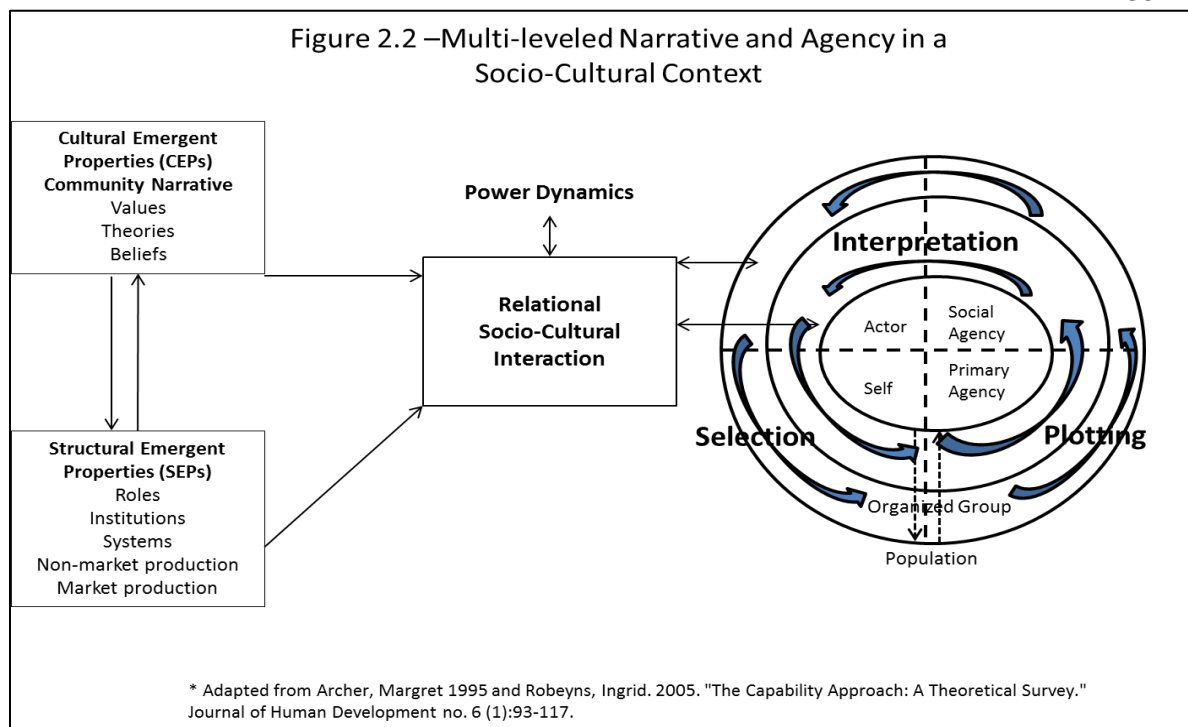 similarly placed in society (Archer 2003, 184). Here the externally imposed identity narratives are discovered from the context. Consider the example of the German-African American student (Cornell 2000). Because she looks black she is externally categorized into a collectivity which disregards her German identity.

The narrating self is constrained or empowered by an embodied existence in a particular context. It would seem that within this quadrant issues of "stereotype threat" are particularly influential (Steele and Aronson 1995; Cudd 2006). From this context particular parts of the imposed, collective identity are selected (or rejected), plotted and interpreted.

In the third quadrant the individual decides which hermeneutical communities she will participate in and, importantly, what level of value she will place on the social identities which are available through these social agents. The questions become, what corporate agents are available and what social identity elements will she select, plot and interpret for identity? For example, will her identity as a member of the black student union be of greater value than her participation in a local, multi-ethnic Sunday school class?

In the Wimberly's research, we saw that black slaves and emancipated slaves placed a high priority on discerning their personal, narrative identity through a process of community interaction within the local congregational context (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986).

The key issue in quadrant four is how the individual will convert the identity narrative into action. The narrating self becomes an actor and enters particular roles with particular commitments (Archer 2003, 184). In the example of Sojourner Truth, she must reject the familiar, internalized narrative identity of "Egypt" and embrace her role as an "authentic, responsible person" – an actor (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986, 97). As Archer reminds us, it is the commitments which are made as an authentic actor, which then return and affect the private and personal self – the narrating self.

Figure 2.2 –Multi-leveled Narrative and Agency in a
Socio-Cultural Context

**Cultural Emergent
Properties (CEPs)
Community Narrative**
Values
Theories
Beliefs

Power Dynamics

Interpretation

**Relational
Socio-Cultural
Interaction**

Actor | Social Agency

Self | Primary Agency

Selection

Plotting

**Structural Emergent
Properties (SEPs)**
Roles
Institutions
Systems
Non-market production
Market production

Organized Group

Population

* Adapted from Archer, Margret 1995 and Robeyns, Ingrid. 2005. "The Capability Approach: A Theoretical Survey."
Journal of Human Development no. 6 (1):93-117.

The ability to narrate has two important components - the ability (agency) to narrate (the narrative process). In addition, it operates at multiple levels - the individual, group and population levels.

Cornell makes the important point that the narrative identity process of selecting, plotting and interpreting also occurs at the group level. He writes that, "The problem of collective identity is the problem of creating an account of who "we" (or "they") are that makes sense of the larger matrix of social relations in which the group finds itself and of its place within that matrix and its experience of those relations (Cornell 2000, 44).

Although Archer does not directly apply her matrix to social agents, it would seem that the questions from the individual level can also be applied at higher-order levels. As Wolterstorff has argued, a group has the capacity for rational agency (Wolterstorff 2008, 362). This capacity can be used to survey the collectivity of which it is apart (Quadrant II), For example, a particular low-income, black church may unconsciously accept a stereotyping categorization such as "the hood" while an institution such as University of Southern California may choose to ignore this designation. This African American congregation may also choose its place in respect to the narratives of larger social agents (Quadrant III). For example, Crenshaw Christian Church can distinguish its unique narrative as an African American church within the larger Pentecostal church community, which has its own distinctive narrative (Price 1999, 31).

The relational dimension or "interplay", both vertically and horizontally, is of particular interest in researching the process of narrative identity.

Archer points out that narrative is the result of socio-cultural interaction (Archer 1995, 180). In the historic African American church, the "communal-analogy-storytelling-listening process" is an important demonstration of this interaction (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986). This process represents a particular interaction between the individual level and the community. As the Wimberly's argue, God's activity is evident at both the personal and communal levels (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986, 77).

Implications for my Research

I have been particularly impressed by the Wimberly's commitment to holistic transformation through the integration of the spiritual dimension. I appreciate their intentional recognition of God's activity. From a theological perspective, it has made me consider how I will appreciate both God's activity, as the key Story-teller/Actor in the story, and activity of the human actors (Myers 2011, 58). Sen clearly calls for a "people-centered approach" to development; however, how does this reconcile with a biblical worldview in which God is central. There will be more on this theme in the next chapter.

I think that the "communal-analogy-storytelling-listening process" is particularly instructive for understanding the context for my research. I appreciate Cornell and Sen's point on the multiplicity of identity. This is a particular challenge for evaluating identity in the urban, African-American, Evangelical, Pentecostal context.

In my perspective, one of the most important theoretical findings from this chapter is the integration of Archer's agency matrix with the narrative process. In my view, the Archer's matrix for agency adequately addresses the identity multiplicity issue. It does this through presenting a stratified view of reality in which the person makes genuine choices even as they are acted upon by higher-order strata, which must also be evaluated.

In regards to power relations, the story dialogue method directly builds on Habermas's "ideal speech conditions" (Labonte, Feather, and Hills 1999). It seeks to create a setting in which conversations can occur which are comprehensible, true, appropriate and sincere (1999). Furthermore, the story/dialogue method facilitates a group's movement from descriptive questions (What happened?) to application questions (Now what?). In other words, the process

concludes with the group deciding what type of actor they want to be. It is interesting that this process facilitates Sen's advocacy for development evaluation to move from resource evaluation to functioning evaluation. There will be more on this in the next chapter.

In regards to the analysis of the data from this methodology an appreciation for the multiplicity of identity leads me toward grounded theory (Charmaz 2006). A definite strength of the story dialogue method is that analysis is part of the methodology. In other words, the group themselves create "saturated" categories from their earlier structured dialogue (2006).

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to develop a model of the narrative identity process, and the effect of power dynamics on this process, through utilizing the work of specific narrative theorists and the agency model of Margret Archer from the prior chapter. The Wimberly's (Wimberly 2008), Stephen Cornel (Cornell 2000; Sechrest 2009), Arthur Frank (Frank 1997), Isaac Prilleltensky (Prilleltensky 2008) and Amartya Sen (Sen 2006) were some of the thinkers which were considered. The thesis which was advanced was that the African American narrative identity process is a multi-leveled, interacting phenomenon, which involves the selection, plotting and interpretation of events and is deeply affected by power dynamics.

The chapter began with a presentation of the narrative process through examining the work of Edward and Anne Wimberly. Then there was a broad presentation of the history of reflection on the narrative process through looking at the work of Aristotle, Paul Ricouer, Stephen Cornell and Arthur Frank among others.

After the presentation of this data, I discussed key principles which can be derived from the materials. I then concluded with a section on the direct application of these principles to myself, as the researcher, and the context, theory and method.

CHAPTER III - ARTICULATING FREEDOM: PERSPECTIVES ON FREEDOM FROM CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING, THE CAPABILITY APPROACH AND AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Introduction

The central purpose for this chapter is to compare and contrast three visions of freedom - two of which have European roots in Aristotle, and a third which is rooted in the African American congregational tradition. The outlines of the first approach will be traced through the work of Aristotle and Aquinas to contemporary Catholic social teaching (CST) (Paul IV 1965). The contours of the second strand will be traced through Aristotle to the capability approach, as interpreted by Amartya Sen (Sen 2000). The third approach will introduce the understanding of freedom which emerges in the work of Edward and Anne Wimberly (Wimberly 2005; Wimberly 2006).

The thesis of this paper is that the three approaches present important points of comparison and contrast in regard to their understandings of freedom, reason, human fallibility and the respective levels of analysis. Through the findings in this paper, I hope to better connect the European conversation on freedom, as found in CST and the capability approach, with the understanding of freedom in my area of doctoral studies in African American congregations in South Los Angeles.

Considering the Data

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* - Functionings and the Good Life

The good life, Aristotle argued, is *eudaimonia* or human flourishing (Aristotle 1984, 1735). From this claim, Aristotle argued for a fundamental distinction between instrumental means, such as wealth, and intrinsic ends (Aristotle 1984, 1729). The ends for Aristotle are human flourishing. He notes that, "the excellence of a thing is relative to its proper function" (Aristotle 1984, 1798).

"[F]ulfillment of man's distinctive function" was understood as the purpose of the virtuous life. Understanding this pursuit of virtue was a major theme for Aristotle. Proper virtue was considered to be a "mean between extremes" (Stumpf 1982, 100; Aristotle 1984). The cardinal virtues for Aristotle were courage, temperance (self-restraint), justice and wisdom. He concluded that practical wisdom, *phronesis*, is the best guide to moral action (Stumpf 1982, 100). Although, he stated that, "philosophic wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of virtuous activities" (Stumpf 1982).

Aquinas and the Differing Views of Freedom and Virtue

The Roman Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274 AD) built on the work of Aristotle and developed a particular, reason-based approach to freedom which emphasized the freedom for excellence, in contrast to an alternative, will-based conception of freedom which emphasized freedom from external influences.

Aquinas understood the "freedom for excellence" as the organizing principle of the moral life (Weigel 2005, 79). In this sense, freedom is like learning to play a piano or playing a sport. It is "a matter of gradually acquiring the capacity to choose the good and to do what we choose with perfection, with excellence" (Weigel 2005, 81).

Aquinas agrees with Aristotle's selection of the cardinal virtues. He places practical wisdom (prudence) as paramount among the cardinal virtues; and includes justice, self-control (Temperance) and courage (fortitude) to organize the passions (Thomas 1993, 153-154). However, Aquinas adds on to the cardinal virtues, the theological virtues of faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13; Thomas 1993, 155). Aquinas states that, "man needed to receive in addition something supernatural to direct him to a supernatural end" (1993). The renowned Thomist scholar, Servais Pinckaers, states that this type of freedom renders

> the human person more and more capable of self-direction according to the movement of charity. The counsels of the New Law (of freedom) show the moral autonomy of the Christian who through the interior impulse of the Holy Spirit has become capable of making free choices of paths beyond the necessary precepts that will lead to God (Pinckaers 2005, 182).

Freedom of Indifference – An alternative narrative for freedom

In Aquinas' day there was an alternative narrative of freedom which embraced nominalism. Nominalism produced a new concept of freedom as a choice which emanated from the will alone, known as the freedom of indifference (Pinckaers 2005). This type of freedom was in constant tension, or opposition, in regard to everything outside itself (2005, 168). This approach was based on the premise that either a moral system was autonomous, centered on the human person, and precisely on his or her freedom to claim radical independence in their choice of external things, or it was to be subjected to a rule, a law, to alien obligations (2005, 169). Weigel points out that that tension between these two views of freedom continues to be seen to this day (Weigel 2005).

Contemporary Catholic Social Teaching on Freedom

Gaudium Et Spes

On December 7th, 1965, Pope John Paul IVth issued *Gaudium Et Spes* (Paul IV 1965). In this document the Pope stated that, "For its part, authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man remains 'under the control of his own decisions'" (1965, 17). In addition he boldly stated that, "the subject and the goal of all institutions is and must be the human person" (1965, 25).

This document also outlined an understanding of the common good. The common good was defined as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual member's relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment" (1965, 26).

Two years later Pope John Paul VI issued *Populorum Progressio*. In this important document the Pope set out to "help all men explore this serious problem [of progressive development] in all its dimensions" (Paul VI 1967). In exploring these dimensions the Pope states that, "Far from being the ultimate measure of all things, man can only realize himself by reaching beyond himself". More specifically he argues that "True humanism points the way toward God" (1967, 42).

In 2010 the Catholic Bishops' Conference for England and Wales built on these principles in the report, "Choosing the Common Good" (Conference 2010, 8). In this

document, the common good was defined as, "'the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily" (2010). The pursuit of these goals was defined as "integral human development" (2010). This understanding of freedom in the context of development involves both individuals and groups who pursue human flourishing through freely orientating their *telos* toward the common good.

Development as Freedom and Amartya Sen

The purpose of this section is to outline the understanding of freedom which emerges in Amartya Sen's interpretation of the capability approach. In addition, key terms such as capability will be defined. Although there are important, alternative voices in the capability approach such as Martha Nussbaum, Ingrid Robeyns, Sabina Alkire and Severine Deneulin, these authors are marginally referenced as Sen's definition of the capability approach continues to be the most influential interpretation both within the capability approach and externally (Robeyns 2011; Deneulin and Bano 2009, 45).

The CA is a multi-disciplinary conversation. As one Robeyns has noted, "the capability approach is being discussed in such diverse fields as social choice theory, mainstream welfare economics, heterodox economics, liberal egalitarianism, moral philosophy, development ethics, development economics, social and political theory, education, gender studies, theology, and so forth" (Robeyns 2003, 371).

As was stated, the capability approach is largely rooted in the thinking of Amartya Sen. Sen's first presentation of the CA was in *The Tanner Lectures* at Stanford University in 1979 (Sen 1979; Deneulin 2005). In his lecture, Sen argues for "basic capability equality" in contrast to "utilitarian equality, total utility equality and Rawlsian equality" (Sen 1979).

Although Sen's CA would go through many iterations, the foundational concept of capability-based evaluation had a profound effect on the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) in the 1990s. During this time, the UNDP began the Human Development Reports (HDRs) which stated that,

> The purpose of development is to offer people more options. One of their
> options is access to income - not as an end in itself but as a means to acquiring
> human wellbeing. But there are other options as well, including long life,
> knowledge, political freedom, personal security, community participation and

guaranteed human rights. People cannot be reduced to a single dimension as economic creatures. What makes them and the study of the development process fascinating is the entire spectrum through which human capabilities are expanded and utilized" (UNDP 1990, iii).

Since their inception, the HDRs have profoundly influenced the field of international development (Deneulin and Bano 2009).

As Sen's theory has significantly adjusted over the years, the focus for this discussion will be on Sen's presentation of the approach as he articulated it in *Development as Freedom* (Sen 2000). This book was written as an adapted compilation of a series of five lectures which Sen presented at the World Bank in 1996 (2000, xiii).

One way of interpreting *Development as Freedom* is to see it as a response to the question, "What is the proper space for the evaluation of poverty in development?" Sen's underlying assumption is that, "the real 'bite'" of a theory of poverty evaluation can "be understood from its informational base: what information is - or is not - taken to be directly relevant" (2000, 61). As he did in the 1979 Tanner Lectures, Sen locates his theory through contrasting his approach with other development theories such as income-based evaluation and utilitarianism.[13]

Contrasting with Resource-Based and Utility-Based Approaches

In regards to income-creation as the goal of development, Sen quotes Aristotle's work *Nicomeadean Ethics* in which he says, "Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else" (2000, 14). Sen also cites the work of Adam Smith and Karl Marx on this point (Sen 2000, 7, 29, 71, 107).

Sen continues that one can make an "excellent argument for *beginning* with whatever information we have on the distribution of incomes, particularly low real incomes" (2000, 72). However, he argues that the focus cannot be on providing resources due to the fact that people significantly differ in their ability to convert resources. Five factors which affect resource conversion which Sen recognizes include the following:

- *Personal differences* such as obesity or disability affect resource conversion.

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[13] Sen also contrasts his theory with the work the primary social goods of John Rawls; however, Sen's interpretation of Rawl's work has been significantly critiqued in recent years (Robeyns, 2011).

- *Environmental diversities* due to the presence of infectious disease, heating, clothing requirements or pollution are also important.
- *Social climate*, or community relationships are also important.
- Relational *perspective differences* are recognized (2000, 73). As an example, Sen discusses the challenge of being relatively poor in an affluent community or "appearing in the community without shame" as the economist Adam Smith noted.
- *Distribution within the family* is a final recognized factor. The wellbeing or freedom of individuals in a family depend on how the family income in terms of the interests of different members of the family (Sen 2000, 73; Robeyns 2011).

If, due to complex conversion factors, resources are a challenging space in which to measure development what about the internal space of utility or personal preference?

Utility as an Informational Base

Sen claims that utilitarianism has been "the dominant ethical theory" (Sen 2000, 58). It is argued in classic utilitarianism that, "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Munson and Munson 2000, 4). In contrast to a resource-based approach, the utilitarian evaluation moves the evaluative space internally, within the realm of subjective preference.

However, Sen claims that this approach is also inadequate due to its inability to capture non-utility concerns such as rights, freedoms, and distributional concerns and due to a focus on aggregate preferences (Sen 2000, 62). In addition, this approach is deemed inadequate due to adaptive preferences. On this Sen states, "deprived people tend to come to terms with their deprivation because of the sheer necessity of survival, and they may, as a result, lack the courage to demand any radical change, and may even adjust their desires and expectations to what they unambitiously see as feasible" (2000, 63). As stated in chapter 1, Sen notes that in cases of long-term deprivation a "false consciousness" may form (Sen 2002, 80-81). In light of these critiques, Sen proposes the CA as an effective way forward.

What the Capability Approach is and How it Defines freedom

For Sen, fundamental moral facts are facts about individual well-being. His assumption is that "individual agency is, ultimately, central" in addressing deprivation (Sen 2000, xi). In chapter one, this premise was examined and contrasted with the work of Deneulin and Archer.

Functionings

For the reasons cited above, Sen argues that external, resource-based evaluations and internal subjective preference are inadequate evaluative spaces. Sen begins by arguing, in line with Aristotle, for a focus on, "functionings" as the basic building block of normative analysis (Sen 2000, 73). Sen states that "The concept of 'functionings' which has distinctly Aristotelian roots, reflects the various things a person may value doing or being" (2000, 75). Or, he states that they are, "things that a person has reason to value" (2000, 54). For example, this could be, "being able to take part in the life of the community and having self-respect" (2000). In contrast to measuring accessible resources and internal preferences, functionings focus on his or her "actual *achievements*" (2000).

In addition, there are three further observations to make in regards to Sen's view of functionings, First, Sen advocates a non-empiricist view of the person in his embrace of both "doing and being" activities (2000). Secondly, Sen notes that the activity of "choosing functionings" can also be considered a functioning (2000, 76). Thirdly, Sen places a high value on *individual reason* in deciding which functionings are of value. Sen argues that both *Nicomechean Ethics* and *Politics* articulate "the kinds of reasoning that can be sensibly used" (2000, 345 n1). Furthermore, he argues that this reasoning must be able to stand within the democratic process (2000, 32).

Substantive Freedoms

Within the realm of development evaluation, Sen argues that that evaluation must move beyond functionings and evaluate one's freedom or opportunity to function. "Expansion of freedom" Sen states, "is viewed, in this approach both as the primary end and as the principal means of development" (2000, xii).

The primary focus of the CA is on the ends of development, as Sen defines it - increasing individual's freedom. Ingrid Robeyns notes, "It is therefore somewhat more precise to say that the capability approach focuses on people's ends in terms of beings and doings expressed in general terms: being literate, being mobile, being able to hold a decent job. Whether a particular person then decides to translate these general capabilities into the more specific capabilities *A*, *B* or *C* (e.g., reading street signs, reading the newspaper, or reading the Bible), is up to them" (Robeyns 2011).

Because freedom serves as the end of development projects Sen places high importance on the local view of the traditional life and not "cunning development projects" (2000, 11). He states, "If a traditional way of life has to be sacrificed to escape grinding poverty or miniscule longevity (as many traditional societies have had for thousands of years), then it is the people directly involved who must have the opportunity to participate in deciding what should be chosen" (2000, 31).

In regards to the means, Sen has identified five different types of instrumental freedoms: economic facilities, political freedoms, social facilities, transparency guarantees, and protective security (2000, 10-11, 38-41). Each of these instrumental, interconnected freedoms help to, "advance the general capability of a person" (2000, 10).

This instrumental aspect of freedom is central for understanding Sen's capability approach. Therefore, we will take a moment to outline his framework on this point. By economic facilities, Sen means "Opportunities that individuals respectively enjoy to utilize economic resources" (2000, 38). By political freedoms Sen means, such things as "free speech and elections" (2000, 11). By social opportunities he means, "Arrangements that society makes for education, and healthcare, which influence the individual's substantive freedom to live better" (2000, 34). By transparency guarentees Sen is speaking of the important intangible level of "trust" in a society (2000). Finally, in regards to protective securities, Sen is recognizing the importance of fixed institutional arrangements (2000, 40).

Sen argues that freedom is central to the process of development for two distinct reasons (2000, 4-5): First, there is the *effectiveness* reason. By this Sen means that, "the achievement of development is thoroughly dependent on the free agency of people" (2000). In other words, if a development project is to be sustainable, it must be locally-owned. However, Sen quickly emphasizes that development workers must press beyond the effectiveness reason and also consider the *evaluative* reason. By this he means that the "assessment of progress has to be done primarily in terms of whether the freedoms *that people value* have been enhanced"

(emphasis mine, 2000). For example, he notes that, "What would be damaging would be the neglect - often to be seen in the development literature - of centrally relevant concerns because of a lack of interest in the freedoms of the people involved" (2000, 34).

Two Types of Freedom

Sen further characterizes freedom within the ends and means aspects of freedom through arguing that there are two further distinctions that must be made (See Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 - Freedom in the life of the Development Project
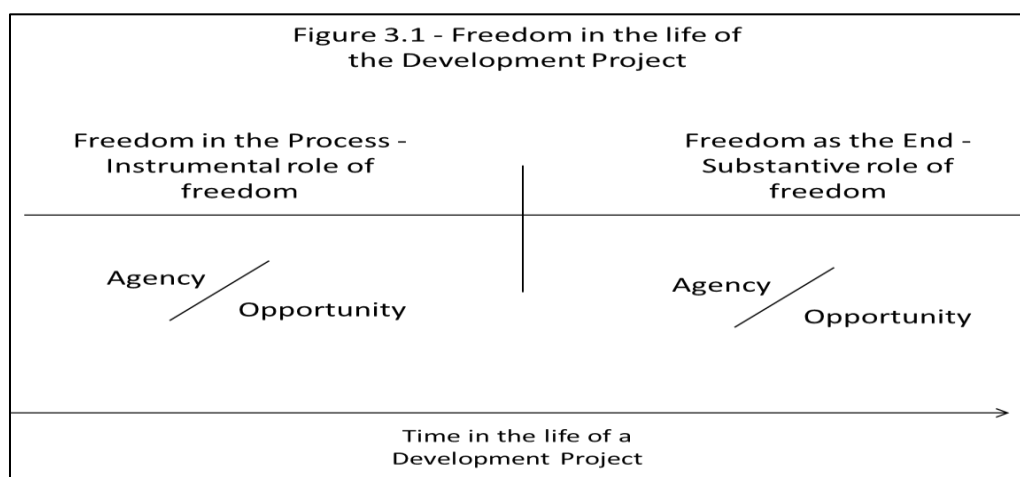
Process – Agency. First of all there is the agency aspect. By this Sen means, "Someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well" (2000, 19). As much of Chapter One was devoted to an examination of Sen's view of agency, we will not examine it further here.

Opportunity – Capability. The second aspect of freedom is opportunity or capability aspect. Here it is important to note that Sen is describing a particular type of freedom. He calls this freedom a capability. Sen defines a capability as the "freedoms [a person] enjoys to lead the kind of life [a person] has reason to value" (Sen 2000, 86; Deneulin and Shahani 2009, 31). Elsewhere Sen defines a capability as, "Alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for [a person] to achieve" (2000, 75). CA theorists summarize Sen's definition of capability as, "a person's freedom to enjoy various functionings – to be or do things that contribute to their well-being" (Deneulin and Shahani 2009, 22). Sen argues that, "While the combination of a

person's functionings reflects her actual achievements, the capability set represents the *freedom to achieve*" (italics mine, 2000).

As an illustration of these terms, Sen frequently uses the example of an affluent person who is fasting as opposed to a malnourished child (2000). Both have the same achieved functioning however, the affluent person has the choice to realize this functioning or another functioning (i.e. eating). If one simply evaluated the functioning, both individuals would be identical. Robeyns argues that, "understanding capability as *an opportunity concept of freedom*, rather than some other kind of freedom, may undermine mistaken critiques on Sen's work" (emphasis mine, Robeyns 2011).

Furthermore, Sen notes that the "Evaluative focus of this 'capability approach' can be either on the *realized* functionings (what a person is actually able to do) or on the *capability set* of alternatives she has (her real opportunities)" (2000, 76).

Figure 3.2 – A stylized non-dynamic representation of a person's capability set and her social and personal context

* Robeyns, Ingrid. 2005. "The Capability Approach: A Theoretical Survey." Journal of Human Development no. 6 (1): 98.
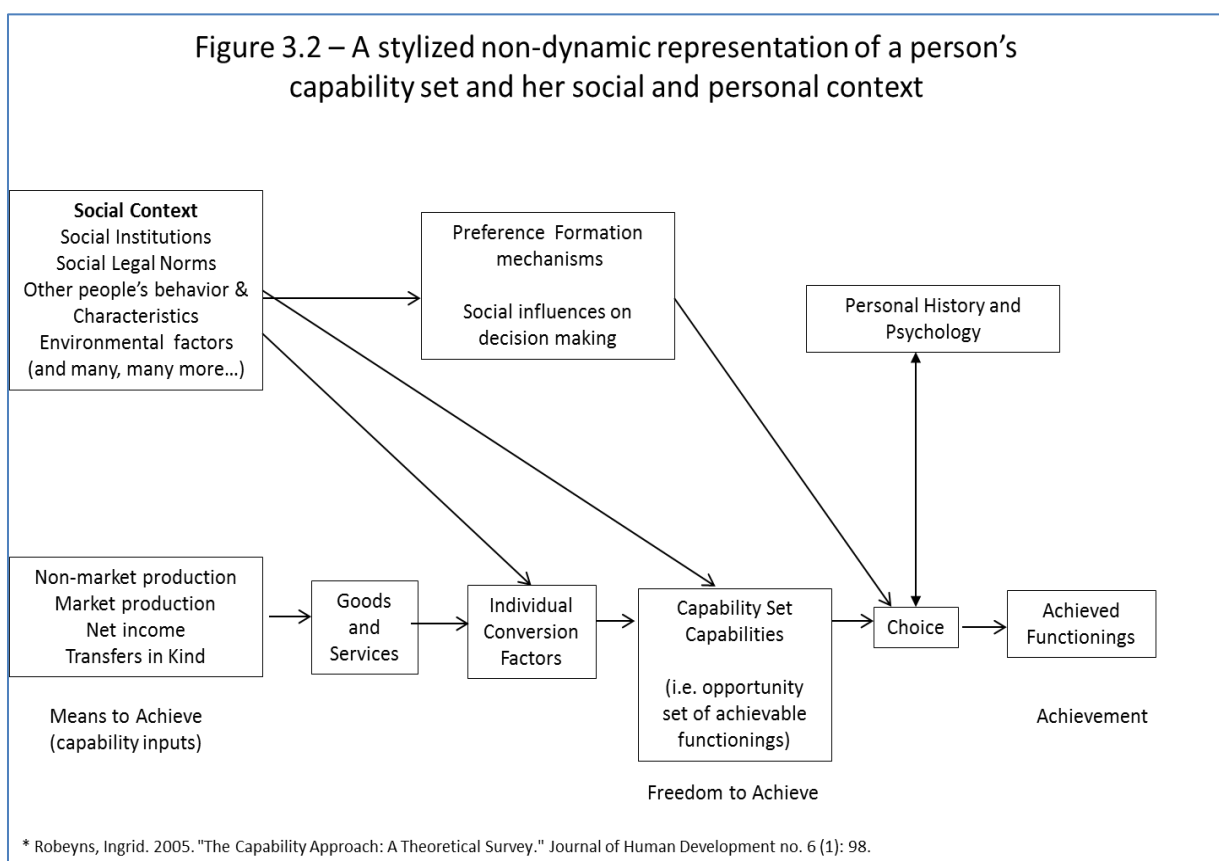
Unfreedoms

As a corollary to the above definition of development Sen states that, "Development consists in the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little *opportunity* of exercising their reasoned agency" (Sen 2000, xii). In other words, "The removal of substantial unfreedoms…is constitutive of development" (2000).

Sen again employs the agency-opportunity distinction to describe unfreedoms. He states, "Unfreedom can arise either through inadequate processes (such as the violation of voting privileges or other political or civil rights) or through inadequate opportunities that some people have for achieving what they minimally would like to achieve (including the absence of such elementary opportunities as the capability to escape premature mortality or preventable morbidity or involuntary starvation)" (2000, 17).

Freedom for Ed and Anne Wimberly

The African American Pastoral Theologians Edward and Anne Wimberly provide a final view on freedom. E. Wimberly argues that the purpose of those that would assist the oppressed is to, "Liberate persons from internalized conversations and stories into which they have been recruited and which limit their ability to participate in wider society at all levels" (Wimberly 2006, 12). In the African American community this freedom involves liberation from "negative self-images, identities and stories. Such recruiting leads African Americans to internalize oppression, keeping them in psychic bondage without even needing overt forms of oppression" (Wimberly 2006, 11).

Anne Wimberly conducted a series of interviews with African American Christians in order to examine their definition of freedom (Wimberly 2005, 5-12). From this research she describes freedom, which she also calls liberation, as a "multidimensional process that never stops" (Wimberly 2005, 8). According to A. Wimberly, these dimensions include the spiritual, ethical, material, socio-political, psychosocial, educational, and communal (2005).

She begins with the spiritual dimension which results when "we choose to link our lives with God's story revealed in the person of Jesus Christ" (Wimberly 2005, 9). It involves living in "positive relation to God, self, others and all things" (2005). The second category of ethical liberation involves "Living according to a values framework centered on knowing all of life as a

gift" (2005). Material Liberation involves "assuring that all God's children have adequate material supports such as housing, economic means, food, and clothing to survive and thrive with human dignity and respect (2005, 10). Socio political liberation involves both "Equal participation in policy-making and liberation from human disenfranchisement to human enfranchisement" (2005). Psychosocial liberation involves the "liberation from denigration and dehumanization to positive self-valuing of who and whose we are as individuals, families, and ethnic cultural group" (2005, 10). Educational liberation involves the move from no education and miseducation to active learning. And finally, it involves communal liberation through no longer adopting "a stance of isolation" (2005).

Table 3.1 - Freedom in the African American Congregation*		
	Freedom from	**Freedom To**
Spiritiual Liberation	a dead-in or "boxed-in" existence	our embrace of and acting on God's hope and purpose for our lives.
Ethical Liberation	humans-our own-tendencies to name and foster an existence and relationships that harm the lives of human beings and otherkind	form, hold to, and act on a framework of values that contribute to building up and nurturing all of life.
Material Liberation	Material need	Material sustenance
Sociopolitical Liberation	human disenfranchisement	human enfranchisement
Psychosocial Liberation	denigration and dehumanization	positive self-valuing of who and Whose we are as indivdiuals, families and an ethnic cultural group.
Education Liberation	miseducation, no education, and no vision	active learning and arriving at a vision for living.
Communal Liberation	our self's adoption of a stance of isolation or being set outside community	to a commitment to be in significant relationship with those in our families or non-kin circles as a caring, sharing, and listening presence.
* Wimberly, Anne Streaty. 2005. Soul Stories: African American Christian Education. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 9-11.		

E. Wimberly points out that the process of liberation "enables human beings to become fully involved and engaged in life so that each person can identify, develop, and exercise his or her full *human capacities* while at the same time enabling others to do likewise for the purpose of contributing to the *common good*" (emphasis mine, Wimberly 2006, 21). He states that, "Editing the identities and stories into which one has been recruited is an important step in recovering one's own agency" (2006, 65). E. Wimberly critiques the narrative of modernity in creating "relational refugees" who are driven by market values (2006, 139). E. Wimberly concludes that, "it is not enough to liberate personal agency…Attention must be given to the way society attempts to recruit people into stories, plots, ideas, and images that are alien to who they are" (2006, 140).

Discussion and Interpretation

All three approaches embrace a form of ethical individualism; however, Catholic social teaching and the Wimberly's would disagree with a type of methodological and ontological individualism which marginalizes the importance of supra-individual entities.

Table 3.2 Comparing CST, Sen and Wimberly's			
	Aquinas/CST	**Sen**	**Wimberly's**
Ethical Individualism	Qualified Endorsement	Endorsed	Qualified Endorsement
Ethical Emphasis	The Common Good	The Individual	The Common Good
Methodological Individualism	Rejected	Accepted, in a particular form*	Rejected
Group Funtionings Capabilities	Embraced	Analytically affirmed, but methodologically marginalized	Embraced

As was argued in the first chapter, based on Margret Archer's definition of methodological individualism, Sen seems to hold to a particular form of methodological individualism which does not fully recognize the influence of supra-individual entities. While his approach implicitly avoids the nihilism involved in the non-Aristotelian/Ockham approach to freedom through recognizing the individual's relational dependence, he does not explicitly provide a larger narrative frame of the common good which might guide individual and societal values. Sen points toward

conditions which instrumentally increase individual agency, however, he does not provide adequate resources to move in that direction.

Ingrid Robeyns recognizes the limitations of the CA. She states that, "[T]he capability approach is not a theory that can *explain* poverty, inequality and well-being; instead, it rather provides a tool and a framework within which to *conceptualize* and *evaluate* these phenomena. Applying the capability approach to issues of policy and social change will therefore often require the addition of explanation theories" (Robeyns 2005, 94).

CST and the Wimberly's, on the other hand, provide clearer guidance in regards to supra-individual entities. Consider the definition of the common good which includes "social groups and their individual member's" (Paul IV 1965). The Wimberly's commitment to a narrative for the common good is also evident in, E. Wimberly's goal of enabling "human beings to become fully involved and engaged in life so that each person can identify, develop, and exercise his or her full *human capacities* while at the same time enabling others to do likewise for the purpose of contributing to the *common good* (emphasis mine, Wimberly 2006, 21). A. Wimberly also recognizes the communal dimension when she states the need to move provide "liberation from denigration and dehumanization to positive self-valuing of who and whose we are as *individuals, families, and ethnic cultural group*" (Wimberly 2005).

While Sen seems to marginalize the importance of group functionings and capabilities in both the means and ends of development, Catholic social teaching and the Wimberly's endorse the recognition of group functionings and capabilities. I would argue that a more appropriate definition of a capability is that it is, "a kind of freedom which an individual or social group enjoys which leads to those functionings which that individual or social group has reason to value as it pursues the common good."

In the *Idea of Justice* Sen stated that, "In valuing a person's ability to take part in the life of the society, there is an implicit valuation of the life of the society itself, and that is an important enough aspect of the capability perspective" (Sen 2009, 246). Chapter 1 of this paper recognized examined Sen's position of methodological and ontological individualism. While CST and the Wimberly's do not explicitly take an explicit position on Sen's "capabilities", I would argue that a strong case could be made that they both recognize the validity of group functionings and capabilities.

Sen defines freedom, in the context of development as both the end and means of a project. In addition, he argues that there is an agency and opportunity aspect to freedom in both the aforementioned end

and means aspects. In contrast to this position, CST and the Wimberly's recognize the importance of individual agency and opportunity as an end and means, however, they also recognize the importance of other actors and structures in their definition of freedom.

Table 3.3 Comparing CST, Sen and Wimberly's			
	Aquinas/CST	**Sen**	**Wimberly's**
Definition of Freedom	Individual and communal agency and opportunity for the common good	Individual agency and opportunity as the end and means of development.	The multi-dimensional opportunity for individual and communal actors to fully participate in the common good
Freedom to	Pursue the common good	Achieve	Participate in God's story
Freedom from	Internal and external effects of sin	Unfreedoms	Structural and Internalized Oppression
Central Faculty	Reason	Reason	Relational story-telling
Role of Reason	*Phronesis,* Practical Wisdom	Democractic/Public Reasoning	Relationally-embedded, narrative-driven wisdom
Man's reason and Corruption	"Wounded by sin"	No Mention	Distorted relationships and internalized oppression

Sen has made some important adjustments from his original conception of capability in 1979. One of the most important ones has been his equating of capability with the idea of freedom in *Development as Freedom* (Sen, 2000). While this definition has many commending features, it requires a broader understanding of agency and the common good.

While there is a common appreciation for the central role of reason, or practical wisdom (phronesis) in the move toward freedom; there is a significant difference between Sen, Catholic social teaching and the Wimberly's in understanding the wounded or fallible condition of reason.

The guiding faculty for Sen and Aquinas and Catholic social teaching appears to be practical wisdom or reason. Where CST recognizes the deeply flawed condition of this faculty, Sen argues for more decision-making rigor and information access. The Wimberly's, on the other hand, argue for relationally-embedded wisdom which appreciates God's larger story.

True freedom can only be reached through "true humanism" which, for CST and the Wimberly's, involves union with Christ.

The highest of the virtues are faith, hope and love. By implication, removal of unfreedoms by development workers is not complete until individuals are in supernatural communion with Christ. Also, this observation affects the development worker also, as he or she is also called to humility and freedom which is found in true humanism.

In light of prior chapters, as the freedom to tell a story involves both an agency and opportunity aspect, it will be important to engage both Archer's model for agency and the Cornell- Frank model for the narrative process.

When examining the freedom to tell a story, at both the individual and group level, it will be critical to identify the agency of the individual or group and the specific story that the individual or group chooses to tell. In other words, (1) what type of reflexive stance does the individual or group take toward society? And then, also, (2) what type of narrative process does the individual or group follow (restitution, chaos, quest)?

Figure 3.3 — Ability to Tell a Story as a Functioning and Capability
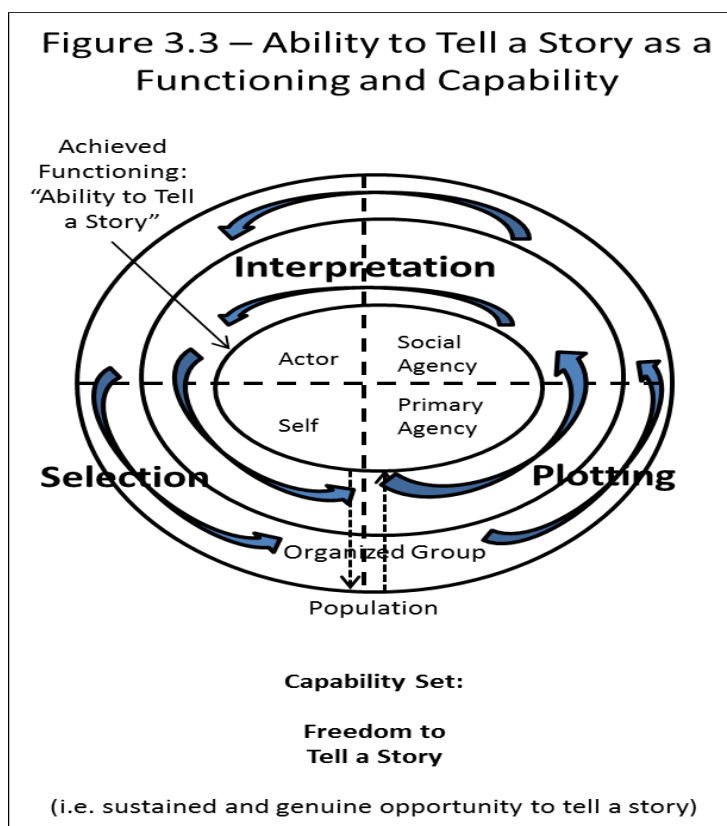
Implications for my Research

I continue to realize the important fact that I am also in need of liberation. As I move into this research, I hope that I continue to grow in a humility which recognizes my dependence on God and community as I "reach beyond myself to pursue the common good" (Paul VI 1967).

I realize that the Wimberly's represent one type of African American congregational narrative which is present in the United Methodist Church. I will need to do further research on African American congregations in South LA in order to confirm or adjust my understanding for the local context.

There were also important implications from this chapter in regards to method. While ethically I need to focus on every individual in the story-dialogue group, it is also important to methodologically and ontologically recognize the realized functioning of the group as a whole in terms of their ability to tell a story.

Finally, I consider the story/dialogue method to be an ideal method for identifying the group capability to tell a story. As the group interacts with the case story they then look forward and decide how they will combine their social context and social identities into a particular story, in which they are an actor.

Conclusion

The central purpose of this chapter was to compare and contrast three visions of freedom - two European and a third which is rooted in the African American tradition. The outlines of the first approach were traced through the work of Aristotle and Aquinas to contemporary Catholic social teaching (Paul VI 1967; Paul IV 1965; Conference 2010). The contours of the second strand were traced through Aristotle to the CA (Sen 2000). The third approach introduced the understanding of freedom which emerges in the work of Edward and Anne Wimberly (Wimberly 2005; Wimberly 2006).

The thesis of this chapter is that the three approaches present important points of comparison and contrast in regards to their understandings of freedom, the common good, reason and human fallibility. Through the findings in this paper, I sought to connect the European conversation on freedom with the understanding of freedom which is implicit within one expression of African American tradition.

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings

In chapter one, I examined the complex interaction between structure, culture and agency, both at the individual and collective level, with specific reference to the African American context. Out of this chapter I found that the critical realism approach adds to the capability approach in that it clarifies the distinctions between higher-order personal properties (PEPs) and cultural and structural properties (CEPs and SEPs). In addition, I found that critical realism provides a more stratified definition of "structures of living together" (Deneulin 2006) for the capability approach through the articulation of the process of emergence.

I also found in this chapter that Archer's framework for internal conversations addresses Sen's concern that the multiple affiliations of the individual agent be appreciated through recognizing the important, yet subordinate role, of social agency at the individual level. In addition, it was found that Archer's agency matrix provides a framework for understanding the individual as a private self, an agent and an actor, while remaining consistent with her broader theory of stratified reality. In this chapter I also found that Archer's conception for the different modes of "reflexivity" of individuals is particularly helpful. In addition, it was pointed out that although Archer recognizes the presence of higher levels of social integration beyond the individual, there was a need for further investigation on how her model of agency applies at the group and population levels (Archer 2003). Finally, of particular relevance for poverty evaluation would be how "fractured reflexivity" affects agency in impoverished groups and populations (2003).

The purpose of the second chapter was to develop a model of the narrative identity process through integrating the work of several, key narrative theorists with the findings from the prior chapter. The first finding from this chapter was that the broad scope of narrative involves "any item which has the dispositional capacity of being understood by someone" (Archer 1995, 180). From the work of Cornell, and the Wimberly's, I noted that some of the key sub-elements which emerge in identity narratives are events, meanings, images, contexts and relationships. Secondly, I found that the narrative identity process at the individual and group level involves the interaction of the three activities of selection, plotting and interpretation. Building on the work of Paul Ricouer it was found that the narrative identity of an individual or

group is the matrix of the plot and the character. Thirdly, I also found that although the plotting of narratives in terms of a quest, restitution or chaos were originally taken from illness narratives, they can also, potentially, be applied to a person or community's response to poverty, both in terms of those in poverty and those who are assisting the impoverished. This insight was connected with the concept of the "marred identity" from transformational development (Myers 2011).

It was also found that power dynamics lie at the heart of the narrative identity process, and deeply affect the personal, relational and communal dimensions of the process (Prilleltensky 2008). These distortive effects can be reduced, in the small group context, through pursuing "ideal speech conditions", which the story/dialogue method intentionally facilitates (Habermas 1984).
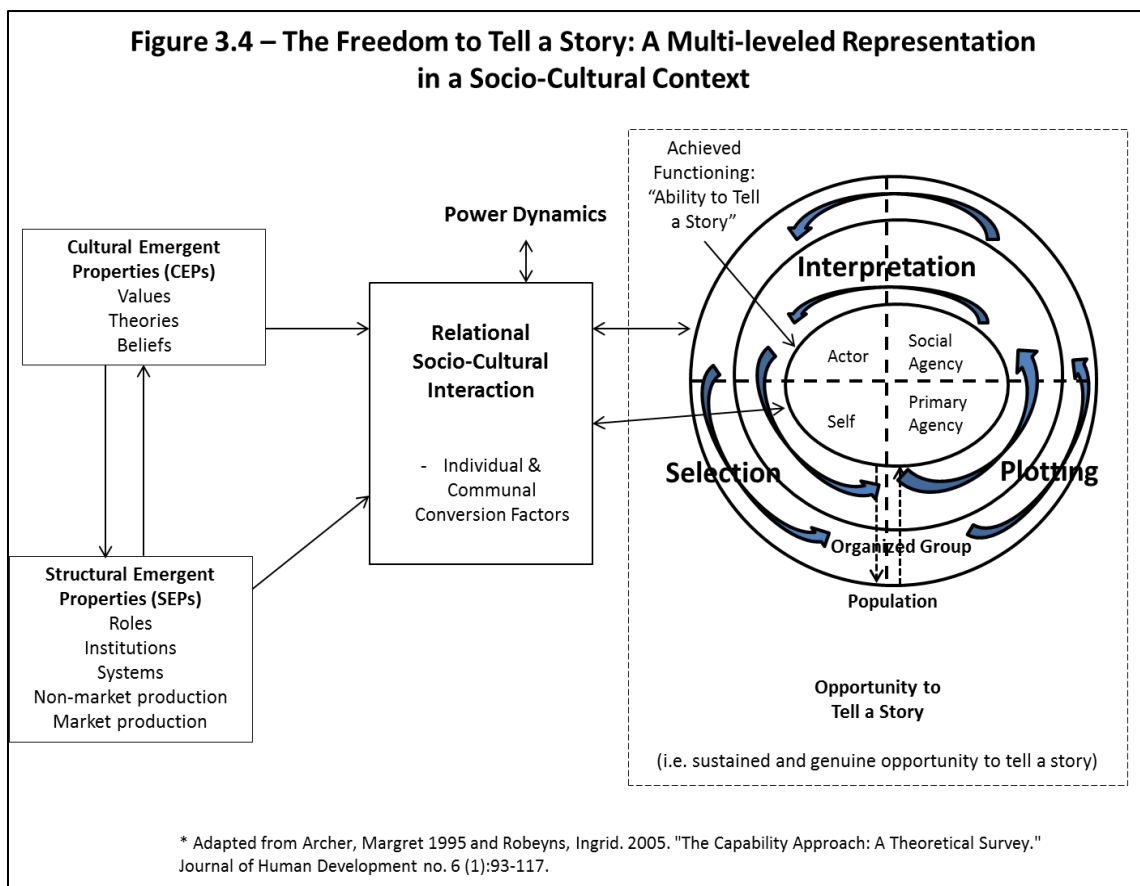
It was also found that a primary dimension of the ability to narrate at the individual level involves the story-teller/agent asking different questions in the different quadrants of Archer's matrix (See Figure 2.1).   In addition, it was pointed out that the ability to narrate operates at multiple levels - the individual, group and population levels – and has two important components - the ability (agency) to narrate (the narrative process). Finally, it was also discovered that the relational dimension or "interplay", both vertically and horizontally, is of particular interest in researching the process of narrative identity.

The central purpose for the final chapter was to compare and contrast three visions of freedom. One of the first findings from this chapter was that all three approaches embrace a form of ethical individualism; however, Catholic social teaching and the Wimberly's would disagree with a type of methodological and ontological individualism which marginalizes the importance of supra-individual entities. Both CST and the Wimberly's embrace an approach to development which seeks the common good of "social groups and their individual member's" (Paul IV 1965). In addition, this insight was also applied to group functionings and capabilities. I argued that while Sen marginalize the importance of group functionings and capabilities in both the means and ends of development, Catholic social teaching and the Wimberly's would endorse the recognition of group functionings and capabilities. On this point I argued that a more appropriate definition of a capability is that it is, "a kind of freedom which an individual or social group enjoys which leads to those functionings which that individual or social group has reason to value as it pursues the common good."

Sen defines freedom, in the context of development as both the end and means of a project. In addition, he argues that there is an agency and opportunity aspect to freedom in both

the aforementioned end and means aspects. In addition, it was also found that there is a common calling in all three approaches to the central role of reason, or practical wisdom (*phronesis*); however, there is a significant difference between Sen, on the one hand, and CST and the Wimberly's on the other, in understanding the wounded or fallible condition of reason. In light of the fallible condition of agents, CST recognizes that true freedom can only be reached through "true humanism" which, for CST and the Wimberly's, involves union with Christ (Paul VI, 1967). Finally, building on the prior chapters, as the freedom to tell a narrative involves both an agency and an opportunity aspect, it will be important to engage both Archer's model for agency and the Cornell-Frank model for the narrative process in my research.

Overall the framework for understanding the intersection of narrative and capability which emerged from this research is illustrated in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 – The Freedom to Tell a Story: A Multi-leveled Representation in a Socio-Cultural Context

Cultural Emergent Properties (CEPs)
Values
Theories
Beliefs

Power Dynamics

Relational Socio-Cultural Interaction

- Individual & Communal Conversion Factors

Structural Emergent Properties (SEPs)
Roles
Institutions
Systems
Non-market production
Market production

Achieved Functioning: "Ability to Tell a Story"

Interpretation

Actor

Social Agency

Self

Primary Agency

Selection

Plotting

Organized Group

Population

Opportunity to Tell a Story

(i.e. sustained and genuine opportunity to tell a story)

* Adapted from Archer, Margret 1995 and Robeyns, Ingrid. 2005. "The Capability Approach: A Theoretical Survey." Journal of Human Development no. 6 (1):93-117.

Conclusions

The overall purpose of this tutorial paper was to identify a methodological framework for further understanding the intersection of narrative and capability, a type of freedom, within the African American context.[14] This framework was developed with particular reference to African American congregational counseling, the capability approach and critical realism.

In chapter one, I summarized and critiqued the conversation in the capability approach in regards to structure and agency and introduced several key elements from critical realism (Archer 2003). In regards to my role as a researcher, this chapter increased my self-awareness. In studying the work of the Christian Smith, I found that my background as a "white evangelical" will lead me toward explanations which are characterized by "individualism, relationalism and anti-structuralism" (see note 8, Emerson and Smith 2000, 78). African Americans, on the other hand, tend to understand identity issues in communal and structural terms (2000, 89).

The dynamics of my research context (South Los Angeles) are complex; however, the critical realism approach has provided me with helpful analytic tools for understanding this complexity. Archer's approach to stratified agency, specifically in terms of communicative reflexivity, has important similarities to the "communal-analogy-storytelling-listening process" which has been historically present in the African American congregation (Wimberly and Wimberly 1986). I look forward to exploring this process further in my tutorial with Dr. Daniel Walker. Also, Archer's concept of fractured reflexivity was helpful in understanding urban poverty, although it needs further development in regards to agents who express aggression and violence ("the street household").

In regards to my method, the story/dialogue process is a type of focus group method which brings together multiple, individual stories into a shared narrative (Labonte 2010). This allows me to value the individual agent and recognize the unique properties of social agency.

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[14] The purpose of a methodological framework, as I use it here, is to: (1) Explicate the conceptual logic and direction of the research project, (2) Engage leading ideas in the field, (3) Acknowledge prior theoretical works, (4) Position the researcher's work in relation to other theories, (5) And, explain the significance of original concepts (Charmaz 2006, 169).

In chapter two I argued that the African American narrative identity process is a multi-leveled, interacting phenomenon, which involves the selection, plotting and interpretation of "things that happen" or events (Casati and Varzi 2010). This narrative process, it is argued, is deeply affected by power dynamics. In this chapter I was particularly impressed by the Wimberly's commitment to intentionally recognizing God's agency and activity within "everyday stories" (Wimberly 2005). From a theological perspective, it has made me consider how I will appreciate both God's activity, as the key Story-teller, and the activity of the human actors. This awareness of God's activity is clearly not a direct priority for Sen as part of his personal life or the development evaluation process (Sen 2006). Although Sen is open to exploring religion as a topic which someone else may have "reason to value" (Sen, 2000, Deneulin and Bano, 2009, 46).

I think that the "communal-analogy-storytelling-listening process" is particularly helpful for me in further research. However, as I recognize the importance of the communal dimension in African American culture, I also appreciate Cornell and Sen's point on the multiplicity of identity. This is a particular challenge for me as I evaluate narrative identity in the urban, African-American, Evangelical, Pentecostal context.

In my perspective, one of the most important theoretical findings from chapter two is the integration of Archer's agency matrix with the narrative process. As she did not apply her agency matrix at the social agent level, I think this could be a fruitful area for further research.

In regards to power relations, the story dialogue method directly builds on Habermas's "ideal speech conditions" (Labonte, Feather, and Hills 1999). I found that this structure helps in mitigating some of the power issues which may arise in a story/dialogue group. Furthermore, the story/dialogue method facilitates a group's movement from descriptive questions (What happened?) to application questions (Now what?). I concluded that this process facilitates Sen's call for development evaluation to move from "resource" evaluation to "functioning" evaluation. In other words, I believe that the story/dialogue method can be a helpful method to evaluate *achieved functioning in telling a story* at both the individual and communal level.

In regards to analysis of the data, this chapter has led me toward a type of narrative analysis which is grounded in an identification of the participant's narrative structure (quest, restitution or chaos narratives) (Frank 1997). In my methods class on data analysis I will explore narrative analysis in more depth.

Finally, the central purpose for the third chapter was to compare and contrast three visions of freedom in order to better connect the European conversation on freedom, as found in Catholic social teaching and the CA, with the understanding which is found in African

American congregations. As the Wimberly's represent one type of African American narrative. I will need to do further research in African American congregations with Dr. Daniel Walker in order to confirm or adjust my understanding of narrative and freedom for the local context. As I move deeper into this research, I hope that I continue to grow in a humility which recognizes true liberation - interdependence on God and community - as I "reach beyond myself to pursue the common good" (Paul VI 1967).

Also, one of my main conclusions from chapter three is that I am primarily interested in building on Deneulin's work and examining capability at the group level. I think that this is a necessary extension of the capability approach as it needs to move beyond methodological and ontological individualism. Also, I am wondering if a term such as "stratified individualism" better captures the type of common good approach which respects the individual-in-community.

Regardless, it seems that the story/dialogue method is an ideal means of identifying the type of actors that a group is committed to becoming. At the conclusion of this methodology, the group looks forward and decides how they will combine their social context and various social identities into a particular story, in which they are a collective actor. As a next step, I plan to further explore how appreciative inquiry complements the story/dialogue methodology as it facilities the participants looking toward a better future (Branson 2004).

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[15] Footnote.

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