

Can the Poor Have Their Say?

Structural Incorporation of Low-Income Voices in Corporate Governance

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation attempts to locate the general and specific theories and practices that account for the incentives and obstacles for low-income and marginalized persons' structural incorporation into corporate governance. Factors related to health/human services and community development organizations that purport to engage in work for the betterment of such low-income and marginalized persons are explored. Through a mixed-methods model, this dissertation, especially after the 50th anniversary year of the War on Poverty, explores the perspectives of board members and others about perceived and real obstacles and incentives to participate in such governance. Unlike in the past with the War on Poverty, a new moment, or *punctuated equilibrium*, may provide a new opportunity for low-income voices to be heard and institutionalized. The Delphi panelists held *strong consensus in agreement* that it is important to include low-income persons on boards, but it is not a requirement. The panelists hold in *strong consensus of agreement* that training is needed to help understand the issues faced by low-income persons and communities, and training needs to help all members deal with problem-solving skills. The panelists hold in *strong consensus in disagreement* that it is no longer important for low-income persons to serve on boards. There is a critical finding that as the new governance and accountability movements attest, there is not an urgency, though with some nuances, for some form of structural inclusion of low-income persons on boards of community service agencies. This work adds to the social theoretical literature pertaining to operative political-economic perspectives and values, institutional isomorphism, and network diffusion concerning the inclusion of diverse voices and its real and practical impact on nonprofit board governance.

*Keywords:* voices, governance, maximum feasible participation (MFP), affirmative action, diversity, inclusion, community development corporations (CDC), community services agencies (CSA), community organizing (CO), critical andragogy, institutional isomorphism, network diffusion, *punctuated equilibrium*, Delphi method, Participatory Action Research (PAR), John Dewey, Paulo Freire, social network theory, privatization, marketization, democracy

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my wife, Dr. Donna DeBlasio, who remained ever present providing insights and guidance. My parents, family, and friends deserve much praise for their long-standing patience during this project. Finally, this work is dedicated to those low-income persons who have accompanied me over these years as a leader in anti-poverty work who desire to have their voices heard, understood, and incorporated into the very structures designed to serve their needs demanding “a voice in shaping them” (Dewey, 1937, p. 401).

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## Chapter One

### **Introduction**

Why are institutions created to serve persons who live in poverty but do not demand or require that such organizations be controlled or influenced by low-income persons? Are low-income persons unable to make decisions for themselves? Are low-income individuals unable to face tough corporate demands? Do persons who are poor need more affluent members of society to render decisions, pass budgets, and manage programs? Maybe the voices of low-income persons really do not matter since those in positions of power know what is best for them. An attempt legislated in federal social welfare policy once required such inclusion. That experiment failed by some accounts. However, lessons abound for future practice and policy since some organizations have incorporated such voices, regardless of requirement, and model how it is done. Seemingly, the formal incorporation of voices of low-income persons in decision making in the very organizations designed to serve their needs remains a low priority or a non-essential ingredient for many institutions. Though important for the sake of diversity and inclusivity, proxies based on race, gender, and geography may have crouched out the socioeconomic status of persons. Where have the voices of people who are poor engaged in determining social welfare policy or channeling best practice gone? More importantly, how do low-income persons and other persons of means experience engagement and incorporation of voice in corporate decision making?

Scholars in various fields, especially in social theory, management, and education seem to agree that some level of diversity and the inclusion of various voices in decision-making structures increase an organization's ability to identify relevant strategies,

implement meaningful changes, and respond to one's clients or customers (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Researchers maintain that ethical and practical leadership requires the inclusion of multifaceted voices and perspectives, not only as an exercise in democratic decision making, but to build a just and better world (Dewey, 2004; Gilligan, 1982; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2013; Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Ryan, 2006; Snyder, 2013). As gender (Miller, 2014) and race (Ladson-Billings, 2001) have become sounding boards for such measures of inclusion, consideration of a person's socioeconomic status has seemingly dropped from the lexicon and research agenda. Even the very nature of a communal response, with the previous practice of mutual aid and associative life, may have diminished over time. This has left those without a voice to fend for themselves or wait for another *Overton window of political possibilities* for their efforts (Putnam, 2020; Skocpol, 2013; Szalek, 2013) or for a precious moment of *punctuated equilibrium* (Baumgartner et al., 2014).

It is critical to better understand how such voices find incentives or obstacles to being heard on governance structures or boards. Social theory adds various insights. Some theorists argue that organizational structures, in general, remain fixed due to regulatory requirements or are simply mirror images of each other (Castillo, 2018; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983); others maintain that all structures reflect political choices and can be flexible and plastic (Unger, 1997). Various scholars argue that new forms of social capital and a revitalized civics engagement need to be garnered to help marginalized persons and communities break out of poverty (Farr, 2004; Gittel & Thompson, 2002).

Some theorists of community development postulate that organizational exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons reflects shifts in technical knowledge and forces related to marketization and privatization (Stoecker, 2008, 2013), thus rendering nonprofessionals mute or invisible from such governance leadership. In other words, due to the increasing technical demands of financial understanding of complex balance sheets and regulatory requirements, non-professional community leaders remain ill-prepared for sophisticated decision-making, thus relying on the beneficence of other expert leaders.

This research project attempts to analyze such structures by gleaning perspectives and experiences from actual participants — low-income, marginalized, and dominant — on their experience of inclusion or obstacles to engagement pertaining to service on community governance boards established purposely to serve their interests and needs. This research aims to clarify insights from the social theoretical constructs about governance and inclusion and is framed within insights from Deweyan and Freirean andragogy, with special emphasis on low-income and marginalized persons.

### **Research Questions and Purpose of the Study**

The following questions will be the focus of this dissertation:

***Research Question One:*** How are the voices of low-income and marginalized persons structurally incorporated into boards of directors, especially those organizations that serve such persons and communities?

***Research Question Two:*** How are low-income and marginalized persons formed and prepared in both technical knowledge and governance obligations, using relevant adult educational processes, to serve on such community corporations?

**Research Question Three:** How are low-income and marginalized persons disenfranchised from such engagement, and how is such disenfranchisement related to disempowerment?

**Research Question Four:** How do practices and policies regarding the structural inclusion (or exclusion) of such voices get diffused and generally accepted?

**Research Question Five:** How do operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, and privatization/marketization forces and ideology impact incentives or obstacles to the inclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations?

This research project relies predominantly on an interpretivist and historical method in the foreground, with multivariate analysis as a background perspective (Alford, 1998). It is a critical feature of this research, filling in a gap in the literature, that the *voices* (Gilligan, 1982; Greene, 2009) of low-income and marginalized persons be heard and understood related to their perspectives and influence on the structural incentives and obstacles to their service on such corporate boards. Based on Mark's (2009) dichotomous reframing, this research project is less interested in determining the average effects, but rather probing to understand the experience of the participants themselves within the historical and structural reality of corporate boards of the institutions under investigation. A constructivist-interpretive and historical approach employing a case study is used but is triangulated (Maxwell, 2013) with a mixed-methods approach involving the Delphi process (Keeney et al., 2010; Turoff & Linstone, 2002) and other related quantitative tools, such as a Likert scale analysis. The purpose is capturing the voices of these participants, both low-income and marginalized, as well as

those persons more privileged who have served in such capacities. The utilization of a modified social network theory (Borgatti et al., 2013; Kadushin, 2012; Lubbers et al., 2020; Valente, 1995) process that measures nodal relationships that foster diffusion and isomorphic institutionalism offers further evidence for triangulation. The application of the participatory action research (PAR) process coupled with the Delphi method provides further credibility to the information gleaned and results provided. A case study analysis of Youngstown, Ohio with access and obstacles provides insights into this important concept of low-income involvement in corporate governance.

Some delimitation to this research involves its focus as a case study of a local community rather than a larger national analysis due to the opportunity to conduct an in-depth probe regarding the perceptions of actual and potential leaders. Limitations include the reality of including an adequate number of actual board members to address a wide range of perceptions, as well as the very nature of a case study itself in terms of generalizability. However, what is lost in national scope and understanding may be found in a more detailed, quasi-phenomenological approach to plumb perceptions by actual practitioners rooted in a community, within all of its contexts and history (Smith & Kornblum, 1996).

### **Significance of the Study**

Over 50 years ago on January 8, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared that the federal government would launch an unprecedented War on Poverty. Community agencies and federal bureaus mobilized resources to attack poverty at its root by empowering low-income persons and local communities to contribute to relevant solutions (Clark, 2002). The birth of *maximum feasible participation* (MFP) forged a new



policy perspective for corporate inclusion and a new hope for low-income persons and communities disempowered from the ever-burgeoning welfare state and focus on individual poverty over community assets (Alcock, 2005; Arnstein, 1972; Melish, 2010; Moynihan, 1969; Naples, 1998a, 1998b; Rubin, 1969; Schryer, 2018).

Over several decades, the structural voices of low-income and marginalized persons on boards of directors and in positions of governance experienced various shifts and changes, from the regulatory requirement to niche market, to advisory, to diversity celebration, to representative voices, to perceived or actual disappearance (Alcock, 2005; Anderson, 1967; Arnstein, 1972; Beito, 2000; Bell & Wray, 2004; Bloomberg & Rosenstock, 1968; Boone, 1972; Brieland, 1971; Camacho, 1980; Cazenave, 2007; Davidson, 1969; Fessler, 1970; Gillette, 2010; Gittell, 1977; Kornbluh, 2007; Kramer, 1969; Kravitz, 1969; Landsberger, 1972; LaRochelle, 2016, 2019; Levitan, 1967, 1969; Marris & Rein, 1982; Melish, 2010; Mildred, 1994; Moynihan, 1969; Naples, 1998a, 1998b; Nemon, 2007; O'Connor, 2009; Rosenthal, 2018; Rubin, 1969; Schmitt, 2012; Schryer, 2018; Strange, 1972; Sundquist, 1969; Wofford, 1969; Yarmolinsky, 1969; Zarefsky, 1977). However, a new day dawns with the rise of various local, national, and global struggles for racial justice. Boards of nonprofits are trying to diversify their members with attention to racial and gender composition and less to incomes or poverty status (Levey, 2020). Currently, two new movements focusing on governance and accountability have re-stirred the pot (Melish 2010; Liebman & Sabel, 2003). Such a moment of convergence of these two movements may create an opening, or *punctuated equilibrium* (Baumgartner et al., 2014; Jones & Baumgartner, 2012; Harvey, 2020),

providing a new opportunity for re-engagement with some critical ideas generated during the War on Poverty.

### **Social Context of the Study - Youngstown, OH**

Many have written about the rise, fall, and re-creation of Youngstown that contextualizes its economics, politics, leisure, assets, and cultural reality (DeBlasio, 2010; DeBlasio & Pallante, 2014; Linkon & Russo, 2002). At the turn of the 20th century, Youngstown expanded rapidly due to the growth of the iron and steel industry which underpinned the massive industrialization of the United States. Wealth created opportunities for many. On the other hand, poverty remained a fixture for Mahoning Valley, including the City of Youngstown, despite the creation of various forms of company housing to help alleviate some of the conditions of the working-poor factory families (DeBlasio & Pallante, 2014). European-based, diverse, ethnic communities flocked to the area when immigration policies welcomed family reunification, and the demand for cheap labor ruled. African Americans migrated to the Mahoning Valley in great numbers as Jim Crow laws and other forms of discrimination led many families to move north only to find new forms of prejudice and systemic racism.

After World War II, Youngstown provided a great middle-class life for many with stable wages and benefits due to the power of various unions and collective bargaining agreements. For several decades following the war, families in Youngstown experienced high levels of homeownership and relative prosperity. Of course, many African American and Latino families did not always share in such bounties and opportunities. Many remained stuck in poverty, except for some who secured employment in its regional industrial auto and steel making shops.

The 1960s emerged with renewed hope with major collective bargaining agreements in place providing stable incomes for many in the city and its ever-growing suburbs. However, shifts occurred as new demands were made by citizens left out from the promise of “the Great Convergence” (Putnam, 2020, p. 35). White flight and urban renewal shifted population wealth and power. Riots spurred by racial justice movements and perceptions of zero-sum losses due to increasing civil rights and equal opportunities exacerbated the flight out of the city. The federal War on Poverty during the mid-1960s brought government monies to the City of Youngstown legislating that the local Youngstown Community Action Agency (CAA) coordinate sundry federal social welfare programs and engage low-income persons and representative institutions together with political leaders in its decision making and governance. The CAA, under the new name of the Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership (MYCAP), continues its full range of services today.

The late 1970s saw a rapid decline in the industrial political economy as steel and its related supply chain plants moved or closed. The demographics during the 1970 census showed that 50.9% of the population was African American and 47.8% Caucasian (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1972, p. xi). The report revealed that 21.4% of all families and 16.3% of individuals lived below the poverty level (p. 8), with Caucasian male-headed households at 10.2% and Caucasian female head of households at 29.1%, while African American male-headed families reported at 11%, and African American female head of households represented 63.8% (p. 9).

With its attendant “Save Our Valley” financial investment campaign, an effort by the Ecumenical Coalition led by Catholic Bishop James W. Malone with several other

Christian (Episcopal Bishop John H. Burt) and Jewish leaders (Rabbi Sidney Berkowitz from Congregation Rodef Sholom) advocated and organized to obtain vacated steel mills to transform them into worker-community owned enterprises. After several noble attempts failed, leaders declared it over in 1981 but created new opportunities for community development and theory (Fuechtmann,1989; Lynd, 1987; McBee, 1978).

During the 1980s, poverty continued to impact groups differently recording the times before the crash of the steel industry in this region. In general, 7.8% of families lived below the poverty threshold (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1983, p. P-85).

Caucasian families recorded a 5.8% poverty rate (p. P-106). On the other hand, African American families experienced a poverty rate of 25.4% (p. P-115).

As urban poverty and unemployment grew throughout the 1980s, several leaders from the Ecumenical Coalition approached Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Youngstown to establish a backbone community development organization with a related community financial intermediary. The focus was to continue efforts around worker ownership and other forms of poverty alleviation that social welfare programs and social services, like those offered by the CAA and many others, could not accomplish alone. Together with various groups and a small grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), this coalition developed a cooperative called Call On Our People (COOP) which provided home repair, cleaning, and other forms of residential services. In 1986, after several years of operation, COOP morphed into a backbone organization called Common Wealth and its financial intermediary, Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund. Together, with leaders at Kent State University, Common Wealth helped to create the Ohio Employee Ownership Center to provide technical services to emerging

cooperatives and employee-owned stock companies. These three entities continue the vision and work that emerged from the Ecumenical Coalition to save and reorganize the steel industry in Youngstown.

Various indicators show that Youngstown and its Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) population shifted and deepened into poverty during the 1990s and 2000s. Over time, the population of Youngstown demonstrated a major rise then fall as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Population and Percent Change, City of Youngstown*

Year	Population	Percent Change
1900	44,885	35.1%
1910	79,066	76.2%
1920	132,358	67.4%
1930	170,002	28.4%
1940	167,720	-1.3%
1950	168,330	0.4%
1960	166,689	-1.0%
1970	139,788	-16.1%
1980	115,427	-17.4%
1990	95,695	-17.0%
2000	81,720	-14.6%
2010	66,982	-18.3%
2020	60,598	-9.5%

Source: United States Census Bureau (2021)

Based on the United States Census Bureau (Biggestuscities.com, 2022), the population shifts indicate that the 1930s saw its highest growth rate emerging from the 1920s with a

top population of 170,002. Over time, the city's population declined over 100,000 to its 2021 level of 60,068.

### **Summary Population and Housing Characteristics**

In general, between the years 1960 and 2010, the City of Youngstown's population declined by over 60%. Decreases are still predicted, with an accompanying fact that this community experienced a vacant-housing rate that was 20 times the national average in the early 2000s (Tavernise, 2010).

Even though poverty and the unequal distribution of benefits between races have continued for most of Youngstown's history, the decline of the steel industry exacerbated various trends and conflicts during the 1990s that are still felt today. To bridge various divides and establish the means to share resources and advocate for just land use and economic distribution, various church and community groups wanted to find ways to bring people together, especially between urban and suburban faith communities. Catholic Charities, along with Common Wealth and other local parishes, worked together to form the Alliance for Congregational Transformation Influencing Our Neighborhoods (ACTION) in the late 1990s to focus on the urban-suburban divide.

Poverty continued to raise its ugly head at the turn of the 21st century. The next 20 years witnessed growing poverty in the Youngstown area. Based on The Ohio Poverty Report, in 1999, Youngstown witnessed a 24.8% poverty rate, which further increased to 32.1% during the 2005-2009 timeframe (Ohio Department of Development, 2011, p. 16). In 2007, CNN declared that Youngstown had the lowest median income of any U.S. city with more than 65,000 residents (Christie, 2007). The news continued in that the 2008 American Community Survey confirmed that Youngstown had the highest poverty rate

among Ohio's ten largest cities (Community Research Partners, 2010). Established in 2009, the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) grew out of the envisioning of tethering both organizing and community development efforts. The goal was to rebuild abandoned homes in the City of Youngstown, and the effort was led by the Wean Foundation during this time period as well.

The actual population and poverty rates for Youngstown leading to that declaration in 2008 included a population of 65,277, with 21,825 persons earning less than the poverty income which meant that 33.5% lived in poverty (Community Research Partners, 2010, p. 7). The United States Census Bureau (n.d.) analysis for 2019 statistics reveals that 35.2% of the population of Youngstown lives under the poverty line, which is an increase from 21.4% to 35.2% over the course of nearly 50 years.

The five institutions introduced in this section, ACTION, MYCAP, Common Wealth, Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund, and YNDC center this research project in the study of how low-income individuals are engaged in decision-making and governance.

### **Researcher Perspective**

An academic article (Corbin, 1989) on political economy and community development was published by me in an early stage of my professional career. The managing editor of that journal highly suggested that this work should incorporate an important social welfare poverty alleviation policy construct that had been unknown to me. For over three decades now, the concept of *maximum feasible participation* (MFP) has been driving my intellectual curiosity, reflection, and experience of conflicted practices about the role of voice in decision making and governance. Disquiet continued

to grow, as a scholar and institutional practitioner, that the policy of low-income engagement envisioned in the War on Poverty's MFP seemed to be not only formally discontinued, but generally forgotten in theory and in practice.

As a Caucasian middle-income male and a leader of a faith-based organization, the way in which low-income persons aptly and creatively led groups, coalitions, and organizations while articulating meaningful, measurable, and rooted goals has been witness firsthand. They have continued to open minds with their dreams and demands. Persons living in poverty, based on direct experience, and acknowledged in much literature, remain perfectly capable of speaking for themselves and are fully able to discern and make tough corporate business decisions.

As massive unemployment and deepening poverty unfolded, I moved to Youngstown in August 1987 to work for Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Youngstown tasked to help persons trapped in poverty and discover ways to improve their economic conditions. Serving for over 35 years in corporate governance on boards related to anti-poverty work, incorporating the voices of low-income persons did not easily occur despite the fact that such organizations developed in order to serve low-income persons and families. As a leader in Catholic Charities serving the six-county area of the Diocese of Youngstown, service opportunities on numerous governing boards in the city, region, state, and on the national level, due to mission alignment and social connectivity, have come with this role. Requests to serve on these boards were based on positional authority but hopefully the compassion, passion for justice, care, knowledge, and resources were recognized most.



Standing as a white male rooted and operating in a large faith-based organization provides a vantage point of resource abundance and social networking connections that is embarrassingly rich due to gender, race, and positional authority. Over the years, there have been ample opportunities to be trained in anti-racist work, conflict management, governance, community organizing, and leadership skills. First-hand knowledge of working with low-income persons about how each of them brings assets, resources, and social connections that are equally rich and varied has been meaningful. Trained in Catholic moral theology and social sciences, both academically and practically, provides insight into the Deweyan and Freirean andrological framework that shapes this study. The quest for recognizing insights from lived experience, dialogue, pragmatism, engaging voices of those on the margins, and the very practice of democratic institutions drives this study. These elements, experience, and contextual reality allow me to engage as a *participant as observer* that few can experience first-hand and provide a responsibility to delve into how the alleviation of poverty requires engagement and incorporation of the very persons and communities that organizations claim to serve.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research methodology selected to study how institutions incorporate the voices of low-income persons on their governance boards should model itself that very incorporation of those voices heretofore rarely studied. To accomplish that match between the methodology and a commitment to listening to those on the margin, this study's general theoretical framework is based on a foundational adult formation and educational social theory that recognizes the importance of lived experience, pragmatic resolve, dialogue, democratic practices, and critical thinking. The methodological process

selected echoes this theoretical grounding intentionally by engaging those with a lived experience in the topic to gain insight and expert perspectives.

The philosophical grounding for this work is based on the andragogical insights of John Dewey and Paolo Freire. Both theorists insist, in their own manner, that those impacted should have a voice in the processes of decision-making at many levels of social and associative life (Betz, 1992). This research seeks out the voices of those impacted by social welfare decisions through the associative life of community organizations. More importantly, the Delphi method embedded in a simple participatory action research process (Fletcher and Marchildon, 2014), with the researcher as a *participant as observer* (Gold, 1958; Moore & Savage, 2002; Takyi, 2015), seeks to hear and analyze those voices as a way of equalizing those served, as well as those considered expert and in authority to determine the means of such organizational services. The Deweyan and Freirean andragogy and its requirement for reflective, dialogical, and active citizenship for adults provides an educational leadership framework for this research in both its content and its method.

Dewey argued that a good learner is an active participant in the educational process, and he desired to bridge the gap in the growing divide between those who learn to learn and those who learn to practice, echoing a class society. This experiential learning remains rooted in a longer-term project of engaging students, now adults, as active agents participating in democratic associative living. Freire focused on bringing forth a new and revolutionary society as peasants once oppressed engaged in active learning generative words leading to generative themes (Freire, 2000, p. 96) and overcoming their limit-situations (Freire, 2000, p. 80) via dialogue that transform minds,

hearts, and societies. Both Dewey and Freire consciously dealt with the constraints of historical miseducation and the desire to heal class rifts and false dualisms.

Dewey's insistence on experience and practice, especially in concert with persons as active agents, likewise promoted by Freire, requires that any experiments with democracy include active participation as essential components of adult learning. Dewey (1939) maintained that experiments and experiences in practicing life in voluntary associations provide the grist for larger participatory democracy. Important for this research on MFP, Dewey (1937) articulated a critical insight that “all those who are affected by social institutions must have a share in producing and managing them” and shall have “a voice in shaping them” (p. 401).

This project's goal is to fill that gap in the literature regarding the incentives and obstacles (i.e., themes and limit-situations) to low-income and marginalized persons' participation in the governance in the very organizations that were created to empower them to make decisions and assert control over their own communities. Through the utilization of a general case study of Youngstown's community development corporations (CDC), community action agency (CAA) and community service agency (CSA) network, it is hoped that some knowledge can be shared about how various organizations engaged, or failed to engage, low-income and marginalized persons in their governance. The Delphi process, along with elements from PAR and social network theory, provide further insights into the salient factors affecting the access to and barriers present for low-income persons' participation in corporate governance. The Deweyan and Freirean insights into reflection, praxis, dialogue, and voice applied in this research project provide deeper knowledge on how to incorporate and engage low-income

persons, who often live on the margins of political and corporate decision making, in the great experiment of democracy in institutions and practices, especially designed to serve those most in need.

### **Concept Map**

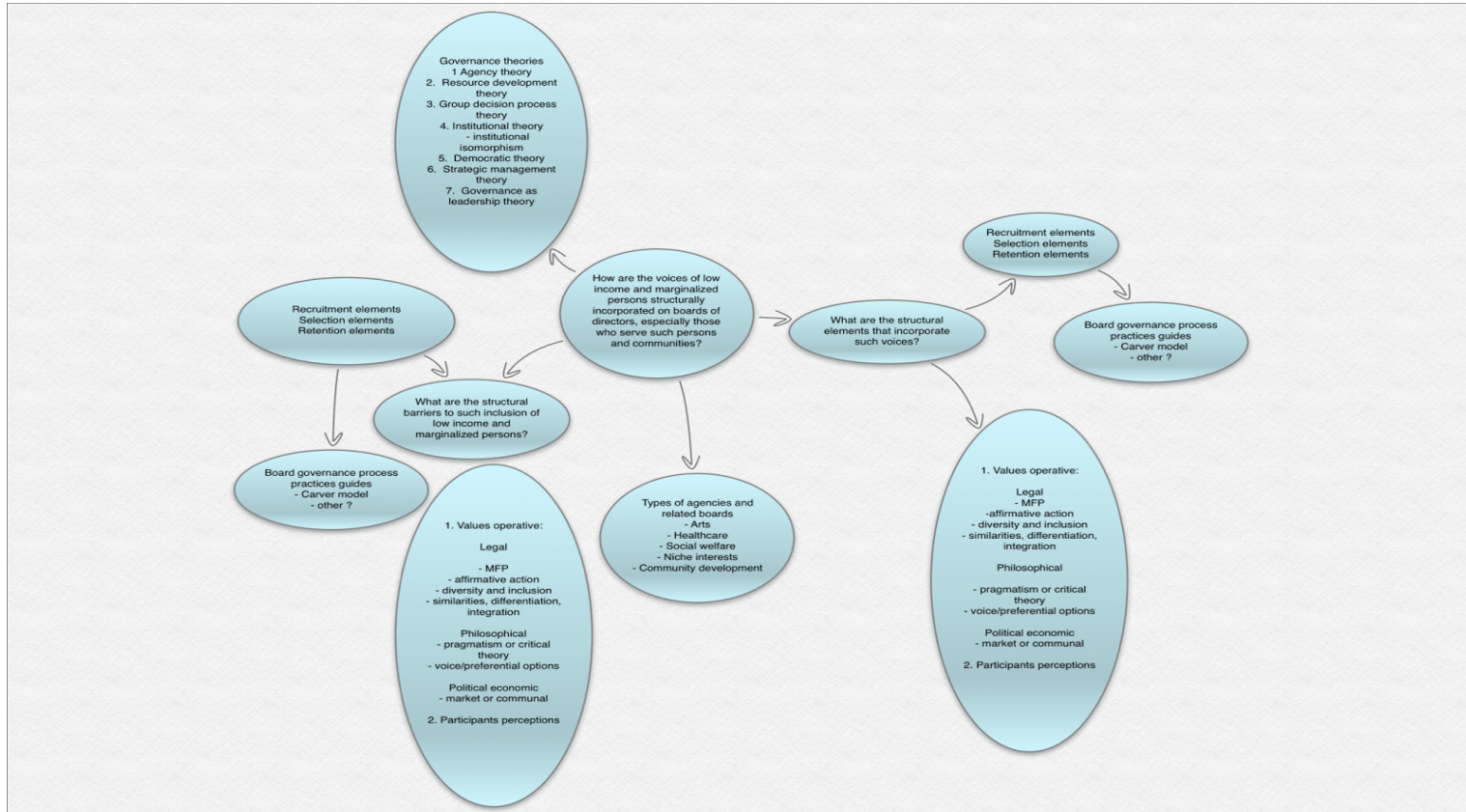
The research questions are tackled through a mirror process. The first aspect is investigating the incentives and reasons for such inclusion, followed by investigating the barriers and obstacles to structural inclusion. This work explores these questions through an analysis of the factors of:

- operative governance theories, values, and practices
- engagement and empowerment
- the diffusion of practices
- nature and availability of training and formation.

Figures 1 and 2 present preliminary concept map options.

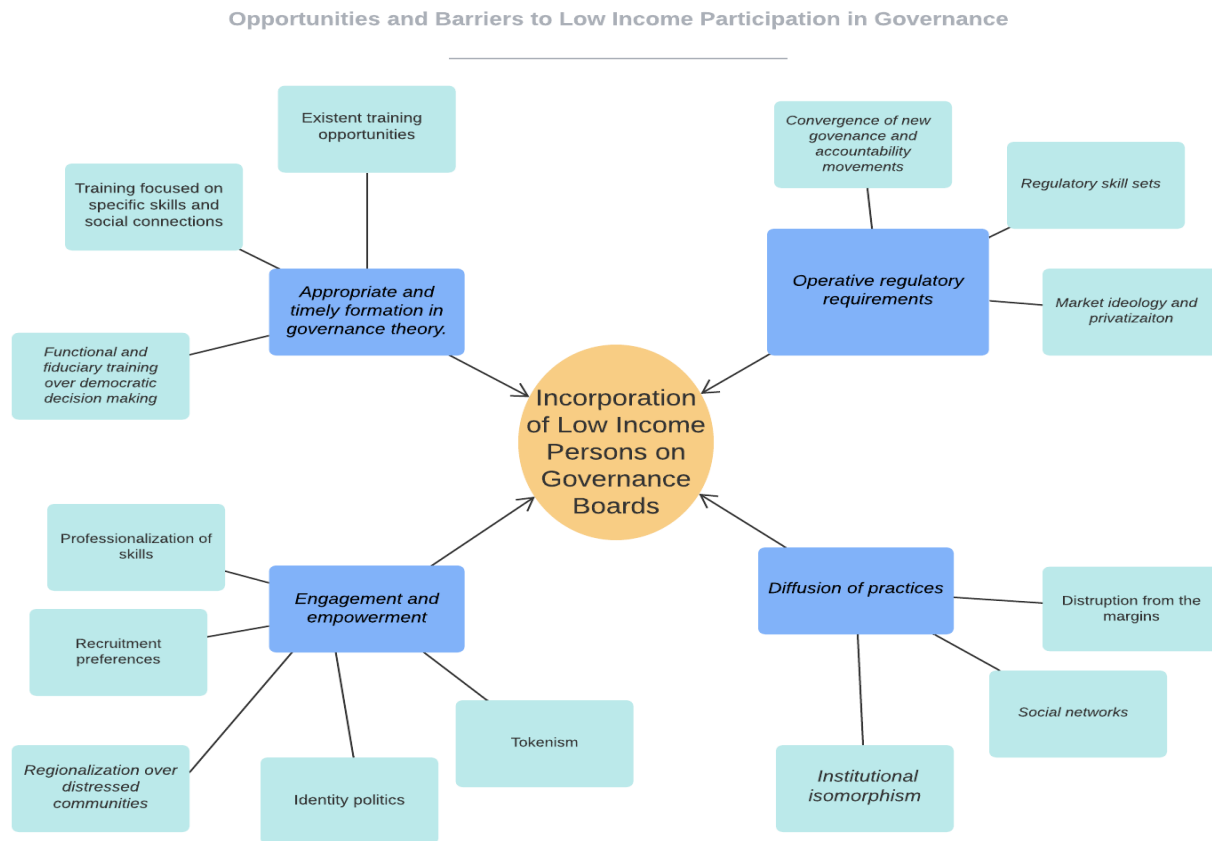
**Figure 1**

*A Preliminary Concept Map (Option One)*



**Figure 2**

*A Preliminary Concept Map (Option Two)*



## **Problem Statement**

Low-income persons should have a governance role, a voice, in decision making in the community service agencies/community development organizations established and operating to serve their needs. Legal, political, and cultural practices and policies, once enshrined in the War on Poverty's MFP policy, have shifted from support for targeted low-income engagement to other categories of inclusion and diversity (e.g., race, gender, fiduciary knowledge, professional skill sets) with preferences for persons with social connections. This research demonstrates which policies and practices need to be incorporated in governance theory, gleaned from the lived experiences of those impacted, to increase the participation of low-income persons on boards of community service/community development agencies in light of a new moment or *punctuated equilibrium* (Baumgartner et al., 2014; Jones & Baumgartner, 2012; Harvey, 2020) of the convergence of the new accountability and new governance movements.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. First, employing a study in one community presents issues around generalizability to other communities regarding their experiences and engagement of low-income and marginalized persons. A case is but one case. Hopefully, some insights can be gleaned for others, and the technique used in the design of the case study can be replicated with other communities.

Second, since this is not a randomized experimental study, rather a comparison of groups utilizing the Delphi process aiming for some consensus or at least a recognition of divergences, issues limiting generalizability may also occur. The Delphi process utilizes multiple engagements of expert panelists to provide insights into various limit-situations

(Freire, 2000, p. 80) and can provide useful insights into removing obstacles that can be tested elsewhere.

Third, low-income and marginalized persons' participation in the governance of nonprofit corporations may not be as hot of a topic today as it was with the establishment of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and the War on Poverty. Low-income and marginalized persons oftentimes remain outside decision-making structures. Though a review of only CDCs and CSAs may be limiting, it can give some insights into the incentives and obstacles faced by low-income and marginalized persons, as they continue to work for more voice, inclusion, and control over decisions that most impact them.

A fourth limitation concerns the researcher's bias and relationship with various funders and boards (Maxwell, 2013). Serving as a *participant as observer* (Gold, 1958; Moore & Savage, 2002; Takyi, 2015), it will be imperative to clearly identify my prejudgments and engage in constant reflectivity.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Andragogy*: The understanding of the science and practice of adult learning. This contrasts to pedagogy, which is the understanding of the science and practice of children learning (Graham, 2017).

*Community Action Agency (CAA)*: "...private corporation or public agency established pursuant to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Pub. L. 88-452, which is authorized to administer funds received from Federal, State, local, or private funding entities to assess, design, operate, finance, and oversee antipoverty programs." (USLegal, 2021).



*Community Development Corporation (CDC)*: “...501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that are created to support and revitalize communities, especially those that are impoverished or struggling. CDCs often deal with the development of affordable housing. They can also be involved in a wide range of community services that meet local needs such as education, job training, healthcare, commercial development, and other social programs. While CDCs may work closely with a representative from the local government, they are not a government entity. As nonprofits, CDCs are tax-exempt and may receive funding from private and public sources” (National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associates, n.d., paras. 2-4).

*Community Development Financial Intermediary (CDFI)*: mission-driven financial institutions that create economic opportunity for individuals and small businesses, quality affordable housing, and essential community services in the United States. Four types of institutions are included in the definition of a CDFI: Community Development (CD) banks, CD credit unions, CD loan funds (most of which are nonprofit), and CD venture capital funds. CDFIs may be certified by the CDFI Fund. Certification is often necessary to receive CDFI Fund support (Office of Comptroller of the Currency, n.d.).

*Community Service Agency (CSA)*: a not-for-profit corporation, community organization, charitable organization, public officer, the state or any political subdivision of the state, or any other body the purpose of which is to improve the quality of life or social welfare of the community and which agrees to accept community service from persons unable to pay civil penalties for noncriminal

traffic infractions (Law Insider, n.d.).

*Delphi Method*: a forecasting process framework based on the results of multiple rounds of questionnaires sent to a panel of experts. Several rounds of questionnaires are sent out to the group of experts, and the anonymous responses are aggregated and shared with the group after each round. The experts are allowed to adjust their answers in subsequent rounds, based on how they interpret the "group response" that has been provided to them. Since multiple rounds of questions are asked and the panel is told what the group thinks as a whole, the Delphi method seeks to reach the correct response through consensus (Dalkey & Helmer, 1962).

*Governance boards*: in the for-profit and nonprofit contexts, boards share many legal precepts: the oversight role, the decision-making power, their place in the organizational structure, and their members' fiduciary duties. In organizations of all kinds, good governance starts with the board of directors. The board's role and legal obligation is to oversee the administration (management) of the organization and ensure that the organization fulfills its mission. Good board members monitor, guide, and enable good management; they do not do it themselves. The board generally has decision-making powers regarding matters of policy, direction, strategy, and governance of the organization.

The board of a well-governed nonprofit organization, like the board of a well-governed profit-making company, will do all of the following:

- Formulate key corporate policies and strategic goals, focusing both on near-term and longer-term challenges and opportunities.

- Authorize major transactions or other actions.
- Oversee matters critical to the health of the organization— not decisions or approvals about specific matters, which is management’s role—but instead those involving fundamental matters such as the viability of its business model, the integrity of its internal systems and controls, and the accuracy of its financial statements.
- Evaluate and help manage risk.
- Steward the resources of the organization for the longer run, not just by carefully reviewing annual budgets and evaluating operations but also by encouraging foresight through several budget cycles, considering investments in light of future evolution, and planning for future capital needs.
- Mentor senior management, provide resources, advice and introductions to help facilitate operations (Rosenthal, 2012, para. 3).

*Low income/poverty level:* Based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines (ASPE, 2021), a person is considered living under the poverty level if he/she earns less than \$12,880 per year. Several governmental programs allow persons to earn up to 200% of the current poverty level in order to obtain such benefits. For this study, low-income individuals will be defined as those who earn up to 200% of the current federal poverty level, thus \$25,760, and based on income categories will be ranged to earning less than \$25,999 (ASPE, 2021).

*“Overton” window of political possibility:* The range of ideas the public is willing to consider and accept. Namesake Joseph P. Overton, who was a senior vice president at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a free-market libertarian think tank, contended that pushing for extreme positions is more effective at changing public opinion. In the United States, the idea of different races mixing in public or women’s suffrage were once considered fringe, extreme policies. That they’re now deemed common sense, reflects progress in shifting the *Overton window* (Conceptually, n.d.; Putnam, 2020; Skocpol, 2013; Szałek, 2013).

*Participatory Action Research (PAR):* an approach to enquiry which has been used since the 1940s. It involves researchers and participants working together to understand a problematic situation and change it for the better. There are many definitions of the approach, which share some common elements. PAR focuses on social change that promotes democracy and challenges inequality; is context-specific, often targeted on the needs of a particular group; is an iterative cycle of research, action, and reflection; and often seeks to ‘liberate’ participants to have a greater awareness of their situation in order to take action. PAR uses a range of different methods, both qualitative and quantitative (Gold, 1958; Moore & Savage, 2002; Participation Research Cluster, n.d.; Takyi, 2015).

*Punctuated Equilibrium Theory:* The punctuated equilibrium theory on public policy formulation is a useful tool in understanding the ways in which public institutions craft policy. The theory, developed by Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones in 1995, states policy changes inherently occur gradually. Factors including the polarization of political ideologies and cultural divides generally make policy

formulation a slow, often stagnant process. However, a policy can change dramatically spurred by fundamental events that can motivate the public to pressure policymakers to implement a new policy. For example, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were a punctuated moment that resulted in dramatic changes to our country's homeland security and defense policies. Each policy field can be directly applied to the punctual equilibrium theory because of their nature of having long periods of policy stability which are punctuated by quick shifts in policy driven by short, but intense periods of instability and change (Baumgartner et al., 2014; Matzke, 2020).

*Social Network Analysis (SNA)*: a process of quantitative and qualitative analysis of a social network. SNA measures and maps the flow of relationships and relationship changes between knowledge-possessing entities. Simple and complex entities include websites, computers, animals, humans, groups, organizations and nations. The SNA structure is made up of node entities, such as humans, and ties, such as relationships. The advent of modern thought and computing facilitated a gradual evolution of the social networking concept in the form of highly complex, graph-based networks with many types of nodes and ties. These networks are the key to procedures and initiatives involving problem solving, administration and operations (Borgatti et al., 2013; Lubbers et al., 2020; Technopedia, 2012; Valente, 1995).

*Tokenism*: “the practice of doing something (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group) only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly” (via Merriam Webster). “There are three components to

preventing tokenism: diversity, equity, and inclusion. Diversity means having students or staff from a variety of backgrounds, including ethnicity, race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and nationality. Equity ensures that everyone has equal access to resources (e.g., salaries, networking, and mentors). As the term indicates, inclusivity means that each member, no matter their background, feels welcomed and valued within the group.”(Sherrer, 2018)

### **Conclusion**

The goal of this research is to add insight into contemporary leadership, education, management, and social theory. The study is rooted in Deweyan and Freirean frames about governance driven from the analysis of the lived experience of involved and excluded participants themselves. There may be a moment of *punctuated equilibrium* or an *Overton window of political possibilities* wherein the convergence of the new accountability and new governance movements provide a re-invigorated mode of MFP. Findings may go beyond yet include insights from identity politics to incorporate and hear low-income persons as they gain a voice in corporate governance and decision making.

## Chapter Two

### **Literature Review**

To analyze the various questions articulated in the introduction, this dissertation first explores the literature regarding various incentives and obstacles to structural inclusion of low-income and marginalized persons. This chapter is divided into three parts. Part One explores the following areas:

- operative governance theories, values, and practices;
- the non-profit community development/service organizational sector with special focus on the history of MFP and disenfranchisement;
- the theoretical constructs of innovation diffusion and organizational adaptation;
- an analysis of operative constructs pertaining to technical knowledge due to privatization and marketization ideologies and operative theories; and
- a brief analysis of the nature and inclusion of voices in decision making.

Part Two identifies various generative themes (Freire, 2000, p. 96) and limit-situations (Freire, 2000, p. 80) gleaned from the literature review analyzed in Part One that will provide elements to be tested by experts engaged in this research project. Part Three delves into the general theory related to the methodology that will be specifically employed and discussed in Chapter Three.

#### **Part One: Operative Governance Theories, Practices and Values**

Several operative governance theories (Cornforth & Brown, 2013) provide a framework for the literature review pertaining to corporate boards and decision-making.

Various governance theorists explore the philosophical underpinnings of corporate decision making, in general, and can be, or have been, implemented and utilized in the nonprofit sector. One such governance methodology is agency theory (Fama & Jenson, 1983), wherein corporate decision-making employs the basic principal-agent framework that one can and does act on behalf of another, within boundaries and within certain rights and obligations. This corporate governance theory models itself on the shareholders/directors' distinction in publicly owned companies. An alternative to this aspect is the stewardship theory of governance, wherein such separation proves impossible, and boards and shareholders or stakeholders need to complement each other rather than divide their domains (Donaldson & Davis, 1991).

The resource development theory (Davis & Cobb, 2010; Drees & Heugens, 2013; Hillman et al., 2009; Jaskyte, 2012; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Roshayani et al., 2018; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) provides another theoretical construct which maintains that the external environment shapes the reality of what types of, and access to, resources are needed for sustainability and growth. Obtaining valuable resources for an organization requires strategic thinking pertaining to the organizational connections, coalitions, and networks one creates to leverage such assets. Board member selection directly seeks critical and resource-rich alliances. Another insight from this school pertains to the concern that organizations, especially non-profit corporations, may lose their community connection and representation and become mere agents of the state rather than community agents as governmental funds become the dominant mode of resource for operations (Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

A third model relies on an understanding of group decision process theory



(Brown, 2005; Zander, 1993, 1994) in which the structures of an organization's internal relationships and procedures indicate proper and meaningful decisions. A fourth model is institutional theory (Abzug & Galaskiewicz, 2001; Abzug & Simonoff, 2019; Castillo, 2018; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Guo, 2007; Luoma & Goodstein, 1999; Stone, 1996) which analyzes how organizations are influenced by external factors that create various pressures to mimic other successful societal, industrial level, and organizational sector-like corporations by emulating their governance structures and operations.

A fifth governance theory focuses on the democratic nature of decision making (Cornforth & Edwards, 1999). This school focuses on the nature of cooperative decision-making and postulates that to operate in democratic societies, it should be required and optimal that organizations and their boards utilize democratic procedures. A sixth model, strategic management, proposes that organizational leadership and governance be aligned and based on the overall strategy of the firm (Cornforth & Edwards, 1999; Porter, 1991). A seventh theory is a governance-as-leadership approach (Chait et al., 2005) in which its adherents argue for more macro-related activities for boards, while fully decentralizing the micro activities of day-to-day operations to the staff, with clear delineation between the two spheres. Chait et al. introduce a new dimension to the governance literature with their insistence that beyond the macro and the micro distinctions, board members must focus on the generative aspects of corporate leadership which aim for long-term goals and system change efforts.

These theories were utilized to understand the structural incorporation of low-income and marginalized voices in governance. Issues pertaining to highly diffused models of governance chosen by such boards will be explored in more depth as they

impact a board's self-understanding and participants' perceptions of what models do or should do to operate practically (Carver, 2011; Carver & Carver, n.d., 1996, 2001; Masaoka, 2009).

### **Effective Boards in General**

An extensive array of literature exists devoted to the workings of effective governance boards within the nonprofit sector. Zander's (1993) classic study, *Making Boards Effective*, provides insight into various best practices. The book analyzes how board members construct their motivations for engagement and how boards best operate through a shared purpose and vision.

Zander (1993) devoted an entire chapter to engaging a board's constituencies at the grassroots level. He recommended various actions by the board leaders to elicit information, share details, and listen to grassroots leaders and local residents impacted by the various decisions rendered by a board. Zander did not describe how to engage such persons, especially low-income persons, in their actual and direct involvement in the corporate governance of such institutions. Though this book provides some keen insights on the operations of boards, little information is shared about the proper engagement of low-income persons on boards of directors. An opening remains in the literature for such a study.

LeRoux & Langer (2016) analyzed the perceived and actual relationships and roles between the executive director and the boards of directors of various nonprofit organizations. Their analysis of various individual, organizational, and environmental factors found that there is an interplay between the power of the executive director (e.g., tenure, education, gender, status as a founder), the stability of the board measured

through longevity and size of professional staff, and the extent of governmental funding in terms of the actual and perceived roles required of the board from the expectations of the director. The director typically prefers that the board of directors remove themselves from day-to-day operations and management and serve mission alignment and general oversight roles. As an agency matures and maintains financially diverse stability, the board tends to be more involved in its oversight and mission, which is closer in alignment with the executive director's expectations.

LeRoux & Langer (2016) found that there seems to be a cycle in the board - director expectations and actual relationships, especially as organizations mature over time and confront new environmental expectations. LeRoux & Langer noted that there were limitations in their study since they were unable to determine how agencies selected their board members, how they were formed or trained, and how the organization framed or articulated their expectations about the board-director relationship. Another major limitation of this study pertained to the exclusive reliance on survey data from executive directors alone without any board participation. LeRoux & Langer did not address any of the characteristics of board members themselves, especially regarding their socioeconomic status or how to engage the voices and incorporation of those on the margins.

LeRoux & Langer (2016) provided useful insights into the dynamics of the expectations of the executive director of any agency related to board engagement in general. Their study shed light on the organizational dynamics of the agency-theory and resource development theories of board governance with their sharp contrasts between board-central governance (Carver, 2011; Carver & Carver, n.d., 1996, 2001) and

executive leadership led organizations (Herman & Heimovics, 1990, 1994). LeRoux & Langer provided further understanding into Miller-Millesen's (2003) factors that influence board governance.

Miller-Millesen (2003) provided insights that the major governance theories, with special focus on agency, resource development, and institutional, remained inadequate to explain the nature of nonprofit boards. Miller-Millesen articulated various factors that shape board behaviors and self-understanding. Some environmental factors included the resource or funding environment and the institutional or regulatory environment. Three organizational factors included age or life cycle stage, stability, and professionalization. The author reviewed how boards might engage in the recruitment of new members. Miller-Millesen utilized the three dominant governance theories noting that agency theory may predict the need for new members to maintain or re-balance the board-executive director relationship. The resource development theory might predict that recruitment would bring in new boundary-crossing linkages or replace those being lost by turnover. In terms of this research, Miller-Millesen noted that coercive institutional isomorphism as a function found in institutional theory could, in fact, promote more diversity on governing boards if funders or regulators insist on such inclusion.

Miller-Millesen (2003) noted that life cycles of nonprofits, in terms of their maturity, tenure, and changing environments, may require certain nuances and foci for board recruitment. She wrote that "researchers examining stages of board development in both the nonprofit (Mathiasen, 1999; Wood, 1993) and the private (Zahra & Pearce, 1989) sectors argued that when the board transitions to different phases, there is a corresponding shift in governance functions" (p. 541).

However, Miller-Millesen (2003) did not explore whether, or how, there may be an opportunity to transverse obstacles to recruit, form, and engage those persons who have historically been excluded. She did give one insight for future research:

...until actual behavior is observed and explained, linking board activity to organizational performance will continue to yield ambiguous results. It is time to supplement our knowledge of what boards look like and what they should do with more empirical evidence of their actual behaviors. (p. 543)

Low income and marginalized voices remain a less than critical concern in governance theory, and the obstacles and opportunities for such inclusion on boards are rarely discerned. This dissertation hopes to fill this niche by exploring these obstacles and opportunities as they operate and their related perceptions.

Inglis and Cleave (2006) focused on identifying the motivations of the non-profit corporation's board members. Thirty-four motivational items are forged into six components/factors:

- enhancement of self-worth
- learning through community
- helping the community
- developing individual relationships
- unique contributions to the board
- self-healing (pp. 93-96)

The authors developed several survey questions and engaged various expert panels, mostly drawn from service-related and hands-on volunteers for nonprofits, to determine their measures on the above six factors. Fifty-eight of 119 advocacy, environmental,

culture, health, housing, social services, and sports organizations and agencies were selected from a member list of a metropolitan area. Due to possible external threats to validity because the organization's CEOs distributed the surveys to their board members, the results of this study need to be interpreted with caution. Yet, Inglis and Cleave did not focus on community development corporations, nor did they analyze the responses of low-income persons as any subgroup of those surveyed. Access and barriers to low-income persons in terms of leadership in governance are not front and center in this work. Though Inglis and Cleave's identification of 34 motivational elements and six factors are relatively new, they may be helpful in exploring such factors.

Brown and Guo (2010) provided a literature review of various governance theories (e.g., agency, resource dependency, group/decision processes, institutional, democratic, strategic management) pertinent to nonprofit boards. These authors demonstrated the need to acknowledge three contingencies under which specific board roles are prevalent: environmental uncertainty, information asymmetry, and board power/relationship between the board and chief executive officer (CEO). Brown and Guo analyzed community foundation boards by contacting 677 U.S. community foundations, resulting in 121 participants (18%). Brown and Guo found that their "participants tended to be slightly older, wealthier, and were more generous with grants" (p. 538). After the survey, a semi-structured telephone interview with 121 CEOs helped to focus on the more qualitative aspects of board governance. On average, Brown and Guo found that the CEOs cited various roles that they identified as required of boards of directors: fund development (e.g., using their social networking/capital), strategy and planning, financial oversight, public relations, board member vitality, policy oversight, relationship to the

executive, provision of guidance/expertise, the facilitation of grant-making, the generation of respect, becoming a ‘working board,’ membership and knowledgeability (pp. 539-543). The authors relied on resource dependency, group processes, and agency theory to explain their observations about the roles assigned to board members.

Though insightful regarding self-perception of roles, the Brown and Guo (2010) study provides limited insights and generalizability since it only includes community foundation boards where few low- or moderate-income persons are involved. The work to discover the access points and barriers to low-income engagement in corporate governance remains a needed resource in the general literature about effective boards, member expectations, and their motivations and roles.

Hartarska and Nadolnyak (2012) reviewed three years of financial and board composition data from 2002-2004 from the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Data Project with 1,000 members. They focused their analysis on 140 Community Development Loan Funds (CDLF). Hartarska and Nadolnyak applied an econometric Money Flow Index, wherein “predicted efficiency coefficients are regressed on variables measuring board size, gender and racial diversity” since “these variables are identified as related to efficiency in the governance literature” of the banking industry in general (p. 4314).

Hartarska and Nadolnyak (2012) tested two null hypotheses and alternatives. The first was that board size does not affect performance/up to a point (i.e., CDFIs with larger boards perform better). The second was that in CDFI boards, diversity is not related to performance/diversity affects performance. They found that organizational effectiveness (i.e., total costs and efficient coefficients in dollars and clients as dependent variables)

increased with a board that ranges from 10-13 members; a board with a proper balance of women increases effectiveness; and racial diversity may lower effectiveness to a small degree though not statistically significant. Limitations to this study include their sole reliance on investigating CDLFs and not all CDFIs with which they sometimes confuse. They also relied on an econometric model based on regular banking criteria which may be helpful regarding banking institutions but may not possess much salience to many other CDCs. Further, there was no real case study of CDLF boards to witness their operations, best practices, and actions. The authors did not specifically analyze the access and barriers of low-income persons in governance leadership. They only noted minority populations as a proxy variable for low-income, but their statistical work itself related to this variable may stimulate some interpretative disagreements. A large abyss remains pertaining to the nature of low-income persons' engagement with corporate governance.

Roshayani et al. (2018), relying on the resource development model, argued that three major skills frame an effective boards' quest for ideal board members: experience, expertise, and social connections. Nonprofit boards, mimicking for-profit types, seek out board members who have demonstrated experience in either the field of services or in operational leadership to help weather fluctuations, crises, and rapid change. Expertise in various disciplines (e.g., finance, operations, accounting, legal and marketing) provide valuable insights for nonprofit organizations. In light of the massive recession and lack of transparency driven in the 2001 market collapse, these authors demonstrated how new regulations regarding financial management and oversight required by the regulatory framework of all corporations drive a board to covet members with specific expertise. They wrote:



For instance, the U.S. Sarbanes–Oxley Act of 2002 mandates every board to create audit committees composed of at least one financial expert. Thus, academics, consultants, firm leaders, shareholders, and regulators, all call for specific expertise on corporate boards of directors (BODs). (p. 130)

The third highly desired skill regards the social status of members so that connections can be made within communities and between sectors, along with the needed financial and voluntary assets shared with the nonprofit itself. Roshayani et al. studied how engaging persons with these three skills form the foundation of many boards' recruitment strategies out of their conscious, or unconscious, acknowledgement of institutional isomorphism. These authors focused on three skills, while other researchers focused on general aspects for effective boards. The inclusion of those persons most impacted or in poverty on these boards, to give them voice, remains generally and specifically unimportant and undefined as a priority in the literature.

### **Adult Formation for Board Engagement**

This section briefly reviews critical andragogy with a special focus on the community-based formation opportunities available to empower low-income adults. An area of concern to be tested in this dissertation pertains to the nature, extent, and quality of adult-based formation programs for board membership. It is interesting to note that the term empowerment derives its origin in the field of social work to the period during the time of debates about the War on Poverty (Arnstein, 1969; Hardina, 2011). Yet, little has been done to delve into the andragogical aspects of how persons were to be formed and trained to be so empowered, especially on local boards of social welfare organizations.

Green & Griesinger (1996) reported extensive research regarding the importance

of proper formation and development of board members related to their due diligence obligations. A major national organization, BoardSource, provides many successful board formation programs and training guides (Berit, 2010; BoardSource, 2009, 2011, 2021). Other national organizations that provide similar training include the Independent Sector, the Aspen Institute, and the Foundation Center. These major national centers share a common focus on the agency, resource development, or institutional governance theories that recommend board member selection and formation amplify professional expertise or private resource links. The major focus of their training pertains to board-staff relationships, fiduciary responsibilities, and general oversight. Formally articulated or operative andragogy are not discussed in their methodology or framework. Certainly, the Deweyan and Freirean insights of democratic practice, reflection, dialogues, and pedagogy of disenfranchisement remain either hidden or neglected. The basic premise of these training programs relies mostly on a focus on the skills and qualifications of board members in their pursuit of oversight and skill transfers. Most basically, these programs lack any specific andragogy for adult formation except to follow the duties of care, loyalty, and compliance. This area of research will be addressed in this dissertation.

Carver and Carver (n.d., 1996, 2001, 2011) provide another perspective on the board formation process with its highly board centric Policy Governance model for for-profit and non-profit organizations. In this model, the board does not exist to help the staff but to remain in control of the interests of the organization and provide guidance for direction and mission alignment. Within this framework, board members must fully understand their roles and responsibilities as the key stakeholders of the organization and must utilize their professional and organizational skills to govern the institution. The

Carver model does not adequately address the inclusion of board members outside of its agency and resource development perspective and remains silent on the inclusion of those most impacted but excluded from board membership.

Batts (2011) offered another formation experience for board members detailing their roles and responsibilities. He noted that boards find it difficult to provide adequate and timely formation for their members due to various organizational constraints and the revolving nature of board tenure. Batts offered a manual for boards to establish training on their duties and obligations, though remained silent on the empowerment and inclusion of disenfranchised persons who remain at the margins.

Duca (1996) also provided a reference guide for board members to learn about their obligations and responsibilities. Duca focused on the requirement of a collaborative relationship between a board and its staff while focusing on the board's key areas of financial and programmatic oversight. This formation guide offered insights into the need for a diversity of perspectives and persons to serve on a board but focused that diversity generally on professional skills and aptitudes. Any engagement with those who have been disenfranchised or excluded from board membership remained allusive.

These nationally recognized formation programs, generally aimed at nonprofit organizations, do not deal adequately with the specific needs of those persons who have been disempowered from service due to their socioeconomic status or lack of inclusion, though the institution may be attempting to serve them. As is discussed later, various local groups and foundations in the Youngstown case study provide leadership formation opportunities (Wean, 2020).

It remains important to recognize and analyze the extent to which these training

resources for the development of board members, especially low-income and marginalized persons, provide adequate and appropriate formation for engagement in corporate decision-making. It is uncertain how proper andragogical processes (Knowles et al., 2005) are incorporated into these training programs, especially products promoted by nationally recognized training bodies. This research explores whether these training programs incorporate ideas and processes highlighted by John Dewey, especially in his concern for democracy and education (Dewey, 2004) and related epistemological and practice-oriented perspectives (Dewey, 1910, 1920, 1939, 1937) that form learners into citizens and active agents in their own situations.

Another aspect of proper adult formation pertains to the critical consciousness raised by such training to better inform those who have socioeconomic means, as well as those on the margin of society. Utilizing the lens provided by Freire (2000), it seems that actual and potential board members ought to be provided with critical thinking skills that raise their consciousness about societal norms and human wellbeing (Dean, 2012). In this manner, *dialogues*, which Freire prefers (Irwin, 2012), can be structured among those most impacted and marginalized along with those who can open doors to their participation in board governance. This is critical, especially for low-income and marginalized persons, to raise their consciousness about critical factors, themes, and limit-situations (Freire, 2000, p. 80) so that they may be empowered to fully participate and lend their voices in a credible manner in the midst of corporate governance decision-making.

Allen and Lachapelle's (2012) research explored how an organization, Horizons, dedicated itself to provide formation programs to citizens to work to reduce poverty in

some rural communities in Minnesota and Montana. They found that this program was not always consistent in its approach and found various degrees of acceptance of their coaching model. Allen and Lachapelle found that relatively minor engagement in leadership development can yield dramatic changes in a community's capacity to identify and address problems. Apaliyah et al. (2012) provided an overview of various community leadership programs and found that many enhance both the human and social capital of the participants. This, in turn, oftentimes can impact how individuals influence five other community capitals – cultural, political, built, natural, and financial. The programs studied were not specific to low income and disenfranchised persons and their relationships to community development corporations, but their study indicates how investment in community building skills has an impact.

Reborim (2007) explored certain aspects of why citizens participated on boards of various community organizations. She administered a questionnaire to over 700 citizens, focusing on comparing registered voters and past participants of community boards. Reborim found that civic skills were the stronger predictor of community board participation rather than education or income. Her research did not look specifically at community development corporations as a sector, but her insights reveal that the skill set of persons related to civic engagement is a powerful tool for future board participation.

Pigg (2002) reviewed literature on education and training programs related to those who have been disempowered. He found that many scholars and practitioners consider empowerment only from the individual psychological perspective as they engage in community development work. The author found that practitioners tend to maintain that individuals basically empower themselves by transforming their own

personal knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (i.e., self-empowerment). However, Pigg noted that the literature on empowerment points to the important interconnection between interpersonal (e.g., mutual empowerment) and collective social action (e.g., social empowerment) as two themes that are needed in any holistic training. Pigg explored how these various dimensions were incorporated into various leadership education programs. He found that these formation programs generally do not utilize what the literature notes about the interconnections between self, mutual, and social empowerment.

One funding and educational entity, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, remains committed to include formally excluded persons and those most impacted by organizations to serve on that institution's board of directors (CCHD, 2020). Founded in 1968 during the height of the War on Poverty and with its insistence on MFP, the CCHD funds nonprofit organizations engaged in social change and community development activities rather than social services. Many community development organizations have applied and received funding from this source of capital that is raised annually by a national collection involving the majority of the 17,000 Catholic parishes in the United States.

A key component of CCHD funding requires the community development organization to formally structure its board so that at least 30% of its members are persons most impacted by the organization's work and who are living in poverty. For social change organizations, 50% of the board membership must be low-income persons and those most affected by the work of the organization (McCarthy & Castelli, 1994). CCHD does not provide prescriptive details regarding its definition of most affected or

the actual income to ascertain low-income status. Each agency must provide a detailed description of those realities for its locality and then recruit board members as representatives from those areas of concern. Wood et al. (2012) found that such groups demonstrated a higher level of board involvement from persons of color and lower income as more representative of their communities for which the organization is designed to serve or organize. Wood et al. noted that these boards “are extraordinarily a lot less well-off than the typical board members of an American nonprofit” (p. 8).

CCHD also relies on certain national intermediaries to work with funded organizations in board training and formation. These organizations include the Gamaliel National Network, Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the PICO National Network, and the Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART). Generally, these intermediaries provide necessary assistance with strategy and board member empowerment processes (Wood, 2002, 2007; Wood et al., 2012; Wood & Warren, 2002). In many ways, CCHD has continued to maintain the spirit and creativity of the MFP process into its current work in community development and social change. The Youngstown case study unveils some of the important infrastructure work accomplished by CCHD funded groups and institutional engagement of low-income persons.

Perceptions pertaining to trainings and formation programs, with an eye to insights from Dewey (2004) and Freire (2000), are assessed in this dissertation, which is discussed in the methodology section.

### **The Nonprofit Community Services and Development Sector**

This section investigates the general area pertaining to the role of nonprofit corporations in the political economy (Powell & Steinberg, 2006), with a specific focus

on CDCs, COs, and CSAs in local communities (DeFilippis & Saegert, 2012). Focused analysis targets the corporate mandates and organizational structures of such organizations, with special attention to the historical development of MFP.

### ***The Nonprofit Sector in General***

Much has been written about the nonprofit sector of the economy. Powell (1987) and Powell and Steinberg (2006) provided ample scholarly articles in their collected editions. Within the confines of their review of the various aspects of the nonprofit sector, both handbooks included only one article about corporate governance. For the purposes of this research project, the exploration of low-income participation in governance is extremely limited in any of their included articles.

Middleton (1987) provided the only article on corporate governance in the 1987 edition of *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* (Powell, 1987). Middleton reviewed the connections and links of large nonprofit corporations' board members to various elite organizations in communities studied and found that local elites typically comprise the boards of large nonprofits in any community. She found very little information about CDCs, CSAs, or smaller community corporations; low-income persons do not figure in her research of the boards that she studied. Middleton suggested that there were various reasons why certain elites maintain connections to community nonprofits:

1. Community corporations, especially high-profile organizations (e.g., hospitals, universities, art institutions), clamor for high-status individuals to serve on their boards.
2. Men tended to prevail in their connections between such high-profile



organizations. Middleton found that these businessmen tended to prefer service on traditional nonprofit boards while being less engaged in more contemporary and social service-based organizations.

3. “The self-selection process of trustees onto certain nonprofit boards is also heightened by their personal and career motivations” in that many want to be of service while also enhancing their social, political, and economic connections.
4. Many nonprofits sought persons connected to financial resources thus reinforcing the tendency to replace high-status board members with other high-status professionals. (p. 146)

Middleton (1987) argued that such reproduction of high-status elites engaged in corporate governance weakened the ability of an organization to respond to its times and environment. She wrote:

One could reasonably argue, therefore, that boards composed of interconnecting, high-status members did not have the capacity to gather and act on information about changes occurring outside of those networks. In this sense, they were ill-equipped to meet the adaption needs of their nonprofit organizations. The question of for whom nonprofit boards generate power, then, is a complex one. The preponderance of data suggests that high-status members increase the power (resource acquiring ability) of the traditional established agencies on whose boards they sit. In exchange, they use board memberships to solidify network relationships and to strengthen their positions in the community. Under situations of rapid change in the environment, this exchange may not always enhance the

adaptive capacities of organizations. At a community level, however, the interlocking power relationships have implications for the allocation of resources. (pp. 146-147)

Middleton did not offer any insights into the call or abandonment of MFP, especially of low-income persons. Yet, she highlighted an important point regarding a possible barrier to such participation: the lack of connections between sitting high-status board members and low-income persons involved in local leadership. These “weak ties” (Granovetter, 1983, p. 201) may have consciously or unconsciously hindered less high-status persons from being invited to serve on self-reappointing boards. Middleton did not pursue this line of inquiry regarding specific obstacles to low-income persons’ participation in corporate governance but noted that issues around power and participation required more careful study.

Ostrower and Stone (2006) confirmed the research findings of Middleton (1987) that boards of nonprofits generally tended to include members that were “white, more trustees are male than female, and boards draw their members disproportionately from members of the upper-middle and upper classes” (p. 614). Ostrower and Stone state that many nonprofit boards found that “socially and economically prominent community members select, and are selected by, prominent boards of affluent institutions” (p. 616).

Ostrower and Stone (2006) supported the findings of other researchers that “boards play a role among elites, positing that board service enhances elite status, cohesion and influence” (p. 616). They noted that various “power structure theorists argue that nonprofit board membership perpetuates upper-class power” (p. 616). There seems to be built-in barriers for low-income persons to be engaged in such leadership

opportunities due to the very structure of the self-selection of board members.

Ostrower and Stone (2006) provided readers with future research questions. Most importantly for this project, they noted that smaller, community-based organizations, rather than just the traditional larger high-profile agencies, need to be studied in more detail (p. 624). However, Ostrower and Stone did not provide a sense of urgency in studying the barriers to low-income participation on board governance but lamented that elites self-reinforced their actions through self-perpetuating governance policies and practices. The current research adds to the more general literature about the nonprofit sector and delves more deeply into identifying access points and barriers to low-income persons' participation in such leadership roles.

Safford (2009) detailed the inability to respond to a changing environment due to the presence of "strong ties" (Granovetter, 1983, p. 201) among various community board members with high-status profiles. Through social network analysis, Safford detailed how Youngstown, Ohio, unlike Allentown, Pennsylvania, failed to respond adeptly and rapidly to the changing economic realities of its community. His comparative case studies found that Youngstown had a more concentrated social network whose center was the Youngstown Garden Club but failed to rebound as quickly as Allentown, with less dense social network connectivity. Safford provided important insights into the weakness in failing to include more persons in decision-making and corporate governance, both at the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. However, Safford's two-case-studies approach lacks in-depth analysis of leaders regarding their actions during postindustrial reconstruction and remains vague as to what a community should have done in such a situation. Safford provided a glimpse into how the lack of access and

barriers to low-income participation in governance directly impacted a community.

### **The Community Development Sector Specifically with attention to MFP**

This section pinpoints the theoretical and legal history of the notion of MFP that branded the OEO focus in the War on Poverty (Clark, 2002). Earlier works featuring MFP track its historical genesis, legal implications, and struggles with its implementation (Alcock, 2005; Anderson, 1967; Arnstein, 1972; Beito, 2000; Bell & Wray, 2004; Bloomberg & Rosenstock, 1968; Boone, 1972; Brieland, 1971; Camacho, 1980; Cazenave, 2007; Davidson, 1969; Fessler, 1970; Gillette, 2010; Gittell, 1977; Kornbluh, 2007; Kramer, 1969; Kravitz, 1969; Landsberger, 1972; LaRochelle, 2016, 2019; Levitan, 1967, 1969; Marris & Rein, 1982; Melish, 2010; Mildred, 1994; Moynihan, 1969; Naples, 1988; Nemon, 2007; O'Connor, 2009; Rosenthal, 2018; Rubin, 1969; Schmitt, 2012; Schryer, 2018; Strange, 1972; Sundquist, 1969; Wofford, 1969; Yarmolinsky, 1969; Zarefsky, 1977). Though mentioned but never defined in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the goal of MFP aimed to include those persons who were served by agencies to be represented in the decision-making structures and processes of those organizations, furthering the goal that community representatives give voice to their concerns without others speaking for them (Geiger, 2005; Rubin, 1969). Melish's more contemporary analysis of the convergence of new movements in governance and accountability, as they impact the conceptualization and implementation of MFP today, are discussed below after a brief review of the work of CDCs, CSAs, CAAs, or CAPs.

Two seminal works studying the creation and funding of CDCs and CSAs by the Office of Economic Opportunity ground the literature review pertaining to community

development and MFP. Berndt (1977) and Kelly (1977) simultaneously and independently reviewed the work of these organizations, with a specific focus on CDCs over the past and previous decade of their intensive activities. These two studies formed the baseline of much of the current literature of CDCs.

Berndt (1977), an experienced CDC practitioner, provided a detailed case study of the Union Sarah Economic Development Corporation in St. Louis, Missouri, describing its work and organizational subsidiaries. The case study explored the fiscal pressures on this CDC, especially from the U.S. OEO. The study reviewed 14 other CDCs funded by the OEO comparing financial data, community control mandates, entrepreneurial enhancements, private sector support, housing, and retail development, and governmental participation. The analysis revealed that community control was only nominal with a small group of middle-income persons leading the work and that control ultimately remained with OEO authorities per their funding stipulations. Few board members were interviewed, and there were fleeting references made to the role of the board of directors without any extensive review or connections with the literature on governance.

Kelly (1977) studied the composition of boards of directors of CDCs in the United States, with a focus on those funded by the federal government. After the early years of experimenting with MFP, she tested 11 hypotheses about levels of engagement and success of the CDCs (pp. 11-12). This early study revealed difficulties in both internal instrument validity and external threats of population and ecological validity. Kelly's attempt to accomplish a meta-analysis of various CDC data was commendable, but her tools for such analysis were weak and very general. Kelly established the baseline information on CDCs by providing the first serious survey of over 434 board members

representing 35 CDCs from both rural and urban areas. General comparative demographics were provided, and tentative conclusions were raised:

1. MFP was not invalidated even though low-income participation was low.
2. Many middle-class persons who lived in the service areas of CDCs participated in governance thus incorporating a tenet of MFP.
3. The boards mimicked the representative process of quasi-governmental boards.
4. Those MFP requirements provided a better example and model for democratic participation than private business corporations.

Berndt (1977) and Kelly (1977) leave space in the nonprofit sector literature about the importance, work, successes, and struggles of the community development movement. Both cases deal with the power and influence of the OEO over local CDCs, representing conflicting goals and priorities. Low-income participation on board governance is generally discussed in terms of the policy of MFP, but neither study provided a detailed analysis on the nature of governance and the barriers or access to leadership by low-income persons. This is an area of research critically needed in governance theory and practice.

During the decade following the Berndt (1977) and Kelly's (1977) studies, few academic papers focused on CDCs and low-income participation. In a landmark 1987 study, there seemed to be a change in perspective from earlier concerns. In *Beyond the Market and the State* by Bruyn and Meehan (1987), the clear majority of scholarly articles in this edited book detail the work and accomplishments of CDCs focusing on their various programmatic and infrastructure works; however, little was done pertaining

to governance and low-income participation. In one article, Zdenek (1987) provided a lone voice regarding the importance of low-income participation in decision-making and governance of CDCs by outlining the history of CDCs and the role of low-income persons in governance and leadership. Zdenek noted, “in addition to addressing a myriad of needs for low-income residents and communities, CDCs are the first economic and political institutions to be controlled by low-income residents” (p. 116).

Zdenek (1987) found that in the CDC experience, “a board composed primarily of local residents and organizations provides opportunity for greater community input and broadens the base of support for the CDC” (p. 116). Zdenek highlighted:

Participation in the CDC decision-making process often provides low-income and minority peoples their first opportunity to develop leadership skills in economic and political issues. Board members gain business skills, such as how to analyze profit and loss statements or investment agreements, as well as increased comprehension of the economic development planning process . . . CDCs offer invaluable opportunities for minority citizens to gain economic and political leadership, technical skills . . . (p. 116)

He did not further pursue the potential for more inclusion of low-income persons in governance roles, nor did he mention any barriers to such participation. Zdenek provided no specific research to show that low-income persons did in fact control their own CDCs but rather provided a historical insight into a major hope of the policies that created CDCs. He analyzed the specific works and programs of CDCs without attention to governance and low-income engagement.

However, in his conclusion, Zdenek (1987) did note that “community

development corporations have achieved their growth in a market-oriented business environment of competing firms often acting at cross purposes to CDC goals” (p. 126). Though he provided some examples of the changing privatized and marketized framework of CDC work, Zdenek did not issue any calls for future research into low-income participation in governance and leadership. Corporate governance remains a secondary concept in the CDC arena, or so it would seem. Again, this gap provides an opening for this research to probe more deeply into the access and barriers of low-income persons in leadership positions of corporate governance.

Vidal (1992) updated the 1977 and 1987 studies through his publication of *Rebuilding Communities*, which documented the extent to which CDCs have become models for urban revitalization during the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s. Vidal provided an in-depth analysis of 130 CDCs working in 30 cities in the United States. Vidal demonstrated to funders and policymakers that CDCs were critical actors in urban development and provided important best practices to community-based improvements. Vidal’s work aimed to convince policymakers and private funders that CDCs offered resilience, creativity, and responsiveness to changing times, while simultaneously providing loans, housing, businesses, and infrastructure improvements in many low-income communities that have devolved from public entities due to privatization and deregulation. CDCs offered a glimmer of hope in achieving many of the goals of low-income communities to improve their neighborhoods, although the funding streams provided by the OEO had long since disappeared. CDCs created a niche as professional developers responded to the changes in public finance and privatization. However, Vidal did not provide adequate analysis and data about the role of low-income persons’



involvement in governance or corporate leadership. This study continues the trend to focus on the brick-and-mortar accomplishments of CDCs through their complicated financial and investment strategies and tools. Again, the role of board governance finds itself diminished and an accessory to the real work of CDCs...building things. A niche remains for the present study to probe further the access and barriers to low-income persons in decision making and leadership in corporate governance.

Botes and Van Rensburg (2000) provided an international and comparative perspective on CDCs through their own experience working in five settlements in South Africa. Botes and Van Rensburg offered a case study on how the poorest and least heard voices faced obstacles in engaging in decision making. They noted that development professionals needed to adopt guidelines for their work in various communities to maximize participation, especially from low-income persons. Botes and Van Rensburg feared that the professionalization of development had engineered its own barriers to effective low-income participation. They listed nine obstacles, or “plagues,” as they referred to them:

- the paternalistic role of professionals
- inhibiting role of the state
- over-reporting successes only
- selective participation
- hard technical issues over soft process concerns
- conflicting interest groups
- gatekeeping by local elites
- pressure for immediate results

- lack of public interest for involvement (Botes & Van Rensburg, 2000, pp. 42-51)

The authors offered 12 guidelines to guide the facilitation of development processes, mostly to deal with the above nine obstacles. They argued that a major focus needed to be given to how low-income and poor persons in the community engaged in the work of CDCs, with special reference to governance. This work does not deal directly with the United States and its current realities with CDCs, but Botes and Van Rensburg offered comparative insights about the obstacles that contemporary professionalized CDCs may pose, intentionally or not, regarding adequate and meaningful low-income participation in governance and leadership.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published their own report on an emerging trend in CDC work in various communities: the rise of faith-based organizations. In their report, *Faith-Based Organizations in Community Development*, HUD (2001) analyzed the creativity exhibited and the contributions offered by faith-based groups and organizations in their work in low-income neighborhoods. Similar to other reports, HUD focused on the brick-and-mortar aspects of these religiously affiliated groups' activities and raised concerns about how some faith-based organizations have either not participated, or have been hindered from participating, in governmental financing. HUD spent much of its report discussing means to address church/state barriers and called for more research on the impact of faith-based groups in community development.

Unfortunately, the HUD (2001) report did not deal with any issues of low-income participation, as if the earlier OEO concern for MFP never existed, and it generally

ignored the role of boards and governance. This report added to the bank of knowledge about CDCs by focusing on long-term efforts and newly created opportunities for faith-based organizations. Even though HUD has replaced the OEO as the governmental funder and regulator of the community development arena, the notion of MFP has completely vanished from the policy lexicon. Religious-based organizations have had a history of engagement of low-income persons in leadership and in corporate governance. This history remains an untapped resource for research that this project hopes to fill, in some manner, as there are several religious-based CDCs in the Youngstown case study.

Hustedde & Ganowicz (2002) provided critical insights regarding the theoretical constructs needed in the community development field of practice. They noted that community development theory concerns structure, power, and shared meaning (p. 3), and how these three concepts were moored to three classical theoretical frameworks of structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. Hustedde & Ganowicz utilized variations on the “structuration” theory (Giddens, 1984, 1989) to help community development practitioners to link macro and microstructures for their actions (p. 11). Unfortunately, their study did not review how low-income persons could be engaged in organizational decision making but pinpointed a need for a more robust theoretical formation for community development leaders and their respective board members with special attention to those previously disenfranchised.

Padget (2002) offered a case study of a community organization documenting changes over time. Through interviews and archival research, she demonstrated that a community service organization may experience turmoil and changes due to conflicts over institutionalization, professionalization, funding, and the agency’s goals and

strategies. Padget's case study model can help this study, yet her work did not focus on board engagement or low-income involvement.

Murphy and Cunningham (2003) provided excellent sources on current theoretical and historical debates between development and organizing as the best means to obtain community-controlled corporations. They argued that a shift occurred with CDCs to include a comprehensive form with both asset-based economic development and political and sociological elements of social networking, as well as mobilizing residents for political engagement. Murphy and Cunningham offered five principles that form their analysis: inclusion, comprehensiveness, mobilization, adequate wealth, and health and spirit (p.7). They also listed nine issues that all successful CDCs engage in:

- a debate about place versus identity
- an understanding of geography as related to people
- local concerns versus regional opportunities
- a happenstance or purposeful approach to participation
- the critical need for indigenous leadership
- an understanding and utilization of consensus or conflict models of organizing
- funding source restrictions
- political versus economic balance and outcomes
- ability to increase and expand their offerings (i.e., scalability) (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003, pp. 8-9)

From the recruitment of volunteers to comprehensive community planning guides, Murphy and Cunningham (2003) contributed practical ideas for practitioners. Though the research design was not clearly identified for replication, these authors

included a focused case study of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania and provided a good source of bibliographic resources on the debate between economic development and community organizing. The limitations of Murphy and Cunningham's work include a sparse review of the literature on the practice of engagement of low-income persons and the role or nature of board members and governance of successful or failed CDCs.

Frisch and Servon (2006) reviewed results from a study of CDCs as an extension of the Vidal (1992) study. Frisch and Servon reviewed the current fiscal and policy landscape for the work of CDCs in community development. They noted that CDCs, even since 1992, have created more networks and systems in their local communities. These systems and networks gathered and strengthened the growing professional staff and leaders of community development work. Professionalization became a dominant perspective for CDC work; creative financial planning and managing multi-source funding required professionals to design and implement such complex development activities. Frisch and Servon were concerned, however, that such professionalization and technical competency may in fact raise "questions about the CDCs ability to maintain their legitimacy with and accountability to their constituent communities" (p. 91). Frisch and Servon demonstrated that major changes have occurred in the community development field. For instance, a new reliance on assets development rather than needs fulfillment formed the focus of CDC activities and funding. CDCs are now, more so than ever, engaged in "market-oriented development" (p. 94) capitalizing on the current trends in the political economy related to privatization. Frisch and Servon focused on the increased attention to social capital formation as an asset related to trust and networks that remain as essential as human, natural, or financial capital. These authors also

reported the increasing number of religious and faith-based institutions sponsoring CDC related work.

Frisch and Servon (2006) noted an emerging crisis in leadership within and among various CDCs but focused their attention on the aging staff of such organizations. The authors gave no attention to the role and function of low-income persons engaged in governance. A major niche remains concerning the access and barriers to the participation of low-income persons in the governance and leadership of community-based corporations.

Guo (2007) studied various urban charitable organizations and found that as government funding increases as a portion of the budget, it decreases the likelihood that nonprofit organizations will develop boards that are representative of their local community. This is an important insight and finding related to the various obstacles and opportunities for low income and community-based residents to serve on local social welfare agencies. Yet, Guo did not thoroughly explore the obstacles or opportunities related to why this lack of representation may occur.

Stoecker (2008) reviewed the literature on the effectiveness and contradictions faced by CDCs, with a special focus on the model imposed on CDCs through modern capitalism's political economy (e.g., marketization, privatization). Stoecker acknowledged that CDC's integrated community control and market opportunities may have created contradictions and underlying unsolvable tensions. He argued that CDCs remained severely undercapitalized which ensured their limited success. CDCs, however little control they may have over limited resources, were blamed for any failure in economic or participatory improvements.

Stocker (2008) discussed three major obstacles to proper CDC success: limits to their comprehensiveness, the myth of community control, and the development of disorganization based on capitalist political economy (pp. 6-10). He argued that community organizing methods needed to be engaged prior to any development efforts and that there should have been a separation between these two functions and roles in community empowerment (p. 13). Such efforts required ongoing comprehensive community planning and a high-capacity multi-local CDC for development efforts (p. 15). Though Stocker remained passionate about the critical work accomplished by CDCs, he did not provide much depth of analysis. Since community organizing should be the new realm for low-income involvement, Stocker did not provide direction in understanding barriers or access of low-income persons in the corporate governance of CDCs or community organizing groups. This lack of focus on structuring low-income participation in governance continues the pattern of disregarding the hopes and plans for MFP, especially in corporate leadership and governance control of their own assets.

Silverman (2005, 2009) analyzed citizen participation in 15 community-based housing organizations (CBHOs) in the City of Buffalo, New York providing a case study of how professionalization in the community aimed to reduce the politics of patronage in decision making. Silverman (2009) noted that in the housing and community development sectors, there are “limited resources and a lack of incentives to promote citizen participation from government” which thereby has “increasingly circumscribed the role of residents in CBHO decision-making” (p. 5). Other researchers noted this as well (Bockmeyer, 2003; Goetz & Sydney, 1995; Swanstrom, 1999). He tracked in the literature how CHBOs became embedded in new governance structures that remain

decoupled from community activism becoming more like agents of the government, private philanthropies, and other funding sources to deliver the services funded. He also found that even though many of these CHBOs received almost up to 90% of their funding from governmental sources and were required to engage local residents to serve on their boards, few, if any, genuinely complied (p. 9). Few available financial or capacity-building resources for resident selection on boards, coupled with a shift from community-based organizing to the delivery of governmental contracted services, allowed organizations and regulators to ignore any such engagement requirements.

However, some CHBOs reported that if they were neighborhood-based that they did open their board seats to persons from that city district, acknowledging that some governmental funders mandated such an engagement. Silverman (2009) reported from his case study that the boards of many of the CHBOs did reflect the gender and racial composition of the City of Buffalo. Income status, on the other hand, was not reported, but he found that many CHBOs noted that professional and expert level persons who happened to reside in those service areas typically became board members over low-income and non-professional residents. Interestingly, Silverman reported that many of the CHBOs in Buffalo started as specific council-district enterprises to serve residents in defined neighborhoods. Essentially, a patronage system developed wherein many of the CHBOs were perceived to be city functionaries not requiring much local resident engagement regardless of any requirements for such inclusion on boards. As the city demanded more regional and professionally driven outcomes over specific council districts or neighborhoods, institutional pressures demanded that institutional actors (e.g., professional, middle class), hopefully from the local community, serve on these boards of



directors.

Silverman (2009) explored how some scholars like Marwell (2004) advocated for a new approach for CHBOs by promoting a new patronage system of voter power for housing resources but instead offered alternative ideas regarding empowerment and participatory mechanisms. Such alternatives included advocacy for more regulatory requirements that residents and low-income persons serve on CBHO boards and that the law mandates that low income and local residents have a specific role to play in the planning and implementation process of any housing development. Silverman argued that these two elements go beyond the original call for MFP (p. 20). He provided great insight on how professionalization and regional pressures have impacted the ability of low-income persons to serve on these boards established to serve their needs. However, Silverman focused his attention on interviewing the executive leaders of the CHBOs in his study but did not engage any actual or potential board members, which is the gap this dissertation fills.

Melish (2010) traced the history of the War of Poverty's (Economic Opportunity Act, 1964) rapid rise and fall as the prevalent social policy of the early 1960s lasting barely through the 1970s. The twin concepts of MFP and major investment in local poverty reduction agencies (i.e., CAAs or CAPs) quickly dissolved into federal inter-agency in-fights and local community political constraints. Melish traced the legislative and practical history of how the call for more involvement of persons living in poverty in local social welfare decisions through their participation on the boards of local CAAs/CAPs failed not because of its general premise but mostly due to its bad timing.

According to Melish (2010), the War on Poverty hoped to transform the then

extant social work welfare policy paradigm that focused on individualized support and behavior change. Concomitant to the rise of the notion of engagement and inclusion of those who experience poverty, there was a change in social welfare policy thinking away from the old social work school. This emerging but more centralized model, the "legal-bureaucratic" paradigm (p. 10), focused on universalizing benefits based on rights and citizenship claims. Citizen engagement through social and civil rights movements utilized the legal system to address local discrepancies and outright violations of individual rights claims for welfare assistance percolating through the arbitrary choices of welfare agency social workers. A radicalization of social movements not afraid to use the legal process and an emerging centralized welfare system based on common benefits for all created a cauldron of confusion and anxiety about the requirement for MFP at the local level. Melish concluded that "neither of these trends was amenable to the decentralized, coordinated, cooperative, and flexibly responsive policy orientation on which the MFP model was conceptually based" (p. 28).

With the apparent demise of the War on Poverty, all was not lost for proponents of empowering low-income people to have a voice in decision making. Melish (2010) tracked two movements shaped in the 1990s operative today. These two new movements converged, which provided an opening for a better means to incorporate MFP into social welfare policymaking. The new governance movement sought to morph the "legal-bureaucratic" (p. 10) regime from its centralized and uniform cookie-cutter paradigm into a more flexible, localized, decentralized model that combined the best thinking gleaned from subsidiarity wherein local efforts prevail, while higher-order entities orchestrated and shared best practices. For example, the 1996 major legislative shift in social welfare

policy, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, enshrined this new governance model in current anti-poverty welfare policy (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, 1996). The second trend concerns a new accountability led by civic and non-governmental organizations that called for heightened transparency and engagement by all stakeholders, especially those who are poor and most impacted by social welfare decisions. Melish argued that the convergence of these two movements regarding local governance and implementation, along with organizations advocating and demanding transparency and accountability, presented a new moment in time for the principles and practice of giving voice to those most impacted, especially those who are poor, to occur. MFP should be able to be resurrected within a new social policy paradigm of new governance and new accountability movements currently in place. Without using the language of *punctuated equilibrium* (Baumgartner et al., 2014; Jones & Baumgartner, 2012) or *Overton window of political possibility* (Putnam, 2020; Skocpol, 2013; Szalek, 2013) in social policy theory, Melish stated that such a moment is at hand for MFP to rise to the foreground.

Melish (2010) argued for a new human rights-based movement to engage all stakeholders in developing, implementing, and evaluating social welfare policy decisions. The author relied on civic organizations to provide a voice to those most impacted, while calling on welfare agency leaders and decision-makers to implement fully the new governance models at the local level with a new national orchestrating body. Melish failed to address the inclusion of low-income persons on any regulatory governing board or private agency corporation board. She did not seem to consider this as an option for the implementation of both the new governance and the new accountability movements.

This is a blind spot in her analysis that this dissertation explores.

A related topic deals with how the new governance theory impacts another institution beset with a politics of representation — local school boards. Liebman and Sabel (2003) applied general lessons from new governance and new accountability theory and movements to educational reform by tracking how lessons learned from state laboratories came back full circle to local schools in search of solving the problem of inequalities in educational funding. Such experiments with new publics involving an ever-wider field of participants learning to express their voices influenced, and were in turn shaped by, the politics and implementation of a major legislative intervention in the education policy regime (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). More aggressive accountability standards shaped by that 2002 public policy led to new means and responsibilities of local autonomy and governance that could be compared and coached to better performance. Since local schools, districts, and states themselves could be compared, and new modes of local - federal relations could be forged, laggards not equitably or acceptably serving diverse populations could no longer be ignored. With such open comparable analysis available, local and new publics who were not given a voice before could now demand better, and state actors could provide relief in new ways. Liebman and Sabel demonstrated the power of local politics through three case studies showing resilience to adapt when new accountability models make way for new governance structures in educational reform.

Researchers (Hardina, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2011; Hardina & Malott, 1997) identified various characteristics of institutions that employed inclusive practices addressing empowerment and participation. Hardina (2006) specifically noted that

empowerment processes and theory, rooted in the War on Poverty, found one major expression in the government's requirement for CAPs to implement its policy of MFP (p. 5). In her review of the history of the empowerment literature, two theoretical perspectives helped frame the need to engage institutions with personal empowerment efforts. Hardina amplified Zimmerman and Rapport's (1988) work of linking of citizen empowerment to organizational decision making and social change efforts requiring new leadership skills, with Berger and Neuhaus' (1996) explicit acknowledgment that nonprofit community based social welfare institutions need to provide some form of mediating structures between residents and other organizations and the to the government itself. Hardina (2005, 2006) provided specific advice regarding attributes organizations should exhibit if they are to be empowering or empowered. She wrote:

At minimum, an organization should work to recruit and maintain a board of directors with decision-making capacity. To accomplish this task, the organization should adopt specific administrative practices that support client and resident inclusion in organization decision-making. Such action should include, but not be limited to, seats on boards of directors and advisory panels. In addition, an empowerment-oriented organization should make on-going efforts to consult with and empower organizational staff members so that they are supportive of efforts to empower clients and other organization constituents. Effective efforts to increase participation among clients, constituents, and staff require that the organization becomes culturally competent, understanding how to recruit diverse individuals and involve them in decision-making. Members of the organization should attempt to strengthen and maintain informal community networks and to

serve as a mediating institution to link residents with local institutions and government agencies to increase organizational capacity and respond to local needs. The organization should prepare to use participatory evaluation techniques to assess the effectiveness of citizen participation efforts and programs and services. Such preparation will increase the participants' sense of inclusion in the organization and improve the organization's delivery of services. Finally, the organization should take action to increase the political power of constituents by engaging in and promoting actual participation in political action among organizational participants. Each of these activities requires administrators, board members, and staff members to take a specific set of actions. (pp. 7-8)

Hardina's (2006) briefing mentioned board participation, especially by those who have experienced some form of exclusion or disenfranchisement, as a generally easy effort for implementation. More importantly, she highlighted that some obstacles remain:

However, research indicates that in many situations, organizational or political elites continue to retain primary control of decision-making processes unless the organization takes unequivocal precautions to prevent such control (Julian, et al., 1997; King et al., 1998; Tauxe, 1995). According to Silverman (2003), members of marginalized groups can experience further oppression if they receive token roles on decision-making boards. Staff and middle- or high-income board members often attain professional degrees that serve to increase their power advantage vis-à-vis representatives of low-income or other marginalized groups (Hardina & Malott, 1996). Consequently, knowledge of the status of other board members may intimidate some low-income constituents. Oppressed groups lack

resources to ensure political power (money, social contacts, political influence, media coverage, politicians, and social status), which further limits their ability to bargain with professional staff and government officials (Winkle, 1991). O'Neill (1992) argues that representatives of low-income and other marginalized groups are more effective on boards when they represent powerful community constituencies. Such groups obtain power through membership (strength in numbers), ability to influence the media, and linkages with community institutions. (p. 8)

Hardina (2006) suggested a framework for organizations to further their empowerment work by outlining activities related to education, mobilization, political participation, outreach, worker inclusion, evaluation, and voter registration and education (p. 12). Notably missing from her list is attention to the obstacles and opportunities for the direct involvement of low-income or disenfranchised persons on the boards of directors of these institutions. She noted that more training and formation on decision making and leadership for those who have been excluded remains a priority, but she did not dwell on that need. This is a gap in the literature that this dissertation fills.

However, Hardina (2011) returned to research how various community agencies' leaders empowered community residents to engage in decision making on their boards of directors. She found that there have been few "systematic or national studies that document whether social service managers actually use empowerment-oriented management techniques. Available research suggests that few service users or members of marginalized groups participate in or serve on boards in nonprofit organizations" (p. 121). In her study, Hardina surveyed a national cohort of nonprofit organizational leaders

and faculty members who dealt with nonprofit education but did not include board members or potential board members who were empowered or disenfranchised. She further found that many of the surveyed nonprofit leaders attempted to operate out of an empowerment theoretical construct, but the “organizations in which respondents were employed were less likely to use management approaches that enhanced client involvement in decision making or that helped clients become politically active” (p. 122). Hardina noted that obstacles existed for even these seasoned leaders as many of their own organizations practiced hierarchical organizational structures which provided a barrier to experimenting or implementing empowerment processes (p.127). Staff empowerment ranked over client engagement. She noted that these leaders ranked client empowerment, especially board membership, as one of the lowest levels of practice, and there did not seem to be any commitment to improve on that process. Hardina concluded that the managerial philosophy of a nonprofit organization might provide an obstacle, or an opportunity, for low-income clients to serve on these organizations’ boards. Executive leaders do matter in the empowerment process.

Romano (2019) demonstrated in her international comparative research that community development and service organizations provide essential infrastructure and engagement for low income and marginalized persons. The participation of those marginalized in such enterprises tends to provide more efficacy in poverty reduction than those without such engagement. Romano wrote:

...experience emerging from development and policy reduction programs confirms that involving institutions that are closer to the beneficiaries can enhance beneficiary participation in project activities and the likelihood that their priorities



are taken into consideration and project benefits accrue to them. Even when these institutions are not professionally managed and have governance issues, they often tend to represent their membership's interests better than any other entity. (p. 69)

Romano (2019) noted that material poverty is not the only element that might be alleviated from such engaged grass-root institutions. Romano (2019) shared, "poverty is, also, vulnerability, exclusion, and powerlessness" and with institutional voice, low-income persons could "access assets, services, resources, and opportunities, and make or influence decisions that affect their lives" (p. 69).

According to Romano (2019), various international development studies continued to demonstrate that "grass-root, community-level, and membership-based organizations can mediate poor people's access to opportunities and resources, represent their voice and interests in decision-making and development processes, and influence formal and informal institutions and policy, thus tackling the root causes of poverty" (p. 70). However, Romano noted that:

...achieving grass-root organizational development and institutional transformation is a long, complex, time-consuming and often sensitive process, which can lead to poverty reduction. It can also contribute to making development interventions more relevant and inclusive, ensure a higher degree of ownership among target communities; and enhance the likelihood of sustainability. (p 70)

Romano (2019) also shared:

...building sustainable, representative, inclusive and accountable institutions and bringing about community-driven social and institutional change require a long

time and may entail a sensitive and complex process. It is about working with poor, sometimes marginalized communities and groups of people, socially and economically disadvantaged, and living in institutionally weak environments. Intense support, capacity building, and mentoring, combined with holistic approaches, are required to nurture and accompany these groups so that they can become institutionally robust and self-sustaining entities with a strong and inclusive membership base that is able to lead its pathway out of poverty, towards sustainable and integral human development. (p. 82-83)

As noted earlier, the concept of low-income participation on governing boards is not present in the most current research handbook on the community development movement. Those noted above provide a faint mention of the importance of this topic. Generally, current research seems to eliminate this concept from areas of concern. DeFilippis and Saegert (2012) offered detailed analysis on the work of CDCs, but only mentioned the importance of the role of governing boards twice. Other widely diffused models of “disenfranchisement” (Naples, 1998a, p. 53), affirmative action, and various logics of assimilation, differentiation, and integration (Thomas & Ely, 1996) have replaced the MFP construct in recent times. The topic of low-income participation remains hidden in the current literature as though the entire notion of MFP never existed. This is a critical gap in the literature in understanding the importance of governance of nonprofit boards in general, and within community development practices and theory specifically. This research study addresses these lacunae.

### **Diffusion of Good Ideas and Best Practices**

This section of the literature review discusses the theoretical constructs pertaining

to the diffusion of understandings and models that provide structural barriers or incentives for low-income and marginalized persons to be incorporated in governance decision making. This review analyzes how sharing and copying nominally good ideas and best practices influences the corporate decision-making process in any organization.

Two major and related diffusion theories provide guidance in this area. The first model, institutional isomorphism (Abzug & Simonoff, 2019; Castillo, 2018; DiMaggio & Powell, 1989), focuses on how organizations mimic and/or mirror other entities perceived as successful. This diffusion model reviews how the regulatory environment, the industrial landscape, and the institutional contexts influence how organizations face pressures or incentives to mimic successful ones, thus becoming more like them in operations and identity. Abzug and Simonoff analyzed board member composition using the three-part analysis of different forms of isomorphism (i.e., coercive, mimetic, and normative) articulated by DiMaggio & Powell of thousands of nonprofit organizations from different fields (e.g., sectors, such as health care, arts, social services). Abzug and Simonoff found that “that racial and gender inclusivity were much more likely in community foundations, family services, and United Ways (and Ys, which include the YWCAs), than in the other industries/sub sectors under study, particularly in the most recent year of the study” (Abzug & Simonoff, 2019, para. 3). However, the community development and community action sector were not specifically included in their study.

Castillo (2018) noted that institutional isomorphism sheds light on how institutions preserve and recreate themselves in their own image. This model provides critical insight on how pressures mounted on community development and service organizations impact the incentives and obstacles to low-income and marginalized

participation. Castillo provided the insight that one way to break out of such static cycles of “recreation” may be to disrupt the process by adding an element from urban planning called “design from the margins” (Castillo, 2018, para. 9) as offered by urban theorist Cesar McDowell in 2015. This, in turn, sets a norm that gets copied by peer institutions, turning the problem into a systemic issue that can either remain static from the old reproduction or disrupted by seeking the margins.

The second diffusion model focuses on network models and analysis of hubs, weak and strong ties, and nodal relationships. This social network analysis (Granovetter, 1983; Mahajan & Peterson, 1985; Valente, 1995) tracks how loosely or tightly coupled relationships/modes share information and institute innovative changes. These ties uncover mutually reinforcing relationships or the lack of such relationships that may include or exclude low-income persons.

Ennis and West (2012) provided an international and comparative study of the social connections between persons engaged in community development. Their work focused on the nature of weak and strong ties (Granovetter, 1983) of persons engaged in such work in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. Their project employed a pre-intervention social networking analysis and a post intervention analysis. Ennis and West provided insights into how social network theory captured the nature and robustness of social relationships and connectivity. Through their research, the authors hoped to create programming through a community service corporation to connect disconnected groups for the social good of stabilizing a neighborhood racked with discrimination and exclusiveness. Though this research did not directly deal with boards or governance level leadership, Ennis and West provided insights into the importance of strengthening ties

between distinct networks to increase a community's capacity to respond and build a better neighborhood. If such disconnections occur in the U.S. context, especially with reports of governing boards self-selecting similar high-status persons, social network theory could help demonstrate that access points and obstacles exist for low-income participation in both governance and leadership opportunities.

Glowacki-Dudka et al. (2012) used social capital theory to review the networks developing in East Central Indiana as groups related to local food systems came together to forge relationships for community development. Nine persons participated in in-depth interviews regarding their connections to other members of the local food chain, engaging in discussions related to trust and cooperation and competition. Glowacki-Dudka et al. found that trust is a major limiting factor in the possible success of their network. These researchers used grounded theory and constant comparative method (Gubba & Lincoln, 1994) to review transcripts of interviews. The strengths of this research process included in-depth interviews with local leaders that provided valuable insight into emerging networks and cooperatives engaged in community development. One limitation of Glowacki-Dudka et al.'s study involves the small sample of interviews with leaders who were not necessarily representative of the low-income community.

### **Ideology, Values, and Privatization Forces**

This section of the literature review focuses on changes in social, economic, and political ideologies and their impact on governance and community nonprofits. Stoecker (2007, 2008) noted that political-economic forces promoting the privatization of social and community services provided an ideological backdrop to many of the changes that have occurred in social policy formulation and implementation. Dean (2012) concurred

that over the past decades, there have been substantial ideological and cultural changes about the nature of public welfare, with allegiance shifting at one time from government-sponsored actions (i.e., the War on Poverty) to a more contemporary ideological grounding in the efficiencies and efficacies of private market-based solutions. Smith & Stone (1988) traced such shifts in attitudes and values toward a reliance on market-based contracts for social services. Smith & Lipsky (1993) provided a more thorough analysis of such ideological and practical shifts in the political economy of the nonprofit sector. Chubb & Moe (1990) argued for developments in the educational sector that align with the shifts occurring in the general ideological framework of the nature of government, public and private services, and the uplifting of the values of choice and efficiency.

In one study, Hardina (1993) examined how funding streams and board members influenced how some groups were either included or marginalized from decision making. Hardina studied several low-income communities and attempted to measure board influence on their respective organization's choices of services. She found that the power of specific donors to demand service strategies reflecting their interests, especially as they converge with the interests of staff, often holds sway. Hardina concluded that as funding for organizations meant to serve the general community became more dependent on external sources (e.g., public monies or private concerns), the more restrictions occurred regarding the ability of board members representing community interests to influence organizational decisions.

This ever-morphing shift between values and ideologies highlighting values such as public versus private, governmental versus market, and choice versus equity continues to impact how nonprofit community development and service organizations perceive

themselves. These values can constrain or engage corporate boards in their perceptions of the roles and requirements to include low-income and marginalized persons in decision-making and participation on boards.

### **Voices to be Heard - Disenfranchisement**

Who and what are these voices to be heard and encouraged to participate? Much of the research and concerns about the voices of persons can be gleaned from the debate about the nature of citizenship and participation (Khazei, 2011; Rome et al., 2010; Smith, 1997). Hirschman's (1970) classic work on the choices that persons, institutions, and organizations have – voice or exit – provided a major framework for understanding the extent of active engagement or one's removal from participation in both economics and politics. Past researchers offered excellent insights on the practical role of citizen participation in various community organizations (Boone, 1972; Chertow, 1974; Kieffer, 1984; Kornbluh, 2007; Peterson, 1970; Pitkin, 1967; Steckler & Herzog, 1979; Van Til & Van Til, 1969).

On a moral theoretical level, Gilligan (1983) offered her analysis that more traditional forms of engagement rendered some voices silent or less apparent, though equally as valuable. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2013) and Snyder (2013) reinforced how various forms of decision-making styles impact the very nature of the inclusion of different voices in debates and leadership. Through his classic work on *Inclusive Leadership*, Ryan (2006) found that the very end product of including other voices and perspectives (e.g., socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, gender) demands that leaders engage diverse persons in the ongoing and detailed work of decision-making empowered through proper processes and structures.

Much literature expounds on the nature of identity politics in the United States and around the world. It is important to note that changes in identity politics may be a contributing factor to the obstacles and opportunities for low-income persons to be engaged in decision making and governance of community agencies. The War on Poverty's MFP aimed to empower those persons who lived in poverty and in distressed neighborhoods to include their voice in the structures of decision making in organizations that served their needs. The requirement to include such categories of persons seemed to morph over time to a heightened concern for the inclusion of women, persons who are Black, other persons of color, persons with different sexual orientations, and younger individuals, essentially, straying from the typical white middle-class, middle-aged, professional straight male.

Farred (2000) traced the shifts in New Left politics from class and worker level focus to the rise of civil rights based on gender, race, and sexual orientation in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement which occurred simultaneously with the short-lived War on Poverty. The rise of student protest, anti-war mobilization, global colonial decolonization movements, and indigenous Black Power awareness shifted politics towards empowering new voices heretofore disenfranchised, thus requiring recognition and engagement. These new social movements found a home in the emerging cultural studies that focused on these new identities, ultimately leading to the analytical lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Farred demonstrated that these new social movements pursuing "identity politics can be characterized as a political movement sustained by minority agency: the determination to convert structural disenfranchisement into a means of claiming cultural and political power for historically marginalized



groups” (p. 631), namely based on gender, race and sexual orientation. These emergent social movements, along with a new philosophical lens regarding naming one’s voice and negotiating one’s own agency based on one’s identities or intersectionality of one’s identities as a minority in a dominant culture, forged a new paradigm for analysis and politics. Public and private sector leaders and funders became unified in their concern for disenfranchised persons and communities to reclaim their voice and participate in decision making.

Brown-Dean (2019) continued to explore how identity politics impacts current social discourse and social movements. She wrote “identity politics isn’t merely an effort to gain access to power. Rather, it shapes and is shaped by the very practice of governance that renders certain groups vulnerable to legal justifications of their subordinate status” (p.5). In her tome, Brown-Dean utilized an explicit intersectionality lens in her analysis on how identity politics emerged through various social movements and engaged in the cultural and electoral realms. She provided important insights regarding democratic practices in that “it is useful to consider how institutional structures shape exclusion and how political actors react to/reason through this exclusion” (p. 7). Even though Brown-Dean did not address community organizational structures and focuses on macro-political concerns, her insights about democratic practices, inclusion, and structures provide an insight into the empowerment of the disenfranchised seeking a voice in decision making.

### **The Practice of Democracy - From Disenfranchisement to Empowerment**

Prior to Brown-Dean’s (2019) concern with practices and structures, two iconic social and educational theorists highlighted a close connection between democracy and

its practice, as well as how those who have been disenfranchised can be included. Dewey's (2004) pragmatic educational theory demonstrates how participation in training for and in the work of democracy itself, in cooperation with Freire's (2000, 2011) insights, is highlighted in this research project. Betz (1992) provided insights into these two seemingly different theorists of education and change agents, John Dewey and Paulo Freire. He compared their insights from two different world views and time frames, yet remarkably found similar and mutually reinforcing ideals. Dewey argued that a good learner was an active participant in the educational process. Dewey's theory, for the purposes of this study, desires to bridge the gap in the growing divide between those who learn to learn and those who learn to practice, echoing a class society. More importantly, this experiential learning remains rooted in a longer-term project of engaging students, now adults, as active agents participating in democratic associative living.

Freire focused on bringing forth a new and revolutionary society, as peasants once oppressed engaged in active learning *generative words* leading to *generative themes* (Freire, 2000, p. 96) via dialogue that transformed minds, hearts, and societies. Both Dewey and Freire consciously dealt with the constraints of historical miseducation and a desire to heal class rifts and false dualisms.

Betz (1992) argued that Freire's educational theory required much courage and bravery considering third world massive poverty and a history of oppressive regimes, while Dewey enjoyed some level of freedom from such fear, though he too desired justice. Freire focused on revolutionary change, while Dewey desired to secure an educated populace able and willing to engage in participatory democracy. Betz found that even though Freire's vision and method may bring about greater social change, Dewey's

view offered a missing link to such a new world. Dewey's unrelenting defense of democracy and associative life provides experiential means to practice Freirean dialogues while moving society to justice through small- and large-scale experiments. In many ways, Dewey's vision promotes the need for the civic skills required to be fully engaged as citizens and more inclined to participate in community organizations (Reborim, 2007).

Dewey's insistence on experience and practice, especially in concert with persons as active agents, likewise promoted by Freire, requires that any experiments with democracy need active participation as an essential component of adult learning. Dewey (1939) maintained that experiments and experiences in practicing life in voluntary associations provide the grist for larger participatory democracy. Important for this research on MFP, Dewey (1937), articulated a critical insight that "all those who are affected by social institutions must have a share in producing and managing them" and shall have "a voice in shaping them" (p. 401).

Irwin (2012) explored how the real-life experiences of Paulo Freire framed his understanding of marginalization and oppression in the post-modern world. Irwin highlighted Freire's "constant emphasis on the need for praxis, for a practical exploration of the relation between philosophy and the world, so as to bring about real and progressive change in people's lives" (pp. 226-227). He noted the importance Freire held for continuously analyzing the current situation and engaging protagonists themselves in the naming and evaluating of generative themes (Freire, 2000, p. 96) for their understanding and ultimate actions. Irwin noted Freire's identification of limit-situations developing from these themes, yet argued that these limit-situations (Freire, 2000, p. 80) provide not permanent structures but opportunities for action for freedom.

Giroux (2020) continued this Freirean reflection, as he too noted that actors must “imagine themselves as critical and engaged social agents” and that “pedagogy was the crucial political resource in theorizing the importance of establishing a formative culture conducive to creating the critical and informed citizens necessary for sustaining a substantive democracy” (pp. 245-246). Giroux expressed the view that a return to Freirean critical pedagogy is needed even more today during this time of hierarchical and authoritarian impulses in civic and public discourse and practice. He wrote that such a return to Freirean critical thinking empowers students, and adults alike, to “assert a sense of their rights and responsibilities to participate in self-governance despite growing antidemocratic tendencies in educational theory and practice” (pp. 175-176). More insights from Dewey and Freire continue below in Part Three analyzing the chosen methodology for this research.

Specific reflections on the proper role of persons, and the place of citizens, especially those who are low-income or marginalized, in decision making in community ventures continue to focus attention on the nature of voices in contemporary social thought and organizational practice (Dovi, 2003, 2009; Mansbridge, 1999; Morone, 1998; Morone & Kilbreth, 2003; Riger, 1993). Several dissertations investigated the actual and perceived participation of various voices in community organizations. However, these current works have specifically focused on low-income and marginalized persons’ participation and voice in community health centers; there are few comparable studies in the community development and community services’ institutional settings.

Johnson (2011) looked through the lens of a qualitative phenomenological study at the lived experience of various board members of community health centers without

much attention to structural barriers and corporate incentives. She interviewed five board members out of 17 of a community health corporation regarding their perspective on being a board member and whether the model of community governance was an effective model in health care. The five were randomly selected for the interviews. Three themes emerged for Johnson: the perceived capability of the board member, masking behaviors of persons based on class and perspective, and the use of language and metaphors of class structures. She found that board members were not clear on their roles regarding advisory or governance; consumer-members remained unclear regarding their selection; there was a need for more mentoring and formation as board members; and though they felt comfortable, board members sensed that they, especially the consumer representatives, were not able to articulate their perspectives well or did not know when/what was most appropriate (pp. 89-92).

Johnson (2011) ultimately claimed a need for transformational leadership by the CEO of any organization, especially one with a mandate to include low-income, marginalized persons, to connect and help find empowered voices, especially those who are underrepresented or who are consumers. In her study, this CEO did not perceive that consumer board members were able to help with strategic planning or marketing, though their voice ranked as important. However, her dissertation remains weak in understanding the roles of governance and boards in general. Johnson provided no connection to board governance or management. Her attempt to demonstrate the need for transformational leadership (Bass, 2008; Burns, 2003; Fung & Wright, 2001) is vital, but she included this role as an apparent afterthought, without integration with her research process. On the other hand, Johnson's literature review adds much insight into the nature of voices

(Bracken, 2007; Garcia et al., 2007; Kaye, 2001; McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993; Nelson et al., 2001), status hierarchies (Ravlin & Thomas, 2005; Younggreen & Moore, 2008), the silencing of voices through agenda setting and truncated experiments (Anderson et al., 2006; Kraus et al., 2009; Sleath & Rucker, 2001), and in her employment of critical hermeneutics and narrative analysis (Lopez & Wills, 2004; McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993; Mishler, 1986; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006).

Wright (2011) focused on the relationship between “descriptive consumers” (p. iv) selected to serve on a board of a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and various outcomes including elements pertaining to mission and margin, along with financial stability. He utilized a mixed-method process for his national analysis of data. His quantitative analysis provided more compelling evidence than his qualitative method, though both were limited in their findings concerning the specific role and engagement of low-income and marginalized persons on governing boards.

Law (2013) analyzed the nature and extent of quality citizen/consumer participation in the governance of boards of directors of Community Health Centers (CHCs) in the State of Iowa. Two research questions were offered. The first addressed the experience of citizen representatives serving on CHCs (p. 15), and the second asked the direct question: “How do CHCs boards facilitate the quality of citizen participation in policy development?” (p. 16). Law presented important findings and conclusions about the nature of consumer participation in agency decision making by incorporating Arnstein’s (1969) focus on power redistribution with an engagement of the socio-ecological model (McLeroy et. al., 1988) thereby introducing political, economic, and cultural factors not included in that model.

Law (2013) further reflected upon her own limitations with time consumption and limited access to respondents. She noted that a case study approach and seeking out more divergent CHC sites might offer more fruitful paths. Law provided some clear guidance to social work practice pertaining to the nature of quality over quantity in consumer and citizen engagement. One weakness is her lack of knowledge about the structures and governance of the boards that manage and operate the clear majority of nonprofit health and human service agencies.

Hardina (2014) articulated insights from post-modern social constructivism regarding alternative means of acquiring knowledge, especially from those that have been historically marginalized and disenfranchised, based on their experiential reality, social context, and social networks. Hardina noted the contribution of Paolo Freire's insights on popular education for consciousness-raising and praxis by those who have been disempowered. Her research delved into the practical need for social work education and practice to include specific forms of listening to voices oftentimes excluded.

Hardina shared insights from Lee (2021) when she wrote:

The principles of self-determination, empowerment, and inclusion makes it imperative that community organizations or agencies that hire organizers are structured in a way that promotes participation in, if not actual control, of the decision-making process by constituency group members. (p. 386; Minkler, 2004; Satterwhite & Teng, 2007)

Hardina (2014) continued to explore how community organizations could, or should, engage community organizers to apply a dialogue method engaging their constituencies, especially those previously disengaged or disempowered. She analyzed

the social work literature regarding effective processes that engage the voices of those most impacted through group dialogue exercises. She shared research from Polletta (2002) that identified some critical aspects to the dialogue process for problem identification assessment of options, selection of strategy, and the assessment of impact (i.e., capacity building, legitimizing the authority of the group, and ownership of the group decision) (pp. 370-372). Hardina reminded social work professionals that the dialogue process rooted in community social work theory and practice is a means to engage people, to learn from one's reality, to adapt, form collective and personal consciousness, and lead to their own empowerment in the ownership of ideas in order to act. Hardina provided valuable insights into social work practice but did not fully engage in analyzing how constituents can be engaged in decision making structures, like boards of directors. She noted that some organizations that, either through the staff or the actual operations, employ social workers may have formal or informal structures or cultures, donors, governmental restrictions, and other powerful actors that are not open to such empowerment or engagement of clients and others who have been disenfranchised (Silverman, 2009, as cited in Hardina, 2014).

McDowell (2015) provided further insight by acknowledging that if multiple sector voices, especially of those on the margin, were to be heard and included, then leaders and organizations needed to design such structures in their planning and implementation. McDowell's research center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) attempted to influence urban studies, architecture students, and professionals to find ways to create democratic structures in their related fields.



## **Part Two: Themes to be Explored from the Literature Review**

In Part One, several questions focused on the nature of this research project. In conclusion to this literature review, some findings and generative themes (Freire, 2000, p. 96) are summarized which offer insights into limit-situations (Freire, 2000, p. 80) tested in this dissertation.

***Research Question One:*** How are the voices of low-income and marginalized persons structurally incorporated into boards of directors, especially those organizations that serve such persons and communities?

This is the key question for this research project. In general, there is little evidence of concern in the nonprofit governance literature that deals directly with this overall question. Since major shifts have occurred in social welfare policy from the heydays of the War on Poverty and its insistence of MFP, little research or concern focuses on this specific topic. One key finding from the literature review is that few studies have questioned low-income and marginalized persons directly about their own experience in either serving, or wanting to serve, on a board of directors of a social welfare agency. However, the nature of *punctuated equilibrium* or an *Overton window of political possibility* in policy formation can provide an opening for a new focus on MFP with the dawning of calls for racial justice. Further, as new governance and new accountability models emerge in both education and social welfare movements, MFP might have a theoretical and practical opening. Obstacles remain, as other research questions probed in this study reveal.

**Research Question Two:** How are low-income and marginalized persons formed and prepared in both technical knowledge and governance obligations, using relevant adult educational processes, to serve on such community corporations?

An exploration of the literature related to mainstream nonprofit organizational formation programs for board members remains steeped in either agency, resource development, or institutional theory. Any formal or official andragogy remains hidden in their formation programs and advice. Resources rooted in Deweyan or Freirean theory remain missing except for certain faith-based systems like the CCHD and its related training programs found in Gamaliel, PICO, IAF, and DART. If an excluded person seeks to be engaged in a board, and if a board seeks such marginalized persons, training and formation remain essential. Yet, most traditional formation programs, except some limited ones like CCHD, remain neutral in their educational foundations and explicit andragogy. Board formation and training programs specifically designed for low-income and disenfranchised persons do not seem to be wide-spread or available. Even if low-income and disenfranchised persons obtained training in board engagement, it is unclear as to whether that formation proved useful and if such persons found opportunities to serve on such boards. Deweyan and Freieran insights regarding training, education, and the formation of board members and potential board members remain important aspects to a better understanding of how disempowered persons prepare to engage in governing responsibilities. This is an area ripe for more exploration.

**Research Question Three:** How are low-income and marginalized persons disenfranchised from such engagement, and how is such disenfranchisement related to disempowerment?

Much of the literature reviewed reveals that after the heyday of the early years of the War on Poverty and policymakers' insistence on MFP, a general backlash against such requirements prevailed. With the exception of a few organizations, such those funded by the CCHD, various public and private funding sources promoted a need for boards to engage more professionals and socially connected persons to govern such community organizations. The concept of engaging persons most affected envisioned by the MFP policy morphed into a concern for local residents without a requirement related to socioeconomic status. The quest for professionalization on both the board and staff levels further aided in disempowering those low-income persons in the community since their experience and assets did not rise to the level of an advanced academic degree or position in a major institution (e.g., a bank). Many potential board members might discover that they are mere token representatives from a certain neighborhood or class, rather than selected for their assets or experiences.

Another theme to be explored relates to the decoupling of community organizations formed to serve certain distressed neighborhoods wherein local low-income and disadvantaged residents might have a chance to serve on such a board. There seems to have been, or remains, a push to either consolidate organizations for more efficiencies or to serve a larger region. In turn, this might have disempowered local low-income residents practically. Another major theme relates to a shift in conceptualization regarding those most impacted and most marginalized. The War on Poverty identified persons who resided in low-income census tracts and who made less than the poverty income threshold as the focus of engagement on community agencies' boards of directors. Over time, that focus shifted away from a focus on low-income persons from

low-wealth communities to persons of specific races or ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations. In the literature review, board composition analysis focused on the inclusion and representation of persons of color, women, and younger persons, while few noted the importance or specificity of persons of low wealth economic status.

Though, at heart, concerned about disenfranchisement and inclusion, identity politics may have contributed to a form of disempowerment for low-income persons. Board leaders and executive staff find that public and private funders require more attention to board inclusion by those identified by race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Freirean insights pertaining to consciousness-raising by persons responsible for the selection of new board members, and by those who have been disenfranchised themselves, guide the development of themes for better understanding obstacles and opportunities for such engagement.

***Research Question Four:*** How do practices and policies regarding the structural inclusion (or exclusion) of such voices get diffused and generally accepted?

A theme that emerges regards the reality that many persons who serve on local community agency boards, and who may be donors to various efforts, can be socially connected. These nodes of connection provide means to diffuse new ideas or maintain prevailing ideologies and paradigms. Existent board members tend to prefer/recommend persons like themselves, or persons they know professionally or socially, to replace them or others on their boards or related ones. One's social network provides a critical source of names and relationships for future engagement.

Another theme that emerges pertains to a reality of institutional isomorphism that encourages like-minded people and commonly mission-driven organizations to mirror

each other regarding structures, culture, and practices. This isomorphic quality can be either consciously or unconsciously obtained through shared experiences or can be forced by external regulatory or fiscal agents. Even more dramatically, institutional isomorphism does not limit itself to sector-related organizations. Learnings, inter-related social networks, and best practices from for-profit, market-driven organizations can, and do, find willing adherents in the nonprofit sector.

The intentionality to reach out to engage those who have been disenfranchised requires a level of disruptive action. One must reach beyond their social networks and prevailing paradigms of understanding and delivering board governance to engage the margins. In turn, this reaching out to the margins could influence the expansions or creation of new social networks and provide new insights for another round of institutional isomorphism.

***Research Question Five:*** How do operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, and privatization/marketization forces and ideology impact incentives or obstacles to the inclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations?

Marketization and privatization ideologies can find roots in social welfare sector practices and structures accrued from shared social networks and institutional isomorphism. The literature review reveals that due to increasing pressures to professionalize and adopt private market paradigms and practices, many community development and service organizations' staff and boards have recruited persons with technical skills and social connections for board service. Much of the literature regarding the functioning of boards highlights professional skills as a requirement for due diligence

and other strategic functions of the board. The skills needed to ensure compliance with public regulations, like the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, and to be savvy with private financial arrangements, favor persons with those attributes.

Community agency leaders may seek persons that balance the gender, racial, and even sexual orientation intersectionality with these technical and professional skills to serve on ever-demanding governance boards. Many of these professional-grade persons may in fact be residents of the local community being served but may represent a different socioeconomic sector than those being served. The convergence of the new accountability and the new governance movements may in fact provide a *punctuated equilibrium* or *Overton window of political possibility* moment to reintroduce key concepts of inclusion promoted during the War on Poverty's quest for MFP with a focus on disenfranchised, low-income persons. Such a convergence of movements may reaffirm that development of boards that promote persons who have professional skills, connections, and balance out the gender and racial gaps without a focus on low-income residents. The scholarly literature opens the path for this current research project.

### **Part Three: Where and How Will These Themes Be Explored and Tested?**

The lived experience of experts in the City of Youngstown is the focus of this study to test and explore these generative themes (Freire, 2000, p. 96) and limit-situations (Freire, 2000, p. 80). The Delphi methodology provides the means to apply qualitative and quantitative analysis to discover consensus, or uncover disagreements, from experts about the obstacles and opportunities for low-income persons engagement on governing boards. In the next several sections, the where and the how of this research project are explored.

### ***Credible Evidence: Some Lessons from Evaluative Research***

Greene (2009) postulated that current evaluative research relies heavily on a post-positivist construct that favors accessing answers to questions clearly posed to seek out efficacy. Though such clarity is important, Greene argued that complexity may be lost in such endeavors, thus minimizing what is known or could be known about reality, especially human interactions and experiences. Greene tracked the argument by Berliner (2002) who maintained that educational research is "the hardest science of all" (p. 18). This is due to the feat of seeking evidence and explanations always with the power of contexts in which humans find themselves, the ubiquity of interactions insofar as knowledge may be reciprocal, and the short-term nature of knowledge due to its social environs. Greene echoed Berliner's major insight in that there is a need "to understand the particularities of each local context" so that "qualitative inquiry has become so important in educational research" (Berliner, 2002, as cited in Greene, 2009, p. 160). Greene further highlighted a similar impulse by Simons (2004) who argued "for the vital importance of narratives of lived experience for inquiry" (p. 160).

Greene (2009) contended that since the "activities and practices of people are profoundly complex" (p. 161), researchers need to acknowledge that such complexity is "deeply contextual" requiring a sensitivity to "embrace the magnificent multiplicity of ways of thinking, acting, and being that abound in our society and the world more broadly. Complexity honors and respects the wondrous diversity of the human species..." (p. 161). This complexity further requires special attention to the diversity of experiences and actions, which compels researchers to incorporate both disadvantage and the

numerous other means by which human beings are different from each other. Greene wrote:

...radical inequities and injustices of access and opportunity persist, based on nothing more substantial than historical legacies of discrimination and continuing prejudices. As social inquirers, I believe we have a responsibility to conduct our work with a deliberate intention to locate and meaningfully engage with the differences that manifest in a given context. One important way to do this is to privilege and honor complexity. (p. 162)

This complexity is not only found at the personal but also at the structural, economic, and political levels of analysis. Greene (2009) argued:

...it is therefore vitally important that our social research and evaluation prominently attend to the structural dimensions that influence human action, and this is more likely to happen with a vision of human action as fully contextual and thereby complex, as compared to a vision in which contextual characteristics are something to be controlled - statistically and politically. (p. 162)

Such research, she continued:

...that envisions and endeavors to understand the full complexity of human action -- in all of its contextual diversity -- is a practice that legitimizes the multiple perspectives and experiences of all the people being studied. It is a practice that gives voice to these myriad perspectives and experiences. It is a practice that is thereby in form and function democratic and potentially democratizing. (pp. 162-163)

In Greene's (2009) quest to find meaningful and credible evidence, she concluded:



...evidence about social phenomena -- like the phenomena themselves -- is quirky, not definitive; is particular, not general; and is ephemeral, not generalizable. Moreover, evidence is best positioned as an invitation to dialogue rather than an answer to an unanswerable question. (p. 166)

Such evidence, she continued:

...provides a window into the messy complexity of human experience; evidence that accounts for history, culture, and context; evidence that respects difference in perspective and values; evidence about experiences in addition to consequences; evidence about the responsibilities of government not just the responsibilities of its citizens; evidence with the potential for democratic inclusion and legitimization of multiple voices -- evidence not as proof by as inkling. (p. 166)

Rallis (2009) noted in evaluative and applied research that ethical choices undergird any method. He shared that consequentialism provides the foundation for much statistical evidence and methodologies due to its quest to ascertain outcomes. Rallis also noted that another ethical framework, non-consequentialism, offers valuable insights into the human condition through its focus on justice in the very means of data collection and analysis. He wrote, "this principle (justice) maintains that serving and strengthening the least advantaged builds society as a whole, with all members more fully contributing, and it guides evaluators to capture silenced and ignored voices" (p. 173). Rallis argued that the very "ethic of caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 2) embedded in educational theory provides an important insight into various methods. Rallis provided more grist to his argument:

Caring evaluators respect the connections among the participants, the program and ourselves. We want to understand the interactions and the relationships themselves, the interdependencies: how does one person's meaning-making interact with and influence another's? A caring ethic considers respect to be dynamic, symmetrical, and connective; we give respect, and are respected (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1999). We respect the participants and their relationships within their settings. At the same time, we work to create conditions that allow the participants to respect our need to discover and understand their experience. (p. 174)

Rallis (2009) maintained that it is a role of a researcher to “discover what happened and what the experience meant to the program participants” (p. 174). He shared:

...the moral reasoning behind the non-consequentialist ethics leads to the use of tools that are interactive, aiming to capture the multiple and multifaceted experiences of participants. We want to know what the events and activities in their context mean to the participants. We want to hear their voices; we interview, we observe, we analyze their discourse. We leave to others to do the surveys that yield broad information and generalizations and well-done experiments that can reveal causal relationships - we recognize that both are important. Their surveys and experiments deal in consequences; they do not tell details within the story of the organization or program. (p. 174)

If such experiences are to be highlighted, then it is critical for researchers to utilize a method conducive to adding “individual voices - their interpretations of the

phenomenon or experience. The actual words of participants in a variety of social service and education programs reveal the diverse perspectives and unique stories that construct alternative realities for those programs" (pp. 174-175). Rallis fully maintained that "the reported voices are the product of rigorous reasoning, and they embody probity. This credible form of evidence offers insights that can help us improve policy and programming and better serve the people involved" (p. 178).

Hall (2013) focused on how John Dewey's pragmatic methodological reliance on "reflection" provides a rich insight into capturing those voices. He wrote,

Deweyan pragmatism is considered relevant to the discussion on credible mixed-methods evaluation for the following reasons. First, the synergy between theory and practice in the 'pragmatism embedded' in Dewey's work accomplishes contextual sensitivity and tangible processes for how inquiry and credible evidence are achieved. Second, his views on intelligent action advance reflection, ethics, and social justice. And third, Dewey's pragmatism is relevant because, like many evaluators, his main objective is to address societal problems by taking action in an intelligent way. (p. 17)

From Hall's perspective, the central aim of Deweyan pragmatism is to move beyond mere experimentation to intelligent action, which begins with problem identification.

For Hall (2013), this Deweyan insight about intelligent action recognizes that inquiry takes place within communities of people, which represent dynamic entities with a "complex interaction of diverse perspectives" and experiences (Campbell, 1995, p. 184). Within these communities, communication becomes critical to coordinate the responses necessary to address problems. Hall continued:

Deweyan pragmatism adds a less-emphasized dimension to evidence-based practice: reflection. Reflection is the ‘active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends’ (Dewey, 1910, p. 6). Dewey advocates that reflection be ‘employed as a method’ in order to ‘grasp’ beliefs, problems, and prior knowledge with ‘understanding’; thereby enabling them to take on ‘far-reaching significance they did not previously have’ (Murphy, 1990, p. 68). Here we see how reflection also serves as a method to understand how problems can take on new meanings in relationship to the larger context within which they exist. (p. 20)

Hall’s connection between Dewey’s pragmatism, reflection, and democracy are worth quoting in full to highlight the purpose behind the chosen methodology for this research:

In the case of Dewey, a main purpose of evaluation is democracy. This means that evaluation communities, institutions, and the like are purposeful to share information, take collaborative action, and promote social justice to meet human needs. Democracy from this perspective implies sympathy. Dewey reminds us that ‘wide sympathy, keen sensitiveness, persistence in the face of the disagreeable, balance of interests enabling us to undertake the work of analysis and decision intelligently are distinctly moral traits—the virtues or moral excellencies’ (Dewey, 1920, p. 164). Sympathy is an explicit moral imperative that compels mixed methods evaluators to reflect on how their evaluation addresses power dynamics and the interests of those least empowered. The democratic aims of pragmatism obligate the evaluator to utilize mixed methods in

response to the cultural, political, and economic situations in our world so that these ‘situations are actually improved’ (Seigfried, 1996, p. 262). Put succinctly, ‘social situations cannot be resolved pragmatically if such resolutions satisfy only those with the power to force a resolution or if it excludes those for whom the situation is problematic in the first place’ (Seigfried, p. 263). (p. 21)

Hall (2013) focused his attention on the role of reflection. He noted that Deweyan reflection “demands that evaluators imagine the implications their findings have on others. This requires ethical concern or sympathy. Without reflection and sympathy, consequential validity cannot be pragmatically assessed” (p. 24). He continued:

reflection is used to assess continuously the extent to which evaluative endeavors promote values of democracy. Pragmatists are committed to improving society by addressing power dynamics and considering issues of equity. And so, a pragmatic evaluator must be responsive to the economic, cultural, and social characteristics of the context at hand. (p. 24)

Dewey (1910) postulated that reflective thinking is anchored in a “primary situation” which not only grows out of a particular situation but also refers back to it (p. 851). The function of reflective thinking is “to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious” (p. 851). Dewey argued that in reflective thinking, one “faces the situation” (p. 852) thereby observing facts and postulating hypotheses, which in turn may “cause new suggestions to spring up” (p. 853). The consequences of such suggestions continue the reflective process as persons act. During the pre-reflective moment, a person analyzes the facts at hand and sets the problem to be solved; yet, once

the doubt has been resolved and one acts on that knowledge, that situation shifts to a post-reflective mode in which “there results a direct experience of mastery, satisfaction, enjoyment” (p. 855). For Dewey, this reflective process found that “each improvement in the idea leads to new observations that yield new facts or data and help the mind judge more accurately the relevancy of facts already at hand” (p. 856).

The moral agent, Dewey’s primary concern, always treats their actions “as experimental” in that the agent “cannot call them back and must stand their consequences” (p. 856). When the actor finds that things have gone wrong, “it is, however, a wise practice to review the methods by which the unwise decision was reached and see where the misstep was made” (p. 857). In this way, Dewey’s reflective thinking model provides philosophical support to engage in a research method for this study that engages moral agents to participate in a better understanding of their own unique situation which may lead to, or does in fact create, obstacles to low-income persons to be involved in the governance of the very democratic institutions created to serve them. Discussed in more detail below, the Delphi technique provides a way for those most impacted by decisions of social institutions to have a voice in their eventual “producing and managing them” (Dewey, 1937, p. 401).

Other insights regarding the method selected come from Paulo Freire (2000, 2011). Three important Freirean concepts provide insights into the choice of the methodology selected for this research: dialogue, themes, and limit-situations. Freire (2000, 2011) contended that dialogue is required for proper engagement with those who have been oppressed and marginalized. This dialogue gives voice and provides an opportunity for agency by those who have been dismissed or treated as though they are

empty vessels requiring a “banking” model of education rather than his preferred “problem-posing” approach (Freire, 2000, p. 72). Freire (2000, 2011) argued that dialogues must be steeped in praxis which combines reflection and action.

Through this ongoing process, various themes emerge about one’s historical reality as a product of other peoples’ choices. These themes about what is true or perceived to be true offer limit-situations in which persons believe are static and necessarily so. However, these themes and limit-situations have an opposite theme which offers an opportunity to act, which shows emerging leaders and the oppressed that history and existing structures are not static. This opposite theme provides an alternative limit-situation in which persons can act and create a new future. Freire’s (2000, 2011) work challenges educators and change agents to dialogue with those most impacted and oppressed to identify and act on the opposing themes and their related limit-situations. In this manner, all persons acting in a trusting manner can find a path to a new reality not constrained by manipulation through cultural invasion of what is possible and real.

This investigation aims to identify the opportunities and obstacles for persons who live with low incomes to participate in board governance. What themes with concurrent limit-situations have been projected and diffused (e.g., isomorphic institutionalism, social networks, interlocking boards) as static and unmovable? What opposing themes and limit-situations can be ascertained, practiced, and effectively diffused between and among boards to engage those voices who have been left out of governance? The 15 themes and related limit-situations recognized above in Part Two serve as the basis for the engagement for the dialogue with those who have been impacted by their inclusion, or exclusion, from boards.

## **Study Setting**

Based on the general hypotheses offered, this study explores various factors which include why obstacles exist, whether there are incentives for low-income and marginalized persons to serve on nonprofit boards, and how these persons and agencies overcome those obstacles. As discussed in detail above, the CDC and CSA field will be the general area of study since these institutions commenced under the premise of MFP which drove their funding and policy prescriptions. Since Youngstown State University is an urban scholarly community and simultaneously provides a convenient location to test these hypotheses, this study focuses on the CDCs and CSAs located in the greater Youngstown, Ohio MSA.

First, on a qualitative level, a cursory and simple case description (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Maxwell, 2013; Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Scholz & Tietje, 2002; Yin, 2014) is utilized to analyze the community development and community services network in Youngstown, Ohio. Next, the Delphi process (Keeney et al., 2010; Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Linstone & Turoff, 2002, 1979; Yousuf, 2007;) is employed to engage different stakeholders in a process of developing a form of actionable consensus regarding factors (i.e., themes and limit-situations) pertaining to the incentives and obstacles for low-income and marginalized persons to serve on corporate governance of those institutions designed to serve their needs. This is the very target of the MFP policy.

As discussed above, Safford (2009) provided network diffusion insights through his study of various nonprofits in Youngstown and compared it with Allentown to explore their respective ability to rebound from the steel crisis. Safford found weak ties in Youngstown that limited its resiliency. However, Safford did not focus on the community



development or community services' sectors in Youngstown and their engagement with low-income or otherwise marginalized persons. Safford's insights regarding network diffusion may prove important; however, the lived experiences of low-income persons and the agencies designed to serve their needs provide an opportunity to better understand how opportunities or obstacles exist. One aspect that Safford provided details some of the overlapping board members in various community corporations in both cities. This research adds to that knowledge by noting any such overlapping board membership in the CDC and CSA community in Youngstown.

The simple review of the Youngstown network of CDCs and CSAs in that community includes:

- Youngstown Community Action Agency (now Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership, MYCAP)
- Common Wealth, Inc. (CW)
- Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund (CWRLF)
- Alliance for Congregational Transformation Involving Our Neighborhoods (ACTION)
- Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC).

Two other CDCs focused solely on low-income housing tax credit processes, CHOICE and Jubilee Housing, have morphed into each other and now exist as a property management company. Another community organizing group, the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative, merged with the Ohio Organizing Collaborative and now works in close cooperation with ACTION.

This author needs to state upfront an ethical concern. Over the course of 30 years as a leader of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Youngstown, the researcher served on the board of directors of each of the three organizations no longer in operation, three of the five listed existent organizations, and continues to serve on two of these boards. This perspective, both historical and in real time, provides both positive and negative considerations regarding this study.

One critical caveat, however, is that this researcher has moved to another city and no longer retains the position in the local Catholic community that once was held that provided funds or resources to these groups. This newfound geographical and institutional power distance from the community, while remaining connected, provides a unique opportunity with both an insider and an outsider perspective (*a participant as observer* as opposed to a *complete participant*, Gold, 1958) with six years of distance from a previous position in the community that could stifle expert panel engagement.

On the positive side, having served and continuing to serve on some of these boards, the author has a *participant as observer* (Gold, 1958; Moore & Savage, 2002; Takyi, 2015) perspective of the role of boards and the selection of board members to such community boards. Since many of these experts knew the author as committed to these organizations, trust may have been enhanced, especially since anonymity was promised and fulfilled. Further, experts themselves may have found that their trust in the author could allow them to correct interpretations and biases knowing that this researcher cares (Noddings, 1995, 2008; Rallis, 2009) about and is committed to their work. The inside perspective and knowledge of this author may have provided these experts with more freedom for critical corrections of this author's work, thus challenging assumptions and

interpretations. Insights gleaned from this research may lead to more rapid practical and policy changes for board engagement, thus the participating experts may retain higher levels of engagement knowing that their insights might prove actionable.

Some constraints regarding the researcher's *participant as observer* role may raise concerns that this researcher has too much familiarity with the experts, as well as the policies and practices in place in their respective organizations, and that knowledge might either intimidate or hinder their full participation. To address this potential hindrance, perceived conflict of interest, and/or possible social desirability bias, this researcher fully disclosed the nature of his involvement, commitment to anonymity, security of information, goals for improving the work of board governance with special concern for engagement of those who have been excluded, and dedication to utilize the overall information provided to improve the work of community organizations to develop contemporary modes for MFP.

In general, and specifically related to this research, this author "must always remember his primary role as a researcher and remain detached enough to collect and analyze data relevant to the problem under investigation" (Baker, 2006, p. 172). Based on this researcher's experience and commitment to this work in Youngstown and nationally, it is the hope of this author that with full disclosure of his involvement and dedication to privacy and confidentiality, the intention to remain objective and report the analysis fairly and transparently, these experts were more inclined to participate in this research to promote lessons learned into practical applications.

## **Description of the Agencies**

### ***Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership - MYCAP***

The general history and purpose of this local CAA/CSA, found on its website, states that:

MYCAP - Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership, once known as Youngstown Area Community Action Agency (YACAA), is a non-profit organization incorporated by the State of Ohio in 1965. It was established for the express purpose of mobilizing and utilizing resources to increase the quality of life for low-income residents of Mahoning County. MYCAP's Mission is to work with stakeholders, families, and individuals to sustain and foster opportunities for a quality of life for everyone that reflects the values and opportunities of our city and county through job development, housing, education, and services that promote less dependency and more self-sufficiency. MYCAP's Vision is to implement, coordinate and deliver quality programs and services providing ways to overcome barriers of social and economic poverty for moderate to low-income individuals, children and families throughout Youngstown and Mahoning County. (MYCAP, n.d., paras. 1-3)

As noted above, MYCAP established in 1965 as part of the War of Poverty. Local agencies provided services and were vehicles for MFP, in addition to serving as the local CAA/CSA for Mahoning County. For many decades, YACAA maintained a balance on its governing board of a third to local governmental officials, a third to private institutional representatives, and the remaining third to low-income persons served by the

agency. The researcher served on the YACAA board of directors as a representative of the private sector from 1993 until 1998, acting as the corporate treasurer from 1996-1998. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Youngstown provided governance participation since the creation of YACAA from 1965 until 2012. From its inception as one of the original members creating this CAA, Catholic Charities maintained a required seat on that board.

MYCAP maintains a budget annualized of approximately \$6.5 million secured from mostly public funders. Their services include emergency and planned assistance (e.g., rent, energy), energy and weatherization services and programs, professional development and workforce assistance, community case workers and health outreach efforts (e.g., maternal health), and senior outreach and social assistance. This agency maintains a 20-member board of directors composed of various governmental officials, private sector representatives, and low-income persons or organized representatives of the low-income community.

***Common Wealth, Inc. - CWI***

According to its website, Common Wealth, Inc.:

...grew out of efforts, initiated by the Ecumenical Coalition of Religious Leaders, to bring worker-ownership to steel mills in the Mahoning Valley. Although this endeavor was unsuccessful, the Coalition succeeded in other ways. The group persuaded religious and civic leaders to suspend theological disputes and work together for moral leadership. Inspired, volunteers established agencies such as the Food Assistance Warehouse (now Second Harvest Food Bank), as well Common Wealth, Inc., and Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund as economic

development agencies to assist with cooperative economic development efforts.

(Common Wealth, 2019a, paras. 1-3 )

Since 1986, CWI has acted as a sponsor, consultant, and developer on numerous projects, investing more than \$50 million and establishing over 500 affordable housing units, as well as developing numerous cooperative enterprises. CWI created and maintains the Lake to River Food Cooperative (Common Wealth, 2019b), its Kitchen Incubator (Common Wealth, 2019c), and a retail restaurant called Cultivate Cafe (Common Wealth, 2019d), which were all organized as cooperative enterprises. CWI continues its work developing and managing affordable housing properties for low-income families (Common Wealth, 2019e).

There are seven persons currently serving on the board of directors of CWI, with one employee representing all of the cooperatives enterprises (Common Wealth, 2019f). The current researcher served on this board of directors for several years (i.e., 1988-2014) and was reelected to serve in 2017 as an expert leader. CWI's operational budget approximates \$3.1 million.

### ***Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund - CWRLF***

Based on its website, the CWRLF was founded in 1987, and is a:

...non-profit community development financial institution whose purpose is to lend money to employee-owned companies or co-ops for expansion, facilities, machinery and equipment, vehicles, and working capital or for employee-buyouts.

CWRLF serves borrowers located in Ohio and the nearby areas of contiguous states. The Mahoning Valley Economic Development Corporation manages the Loan Fund. Currently, CWRLF can make direct loans to borrowers for amounts

up to \$250,000 and, with partners, a single borrower can obtain loans for amounts up to a total of \$500,000. As the size of the Loan Fund grows, these loan limits will increase. Loan interest rates will be competitive and most likely advantageous to borrowers. CWRLF is funded through Social Investment Notes with loans made at below market rates by individuals, corporations, foundations, and religious organizations, and is a member of the National Association of Community Development Loan Funds. CWRLF loans to democratically owned and managed for-profit businesses, such as cooperatives or Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), and to nonprofit community-based groups for projects or facilities. (Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund, 2019, paras. 1-5 )

CWLF has a small board of directors of about six persons comprising a representative from Common Wealth itself and other community members or experts. The current researcher served on this board of directors for several years (i.e., 1988-2014) and in 2017 was reelected to serve as an expert leader. This corporation has now merged its management function with the Mahoning Valley Economic Development Corporation. CWRLF's operational budget is approximately \$5.1 million.

***Alliance of Congregational Transformation Involving Our Neighborhoods - ACTION***

ACTION emerged from work developed between the Catholic Diocese of Youngstown's Office of the CCHD, Common Wealth, Inc, and several urban and suburban Catholic parishes. The current researcher directed the CCHD office during the formation of ACTION and provided the seed capital on both the local and national levels for its establishment. The current researcher never served in any governance position for ACTION.

ACTION morphed from a charitable organization connecting local urban and suburban faith communities around 1995 into a faith-based organizing entity funded to engage in social justice work. For many years, ACTION received technical assistance and retained its membership in the Gamaliel Foundation, a national federation devoted to faith-based community organizing. According to its website, ACTION's mission is:

Guided by our faith traditions, shared values, and multicultural collaboration, we strive to develop a community of diverse leaders committed to raising awareness and seeking solutions to overcome poverty, racism, & social injustice. (ACTION, 2020, para.1).

ACTION involves 21 churches or community institutions as its members. It maintains its board of directors of 31 persons including representatives from each participating organization. Several of the faith groups and community organizations (e.g., Common Wealth and the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation) represent low-income communities. ACTION focuses its efforts on community organizing related to health policy, education, food insecurity, and general concerns pertaining to racism in the Mahoning Valley.

#### ***Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation - YNDC***

According to its website, YNDC is a:  
...multifaceted neighborhood development organization launched in 2009 in partnership with the City of Youngstown and The Raymond John Wean Foundation to catalyze strategic neighborhood reinvestment in neighborhoods throughout the city. YNDC works to transform neighborhoods into meaningful places where people invest time, money and energy into their homes and neighborhoods; where neighbors have the capacity to



manage day-to-day issues; and where neighbors feel confident about the future of their neighborhood. (YNDC, 2020a, paras. 1-2)

YNDC provides housing development services with a special focus on rehabilitation of homes for resale, housing counseling, home repair, mortgage finance, and operates a commercial space for social entrepreneurs. These services aim to fulfill YNDC's central goal "to foster the transformation of vulnerable, undervalued and transitional neighborhoods into healthy neighborhoods of choice – places where people are willing to invest their time, energy and resources and where residents can manage their own problems" (YNDC, 2020b, para.2).

YNDC maintains a board of directors of approximately 15 persons representing the public sector and local residents from the various neighborhoods impacted by their work. YNDC maintains an annual budget of approximately \$6 million (YNDC, 2019).

### **The Delphi Method**

Designed by the RAND Corporation to explore national security issues and provide a means to obtain consensus from experts, the Delphi method can be applied to research in many quarters such as medicine, nursing, and in the social sciences (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The Delphi process (Beck, 2015; Garson, 2014; Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Keeney et al., 2010; Linstone & Turoff, 2002, 1979; Yousuf, 2007) provides an opportunity, linked with quantitative analysis utilizing Likert scales, to garner insights from various experts and persons directly involved in the field of nonprofit governance or those who want to be and have been excluded. In essence, the Delphi method, through its iterative process of refinement, engages experts and practitioners alike in seeking to *reflect* (Dewey, 1910) on one's reality and identify obstacles (i.e., limit-situations) and

opportunities (i.e., alternative limit-situations) to provide *voice* (Freire, 2000, 2011) to low-income persons regarding the governance of the very institutions formed to engage or represent them.

In this study, two aspects of the Delphi process are employed. One is at the policy level and another at the normative level. According to Yousuf (2007):

...[a] policy Delphi is one which seeks to generate the strongest possible opposing viewpoints on a policy issue from an expert panel. Rather than consensus, the emphasis is on identifying differing opinions and divergent responses through a process of debate carried out through the rounds of Delphi. (Needham, 1990, as cited in Yousuf, 2007, p. 2)

The policy perspective rooted in the War on Poverty's mandate of MFP to engage low-income persons on various boards that either failed as a policy, or was not properly implemented, is explored conceptually and practically through this process and research. Divergent views and experiences need to be voiced regarding such a policy prescription and failure. These divergences, and perhaps consensus, provide policy recommendations for future anti-poverty work. This work provides possibilities for *punctuated equilibrium* or *Overton window of political possibilities* with current social unrest and challenges to inequity in decision making, especially on corporate structures designed to serve those most in need.

The focus of a normative Delphi, also called a consensus Delphi, is:

...establishing what is desirable in the form of goals and priorities. It does not focus on speculating about what is probable within a given time frame in the

future; instead, it is an attempt to ‘... structure a set of properties which could be integrated into a normative future--properties based on the criterion of desirability rather than likelihood’”. (Sutherland, 1975, as cited in Yousuf, 2007, p. 2)

Rieger (1986) noted that "... it seems reasonable to claim that Delphi is continuing to be a much-used tool in the search for answers to normative questions, especially in education areas, but also in other fields" (p.198). If normative or consensual aspects can be gleaned from the Delphi process regarding the policy of MFP, then this could be included in any future recommendation to policymakers and to those in local leadership positions engaged in board governance and recruitment. It is these aspects of buy-in for the expert panel, whether from lessons gleaned from divergence or an emergent consensus, that this study hopes to address to maintain and sustain active participation in the various iterative rounds (Brooks, 1979; Yousuf, 2007).

Miller (2006) postulated that common surveys try to identify what is, whereas the Delphi technique attempts to address what could/should be. Hsu & Sandford (2007) provided an excellent literature review of the Delphi method. They indicated a critical feature of the method – its iterative approach. Ludwig (1994, 1997) wrote:

...iterations refer to the feedback process. The process was viewed as a series of rounds; in each round, every participant worked through a questionnaire that was returned to the researcher who collected, edited, and returned to every participant a statement of the position of the whole group and the participant’s own position. A summation of comments made each participant aware of the range of opinions and the reasons underlying those opinions.” (Ludwig, 1994, p. 55)

Hsu & Sandford (2007) noted more specifically that the iterative style found in the feedback process allows and encourages the selected Delphi participants to reassess their initial judgments about the information provided in previous iterations. Hsu and Sanford contended that in a Delphi study, the results of previous iterations regarding specific statements and/or items can change or be modified by individual panel members in later iterations based on their ability to review and assess the comments and feedback provided by the other Delphi panelists. Hsu and Sandford noted other characteristics inherent with using including the ability to provide anonymity to respondents and a controlled feedback process (Dalkey, 1967; Yousuf, 2007), and the suitability of a variety of statistical analysis techniques to interpret the data (Dalkey, 1972; Douglas, 1983, Ludlow, 1975). These characteristics, for Hsu and Sandford, offset the shortcomings of conventional means of pooling opinions obtained from a group interaction (i.e., influences of dominant individuals, noise, and group pressure for conformity) (Dalkey, 1972).

One of the primary characteristics and advantages of the Delphi process noted by Hsu and Sanford (2007) is subject anonymity which can reduce the effects of dominant individuals and often is a concern when using group-based processes to collect and synthesize information (Dalkey, 1972). An additional provision of confidentiality, argued Hsu and Sandford, is facilitated by the geographic dispersion of the subjects as well as the use of electronic communication such as email or various electronic survey tools to solicit and exchange information. In this manner, certain aspects associated with group dynamics, such as social desirability or manipulation or coercion to conform or adopt a certain viewpoint, can be minimized (Adams, 2001; Helmer & Rescher, 1959; Oh, 1974).

Hsu and Sanford (2007) promoted the Delphi process for research in sensitive areas especially when the researcher is concerned about engaging persons with unequal power and social status. They mention the problem of noise and how the Delphi method can reduce such a concern. They wrote:

...noise is that communication which occurs in a group process which both distorts the data and deals with the group and/or individual interests rather than focusing on problem-solving. As a result, the information developed from this kind of communication generally consists of bias not related to the purposes of the study. Basically, the controlled feedback process consists of a well-organized summary of the prior iteration intentionally distributed to the subjects which allow each participant an opportunity to generate additional insights and more thoroughly clarify the information developed by previous iterations. Through the operation of multiple iterations, subjects are expected to become more problem-solving oriented, to offer their opinions more insightfully, and to minimize the effects of noise. (p. 2)

Though not mentioned by Hsu and Sandford, the problem-solving aspect is a key element in Deweyan reflection, Freire praxis, and the training for democratic processes that the very notion of MFP held.

Hsu and Sandford (2007) and Keeney et al. (2010) argued that the Delphi process lends itself to utilize some statistical analysis, when appropriate, and can further reduce the potential of group pressure for conformity (Dalkey, 1972). More specifically, they argued that statistical analysis can ensure that opinions generated by each subject of a Delphi study are well represented in the final iteration because, “at the end of the exercise

there may still be a significant spread in individual opinions” (Dalkey, 1972, p. 21).

Persons of any social standing involved in this study would:

have no pressure, either real or perceived, to conform to another participant’s responses that may originate from obedience to social norms, customs, organizational culture, or standing within a profession. The tools of statistical analysis allow for objective and impartial analysis and summarization of the collected data. (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 2)

Hsu and Sandford (2007) provided specific recommendations for the utilization of the Delphi process from their review of its application. Examining various studies (Brooks, 1979; Custer et al., 1999; Cyphert and Gant, 1971; Ludwig, 1994, 1997; Worthen & Sanders, 1987) they noted, along with Keeney et al. (2010), that three iterations are often sufficient to collect the needed information and analysis but provide some advice for up to four iterations, if it is determined that additional iterations beyond three are needed or valuable. Some experts argue that if policy consensus is the required outcome, then four iterations might be needed. This research does not require consensus to be obtained for information and knowledge to be shared requiring opportunities and obstacles for low-income participation; therefore, three rounds are appropriate.

Hsu and Sandford (2007) and Keeney et al. (2010) noted other scholars (Jacobs, 1996; Judd, 1972; Taylor & Judd, 1989) affirm that selecting subjects for the study remains critical. Hsu and Sanford shared that “since the Delphi technique focuses on eliciting expert opinions over a short period of time, the selection of Delphi subjects is generally dependent upon the disciplinary areas of expertise required by the specific issue” (p. 3). However, there seems to be no exact criterion in the literature regarding the

precise selection of Delphi expert panelists (Kaplan, 1971, p. 24). Hsu and Sandford proposed that the most relevant criteria for selecting Delphi subjects pertain to their “related backgrounds and experiences concerning the target issue, are capable of contributing helpful inputs, and are willing to revise their initial or previous judgments” (Pill, 1971, as cited in Hsu & Sanford, 2007, p. 3; Oh, 1974).

Hsu and Sanford (2007) found that various other scholars (Delbecq et al., 1975) proposed that some cross-sections of “(1) the top management decision-makers who will utilize the outcomes of the Delphi study; (2) the professional staff members together with their support team; and (3) the respondents to the Delphi questionnaire whose judgments are being sought” (Delbecq et al., 1975, as cited in Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 85) be utilized in such a study.

Hsu and Sandford (2007) adopted the recommendations of Delbecq et al. (1975) pertaining to the generally accepted mode of subjects to be invited to participate in a Delphi study. They recommended that there should be a “minimally sufficient number of subjects and should seek to verify the results through follow-up explorations” (p. 3). Ludwig (1994) noted that the number of experts used in a Delphi study is “generally determined by the number required to constitute a representative pooling of judgments and the information processing capability of the research team” (p. 52). Hsu and Sandford noted that what constitutes an optimal number of subjects in a Delphi study never reaches a consensus in the literature. Delbecq et al. suggested that 10 to 15 subjects could be sufficient if the background of the Delphi subjects is homogeneous. Ludwig (1997) documented, “the majority of Delphi studies have used between 15 and 20 respondents” (p. 2). There seems to be a consensus that the size of Delphi subjects is

variable (Delbecq et al., 1975). Hsu and Sandford cautioned that if the sample size of a Delphi study is too small, subjects may not be considered as having provided a representative pooling of judgments regarding the target issue; however, if the sample size is too large, the drawbacks inherent within the Delphi technique, such as potentially low response rates and the obligation of large blocks of time by the respondents and the researcher(s), can be the result (p. 4).

In this research project, with a focus on a specific community, panelists invited include current board members of various CDCs and CSAs, both low-income and above the low-income threshold, along with the executive director from such institutions. The goal is to engage between four to five persons per the various categories listed above for a total of 16-20 panelists.

### **Data Analysis**

Hsu and Sandford (2007) provided useful insights regarding data analysis. They noted that various decision rules must be established to assemble, organize, and interpret the judgments and insights provided by Delphi panelists. In many Delphi studies, consensus among the panelists is the overarching goal. Though consensus pertaining to the opportunities and obstacles to engage low-income persons in board governance would be helpful for final recommendations, it is not the overarching goal of this research project to seek consensus; rather, such a consensus may not be found. Yet, the lack of consensus may provide fruitful insights for recommendations. The lack of consensus uncovered by the Delphi process may be a helpful indicator of missed opportunities and hidden obstacles, especially if such divergent patterns emerge from different sectors of panelists. Even though consensus is not the overarching goal of this research, the process



is conducted with sensitivities toward finding consensus to discover meaningful solutions for obstacles and opportunities for board engagement while acknowledging that such a result may prove improbable.

Consensus on a topic can be decided if a certain percentage of the votes fall within a prescribed range (Miller, 2006, as cited in Hsu & Sanford, 2007). One criterion recommended that consensus is achieved by having 80% of subjects' votes fall within two categories on a seven-point scale (Ulschak, 1983). Green (1982) suggested that at least 70% of Delphi subjects need to rate three or higher on a four-point Likert-type scale, and the median must be at 3.25 or higher. Scheibe et al. (1975) revealed that the use of percentage measures is inadequate. They suggested that a more reliable alternative is to measure the stability of subjects' responses in successive iterations. In this research project, since consensus is not necessarily the goal, each of these criteria is explored and reviewed for their results, with a focus on measuring the stability of the panelists' responses over time.

In this research project, the Delphi process data analysis involves both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data analysis is used with open-ended questions that solicit subjects' opinions, especially during the initial round one iteration. Subsequent iterations identify and hopefully achieve the desired level of consensus, or reveal the discordant voices, as well as any changes of judgments among panelists. The coding and organizing of the qualitative data follow the recommendations of Saldaña (2016) and Keeney et al. (2010, p. 66) who provided insights into various qualitative analytical software tools, such as NVivo or the like, that can be employed for coding and organizing themes.

The quantitative data is ascertained through statistical analysis recommended for Delphi studies that utilize measures of central tendency (i.e., means, median, and mode) and level of dispersion (i.e., standard deviation) to present information concerning the collective judgments of respondents (Hasson et al., 2000; Keeney et al., 2010, pp. 93-94).

Throughout this research, success is not determined if consensus is achieved or not, either via qualitative or quantitative analysis, since consensus is not the specific and only goal; rather, an analysis of potential conflictual perspectives may add to the fruitfulness of the study. Listening to and highlighting various voices, especially those marginalized which is the very goal of this project through the lens of Deweyan and Freirean theory, in dialogue with others may in fact result in irreconcilable divergences. That outcome, which may signify various opposing themes and their concomitant limit-situations, requires further analysis and may posit areas of concern for future recommendations. Steps for practice or action can be analyzed to find means to break through heretofore limit-situations and create openings through this dialogue for diffusing new ways of thinking and acting in board governance.

### **Limitations: Threats to Reliability and Validity**

Keeney et al. (2010) articulated various issues, and their resolution, related to the reliability and validity of the Delphi process.

#### ***Reliability***

Keeney et al. (2010) noted that reliability, which refers to “an examination of stability and equivalence of the research conditions and procedures” (p. 96), can be enhanced through two main features. First, through the very decision-making process inherent in the Delphi process, “participants do not need to meet face to face, therefore,

avoiding group bias and groupthink scenarios, and secondly, as the panel size increases the reliability of the respondent group also grows” (pp. 96-97). The Delphi method for Keeney et al. provides a built-in reliability check through its iterative process of “test-retest method, which measures the consistency of results over different timeframes” (p. 97). Another key aspect regarding reliability pertains to comparing various groups to determine consistency between and among them. According to Keeney et al., rigor can also be assessed by means of the sample number and by the very design and administration of the study.

### ***Validity***

Keeney et al. (2010) noted the importance of validity and the researcher’s obligation to ensure such with proven processes. Validity refers to the “ability of the instrument to measure the attributes of the construct under study” (DeVon et al., 2007, as cited in Keeney et al., 2010, p. 100). They noted three key assumptions that help clarify validity in the Delphi process. First, the results from a Delphi study emerge from a group opinion rather than just on a single person. Second, the Delphi process is “based on expert opinion from the ‘real world’ providing confirmative judgments” (p. 100). Third, the iterative process inherent in the Delphi method “combining an open first qualitative round, allows experts to generate scale items and the continual succession of rounds allows the opportunity to review and judge the appropriateness of the scale” (p. 100). More importantly for Keeney et al. was the fact that the “panelists are representative of the expert group and knowledge area under study yet are impartial to the results” (p. 100).

Keeney et al. (2010) provided insights into the concurrent and predictive criterion-related validity of the Delphi process. Criterion-related validity is established “when a test is shown to be effective in predicting criterion or indicators of a construct” (p. 100). Concurrent validity is demonstrated “when a test, administered at the same time, is correlated with a measure that has been previously validated. In contrast, predictive validity is where one measure occurs earlier and is meant to predict some later measure” (p.101). Keeney et al. argued that the Delphi process “contributes to concurrent validity due to the successive rounds and by achieving consensus as the panelists have identified and agreed to the components” (p. 101). However, predictive validity is “often measured in terms of the accuracy of the Delphi and many claim this is proof of the techniques’ validity” (p. 101).

Keeney et al. (2010) cautioned against threats to external and internal validity. In terms of external validity, one must be cautious regarding inappropriate claim generalization due to the nature of a specific sample, at a specific time and place, and “conclude that results could be transferred to the wider context” (p. 102). Threats to internal validity include:

- concerns of panelist selections who may be too limited in their expertise and experience;
- the nature of historical reality in that between rounds various events may have occurred to either influence one’s understanding;
- the study itself or participation;
- the situation of the study itself in reference to changes in questions between rounds and lack of understanding about the nature of consensus;

- reactivity, which is the lack of accountability by some participants for their expressed views and pressure points that increase groupthink and bandwagon effects;
  - natural loss by declining participation rates among the panelists due to circumstances or fatigue; and
  - researcher bias which may consciously or not reduce the open-ended first round to a smaller but less robust pool of items to be considered or tendency to reduce divergent voices for the sake of acquiring consensus.
- (pp. 147-148)

### ***Trustworthiness***

Keeney et al. (2010) pointed out that the issue of trustworthiness is probably a preferred construct over relying solely on reliability and validity. They noted that trustworthiness comprises “credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability” (p. 103) These same values were also supported by other research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit et al., 2001). Credibility is enhanced by the degree to which the information can be believed, while dependability refers to the stability of the data collected throughout the process. Confirmability “conveys the neutrality whilst transferability reports the application of the findings to other settings” (p. 103). Again, citing other studies, Keeney et al. maintained that these elements were enhanced throughout the ongoing iterative process wherein panelists provide feedback and checks. Confirmability is amplified by maintaining a detailed description by the researcher regarding the methods employed throughout the process such as maintaining an audit trail (Skulmoski

et. al., 2007). Hopefully, with sensitivity to these concerns, some of these threats were lessened and properly addressed.

### ***Response Rate, Participation, and Engagement of Panelists***

Hsu and Sandford (2007) argued that potential problems exist for low response rates and difficulties in maintaining robust feedback. “In the Delphi technique, [poor response rate] is magnified fourfold because a maximum of four surveys may be sent to the same panelists” (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995, p. 196). With this aspect in mind, this research project focuses on three Delphi rounds to increase sustainable participation. If a certain portion of the subjects, warn Hsu and Sandford, discontinue their responses during various stages of the Delphi process, the quality of information obtained may be discounted or at least critically scrutinized. As such, Ludwig (1994) specifically addressed subject motivation as the key to the successful implementation of a Delphi study. One key motivation for continued participation might entail the knowledge that these results could impact local agencies in their search for board diversity. Further participation might be enhanced due to the disclosure to the experts that the researcher cares about the outcome of the research due to being a *participant as observer*.

Hsu and Sandford (2007) warned that Delphi investigators can consciously, or not, mold opinions and forge consensus. Again, since consensus is not the sole indicator of success in this project, reporting divergences accurately may help mitigate against this warning. More importantly, since the panelists were experts, they were able to ensure that their responses were accurately reported.

Another concern raised by Hsu and Sandford (2007) pertained to whether a Delphi process requires that participants be equally knowledgeable about the subject

matter. Several Delphi practitioners argued that the expertise of Delphi panelists could be unevenly distributed (Altschuld & Thomas, 1991; Marchant, 1988). Since this research project utilizes experts from different levels of experience related to board governance, there may have been an unequal distribution of knowledge on governance topics. “Some panelists may have much more in-depth knowledge of certain topics, whereas other panelists are more knowledgeable about different topics” (Altschuld & Thomas, 1991, p. 187). Therefore, subjects who have less in-depth knowledge of certain topics are unable to specify the most important statements which have been identified by those subjects who possess in-depth knowledge concerning the target issue. The outcomes of a Delphi study, for Hsu and Sandford and others, could be the result of identifying a series of general statements rather than an in-depth exposition of the topic (Altschuld & Thomas, 1991). Yet, since this research is about opportunities and obstacles, each participant has their own experience to share and could reflect on that experience through the iterative process.

Another caution concerns power differentials among the panelists, especially if they do not share any emergent consensus viewpoint or maintain strongly held differing opinions from others. Such divergent voices need to be able to share their beliefs, so their perspectives are heard during each round of the Delphi process and in the final report. Confidentiality and accurate reporting are a consistent theme to prevent power dynamics and a false sense of consensus from squelching divergent and oppositional voices (Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Mitroff & Turoff, 1975; Yousuf, 2007).

Yousuf (2007) noted that the Delphi “iterative feedback method develops an insight, which in its totality, is more than the sum of the parts” (p. 6). Hsu and Sandford (2007) summed up their appraisal:

...the Delphi technique has and will continue to be an important data collection methodology with a wide variety of applications and uses for people who want to gather information from those who are immersed and embedded in the topic of interest and can provide real-time and real-world knowledge. (p. 5)

In more practical applications and providing additional guidance to this study, Fletcher and Marchildon (2014) provided insights into the application of the Delphi process in a study they conducted with Canadian health care executives who were developing new systems for leadership development. They presented how they managed their process in detail with a specific study through both qualitative and quantitative means. They noted how they utilized a specific software program, NVivo9, and relying on insights from Gilgun (2011), cautioned other researchers on the necessary care required to be faithful in coding and sharing results.

These authors coupled their Delphi study with a more inclusive PAR process which provides a fruitful road map for this study. Fletcher and Marchildon (2014) argued that such a coupling provided two benefits to their study. First, by engaging the participants in some form of participatory research, they were able to reduce attrition due to the multiple rounds of Delphi questionnaires. Second, in light of the engaging participants in renewing their commitment to democracy (Dewey, 1937, 2004) and empowering persons to exert their own agency (Freire, 2000, 2011), the PAR process when coupled with the Delphi method “produces information that can be put into practice



by participants, making it particularly useful for policy- and decision-makers” (Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014, p. 13).

Fletcher and Marchildon (2014) further explained why they coupled these two processes in this study:

The Delphi method is epistemologically conducive to PAR research. PAR creates space for ‘non- academic community members to contribute to knowledge construction about the issue being studied’ and seeks to understand how the issue plays out in participants’ everyday lives (Billies et al., 2010, p. 278). Thus, PAR takes an epistemological position that values experiential knowledge as authoritative (Billies et al., 2010). As discussed previously, the Delphi method is suited to contexts where little academic literature exists, but experiential knowledge is vast. The Delphi method positions community members or practitioners as experts on the issue being studied. We sought a clear articulation of the vague concept ‘leadership,’ something known best by those who act as leaders in their daily lives. The Delphi method allowed us to draw on participants’ experiential insight to help define effective leadership in health system change.

(p. 13)

In coupling the Delphi and PAR frameworks, participants remain involved in all phases of the research project. According to Fletcher and Marchildon, in the early stage of the research, the participants can provide insight on problem identification, advice on the interview guide, and assist with participant selection and recruitment.

Another insight offered by Fletcher and Marchildon (2014) pertains to the issue of triangulation of the research and thus sustaining its reliability and credibility. The Delphi

method “encourages researcher accountability to the participants during the analysis” (p. 8). After round one, the aggregated data are returned to the participants along with the researchers’ interpretations of it. This allows participants to provide feedback on the findings and observations as they emerged. Fletcher and Marchildon (2014) continued:

In contrast, more individualized methods of participant validation only allow individual participants to validate the accuracy of their own transcripts or findings, not the aggregated results or observations. In this way, the Delphi method encourages careful data processing and responsible interpretation by keeping the researcher accountable to the participants’ meanings and intentions. Such consultation is a way to ensure participants’ continuous involvement and their control over the results, which are key tenets of PAR (Berg, 2004). (p. 8)

This study couples the Delphi and PAR methods to gain insights into the opportunities and obstacles that low-income persons’ experience regarding their desires to become involved in decision making and governance of the very institutions organized to serve them. The PAR aspect is accomplished by engaging with the participants, as a *participant as observer*, to find workable solutions for local changes in board recruitment, training, and formation. This research has a specific praxis point for local change by the various groups engaged, if those recommendations are accepted, and may have implications for national change.

Another method that used to ensure the triangulation of results is the social network theoretical framework. There is a growing body of knowledge and interest pertaining to poverty alleviation and social network theory (Lubbers et al., 2020) and in nonprofit organizational theory (McCambridge et. al., 2013). In this research, adding to

the contributions of Safford (2009) regarding the corporate interlocking linkages of leaders in Youngstown, various board members are mapped regarding their relationships to various boards. A social mapping technique is utilized to ascertain their interconnectedness in terms of governance involvement and for an insight into institutional isomorphism and diffusion of ideas (Borgatti et. al, 2013; Granovetter, 1973, 1982, 1983; Mahajan & Peterson, 1985; Safford, 2009; Valente, 1995).

This mapping technique is important for multiple reasons. Borgatti et al. (2013) noted:

...a generic hypothesis of network theory is that an actor's position in a network determines in part the constraints and opportunities that he or she will encounter, and therefore identifying that position is important for predicting actor outcomes such as performance, behavior or beliefs. Similarly, there is an analogous generic hypothesis at the group level stating that what happens to a group of actors is in part a function of the structure of connections among them. (p. 1)

They observed that networks are a way of thinking about social systems that focus attention on the relationships among the entities (i.e., actors or nodes) that make up the system. Borgatti et al. write:

The nodes have characteristics - typically called 'attributes' - that distinguish among them, and these can be categorical traits, such as being male, or quantitative attributes, such as being 56 years of age. The relationships between nodes also have characteristics, and in network analysis, we think of these as ties or links. (pp. 1-2)

What is important is to track or analyze how these ties interlink through common nodes, which in turn creates “chains or paths of nodes and links whose endpoints are now connected indirectly by this means. This in turn creates the connected web that we think of as a network” (p. 2). The power of network analysis is that “it provides a mechanism -- indirect connection -- by which disparate parts of a system may affect each other” (p. 2).

Such nodes are usually persons or could be groups and organizations. A social network analysis explores how individual and organizational dyads, nodes, and networks themselves are connected. Borgatti et al. (2013) provided insights into types of relationships that can be measured either between individuals or corporations themselves, as well as tactics in analyzing such connections. For the purpose of this study, the Delphi method is the primary methodology, but added insights are gained from social network analysis to track individual and organizational relationships. This allows both formal and informal structures and positions that may provide insights into the obstacles and opportunities for MFP of those previously excluded to be mapped.

### **Conclusions**

This project returns to the foreground the goal of the creation and extension of CDC and CSA organizational structures that provide social services and community development opportunities for the poor, with MFP by those most impacted by these decisions. The literature on the nonprofit sector, the community development sector in particular, and the issues surrounding effective and proper boards for governance have all seemingly abandoned the issue around low-income and marginalized persons’ participation as a major goal. It seems that there are obstacles (i.e., limit-situations) for low-income and marginalized persons to serve as leaders on governance boards in

community institutions. Some have gained access over time, but such a concern for proper participation has diminished over the past decades.

Overall, this research continues to explore whether we are facing a new *Overton window of political possibilities* (Putnam, 2020; Skocpol, 2013; Szalek, 2013) or *punctuated equilibrium* (Baumgartner et al., 2014; Jones & Baumgartner, 2012; Harvey, 2020) regarding the importance of including those voices who had been marginalized in the board governance of those very institutions designed to empower them. There may be a moment now, due to various racial justice efforts and new movements regarding accountability and governance, to reanalyze anti-poverty programs and revisit the very concept, or at least the essential features of MFP.

This project's goal is to fill that gap in the literature about the incentives and obstacles (i.e., themes and limit-situations) to low-income and marginalized persons' participation in the governance in the very organizations that were created to empower them to make decisions and assert control over their own communities. Through the utilization of a general case study of one community's CDC and CSA network, it is hoped that some knowledge can be shared about how various CDCs and CSAs engage, or failed to engage, low-income and marginalized persons in their governance. The Delphi process coupled with elements from PAR and social network theory provides further insights into the salient factors affecting the access to and barriers to low-income persons' participation in corporate governance. Both in its methodology and applicable findings, this project aims to apply Deweyan and Freirean insights into reflection, praxis, dialogue, and voice to continue the great experiment of democracy in institutions and practices.

## Chapter Three

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This research project aims to uncover some of the incentives and obstacles to low-income and marginalized persons' engagement in nonprofit governance. The scholarly literature on the nonprofit sector generally does not focus on this topic. The literature on the community development sector claimed that low-income persons and local residents should have control over their own assets through the development of CSAs and CDCs, but it has not probed the issue of governance and board leadership. Over time, with the emergence of increased professionalization of community development practitioners and the ever-increasing technical nature of financial instruments to establish projects, this literature reduced its analysis to focus only on its brick-and-mortar accomplishments. The notion of MFP disappears from any serious study of CSAs and CDCs. The literature regarding effective boards seemed even less interested in this notion. This gap in the literature, specifically the elements of incentives and obstacles to low-income and marginalized persons providing leadership in the corporate governance of community development and service corporations, centers this research and roots it in the lived experience of a specific community, Youngstown, Ohio.

The literature review, connected to various research questions, offered key themes and accompanying limit-situations that are addressed in this study:

**Research Question One:** How are the voices of low-income and marginalized persons structurally incorporated into boards of directors, especially those organizations that serve such persons and communities?

*Theme 1A: Politically and structurally there is a new moment of punctuated equilibrium in social policy to reintroduce and implement MFP.*

**Research Question Two:** How are low-income and marginalized persons formed and prepared in both technical knowledge and governance obligations, using relevant adult educational processes, to serve on such community corporations?

*Theme 2: Few board training opportunities exist for persons who are low income and disenfranchised.*

*Theme 3: Training programs focus on agency, resource development, or institutional theory, thus, recruiting persons who exhibit those skills.*

*Theme 4: Board training and formation programs are rooted in specific andragogy that highlights privatized ideology rather than Deweyan experience or Freirean dialogue.*

**Research Question Three:** How are low-income and marginalized persons disenfranchised from such engagement, and how is such disenfranchisement related to disempowerment?

*Theme 5A: Preferred engagement with persons who have professional skills.*

*Theme 6: Recruitment of persons with social connections and donor knowledge.*

*Theme 7: The decoupling of agencies from specifically distressed neighborhoods to more regional responsibilities.*

*Theme 8: Identity politics highlights gender, race, and sexual orientation away from class status; persons at intersectionality preferred over those who live poverty alone.*

*Theme 9: Low-income and marginalized persons can sense that they might be tokens on such a board.*

**Research Question Four:** How do practices and policies regarding the structural inclusion (or exclusion) of such voices get diffused and generally accepted?

*Theme 10: Institutional isomorphism via coercive, mimetic, and normative forms influence board inclusion.*

*Theme 11: Board members and staff reach out to those in their social networks to replace or include.*

*Theme 12: Engagement of the margins requires disruption.*

**Research Question Five:** How do operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, and privatization/marketization forces and ideology impact incentives or obstacles to the inclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations?

*Theme 13: Market and privatization ideologies drive focus for who to include on boards related to functions.*

*Theme 5B: Professionalization of skills required for oversight determines who should serve on boards.*



*Theme 1B: Convergence of new accountability and new governance movements promote certain skills and may provide an opening for MFP for low income.*

Based on the five general questions and 13 themes posed in Chapter Two, several hypotheses are tested to explore why such incentives and obstacles might exist:

***Hypothesis 1:*** Low-income and marginalized persons' voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities.

***Hypothesis 2:*** Low-income and marginalized persons are not trained in corporate governance to serve as leaders on the boards of CDCs and CSAs.

***Hypothesis 2a:*** Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.

***Hypothesis 3:*** Low-income and marginalized persons are disenfranchised and disempowered from such engagement on boards.

***Hypothesis 3a:*** Low-income and marginalized persons are perceived by others as token representatives on these boards.

***Hypothesis 3b:*** Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as token representatives if they serve on these boards.

***Hypothesis 4:*** Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused.

***Hypothesis 4a:*** CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.

**Hypothesis 5:** Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Prior to any action or activity, the proposed research project required the approval of the Youngstown State University Institutional Review Board pertaining to Human Subjects. All appropriate paperwork, credentials, forms, and design elements were provided to the IRB in a timely fashion to secure permission and to make any necessary adjustments per their instructions.

To the extent possible, Kaiser (2009) recommended including on a participant's permission form a method to request how they want their information shared as various Delphi rounds are instituted, or at the very end of the process before results are published. Kaiser (2009) suggested three options:

1. A panelist allows the researcher to share the information just as he/she provided it, with no details needing to be changed and to allow the researcher to use his/her real name.
2. The researcher can share the information just as the panelist provided it but not utilize his/her real name since they may be concerned that others might identify him/her based on the data, even though his/her name is not used.
3. The researcher can share the information the panelist provided, not use his/her real name, and change details that might make him/her identifiable to others; the panelist may also wish that specific pieces of his/her data not be shared

without first altering the data so as to make him/her unidentifiable as they would describe on his/her permission form.

Keeney et al. (2010) and Beck (2015) provided excellent outlines of the elements included in any various informed consent, participation information packet, and release form. The following items for the purpose of this research project can be found in Appendices A, B, and C.

### **Research Design**

This section discusses the general research design, followed by subsections pertaining to the population and sampling plan, data collection procedures, and analysis. The study employs a mixed-method design. First, the Delphi process, analyzes the results of the participants using an iterative process. The expert panel of participants include representatives from these three groups:

- low-income persons who are serving on the boards of a CDC or CSA;
- non-low-income persons who serve on the boards of a CDC or CSA; and
- the executive directors of these agencies.

Then, a network analysis of board members and executive directors explores interlocking directorates to ascertain nodes, links, and possible modes of institutional isomorphism.

### ***Expert Panelists***

The expert panelists selected for this research were derived from the complete list of board members and executive directors serving in that capacity from 2019 to the present from each of the organizations studied in this research. These organizations included: ACTION, Common Wealth and the Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund, MYCAP (the designated community action agency), and YNDC. From that list, there

were four executive directors who were immediately considered as panelists, and 71 board members (including this researcher who serves on two of the boards listed – Common Wealth and Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund; this researcher, of course, was eliminated from the list of possible panelists). With the social network analysis discussed later, it is also important to note that the four executive directors also served on one or two of the other agencies' boards of directors at the time this study was conducted. There seems to be a tight social networking impact among these executive directors serving on each other's boards.

For the purposes of this research, the boards of directors from Common Wealth and Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund were considered together, as they share an executive director. The four executive directors were contacted to request:

- their personal participation as an expert panelist;
- the names and contact information for each of their board members currently serving since at least 2019; and
- to identify, by name, the persons on their boards who they perceive to be either below the poverty line threshold (i.e., \$25,999 for the purpose of this research which is approximately 200% of the U.S. federal poverty guideline (ASPE, 2021).

The participation of the four executive directors as expert panelists was secured, and each provided a list of their agency's board of directors with contact information. Each executive director provided their input regarding their perception of which board members should be considered below, or above, the poverty threshold level.

Table 2 displays the total number of potential board members, and Figure 3 graphically shows the percentage of the total.

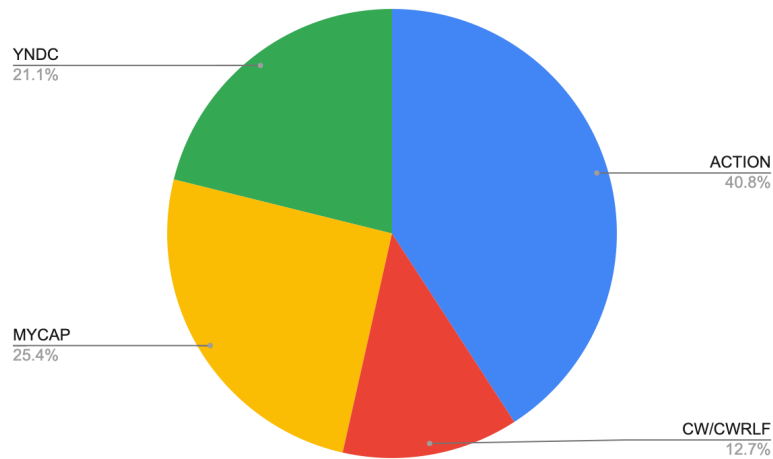
**Table 2**

*Possible Expert Panelists From Complete List of Board Members From Organizations Studied*

Participating Organization	Number of Board Members	% of Board Members From Total Possible
ACTION	29	41%
CW/CWRLF	9	13%
MYCAP	18	25%
YNDC	15	21%
Total	71	

**Figure 3**

*Percent of Possible Board Members Available by Organization for Possible Selection*



As seen above, ACTION had the largest percentage and number of board members eligible with 29 members representing nearly 41% of the total. MYCAP ranked second with a total of eighteen 18 board members making up 25% of the total. YNDC

ranked close at third with 15 board members at 21% of the total. Finally, the combined boards of CW/CWRLF were the smallest at nine members representing 13%.

The next step in the process identified the perceived earnings (i.e., below or above \$25,999/year) of the board members. This step in the process identified who from each board might be considered earning less than poverty (defined as less than \$25,999 per year based on the 2021 HHS poverty guidance) and those that might earn above poverty (above \$25,999 per year). Each executive director of the participating organizations was asked to identify which board members on their respective boards might be considered living below the poverty level.

**Table 3**

*Board Members’ Earnings Perceived Below HHS Poverty Level: Percent of the Agency Board*

Agency	Number of Board Members Perceived Below Poverty	Percent of Agency Board Perceived Below Poverty
ACTION	14	48%
CW/CWRLF	2	22%
MYCAP	3	17%
YNDC	3	20%
Total	22	31%

Table 3 shows that ACTION believed that about 14 of its 29 members (48%) may be living below the poverty threshold; MYCAP estimated two of its members (17%); YNDC identified three (20%); and CW/CWRLF approximated two members living below the HHS poverty line (22%).

**Table 4***Board Members' Earnings Perceived Below HHS Poverty Level: Percent of the Total**Number of Board Members (n = 71)*

Agency	Percent of Total Possible Participants
ACTION	20%
CW/CWRLF	3%
MYCAP	4%
YNDC	4%

Table 4 displays the percent of board members from the total ( $n = 71$ ) who may be living below the poverty threshold for each agency. As can be seen, ACTION's board members make up approximately 20% of the total number of board members who are perceived to be living under the poverty threshold, while MYCAP and YNDC share about 4% of the total. CW/CWRLF represents about 3% of the total number of board members perceived to be living under the poverty level.

**Table 5***Board Members' Earnings Perceived Above HHS Poverty Level: Percent of the Agency**Board*

Agency	Number of Board Members Perceived Above Poverty	Percent of Agency Board Perceived Above Poverty
ACTION	15	52%
CW/CWRLF	7	78%
MYCAP	15	83%
YNDC	12	80%
Total	49	

Table 5 demonstrates that the agency executive directors perceived that a clear majority of their board members earned above the poverty level, with MYCAP at the highest rate with 15 members representing 83% of its board. YNDC claimed 12 members (80%) were above the poverty threshold; CW/CWRLF identified seven members (78%); and ACTION noted 15 members (52%) above the poverty level.

**Table 6**

*Board Members' Earnings Perceived Above HHS Poverty Level: Percent of the Total Number of Board Members (n = 71)*

Agency	Percent of Total Possible Participants
ACTION	21%
CW/CWRLF	10%
MYCAP	21%
YNDC	17%
Total	69%

Table 6 shows the percentage of each agency as a representation of the total number of board members ( $n = 71$ ). ACTION and MYCAP each represent 21% of the total number of those board members perceived to be above the poverty threshold, while YNDC represents 17% of the total. CW/CWRLF is approximately 10% of the total board members above poverty. Clearly, via the perception of the agency chief executives, most of their board members (49; 69% of the total number) earn above the poverty level threshold.

**Random Selection of Expert Panelists.** The names of persons identified as either below or above the poverty line were sorted into two databases, as determined by the agency's executive directors. The general literature regarding the Delphi process



indicated no specific rule of thumb for the exact number of participants. The current investigation aimed to engage between 16 and 21 of these persons, with the agency executive directors as four of the expert panelists. Each of the names of the board members for both datasets, either below or above the poverty line, was alphabetically arranged and a number was assigned.

A random number generator provided the means to acquire the names of the persons in each dataset. Twenty board members who had been randomly selected, 10 from above and 10 from below the poverty line, were sent an email or letter requesting their participation for Round One. The executive directors of each agency and any board member approached did not know who else might have been selected randomly to participate or their response to participation (i.e., agreed, withdrew, or did not respond).

Four rounds of requests ensued. After each of the previous three rounds of requests via letter or email, persons either selected to participate as an expert panelist, withdrew, or did not answer after several attempts to secure their participation. Once there was clear information on who declined or withdrew from participation, an equal number of randomly selected participants from above/below the poverty level were invited (see Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix C).

Throughout all four rounds, 39 out of 71 (55%) different board members were randomly selected and asked to participate. As represented in Table 3 above, 18 out of the 22 individuals with a perceived income below the poverty line were approached to participate, which represents approximately 82% of the group of those identified. Seventeen experts, representing approximately 44% of the 39 identified persons above the poverty level, were solicited for participation (n.b., The four executive directors, and

a few others including this researcher, also served on each other's boards and were removed from this selection process or considered only once for selection; overall 10 persons shared overlapping board membership).

## **Data Collection Procedures and Data Analysis**

### ***The Delphi Method in General***

Hsu and Sandford (2007) and Witkin and Altschuld (1995) noted that electronic technology provides an opportunity for individuals to employ the Delphi process more easily by taking advantages of, "(1) the storage, processing, and speed of transmission capabilities of computers; (2) the maintenance of respondent anonymity; and (3) the potential for rapid feedback" (Alstshuld, 1995, p. 204; Hsu and Sandford, 2007, p. 4). Thereby, this research project was conducted using electronic survey technology for each iteration of the Delphi process.

This research project closely follows the various rounds and analysis process outlined by Hsu and Sandford (2007) and Keeney et al. (2010).

**Round One.** Process: In the first round, the Delphi process traditionally begins with an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix D). The open-ended questionnaire serves as the cornerstone of soliciting specific information, derived from the themes and hypotheses listed above, about a content area from the Delphi subjects (Custer et al., 1999). It should be noted that it is both an acceptable and a common modification of the Delphi process format to use a structured questionnaire in round one that is based upon an extensive review of the literature. The factors included themes uncovered from the general literature on nonprofit boards and specific literature gleaned from analysis of community services organizations with special attention to the trends related to MFP,

which engaged the expert panelists to provide more experiential information in narrative form. Keeney et al. (2010) recommend that the researcher limit the panel “to identify a minimum five items/priorities and a maximum of ten items/priorities. This should safeguard against an unmanageable number of items for the second round and should ensure a reasonable to good response rate” (p. 71).

For round one, the five hypotheses, which were developed from the 13 themes identified in the literature review, were utilized to solicit open-ended responses as to their understanding and reflections based on their lived experience on those themes, as well as to encourage panelists to identify other themes not articulated from the literature review. With regard to the time management between iterations, Delbecq et al. (1975) noted that giving two weeks for Delphi subjects to respond to each round is encouraged. In essence, this first-round questionnaire sent to the panel of experts solicits a list of opinions involving experiences and judgments, a list of predictions, and a list of recommended activities (Pfeiffer, 1968; Yousuf, 2007).

The goal of Round One was to ascertain the expert panelists’ basic opinions that were framed by the general and specific literature, along with what factors may be missing or otherwise absent from those derived from the academic literature. The insights garnered from the open-ended questions and narrative replies helped to uncover other *generative themes* (Irwin, 2012) that were then explored more fully in the other two Delphi rounds.

Analysis: The narratives were transcribed, if orally provided, or recorded in an online survey tool. Round One contained virtually all narrative responses. The narratives were saved in the Nvivo software and then coded by hand. The files coded employed the

factors and themes found in the literature review (i.e., *a priori* or structured) and marked any new emergent factors and themes as well (Stuckey, 2015, p.8). Then, the collected information was converted, along with themes from the literature review, into a well-structured questionnaire, which was used as the survey instrument for the second round of data collection.

**Round Two.** Process: In the second round, each Delphi participant received a second questionnaire and was asked to review the summarized items based on the information provided in the first round and from the themes generated from the literature review. The expert was asked to rate or evaluate each item (i.e., themes denoting possible limit-situations) by some criterion of importance (Pfeiffer, 1968; Yousuf, 2007). Accordingly, Delphi panelists were asked, using Likert scales, to rate or “rank-order items to establish preliminary priorities among items. As a result of round two, areas of disagreement and agreement are identified” (Ludwig, 1994, p. 54-55). Participants were able to add comments and insights from their rankings in order to garner more nuances and insights.

Analysis: It is at this point that Keeney et al. (2010) recommend engaging in quantitative analysis utilizing SPSS to provide preliminary data analysis. The survey results from Round Two were downloaded into SPSS for basic statistical analysis and factor analysis. Delphi panelists were asked to state the rationale concerning rating priorities among items (Jacobs, 1996). In this round, consensus may begin forming, and the actual outcomes can be presented among the participants’ responses (Jacobs, 1996). Open-ended comments were reported in a narrative form via a Microsoft Word document and then saved in Nvivo under each panelist (case). Each of the narrative files (cases) was

then analyzed and coded in Nvivo marking literature-based factors and themes, the emergent factors and themes derived from Round One, and seeking any new factors or themes. Each of the factors and underlying themes was demarcated on a range of agreed-upon consensus (strong, moderate, majority, weak, or not at all). This analysis provided a means to report back to the panelists for Round Three about how their collective opinions ranged in terms of levels of consensus.

**Round Three.** Process: In the third round, the analysis from both Nvivo (narratives) and SPSS (Likert scales) formed the basis of the specific questions posed during this round. Each Delphi panelist received a questionnaire that included the items and ratings summarized in the previous round and were asked to provide comments after each question. The order of the questions was randomly rearranged in the central portions of the survey to mitigate against any order effects, since in Round Two there seemed to be a trend by the panelists to respond with more neutral responses in later questions. Of course, it could be true that in some sections, the panelists individually may not hold a strong opinion; however, in order to reduce this effect, four interior sections of questions were randomly rearranged even though the questions related to those sections remained in place (i.e., only the sections were placed in a different order, but the questions related to that section remained together and were not randomly placed in any order).

This round gave Delphi panelists an opportunity to make further clarifications of both the information and their judgments of the relative importance of the items. However, compared to the previous round, only a slight increase in the degree of consensus was expected (Anglin, 1991; Dalkey & Rourke, 1972; Jacobs, 1996; Weaver, 1971). The third questionnaire included the list, the ratings indicated, and the emerging

consensus. One question sought a rank order of their opinion about the importance of board training, while another question forced the respondents to select a specific policy proposal. The final question in this Round Three requested a narrative response to what they perceive, or believe, to be the best practice and/or policy regarding the engagement of low-income persons on community service boards of directors.

Analysis: Keeney et al. (2010) recommend engaging in quantitative analysis utilizing SPSS to provide final data analysis. Basically, Hsu and Sandford (2007) found that consensus on a topic can be decided if a certain percentage of the votes falls within a prescribed range (Miller, 2006). One criterion recommended that consensus is achieved by having 80% of subjects' votes fall within two categories on a seven-point scale (Ulschak, 1983). Green (1982) suggested that at least 70% of Delphi subjects need to rate three or higher on a four-point Likert-type scale, and the median must be at 3.25 or higher. Scheibe et al. (1975) revealed that the use of percentage measures is inadequate. They suggested that a more reliable alternative is to measure the stability of subjects' responses in successive iterations. In this research project, since consensus was not necessarily the goal, each of these criteria was explored and reviewed for their results, with a focus on measuring the stability of the panelists' responses over time. A consensus scale was developed to identify various levels of agreement or disagreement, along as acknowledge positions of weak or no apparent consensus.

The quantitative data was ascertained through statistical analysis recommended for Delphi studies that utilizes measures of central tendency (i.e., means and mode) and level of dispersion (i.e., standard deviation) in order to present information concerning the collective judgments of respondents (Hasson et al., 2000; Keeney et al., 2010, pp. 93-

94). Throughout this research, since one of the goals was an analysis of potential conflictual perspectives rather than a consensus, success was not determined by whether consensus was achieved via qualitative or quantitative analysis.

### **Network Analysis of Interlocking Board Membership**

The names of all the board members serving between 2019-2020 of the five agencies engaged in the Delphi process were compiled. Even though not all the board members were selected for the Delphi process, all names of board members were used to analyze their actual weak or strong social network ties using their connectedness, or lack thereof. This was accomplished by employing SocNetV to map interlocking board memberships. In this manner, nodes and weak and strong ties between organizations and among these leaders could be identified.

### **Conclusion**

As noted earlier, Betz (1992) argued that both Dewey and Freire insist, in their own manner, that those impacted should have a voice in the processes of decision making at many levels of social and associative life. Thus, this research sought out the voices of those impacted by social welfare decisions through the associative life of community organizations. More importantly, the very research method used in this study, the Delphi method embedded in a PAR process (Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014), with the researcher as a *participant as observer* (Gold, 1958; Moore & Savage, 2002; Takyi, 2015), sought to hear and analyze those voices using the Delphi method. This process provided a way for those in decision making authority, both low-income and non-low-income, to engage in reflection and dialogue through the iterative process, thus giving an opportunity to find consensus or discordant opinions on policy regarding governance models. The Deweyan

and Freirean andragogy and its requirement for reflective, dialogical, and active citizenship for adults provides an educational leadership framework for this research in both its content and its method.



## Chapter Four

### **Initial Results**

This research employed the Delphi method to engage practicing experts in non-profit governance work. Participants in the case study were considered experts because they were currently serving as board members, executive directors, or in some cases, on both community service and development agencies. All experts in the case study were operating in the City of Youngstown, Ohio. The Delphi method utilized in the study requested that the panelists engage in three iterative rounds of survey interchanges exploring various factors and themes on the requirements and realities of low-income persons serving, or who should serve, on the boards of directors of these selected community service organizations.

As discussed in Chapter Three, this method of PAR engages experts in the field to reflect on their own experiences through providing insights and opinions on practices and policies without knowing the identity of the other expert panelists. This anonymous factor frees each expert panel member to provide their rankings to the policy positions and share their opinion without fear of reprisals from others engaged in their community or agency boards. Additionally, this approach mitigates power differentials and minimizes groupthink. In each round, more precision was provided in the questioning and in the panelists' responses regarding various policy positions on the requirements and practices of low-income persons' participation on boards of directors. The goal was to uncover areas of agreement, or disagreement, among the panelists on this policy topic and hear directly from the voices of seasoned experts engaged in organizational decision-making.

Throughout Chapter Four, the process for selecting panelists and the nature of each round is reported. Results from Round One, including the methodological approach employed and the characteristics of the panelists engaged, are discussed in this chapter. Subsequent chapters analyze Rounds Two and Three, along with a social network analysis. The narratives uncovered from Round One of the Delphi process are analyzed utilizing Nvivo software along with hearing directly from the panelists' voices as they responded to various structured, or a priori, themes and identified emergent ones. After a brief review of the characteristics of the participating panelists in Rounds Two and Three, the next chapters share critical insights of agreement and disagreement among the panelists. SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative results of the two survey rounds, comparing results from both rounds on common questions as organized by factors with related themes. Finally, a general discussion follows regarding the connections between these agencies and board members employing a social network analysis with the aid of the SocNetV software.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Twenty-one persons were selected to be expert panelists. There were four executive directors and 17 were board members. Table 7 shares these details.

**Table 7**

*Board Members and Executive Directors Selected as Expert Panelist for Delphi Rounds:  
Percent of Total Selected and Number and Final Percent of Those Earning Less Than  
Poverty Level (\$25,999)*

Agency	Number	Percent of Total Selected	Number and Percent of Those who are Below Poverty Level (\$25,999) as Perceived by the Executive Director
ACTION	6	29%	2
CW/CWRLF	1	5%	0
MYCAP	8	38%	1
YNDC	2	10%	0
Executive Directors	4	19%	0
Total	21		3

Table 7 displays the number of persons from each agency and their relative percentage of the total number selected. The four executive directors represented 19% of the selected expert participants. MYCAP represents the most significant number of participants, with eight persons (38%). ACTION board members numbered six (29%); YNDC had two (10%); and CW/CWRLF secured one participant (5%). Table 7 further shows that three of the 21 expert panelists who participated earned below the poverty level threshold, based on the perceptions of the corresponding executive directors. They represent 14% of the total selected.

***Specific Demographic Characteristics of the Expert Panelists***

All 21 panel experts were provided an opportunity to provide input to address their demographic characteristics directly without the perception of their respective executive directors. Below, Table 8 represents this information.

**Table 8***Expert Panelists Demographic Characteristics: Income Levels*

Income Levels	Responses	
Under \$15,000	0%	0
Between \$15,001 and \$25,999	11%	2
Between \$26,000 and \$49,999	16%	3
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	16%	3
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	21%	4
Between \$100,000 and \$150,000	21%	4
Over \$150,000	11%	2
I prefer not to answer	5%	1
Other	0%	0
	Answered	19
	Skipped	2

Table 8 shows that only two of the panelists claimed to earn below the poverty level threshold, representing 11% of the experts. Based on the perceptions from the executive directors, the reality was close, especially since the next range above \$26,000 may include a person at the lower level of that range. Three panelists reported earning between \$26,000 and \$49,599, with another three reporting the \$50,000-\$74,999 range. Eight participants, representing 42% earned over \$75,000 a year. Two expert panelists selected not to respond to this question.

Tables 9 through 12 show the breakdown of the expert panelists' demographic characteristics regarding their race, ethnicity, gender, and age.

**Table 9***Expert Panelists Demographic Characteristics: Ethnic Characteristics*

I consider myself to be Hispanic.	Responses	
Yes	11%	2
No	89%	17
Prefer not to answer	0%	0
	Answered	19
	Skipped	2

Table 9 notes that 89% of the experts do not consider themselves as Hispanic, while 11% do. Two panelists did not respond to this question.

**Table 10***Expert Panelists Demographic Characteristics: Racial Characteristics*

I consider myself to be (check all that apply):	Responses	
African American	42%	8
Asian	0%	0
Caucasian	53%	10
Native American	0%	0
Pacific Islander	0%	0
Prefer not to Report	0%	0
Other	0%	0
Other (Please Specify)	5%	1
	Answered	19
	Skipped	2

Table 10 reveals that 42% of the experts identified that they were African American, while 53% considered themselves Caucasian. One person selected “Other,” and two skipped this question.

**Table 11**

*Expert Panelists Demographic Characteristics: Gender*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	53%	10
Male	47%	9
I prefer not to respond	0%	0
Another gender identity, please specify_____	0%	0
	Answered	19
	Skipped	2

Table 11 shows the gender distribution of the expert panelists. Fifty-three percent identified as female, while 47% of the remaining respondents noted that they were male. Two persons did not reply.

**Table 12**

*Expert Panelists Demographic Characteristics: Age*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 18	0%	0
18-24	0%	0
25-34	5%	1
35-44	16%	3
45-54	11%	2
55-64	21%	4
65+	47%	9
Prefer not to answer	0%	0

Answered	19
Skipped	2

---

Table 12 shows the age distribution among the expert panelists. While two persons did not participate in answering this question, four persons or 21% of the respondents were under 44 years of age. None of the participants were under the age of 24. Six persons or 32% were between 45 and 64 years of age. Nine persons or 47% reported being over 65 years of age.

### **Specific Analysis of Round One**

During the months of April and May 2021, prospective panelists were provided with various materials pertaining to the nature of their participation in the study, their permission to participate was obtained, and basic demographic information was secured from each expert panelist who agreed to participate. During June, July, and early August 2021, the 21 participants received an online survey, or a printed version (as requested), with a chance to be interviewed by Dr. Alison Kaufman. Interviews included open-ended questions built from the various factors and themes derived from the literature review with ample space and openings for each person to add new factors or themes (see Appendix D for the list of questions). Reminders were sent to encourage participants to promptly complete the interviews.

By mid-August 2021, it was determined that the timeline for engagement needed to be finalized so that the comments could be analyzed. Through this process, one executive director was unable to participate in Round One, and two board members officially withdrew their participation in the study. Five board members did not want to

withdraw but chose not to participate in the narrative Round One due to various reasons.

Table 13 displays these numbers.

**Table 13**

*Round One Participants*

Participants	Number
Executive Directors	3
Board Members	11
Total	14

*Note.* From the initial 21 panelists, two withdrew and five did not reply.

In total, 14 persons participated in Round One. This number included three executive directors and 11 board members. Two board members were no longer able to engage in the process, thus reducing the overall number of panelists from 21 to 19. The 14 panelists represented a 74% participation rate of the newly emerged expert group. Table 14 provides a more robust analysis of the 14 panelists who participated in Round One.

**Table 14**

*Round One General Characteristics (n = 14)*

Factors	Number	Percent of Total Participants
Executive Directors	3	21%
ACTION	4	29%
CW/CWRLF	1	7%
MYCAP	4	29%
YNDC	2	14%
Below Poverty	1	7%
Above Poverty	12	86%
Not report	1	7%
Gender		



Female	8	57%
Male	6	43%
Hispanic YES	0	0%
African American	5	36%
Caucasian	9	64%
Age		
Under 34	0	0%
35-44	1	7%
45-54	2	14%
55-64	3	21%
65+	8	57%

The executive directors' group represented approximately 21% of the total panelists' group. ACTION and MYCAP's board members, with four each, represented 29% from each agency; YNDC composed 14%; and CW/CWRLF made up 7%. Table 14 also shows that 7% earned below the poverty threshold, while 86% reported earnings above the poverty line. One person did not report this information. Of the experts, 57% were female and 43% were male. All participants reported that they were non-Hispanic. Thirty-six percent disclosed that they were African Americans, and the remaining 64% reported being Caucasian. Most expert panelists noted that they were above the age of 60, which represented 57%. Five panelists (35%) ranged between the ages of 45-64. One person (7%) noted that they were in the 35-44 age range. No one reported being below the age of 34.

The goal of the open-ended questionnaire was to elicit responses from the expert panelists based on their experience serving on the boards of community service agencies, driven by some basic factors and themes as explored in Figure 4 below. These factors and themes supplied the background information for the Round One questions posed to the

panelists for their comments. The five basic factors posed as questions composed of 13 related limit-situational generative themes included:

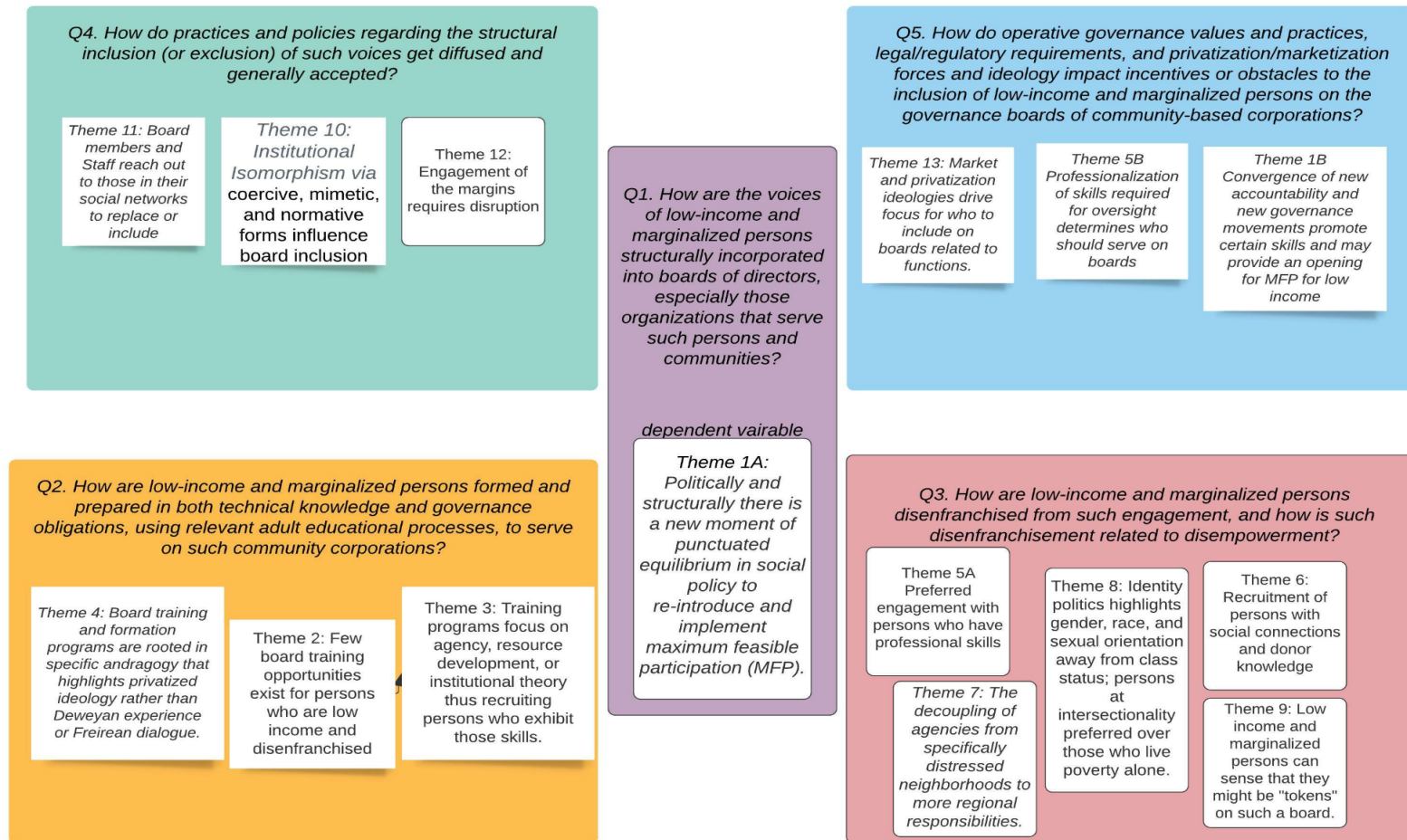
- Q1: How are the voices of low-income and marginalized persons structurally incorporated into boards of directors, especially those organizations that serve such persons and communities? (Factor A)
  - *Theme 1A: Politically and structurally there is a new moment of punctuated equilibrium in social policy to re-introduce and implement MFP.*
- Q2: How are low-income and marginalized persons formed and prepared in both technical knowledge and governance obligations, using relevant adult educational processes, to serve on such community corporations? (Factor B)
  - *Theme 2: Few board training opportunities exist for persons who are low-income and disenfranchised.*
  - *Theme 3: Training programs focus on agency, resource development, or institutional theory thus recruiting persons who exhibit those skills.*
  - *Theme 4: Board training and formation programs are rooted in specific andragogy that highlights privatized ideology rather than the Deweyan experience or Freirean dialogue.*
- Q3: How are low-income and marginalized persons disenfranchised from such engagement, and how is such disenfranchisement related to disempowerment? (Factor C)
  - *Theme 5A: Preferred engagement with persons who have professional skills.*

- *Theme 6: Recruitment of persons with social connections and donor knowledge.*
  - *Theme 7: The decoupling of agencies from specifically distressed neighborhoods to more regional responsibilities.*
  - *Theme 8: Identity politics highlights gender, race, and sexual orientation away from class status; persons at intersectionality are preferred over those who live poverty alone.*
  - *Theme 9: Low-income and marginalized persons can sense that they might be tokens on such a board.*
- Q4: How do practices and policies regarding the structural inclusion (or exclusion) of such voices get diffused and generally accepted? (Factor D)
    - *Theme 10: Institutional isomorphism via coercive, mimetic, and normative forms influence board inclusion.*
    - *Theme 11: Board members and staff reach out to those in their social networks to replace or include.*
    - *Theme 12: Engagement of the margins requires disruption.*
  - Q5: How do operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, and privatization/marketization forces and ideology impact incentives or obstacles to the inclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations? (Factor E)
    - *Theme 1B: Convergence of new accountability and new governance movements promote certain skills and may provide an opening for MFP for low income.*

- *Theme 5B: Professionalization of skills required for oversight determines who should serve on boards.*
- *Theme 13: Market and privatization ideologies drive focus for who to include on boards related to functions*

**Figure 4**

*Factors and Themes Generated from the Literature Review*



These factors and themes were then converted into questions for the panelists to provide input and commentary. The Round One survey questions posed were:

- What has been your experience on how “community agencies” bring in low-income persons to serve on their boards?
- What has been your experience on how low-income persons get trained to serve on these “community agency” boards?
- What has been your experience on how low-income persons are willing to serve on boards of “community agencies”
- What has been your experience on how low-income persons might have been disenfranchised or disempowered to serve on boards of “community agencies”?
  - Do you find this true? Why or why not? How?
- What has been your experience on how low-income persons may be seen to be a “token” on a board of a “community agency”?
  - Do you find this true? Why or why not? How? If you are a low-income person yourself, have you ever felt you are seen as a “token” representative? How?
- What has been your experience of behaviors by persons already on a board to welcome low-income persons?
- What has been your experience of behaviors by persons already on a board to exclude low-income persons?
- What has been your experience of any formal rules by a board to welcome low-income persons?

- What has been your experience of any formal rules by a board to exclude low-income persons?
- What is your opinion about this statement? Low-income persons must be involved in decision-making on a board.
- What is your opinion about this statement? It is no longer important for low-income persons to serve on the board of a “community agency.”
- Do you think that low-income persons should be required to serve on the board of directors of “community agencies” that were established to serve the needs of low-income persons?
  - YES or NO. Explain.

The final question posed directly asked the panelists to provide other limit-situational themes, asking:

- Please share any other thoughts or experiences you have about the role of low-income persons on boards of directors.

***Results From Round One Narrative Survey***

Each of the 14 panelists’ interviews, either done online or via an interview with Dr. Alison Kaufman, were formatted into a Microsoft Word document and treated as a separate file. Each file, in turn, was loaded into the Nvivo software as a separate case for qualitative analysis. Codes were created based on the factors and themes noted above to then code each case file properly. Table 15 lists the Codes utilized from the literature review and organized along with the factors and themes earlier identified.

**Table 15***Structured Codes Based on Factors and Themes for Round One (Nvivo)*

Structured Code	Factor/Theme Based on Questions
Moment (new reality, urgency)	Factor A/Q1
Training (Opportunities, Content, Andragogical Method)	Factor B/Q2
Disenfranchisement (disengagement, social connections, income, professionalization, identity politics (diversity), tokenism)	Factor C/Q3
Policies (isomorphism, participation of low income required)	Factor D/Q4
Practices (social networks, margins)	
Ideology (market privatization, professionalization, accountability)	Factor E/Q5

One goal was that the questions were not so specific and so tightly connected to one factor or theme that nuances and other lenses might be missed. Thus, the predetermined, or structured, codes form a nucleus of the general factors and themes derived from the literature review but without such strict and narrow confines. Emergent themes were captured in the analysis phase. At this point in the Delphi process, it was the hope to garner as much open commentary and insights as possible. However, these factors and themes continued to drive this research project in Rounds Two and Three (Sald, 2012). As shown in Table 15, the a priori codes, or structured codes, developed from the literature review, were identified along with the logic of the five questions and themes:

1. the moment and its urgency
2. training



3. disenfranchisement
4. policies and practices
5. ideological pressures

A focus of the investigation, rooted in the Delphi method, was to listen carefully to the concerns, nuances, and ideas found in the comments of the expert panelists. Table 16 displays the number of cases (i.e., panelist interviews) that mentioned an aspect of the structured code during analysis, as recorded by Nvivo.

**Table 16**

*Factors and Themes Coded for Narrative Analysis: Generated from the Literature – Round One (Nvivo) (n =14)*

Codes – Factors and Themes – Structured	Cases: Interviewees	References
Moment (theme/Q1)	7	8
Urgency	5	8
Training (themes/Q2)	9	15
Content	9	11
Methods	5	6
Opportunities	12	14
Disenfranchisement (themes/Q3)	6	7
Disengagement	7	12
Lack of social connections	6	14
Perception of class or income status	7	22
Perception of professional credentials	9	19
Perception of race or ethnicity diversity	4	12
Perception of tokenism	13	23
Perception wrong gender or sexuality	0	0
Policies (themes/Q4)	6	7
Isomorphism	14	46
Required Low-Income participation	14	49

Practices (themes/Q4)	10	30
On the margins	13	28
Social Networks	8	14
Ideology (themes/Q5)	4	4
Accountability	7	13
Market and Privatization	2	3
Professionalization of leadership	8	21

Again, these frequencies represent the number of times that the panelist’s comment(s) touched upon a structured, or a priori, factor or theme and assigned to that code or various related codes. For instance, in the analysis of the Q1 factor, seven panelists noted that there was a clear moment in time now for some action around the topic of low-income persons’ involvement on boards; this was mentioned eight times. Five panelists noted eight times that there was an *urgency* to the moment for such policies and practices to be reviewed or discussed. When a new theme or factor was introduced, a new emergent code was created.

In terms of data sources and citations in this section, Nvivo provided a transcript for each code by the respondent by round. For this section, comments by all panelists for Rounds One and Two were sorted by code and marked by round so that the transcript for each code was saved in a file named by code. Though the file name may seem like it is for Round Two (the designated file contains RD 2 as a marker), the Round One comments are clearly marked and provide the sole data for this section. Each case or panelist was provided with a particular number (e.g., panelist 1, etc.) for continuity of identification or tracking throughout all three rounds. The comments found from Round One follow.

**Urgency of the Moment (Q1/Factor A).** In terms of the urgency of the moment to include low-income persons on the boards of these community service agencies, panelist 13 wrote:

*...a Community Board can be more effective in the community if it requires low-income persons to serve on the board. A stronger, influential progressing board of directors should always recruit a low-income person to serve on their board to strengthen the community.*” (File: RD 2 – Urgency 1172021)

Panelist 7 noted: *“As board members, we need to advocate on behalf of the population to include low-income persons serve on the board. We cannot make decisions based without the involvement of those we serve. It makes no sense!”* (File: RD 2 – Urgency 1172021). This expert continued, *“Agencies must hear the input, ideas, concerns, and values of those they are providing services and resources”* (File: RD 2 – Urgency 1172021).

**Training (Q2/Factor B).** Above, Table 16 shows that for the second structured code dealing with trainings (factor Q2), nine panelists commented on this topic, referencing it 15 times. As the panelists drilled down more, nine noted issues around the *content* of the training with a frequency of 11 mentions. Five persons focused on the methods employed, or not employed, for such training with a frequency of six mentions. The clear majority of 12 respondents noted on 14 occasions the relevancy of finding proper and local *opportunities* for board training.

Various panelists shared their perspectives on training for community agency boards and whether, or how, there might be specific training programs for low-income persons to be able to serve on these boards. Panelist 5 shared:

*I would say that in my experience there's been training, but it hasn't been any different than any other board member, for it to be different it might actually be discriminatory. But I can speak to the fact that we have had, well one of the boards that I'm involved with, we have a tripartite board that requires equal representation from the low-income sector. And what we've had mainly is persons who are not necessarily low-income but represent low-income institutions and entities. However, we also have been fortunate enough to have a few low-income people actually representing agencies that serve low-income people. They themselves are still low-income by that definition. . . But as far as training is concerned, I don't see any difference in the training of members, period. Maybe, I don't know how you do this, but part of the training without... you don't want to single an entity out, by saying, "We need to take time to train you how to treat low-income people" ... you probably wouldn't do that, it would defeat your purpose. I suppose that what probably needs to happen, there probably needs to be an intentional intent to actually include in the training issues that would be germane or important to low-income people. (File: RD 2 – Training 1172021)*

Panelist 1 observed:

*Most boards have a training or orientation for new board members. In my experience the training is the same for all members. I have also been involved with programs such as the Emerging Leaders program that trains low-income and other community leaders how to become more engaged in the community and the basics of board governance and functioning. (File: RD 2 – Training 1172021)*

One expert, panelist 3, insisted on the importance of board training in that “[T]he

*inclusion of low-income people enhances a board especially when that person is trained on how a board works. This inclusion is necessary for community agencies. The statement (no longer important) is false” (File: RD 2 – Training 1172021). Panelist 3 continued by reflecting on the critical importance of board training, especially for low-income persons who serve writing: “[A]bsent adequate Board Training materials, supported by genuine one on one coaching or a formal class setting, the potential for disenfranchisement and/or disempowerment increases dramatically” (File: RD 2 – Training 1172021).*

Panelist 6 noted that *“[M]y experience is that everyone who becomes a member of these ‘community agency’ boards receive orientation to the board which includes some fiduciary training” (File: RD 2 – Content 1172021). Panelist 7 noted that “[A]gain depended on the board, if you are new to serving on the board there may be some additional training that you do not have experience with i.e., understanding budgets, procedures, and protocols etc. I have seen some training on community boards that I am part of” (File: RD 2 – Content 1172021). In a similar vein regarding content, panelist 8 noticed some changes in the information offered in their board training, reflecting that their agency’s “board training manual includes rights and expectations of new members. Also conflict of interest. This was revised after finding out from LI [low-income] members that they sought to benefit from participating” (File: RD 2 – Content 1172021).*

In reflection, panelist 7 warned about the content of such training:

*[I] think often we have tokens on boards, whether they be low income, female, minority. Each board member should have the same weight as another board member. The truth is we do have some expert board members who can be*

*persuasive in moving a board in one direction or another. If low-income board members have not had much experience or any new member can feel as a token or be unrepresented. (File: RD 2 – Content 1172021)*

Some panelists discussed methods, or basic andragogical style, utilized in some of their board training experiences. Panelist 8 wrote:

*Working to include LI (low income) persons – especially seeking their input has happened usually. Existing board members received training that emphasized doing with, not doing for.” This panelist continued, “Sometimes (it) takes longer to reach decisions but board training and agency philosophy stresses that people affected by decisions need a voice in making decisions. (File: RD 2 – Methods 1172021)*

Panelist 3 observed:

*I find that sometimes low-income folks are not empowered by board training and without understanding how boards work, they cannot fully function on a board. Thus, comments in meetings are disregarded. They are simply window dressing. The board misses gleaning actual experience that the person has in services rendered. (File: RD 2 – Methods 1172021)*

Panelist 10 noted that in their experience one of the best methods for board training is “one on one time providing info on background, on values, providing written info, listening to questions and concerns and being shown respect, patience, and sincere appreciation” (File: RD 2 – Methods 1172021).

Panelist 4 provided a more skeptical note:

*I think board education often is lacking across the board. For some organizations, it is hard to get board members that truly represent the diversity (racial, economic and skills) and so they go with people's willingness to just show up. So, often someone who might not have the means to financially contribute (to) the board feels left out or sort of hesitant to contribute to the discussions. The board member that seems to have financial means and professional experience tends to dominate. Board education needs to include ways to make sure all members are valued. (File: RD 2 – Methods 1172021)*

Echoing some others, panelist 13 reported that they are “*not aware of any training for potential board members*” (File: RD 2 – Opportunities 1172021). Panelist 1 identified some training opportunities in the local community based on certain insights or methods/andragogy, when they wrote:

*I think active efforts need[s] [to be] made to develop low-income residents so they can serve on boards. Some programs include neighborhood leadership development programs such as The Raymond John Wean Foundation's Emerging Leaders program or community organizing efforts such as the Youngstown Housing Task Force. (File: RD 2 – Opportunities 1172021)*

Panelist 3 reflected further that:

*In my experience, there has been no board training involved for any members of our community-based board, however, the Racial Equality Institute training is required. Boards that I am familiar with which have no-low-income members have had board retreats which include board training (File: RD 2 – Opportunities 1172021).*

A trend in training efforts and opportunities was identified by panelist 8 who shared, “*In startup stages especially when seeking funding training is usually well done. As agencies become established less attention is paid to formal training and new members rely more on listening and observing longer term members*” (File: RD 2 – Opportunities – 1172021).

**Disenfranchisement (Q3/Factor C).** Under concerns raised in the Q3 factor relating to disenfranchisement, six interviewees narrated some reflection or comment about *disenfranchisement*, mentioning that concept seven times. When dissecting this factor into more specific themes, details emerged from the narrative analysis. For instance, *disengagement* was noted by seven panelists with 12 references. The theme of the *lack of social connections* elicited six interviewees to note that topic 14 times. A similar number of panelists, seven, commented 22 times on the issue of how *perception of class or income status* plays some role. Nine participants noted 19 times how the *perception of professional credentials* may impact the selection of low-income persons on boards.

Only four experts spent time commenting on 12 occasions on the issue of the *perception of race or ethnicity diversity* as differentiated from class or income. No panelist commented at all about the *perception of wrong gender or sexuality* as a conflicting issue preventing, or encouraging, low-income participation on boards. Thirteen panelists elicited 23 comments on the *perception of tokenism*.

Panelists provide insight about the possible themes contributing to disenfranchisement or disengagement of low-income persons from serving on community boards. Panelist 1 noted why some low-income persons might be disenfranchised:



*I think many people, not just low-income but perhaps even more so low-income are disenfranchised from serving on boards because they do not know how to become part or access serving on a board, they are not familiar with Roberts Rules or other governance functions, and may not feel welcome. (File: RD 2 – Disenfranchisement 1172021*

Another participant acknowledged a similar concern as noted in the above training section, as panelist 2 shared, *“Absent adequate Board Training materials, supported by genuine one on one coaching or a formal class setting, the potential for disenfranchisement and/or disempowerment increases dramatically”* (File: RD 2 – Disenfranchisement 1172021). Panelist 12 noted: *“I find that this is sometimes true, and I have been associated with some entities that avoid bringing the voice of the low-income member so as to simply be able to control the narrative from the entities perspective”* (File: RD 2 – Disenfranchisement 1172021).

Panelist 5 provided another insight about disenfranchisement, writing:

*I must say, I haven't had that experience. The low-income people who I have been on boards with have been strong personality types. Who basically didn't allow themselves, at least in terms of interactions or feelings outwardly, I haven't seen that. Now, there are times when... I've been on one board where a low-income person purposely would sometimes make comments, sort of like to test us. Would say something like, “You got that going” and so forth, and sometimes you just have to recognize that it's a test. We test people with our lives too, I guess. So, sometimes it's to see if you are real and you can take a little ribbing. If you have a person who's outgoing, outspoken, and has a strong personality, they may reverse*

*that whole trend and instead of feeling disenfranchised, they may make you feel a little uncomfortable initially as a board member. (File: RD 2 –*

*Disenfranchisement 1172021)*

Panelist 15 echoed the insight about misjudging disenfranchised perceptions, noting:

*For them to be disempowered—I don't think that... To be honest with you, the boards I've been on or the boards I've seen, and something I think I've learned from someone who actually served on the board, I told them about me being busy. And they said to me, "We usually look for busy people. Busy people get things done." They always have other things they need to get done, so they're going to get on there and do the things that need to be done. Whereas a person that is not as busy, perhaps may not show the full interest of getting what needs to get done, done. (File: RD 2 – Disenfranchisement 1172021)*

Panelist 7 gave some very practical advice on mitigating against disenfranchisement:

*When boards make an effort to be inclusive to low-income persons the point seems to be to keep them engaged however if the rest of the board is beyond them in terms of experience it can have a negative affect on the members. Your By-laws committee must be committed to educating all board members about your goals of inclusiveness and every one step forward with that. (File: RD 2 –*

*Disenfranchisement 1172021)*

Delving into another aspect of disenfranchisement, panelists commented on their perspective of *disengagement*. Panelist 10 noted that *“board members tend to defer to the professionals, take them more seriously, get impatient with fully listening to and answering questions and/or concerns of grassroots, less sophisticated/educated*

members” (File: RD 2 – Disengagement 1172021). Panelist 4 had a lengthier reflection:

*As mentioned (above), there are assumptions that money, status, influence etc. weighs more than lived experience or a want to advocate for the community you represent. I have been on boards where it is clear that the members were invited for their professional influence or financial means and such. They seem out of touch with the services or population in the community where the agency delivers services. Then I have been on boards where it is primarily people from the community and issues or opportunities get sidelined because it becomes a town hall session rather than pulling together ideas and next steps. Both boards never seemed to benefit the agency and the agency spent more time accommodating the members or appeasing. Sometimes it's the agency that becomes disempowered because of overcompensating etc. I have seen where people are disempowered with superficial or patronizing gestures by board members --- knowing full well they are asking their input but talk over or dismiss the contribution or minimize it. I have also witnessed where the person is totally ignored or sort of expected to show up but shut up. And where a person has been made invisible or no effort made to reach out or get the information they need, perhaps they prefer email over mailings or don't have a printer to print documents etc. or no one makes themselves available to answer questions. We take a lot for granted and assume everyone has access or can afford access to simple things like WIFI, reliable transportation, etc. Sometimes it's one person tasked with representing all low-income people --- rather than inviting several people who with a similar experience of low-income --- so it makes it more welcoming and they are not a*

*token.*

*I have seen people made to be tokens --- it has happened on both ends of the spectrum. A person with a certain skill like accounting is asked to be on a board who does not necessarily have an interest or a full understanding of the community. While not low-income, I am a religious, I have often been invited on a board and patronized or input minimized because of assumptions and biases against whatever negative perception of the church or religious organization. I don't have financial means nor necessarily have power to garner the financial means that my religious congregation can contribute. It is perceived that I have nothing worth listening to or to contribute so I am quickly shut down or talked over. Or it is perceived I should be able to get the money and make it happen when I have no influence in my community to make anything to happen. But I do have education and able to help problem solve and be resourceful. I believe a low-income person probably has similar means to offer, too. It really gets down to changing perceptions and assumptions of the influencers or dated board policies that somehow equate the ideal member as a white male influential rich make a good board member who has memorized Robert's Rule of Order. And probably include a facilitator or a community organizer to consult with the board processes to be sure all voices are at least heard and decisions are made. (File: RD 2 – Disengagement 1172021)*

Panelist 9 provided a similar perspective, noting:

*Through conversations with some of the people, and they're coming onto the board for information, but are afraid or embarrassed even many times in*

*meetings to ask some of the questions that they may have about low-income. . . To me, there are advantages to having them there because then they could give some customer impact in many situations, but I think they become more quiet about decisions and that type of thing, because sometimes they are somewhat embarrassed. Sometimes they have—no one has invited them to be involved in the decision-making of a lot of agencies that they may be involved with. And they come to, many times they come to get on a board of an agency by expressing interest out—say in the church. Many times. And they don't have an understanding of what they are getting themselves into. And I think that so many times, when I sit in rooms at these boards, the reaction to people in the room, the people in the room, even though some of them may work with low-income people, when they come to a board meeting, their way of interacting and expressing things change. (File: RD 2 – Disengagement 1172021)*

Regarding the structured code pertaining to *lack of social connections*, panelist 15 noted:

*Well, of course, there is always the concern of, 'Okay. What are you bringing to the table?' If you will..., what are you bringing or are you just here because it looks good, you wanted to be on a board? Whereas—they always sit back and take notice of any new person coming on period. But a low-income person would... I would see them welcoming them more than I would another person who has served on boards and been a part of boards, because some of them may feel a threat as opposed to someone who is low-income, they're a body, but they can teach them, they can learn, they are willing to accept how they do it, and their rules, and their perception of everything, if you will. (File: RD 2 – Lack of Social*

Connections 1172021)

Panelist 6 shared:

*In my experience, it is difficult to identify low-income persons for board membership. That means these individuals have leadership skills. They also are on multiple boards which makes their time thin and may not be as productive. My experience is of inclusion of anyone if they want to participate in programming and fundraising. Board participation is not easy to begin with. So, anyone who is willing to take a role is welcome. I do not have experience to observe behaviors that a low-income person has been excluded. (File: RD 2 – Lack of Social Connections 1172021).*

Connecting lack of social connections and disenfranchisement, panelist 4 wrote:  
*there are assumptions that money, status, influence etc. weighs more than lived experience or a want to advocate for the community you represent. I have been on boards where it is clear that the members were invited for their professional influence or financial means and such. . . (File: RD 2 – Lack of Social Connections 1172021)*

Panelist 9 noted a sense of a lack of connection, writing:

*To me it has been somewhat of an exclusion, because many times when you are dealing with the people on the board, they may be some of your most educated people in this area, and they many times in their jobs, they're working for different agencies say for the welfare system, and they be working through that system, and not have skills with talking or working with someone who doesn't*

*earn that type of a salary or hasn't had the opportunity to obtain that kind of education. (File: RD 2 – Lack of Social Connections 1172021)*

This expert continues:

*...because serving on a board, you are giving up a lot of your personal time. You have to have transportation many times to get there, and on the boards I've been on, we are asked to donate like at Christmas or whatever, to donate over here again for whatever. And if you're low-income, do you have the kind of finances to donate? You have people, say like me, and they ask for a donation, so you give them \$20 or \$25. And if all they can give is \$1 or \$5, do you think they are going to be comfortable? I wouldn't think so. (File: RD 2 – Lack of Social Connections 1172021)*

As noted above, the lack of a simple ability to give to a Christmas fund leads to the panelists' responses on their insights of *perception of class or income status* as an element of disengagement. Some experts connect various elements together regarding lack of social connections, disengagement, and disenfranchisement, while some make very specific connections to perceptions of class and income differences. Panelist 5 drilled down on some specifics related to the reality of a low-income person serving on a board, and the board's dilemma related to various incomes serving on their board, reflecting:

*Sometimes, when you're on certain boards you are expected to contribute financially. And I've been on several boards where the expectation is just out there, and then they would semicolon the statement by saying, "However, we're willing to accept work or volunteerism or some other thing in lieu of cash." I*

*don't know how you get around that. I guess if you're on a board that either has a requirement or wants to have participation or membership from a person of low-income, you have to really think about how you're going to do that. If you're on a board with the expectation that a board member actually spends money on events, buys tickets, those kinds of things... a lot of boards have it right in their by-laws, "You folks are expected to contribute at least \$200 a year." Sometimes the statement will say "in-kind." But then the board has to figure out how to convey to the ones that can afford to pay that money that that doesn't mean you. Because I've been on board where some people who could afford, they just took the position that, "Hey, with all the stuff I do, and all the stuff I'm giving, I don't feel like I need to buy a ticket or give money." And they could afford to, but how do you split that out in a way that—sometimes I've known some board chairs to be mildly blunt and just say that, "As a board let's acknowledge among us what we can afford to do and what this agency needs, and we need to act accordingly. We need to see contributions in a manner that benefits the agency, and we need to know how we can best benefit the agency that needs money." That kind of thing.*

*You're always conscious about the people who you know who can't always afford those things. I've been on one board where a person knew and they didn't have one qualm with saying, "No. I won't be able to do that." I appreciate that, you know. I didn't overly do it, but I just let you know, "You know I'm on this board. You know my situation. I'm willing to do some other things, but that's not something I can do." This is a great question. It brought up in mind the importance of trying to negotiate that, because that could be landmine-ish. (File:*



RD 2 – Perception of class or income status 1172021)

Panelist 3 provided a further insight into this perception and offered some remedies:

*Our organization has a strong involvement in the inner-city community. A variety of meetings are held for issues in the city. Often committees are formed to create action on problem issues. This brings various community members to the forefront who may be low-income residents. Forming a board that is active utilizes these low-income residents. No commitment of a donation to the nonprofit is required. However, another board that I have been associated with includes an implicit requirement for donations to the nonprofit. This truly eliminates the inclusion of low-income members.*

*I find that low-income persons are willing to serve if they are treated with respect and their voice is heard in meetings. Also, they may serve when there is an understanding that they are not looked down upon if they do not donate money, but they give time to the agency or nonprofit. (File: RD 2 – Perception of class or income status 117202)*

Panelist 4 reported from their own experience connecting perception of income status with needs for on-going board formation when they shared:

*So, often someone who might not have the means to financially contribute the board feels left out or sort of hesitant to contribute to the discussions. The board member that seems to have financial means and professional experience tends to dominate. Board education needs to include ways to make sure all members are valued. (File: RD 2 – Perception of class or income status 1172021)*

Panelist 9 probed into the matter of perception of class and engagement of low-

income persons:

*In this area, many of them have been disenfranchised and disempowered, because many of the people that are on boards are people in businesses or what have you that might be a person that makes decisions about low-income people.*

*To me it has been somewhat of an exclusion, because many times when you are dealing with the people on the board, they may be some of your most educated people in this area, and they many times in their jobs, they're working for different agencies say for the welfare system, and they be working through that system, and not have skills with talking or working with someone who doesn't earn that type of a salary or hasn't had the opportunity to obtain that kind of education.*

*My thing about low-income, I have a thing about people being declared low-income, but they many times will declare themselves, because they'll say, 'Well, I can't afford to do this, that, or the other because I'm on welfare, or I'm on this, or I'm on that.' And I think that restricts them from becoming engaged with other people. (File: RD 2 – Perception of class or income status 1172021)*

Shifting to perceptions about professional credentials as a source of disenfranchisement, panelist 13 noted from their own experience, *“On some of the boards I serve on, I have been welcomed on for my ability to enhance the organizations, other boards that I was just there as a show piece, until I proved them otherwise”* (File: RD 2 – Perception of professional credentials 1172021). Panelist 10 commented that *“Board members tend to defer to the professionals, take them more seriously, get impatient with fully listening to and answering questions and/or concerns of grass roots,*

*less sophisticated/educated members”* (File: RD 2 – Perception of professional credentials 1172021).

The issue of racial and ethnic diversity for board members provided some commentary by the panelists. Panelist 6 stated that:

*The boards I have experience have a diverse makeup. There are people who may represent low-income persons, but I do not know who they are or how they are brought in. I do not sit on the board development committees of these organizations. My experience is that board development committees are trying very hard to create diversity, but not by low-income standards. Rather, the standard I am aware of is ethnic diversity.* (File: RD 2 – Perception of race or ethnic diversity 1172021)

Connecting various codes and themes, Panelist 4 wrote:

*Depending on the agency, I’ve been on a board where another member or chair will make a declaration for the lack of diversity on the board. Whether that is racial diversity, economic diversity or the mix of board, staff and people receiving services of the agency. The acknowledgement of an unbalanced board is always good, but often in carrying out the attempt to invite “token” or inviting someone to participate but they are unwelcomed or patronized. I think it’s disrespectful of the person being invited. As the board often needs to look at changing their policy or procedure or board education to be more inclusive and then put into practice an equitable way of inviting people to the board. Which might include criteria and who does the board represent. Is it the interest of the board or the community they in service to? Eradicating the underlying biases and assumptions of say an all-white board in an ethnically diverse agency or an agency that serves in a low-*

*income community is takes time but necessary to open the space to include the people who truly have a stake in how the agency will impact and interact with the community. (File: RD 2 – Perception of race or ethnic diversity 1172021)*

The issue of *tokenism* resulted in much more commentary among the Delphi participants.

Panelist 5 noted that:

*I think it's one of those things where you have to either engage the person or someone else who knows the person has to engage them. Because I think initially you have to create a genuine sense of comfort with the person, and actually make them feel that they are not a token. That's not easy sometimes. Especially with vernacular, and phraseology, and using wording that we're comfortable with, that is boards, which someone else may not be as comfortable with because they haven't had the exposure. I think if we consciously create the atmosphere that allows a person to feel comfortable on a board, because what tends to happen... there tends to be only a small number, maybe 1, or on a large board, 2 who may be low-income. And then that becomes an issue, 'If they know I'm low-income they're going to try and be nice-y nice-y and accept me.' But are they genuine? (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021)*

This same expert connected the experiences of low-income persons and persons of color regarding their own experience on a board:

*One of the things that I think happens, if you're not comfortable or used to dealing with a certain segment of people, you're either overly cautious or you step on your own feet in terms of... Because it's like... I'll equate it to the feelings of prejudice. When people say, 'I'm not racist' or 'I'm not prejudice' and they go*

*out of their way to try and demonstrate that, sometimes they trip because we have these messages that have been given to us, so if we can acknowledge we're wrong or they contributed to a negative situation, we sometimes are overbearing them, and then they come out anyway in a statement we make or in a facial gesture that we give and so forth. I've seen some of that, and the only remedy is to acknowledge that there may be some issues you have to deal with and get comfortable with it, acknowledging it, and then you're more apt to demonstrate a more genuine approach to a person you don't know as well or are they are from a group that you don't associate with a lot. (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021)*

When approaching the commentary section about requiring a low-income person to serve on such boards of directors, this same panelist reacted by connecting such a requirement to a form of tokenism:

*I don't think the person should be required. I think the agency should be required to make every effort to seek low-income persons to serve on their board. I kind of know what you mean. But it's kind of almost like saying, 'This is the way that you earn your keep, because we're helping you or people like you, you should serve.' I don't like that idea, because it's almost like, that's really what a token appointment is for somebody. And then you force me to come onto a board, and then you negate me. What could be worse? (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021)*

Panelist 15 provided insight into the connection between the requirement for low-income participation on the board and forms of tokenism:

*I don't know that I would think they would be—I could see some community boards saying, 'Wow. Look what we did. We got a quote unquote minority'" – And when I say minority, I don't mean color, I'm talking about financially— 'We have a minority on the board, and this is what we're looking for.' And as opposed to, 'What does this person bring to the board?' What are they bringing, not just because they are a token. I do think there may be—I don't think it's real prevalent. I don't think a lot of people do it, but I think there may be one or two agencies that do... but I don't think that many do. (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021)*

When this panelist probed more on the requirement for a low-income person to serve on a community agency board, panelist 15 retorted:

*I don't know if I would say required, because required makes me think they would get anybody just to stick them on there to say that they would have a token, so they have a body. I think it would be good. I think it would be feasible. But for them to make it mandatory, no. (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021)*

Panelist 13 concurred with the perception of tokenism and shared how they personally felt when asked to serve on some boards:

*Yes, at times I felt like I was only on the board as a token, to make the board look diverse. On some of the boards I serve on, I have been welcomed on for my ability to enhance the organizations, other boards that I was just there as a show piece, until I proved them otherwise. (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021)*

Panelist 1 shared a different nuance on tokenism, writing:

*I think this varies by agencies. I do believe there are many boards that make a*

*sincere good faith effort to be representative of the communities they serve and there are many others that lack diversity in the broadest sense of the term. I can see in some cases how someone may be viewed as a token.* (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021)

Panelist 8 claimed that it might not be tokenism, per se, that reduces participation of low-income persons on boards as much as the fact that it “*maybe more due to being nervous or embarrassed to be presented as a low-income*” person (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021). Panelist 9 concurred in that insight writing, “*through conversations with some of the people, and they’re coming onto the board for information, but are afraid or embarrassed even many times in meetings to ask some of the questions that they may have about low-income*” (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021).

Panelist 7 observed that:

*I think often we have tokens on boards, whether they be low income, female, minority. Each board member should have the same weight as another other board member. The truth is we do have some expert board members who can be persuasive in moving a board in one direction or another. If low-income board members have not had much experience or any new member can feel as a token or be unrepresented.* (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021)

Some panelists connected tokenism and not listening to the voice of low-income persons on their boards in general. Panelist 12 wrote “*I have been associated with some entities that avoid bringing the voice of the low-income member so as to simply be able to control the narrative from the entities perspective*” (File: RD 2 – Perception of tokenism 1172021). Panelist 10 furthered expounded on this line of experience, noting that “*Board*

*members tend to defer to the professionals, take them more seriously, get Impatient with fully listening to and answering questions and/or concerns of grass roots, less sophisticated/educated members” (File: RD 2— Perception of tokenism 1172021).*

Panelist 4 shared various connections of tokenism, writing:

*Depending on the agency, I’ve been on a board where another member or chair will make a declaration for the lack of diversity on the board. Whether that is racial diversity, economic diversity or the mix of board, staff and people receiving services of the agency. The acknowledgement of an unbalanced board is always good, but often in carrying out the attempt to invite ‘token’ or inviting someone to participate but they are unwelcomed or patronized. I think it’s disrespectful of the person being invited. As the board often needs to look at changing their policy or procedure or board education to be more inclusive and then put into practice an equitable way of inviting people to the board. Which might include criteria and who does the board represent. Is it the interest of the board or the community they in service to? Eradicating the underlying biases and assumptions of say an all white board in an ethnically diverse agency or an agency that serves in a low-income community is takes time but necessary to open the space to include the people who truly have a stake in how the agency will impact and interact with the community.*

*For some organizations it is hard to get board members that truly represent the diversity (racial, economic and skills) and so they go with people’s willingness to just show up. So, often someone who might not have the means to financially contribute the board feels left out or sort of hesitant to contribute to*



*the discussions. The board member that seems to have financial means and professional experience tends to dominate. Board education needs to include ways to make sure all members are valued.*

*I have seen where people are disempowered with superficial or patronizing gestures by board members --- knowing full well they are asking their input but talk over or dismiss the contribution or minimize it. I have also witnessed where the person is totally ignored or sort of expected to show up but shut up. . . Sometimes it's one person tasked with representing all low-income people --- rather than inviting several people who with a similar experience of low-income --- so it makes it more welcoming and they are not a token. (File: RD 2-- Perception of tokenism 1172021)*

Panelist 6 provided a more positive note with a distinction:

*[I] do not perceive a low-income person as a token as much as a leader. I find that this person sits on many boards by virtue of their community position. Again, the token is typically a community leader who sits on multiple boards. I view this more as the default and token member. There are board members who strive to be present and take leadership roles. (File: RD 2-- Perception of tokenism 1172021)*

**Policies Regarding Low Income Participation (Q4/Factor D).** This question and factor pertaining to policies related to low-income inclusion included two areas: isomorphism (14 cases, 46 references) in that agencies tend to mimic or are forced to include similar characteristics by norm or by policy, and the actual policy related to low-income persons' required participation (14 cases, 49 references) on these community boards. Policy requirements (6 cases, 7 references) garnered some commentary. Several

panelists offered that they had not experienced any policy that outright prevented low-income persons from serving on such boards, with panelist 2 explicitly noting: “*Formal rules to welcome – constructive, productive with positive outcomes. Formal rules to exclude – no experience*” (File: RD 2— Policies 1172021). Panelist 5, with experience as a chairperson of a community organization, offered some insights about the practical aspects of having any policy of inclusion, writing:

*If a low-income person is on a board, then effort must be made to make sure that person is put in a position where they participate in important decision making and not in some sort of—it needs to be meaningful, and there needs to be a way to make sure that that occurs, through committees, and that sometimes falls on the board chairperson to make sure they look at committee assignments and they make sure they look at—And the other thing is that you need to get to know everybody on your board well enough, and that includes low-income people to know what their strengths, talents, and personality quirks are. It serves you well to know those kinds of things. There are times when I have strategically asked that a person of low-income would rise to the occasion and answer, because I knew them well enough and I knew the situation well enough, that they would say, ‘Oh. This is mine. I got something I could add to this.’ So, that kind of thing. (File: RD 2— Policies 1172021)*

Probing deeper into the policy prescription for low-income inclusion, an analysis of literature references to various forms of institutional isomorphism that the panelists might describe as part of their own experience was conducted. Such insights included normative, mimetic, or coercive pressures to conform or look more like other

organizations due to the desire to behave like other professional organizations. Some ways include credentialing and licensing (i.e., normative), adapting their work and structures in times of uncertainty to conform to consultants' expectations (i.e., mimetic), or conceding to political pressures or governmental regulatory mandates and contracts (i.e., coercive) (Thornton, 2011).

Panelist 5 explained some of the isomorphic pressures noticed pertaining to financial commitments and donations to the board if one is a member of that organization's governance structure that may negatively impact the participation of low-income persons, writing:

*Sometimes, when you're on certain boards you are expected to contribute financially. And I've been on several boards where the expectation is just out there, and then they would semicolon the statement by saying, 'However, we're willing to accept work or volunteerism or some other thing in lieu of cash.' I don't know how you get around that. I guess if you're on a board that either has a requirement or wants to have participation or membership from a person of low-income, you have to really think about how you're going to do that. If you're on a board with the expectation that a board member actually spends money on events, buys tickets, those kinds of things... a lot of boards have it right in their by-laws, 'You folks are expected to contribute at least \$200 a year.' Sometimes the statement will say 'in-kind.' But then the board has to figure out how to convey to the ones that can afford to pay that money that that doesn't mean you. Because I've been on board where some people who could afford, they just took the position that, 'Hey, with all the stuff I do, and all the stuff I'm giving, I don't feel*

*like I need to buy a ticket or give money.’ And they could afford to, but how do you split that out in a way that—sometimes I’ve known some board chairs to be mildly blunt and just say that, ‘As a board let’s acknowledge among us what we can afford to do and what this agency needs, and we need to act accordingly. We need to see contributions in a manner that benefits the agency, and we need to know how we can best benefit the agency that needs money.’ That kind of thing.*

(File: RD 2— Isomorphism 1172021)

Panelist 3 concurred from their own experience about this isomorphic pressure,

*“However, another board that I have been associated with includes an implicit requirement for donations to the nonprofit. This truly eliminates the inclusion of low-income members”* (File: RD 2— Isomorphism 1172021).

Panelist 1 noted that some agencies are more aggressive in fulfilling their mandates or policies to invite low-income persons on their boards of directors, stating *“My experience is that there are some ‘community agencies’ that actively seek low-income board representatives and some that do not. We seek some low-income persons and persons that reside in low to moderate income census tracts”* (File: RD 2—

Isomorphism 1172021). This same expert noted some formal organizational policies that needed to conform to governmental policies, writing:

*Some boards have within their bylaws that the board will be composed of specific composition of people. Community Housing Development Organizations include one third or more of board members being low-income or representatives of a low-income community. These boards may also have strong recruitment efforts and engagement with the communities or constituents they serve. Formal rules that*

*may exclude low-income persons may include nomination by existing members and/or extensive application requirements. (File: RD 2— Isomorphism 1172021)*

Panelist 13 expressed the opinion that *“Yes. A Community Board can be more effective in the community if it required low-income persons to serve on the board. A stronger, influential progressing board of directors should always recruit a low-income person to serve on their board to strength[en] the community”* (File: RD 2—

Isomorphism 1172021). Panelist 2 probed further on their own board:

*My experience in this area is limited to the . . . Agency Bylaws delineate a tripartite Board composition dictated by public funding entities. Key to this structure is the requirement for Low Income Representation. They are to be democratically nominated and elected by low-income individuals. A significant challenge for the “agencies” is the nominating process. For effective execution of an agency’s strategic plan, avoidance of counterproductive and/or disruptive agendas is directly tied to board recruiting. Educating potential nominees about the purpose of a board can prove to be challenging. Defining the role of leadership to provide strategic direction for an agency, including recruitment of competent management to execute the plan and achieve the goals set by the board. . . my thoughts and experience there are positive and productive. (File: RD 2— Isomorphism 1172021)*

Panelist 6 noted that the pressure for diversification on boards does not seem to be related to income, but rather race, writing:

*The boards I have experience have a diverse makeup. There are people who may represent low-income persons, but I do not who they are or how they are brought*

*in. I do not sit on the board development committees of this organizations. My experience is that board development committees are trying very hard to create diversity, but not by low-income standards. Rather, the standard I am aware of is ethnic diversity. (File: RD 2-- Isomorphism 1172021)*

This expert continues:

*Low-income persons understand and empathize with other low-income persons, but also need to represent all clients. There should be representation of the clients of that decision making community agency. Low-income persons should be involved. It is not fair to presume that low income means limited education or limited board experience, but it may. For that reason, it is even more important to educate every board member on governance, financial statements, mission and fiduciary responsibility. (File: RD 2-- Isomorphism 1172021).*

Panelist 14 concurred about that regulatory framework and the need for ongoing board formation and education, stating:

*When boards make an effort to be inclusive to low-income persons the point seems to be to keep them engaged however if the rest of the board is beyond them in terms of experience it can have a negative affect on the members. Your By-laws committee must be committed to educating all board members about your goals of inclusiveness and everyone step forward with that. . . If as a board you have a policy of training and onboarding new members you should have some formal rules to welcome all. A new board member may need some extra time and attention and I would hope that that would be a commitment to all members. I have not seen first-hand any rules that would exclude low-income persons. (File:*

RD 2-- Isomorphism 1172021)

This same panelist probed deeper into the role of board members committed to the work of their agency as a formal process. This expert wrote:

*As board members we need to advocate on behalf of the population to include low-income persons serve on the board. We cannot make decisions based without involvement of those we serve. It makes no sense!*

*I have been in charge of assembling committees and panels of individuals to review and comment on services provided and needs assessment. I also have served on boards with inclusion of low-income persons and have found that the input received is invaluable. At times, as with everything in life, the people that utilize programs and services are most often the people that have the most knowledge of what is good and bad with these services.*

*I have not had any experiences regarding formal rules to exclude low-income persons. I have been a part a few boards that had formal rules to include low-income individuals and this was done with no issues. (File: RD 2-- Isomorphism 1172021)*

Panelist 10 reflected on some other aspects of normative pressures citing:

*'busy self-centered males and females' tend to more focused on having power, making rapid decisions and getting recognized and thanked, while those members concerned about problem solving and community improvement and fairness and equality often listen, value input and discern the deeper levels of issues and impacts. The ones with positive interactive experience who take the time to listen and be thoughtful are the best board members, whether low-income or high*

*income.* (File: RD 2-- Isomorphism 1172021)

Panelist 4 noted how policies have worked in other agencies not discussed here:

*I've seen where formal rules include how new board members are invited and what is the desired make-up of the board. It is actually helpful since a board reliant on the rules and procedures will comply and make every effort to be inclusive. For example, one board who serves an organization that supports persons with disabilities will be sure the board membership is made up of those who are in fact disabled. The Ohio Association for the Deaf is primarily people who have a deafness or connection to the deaf community as service providers. There is economic and racial cultural diversity among the deaf community --- but the common denominator is deafness.*

*So, in the same way --- for a board the common denominator does not have to be financial means or the ideal profile --- but rather interest and a stake in the agency providing service. This can be spelled out in a rule. However, I've not seen too many documents that would explicitly exclude low-income persons although I've seen where the desire is to have people who know fundraising or involved with money in some way --- in order to raise money and that is the primary purpose of the board for that agency --- rather than the board being about mission, policies and procedures and evaluation. The board culture, tradition, how and who board members are invited tends to reveal the informal ways that exclusion happens.*

*Why would you want to run a community agency meant to serve the community biased towards those who are not engaged or experienced with the*



*community its mission serves? If the community is primarily low income they are impacted by whatever the board decides. If it's a board that is used to being a fundraising board --- needs board education about the true purpose of a board which is to fulfill the mission --- not just hold the annual fundraising activities. It is about relationship building and making sure the mission extends beyond the board room.*

*To me, there are advantages to having them there because then they could give some customer impact in many situations, but I think they become more quiet about decisions and that type of thing, because sometimes they are somewhat embarrassed. Sometimes they have— no one has invited them to be involved in the decision-making of a lot of agencies that they may be involved with. And they come to, many times they come to get on a board of an agency by expressing interest out— say in the church. Many times. And they don't have an understanding of what they are getting themselves into. And I think that so many times, when I sit in rooms at these boards, the reaction to people in the room, the people in the room, even though some of them may work with low-income people, when they come to a board meeting, their way of interacting and expressing things change. (File: RD 2-- Isomorphism 1172021)*

Next, the opinions of the expert panelists on the actual requirement that low-income persons serve on such boards, as a policy, reveals that there is some divergence of thought. One panelist had differing positions in their comments about such a requirement. For instance, panelist 5 noted:

*I don't think the person should be required. I think the agency should be required*

*to make every effort to seek low-income persons to serve on their board. I kind of know what you mean. But it's kind of almost like saying, 'This is the way that you earn your keep, because we're helping you or people like you, you should serve.' I don't like that idea, because it's almost like, that's really what a token appointment is for somebody. And then you force me to come onto a board, and then you negate me. What could be worse? (File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021)*

The same panelist then reconsidered the role of representative voice and wrote:

*I'm on one board where the requirements, it's national and a state requirement, this has to be a tripartite board to include an equal number of members, but here is how it is different, equal number of members from the low-income sector, the private sector, and the political arena. So, when you say low-income sector, I would say of the persons representing the low-income sector, maybe two (2) are low-income. I know one (1) definitely is. The remainder either work for, or they're doing volunteer work for an agency that serves the low-income sector, so they were appointed by that agency. For example, let's say the Urban League, that would be an example of an agency that would have within its constituency a fairly high percentage of low-income constituents. And so, the person who would be appointed wouldn't necessarily be low-income but would represent that entity as an agency that serves low-income people. (File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021)*

Panelist 15 was not convinced that there should be such a requirement for low-income participation on these community boards, noting:

*They must be. I won't say they must be. I think it would be nice to have them on because they do have a strength, some of them don't have a say as to why their income is that amount or anything like that, but I should have a say, but to say that they must is kind of broad to me. I think it is important, but I still get stuck on that word 'must.' [T]hey should have opportunity to serve on boards, but it's not a must. I don't know if I would say required, because required makes me think they would get anybody just to stick them on there to say that they would have a token, so they have a body. I think it would be good. I think it would be feasible. But for them to make it mandatory, no. (File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021)*

Others commented that the requirement is critical. Panelist 1 said:

*I think it depends on the type of organization. If the organization serves low-income people than they should definitely be involved in decision making. I think it is critical to have some representation from the communities and constituents you serve to fulfill your mission and be held accountable. (File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021)*

Panelist 13 concurred:

*Low-income persons should be involved in the decision making of an organization. Who better to know what is need and who the population is to be better served? Low-income persons should absolutely serve on Community board. They would bring better information to the organization thru experience. The inclusion of low-income people enhances a board especially when that person is trained on how a board works. This inclusion is necessary for community*

*agencies. The statement is false. (File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021)*

Another echoed these sentiments, as panelist 6 wrote:

*Perspectives of all people represented by a community agency are important. Board diversity includes low-income persons especially when it was established to serve this community's needs. Fiduciary responsibility includes empathy and understanding. While other board members can empathize, there is no substitute for standing in one's own shoes. (File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021)*

Panelist 14 provided more insights into why it is important to require low-income persons on such boards, writing, *"I believe all voices should be represented and their voice matters. It is Discrimination against low-income people. They know what the community needs are. Many of those on the board with low-income are more passionate about the issues of their communities"* (File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021). Panelist 7 concurred:

*I agree with this 100% and we must be committed to inclusion and involvement of low-income persons and make sure they are part of the decision-making process. Not true no more than ever it is critical for low-income persons to serve on the board of our community agencies. How as a board can we make decisions without the involvement of the person that our agency serves. They must be involved in the process. As board members we need to advocate on behalf of the population to include low-income persons serve on the board. We cannot make decisions based without involvement of those we serve. It makes no sense! (File: RD 2-- Required*

Low Income Participation 1172021)

Other panelists provided insights from their own related experiences about such mandatory inclusion:

*I am in 100% agreement. As with a recent banking ownership change that I was a part of as a customer of the bank, if you do not get the input of the end user of any services, there will be problems! . . . [T]hose that utilize the system are almost better suited to bring the inadequacies of the system to light. There is no more important voice to contribute to the conversation regarding the services and intents of an organization than one who has been a recipient of these services.*

(File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021; panelist 12).

A local leader is even more forceful:

*Most of my experience is of intentional inclusiveness of low-income participation and I am not experienced (or tolerant of) boards that exclude low-income board member participation. I agree that low-income persons must be actively involved. Agencies must hear the input, ideas, concerns, and values of those they are providing services and resources.*

(File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021; panelist 10)

Panelist 4 cautioned about the requirement for such inclusion saying that low-income persons should serve “*provided that they are involved and included in the discussions*”

(File: RD 2-- Required Low Income Participation 1172021).

**Practices That May Include or Exclude Low-Income Persons (Q4).** As formal policies and rules may impact the inclusion or exclusion of low-income persons’ ability to serve on the board of directors of community organizations, the practices themselves

may prevent or encourage such participation. In this portion of the narrative survey, the panelists noted such practices (10 cases, 30 references) from their perspectives or experiences. Related codes focused on comments that noted how board members and the organization had to venture out of their mainstream positions and engage with persons who are not normally included, or who are on the margins (13 cases, 28 references) of society. The need to engage in various social networks (8 cases, 14 references) to engage low-income persons provided further nuances into the various practices that may hinder or provide the opportunity for low-income persons to participate on these boards.

Panelist 5 noted the practice of the usage of language during board meetings and how this may have an impact on inclusivity of those who are low-income, writing:

*Especially with vernacular, and phraseology, and using wording that we're comfortable with, that is boards, which someone else may not be as comfortable with because they haven't had the exposure. I think if we consciously create the atmosphere that allows a person to feel comfortable on a board. . . I've been fortunate to not be on a board that went out of the way to exclude someone. I have had a situation where one person called out several people in the group for using language—you know how there are these phrases, like what MMR means, CDC stands for this, and so forth—and people forget that another person on the board may not be familiar with those terms. Sometimes the person might not speak up because they don't necessarily want you to know they don't know what those phrases mean, or they're annoyed because you are using them and you should know better. I've seen that, but I'm not seeing blatant efforts to make someone of low-income status feel unwanted. I've seen people try to maybe overkill to be*

*welcoming, and then a person starts to think, “This is phony.” It’s like if you are a teacher and you are trying to get to know a kid, trying to get a kid to like you. You can overdo it. And then the kid just thinks you are doing it because you have to because you are a teacher. (File: RD 2— Practices 1172021)*

This panelist’s earlier comments about tokenism are relevant again for issue of practices that may not be so well known, yet remain important to acknowledge:

*If a low-income person is on a board, then effort must be made to make sure that person is put in a position where they participate in important decision making and not in some sort of—it needs to be meaningful, and there needs to be a way to make sure that that occurs, through committees, and that sometime falls on board chairperson to make sure they look at committee assignments and they make sure they look at—And the other thing is that you need to get to know everybody on your board well enough, and that includes low-income people to know what their strengths, talents, and personality quirks are. It serves you well to know those kinds of things. There are times where I have strategically asked that a person of low-income would rise to the occasion and answer, because I knew them well enough and I knew the situation well enough, that they would say, ‘Oh. This is mine. I got something I could add to this.’ (File: RD 2— Practices 1172021)*

Panelist 8 noted the constant need for training to practice inclusion, writing “*Working to include low-income persons— especially seeking their input has happened usually. Existing board members received training that emphasized doing with, not doing for*” (File: RD 2— Practices 1172021). This sentiment received further commentary, as panelist 3 said, “*I find that low-income persons are willing to serve if they are treated*

*with respect and their voice is heard in meetings. Also, they may serve when there is an understanding that they are not looked down upon if they do not donate money, but they give time to the agency or nonprofit” (File: RD 2-- Practices 1172021).* Continuing, this expert noted the following as a best practice:

*...welcoming new members to a board is often the job of the president of the board. Some handle it well and some not so well. My experience has been that some board presidents call on low-income persons to express their views of the issues at hand, making sure to hear their positions. I have not seen exclusionary behaviors. (File: RD 2-- Practices 1172021)*

As some of the panelists promoted good practices, panelist 9 cautioned that some informal practices can be exclusionary, noting:

*To me it has been somewhat of an exclusion, because many times when you are dealing with the people on the board, they may be some of your most educated people in this area, and they many times in their jobs, they're working for different agencies say for the welfare system, and they be working through that system, and not have skills with talking or working with someone who doesn't earn that type of a salary or hasn't had the opportunity to obtain that kind of education. (File: RD 2-- Practices 1172021)*

This person also noted that:

*...so many of the things that you have to talk about or make decisions about are directly impacted by what the federal government says and what the state government says. And these people, many of them haven't had the opportunity to be in or be exposed to a lot of those little intricacies that are in the board*



*decisions and things that you have to make decisions about.* (File: RD 2-- Practices 1172021; panelist 9)

Shifting to the discussion about going out to the margins and engaging with low-income persons as a practice that could be inclusionary, some experts repeated the need for the voice of low-income persons to be heard as it relates to the issues of the board. Panelist 15 noted, *“I think they have a voice and I think their voice needs to be heard as long as it’s relevant to the board and the cause of the board”* (File: RD 2-- On the Margins 1172021). Panelist 1 noted that more pre-planning work needs to be done to prepare low-income persons for such board engagement, stating *“I think active efforts need made to develop low-income residents so they can serve on boards”* (File: RD 2-- On the Margins 1172021). Another noted *“Agencies vary in how much low-income involvement they encourage. Those I am involved with go out of their way to both bring in low-income people and to actively seek their input”* (File: RD 2-- On the Margins 1172021; panelist 8). Repeating the need to go out to the margins, panelist 10 stated, *“Agencies must hear the input, ideas, concerns, and values of those they are providing services and resources”* (File: RD 2-- On the Margins 1172021).

As boards reach out to include them, panelist 9 leveled a warning about focusing on the income status of a potential board member, writing:

*My thing about low-income, I have a thing about people being declared low-income, but they many times will declare themselves, because they’ll say, ‘Well, I can’t afford to do this, that, or the other because I’m on welfare, or I’m on this, or I’m on that.’ And I think that restricts them from becoming engaged with other people.* (File: RD 2-- On the Margins 1172021)

Participants also commented on the nature of one's social networks and how that may impact the inclusion, or exclusion, of low-income persons. Panelist 1 offered insight:

*I think many people not just low-income but perhaps even more so low-income are disenfranchised from serving on boards because they do not know how to become part or access serving on a board, they are not familiar with Roberts rules or other governance functions and may not feel welcome. (File: RD 2— Social Networks 1172021)*

Panelist 3 offered a means to provide outreach and connecting with low-income persons in the community writing:

*Our organization has a strong involvement in the inner-city community. A variety of meetings are held for issues in the city. Often committees are formed to create action on problem issues. This brings various community members to the forefront who may be low-income residents. Forming a board that is active utilizes these low-income residents. (File: RD 2— Social Networks 1172021)*

However, panelist 6 made an open admission, *“In my experience, it is difficult to identify low-income persons for board membership”* (File: RD 2— Social Networks 1172021).

**Ideology (Q5/Factor E).** The last structured coded theme or factor concerns ideology (4 cases, 4 references) which aimed to ascertain how various cultural influences impact the inclusion or exclusion of low-income persons from serving on community boards. This area includes how experts experience issues around the forces calling for accountability (7 cases, 13 references), market and privatization forces (2 cases, 3 references), and the preferences for the professionalization of leadership (8 cases, 21 references). Pertaining to ideology, panelist 8 noted that *“Sometimes takes longer to*

*reach decisions but board training and agency philosophy stresses that people affected by decisions need a voice in making decisions” (File: RD 2— Ideology 1172021).*

Panelist 9 noted another point regarding various cultural factors, writing:

*My experiences have been that most low-income people don't want to serve, because I think a lot of them — I think with my interactions to a lot of things in the community, they don't want to divulge their information. Many of them, from their reactions to some of the questions and some of the things in the training, their reaction to me is that they feel it could hurt them, if they're receiving public funds in any way. (File: RD 2— Ideology 1172021)*

Responding to the cultural force of accountability for organizations, panelist 1 clearly stated that *“I think it is critical to have some representation from the communities and constituents you serve to fulfill your mission and be held accountable” (File: RD 2— Accountability 1172021).* Again, other panelists repeated their concerns about having the low-income community have some voice in the decisions of their organizations, repeating the comment: *“Why would you want to run a community agency meant to serve the community biased towards those who are not in engaged or experienced with the community its mission serves?” (File: RD 2— Accountability 1172021; panelist 4).*

While various comments received multiple codes, none were explicitly related to market and privatization (2 cases, 3 references) ideological forces noted in the literature, except some of the quotations already shared regarding the ability to provide financial donations as a requirement of board membership. One repeated quote from a panelist notes *“there are assumptions that money, status, influence etc. weighs more than lived experience or a want to advocate for the community you represent” (File: RD 2— Market and*

Privatization 1172021; panelist 4). Like all the other structured codes, various rounds provide more commentary to be discussed in the results from Rounds Two and Three.

The construct related to the professionalization of leadership as a cultural ideological force elicited more commentary. Repeating previous quotes as connected, panelist 13 shared that *“On some of the boards I serve on, I have been welcomed on for my ability to enhance the organizations, other boards that I was just there as a show piece, until I proved them otherwise”* (File: RD 2-- Professionalization of Leadership 1172021). Another panelist, noted earlier, confirmed the bias toward professionalization by mentioning that *“Board members tend to defer to the professionals, take them more seriously, get impatient with fully listening to and answering questions and/or concerns of grass roots, less sophisticated/educated members”* (File: RD 2-- Professionalization of Leadership 1172021; panelist 10).

These structured codes and themes influenced the questions developed in Rounds Two and Three in the specific survey questions related to each of these themes. Yet, as can be seen, many of these ideas generated from the literature review presented themselves in direct and sometimes overlapping ways in Round One of discovering general comments from the lived experiences of the panelists. While these general themes were prevalent, new, or emergent themes presented themselves through the comments of the experts.

**Emergent Themes from the Round 1 Narrative Analysis.** A critical component of the Delphi process requires listening attentively for new themes or ideas that emerge based on the lived experience of the expert panelists themselves. In Round One, the questions remained open-ended with the goal of gleaning new insights or themes not

captured in the literature review via the structured codes and original questions. Round One participants offered several emergent themes that were coded as such. These emergent themes were later incorporated into the various working factors and structured themes for the second and third Delphi rounds to be discussed below.

Based on the narratives from each panelist, 11 emergent themes were captured, as displayed in Table 17.

**Table 17**

*Factors or Themes Coded in Round One Narrative Analysis: Generated or Emergent from the Expert Panelists*

Code – Emergent Factors or Themes	Cases Interviewees	References
Democracy	2	2
Low income does not want to leave	1	1
Low income use their position for personal benefit	2	2
Power	2	2
Power differentials between board members disengagement	6	14
Problem-solving	3	6
Recruitment	3	6
Representative not actually low income	3	4
Uncomfortableness	2	8
Voice	7	11
Listening (subtheme of voice)	3	13

These themes were: democracy (2 cases, 2 references), low income does not want to leave board (1 case, 1 reference), low income use their position for personal benefit (2 cases, 2 references), power-- by those with power who exert it (2 cases, 2 references),

power-- differentials between board members as part of disengagement (6 cases, 14 references), recruitment (3 cases, 6 references), problem-solving (3 cases, 6 references), representative not actually low income (3 cases, 4 references), uncomfortableness (2 cases, 8 references), voice (7 cases, 11 references) and a subtheme of listening (3 cases, 13 references).

Based on the textual analysis, the distribution of the themes emerged from the various boards' representatives, as shown in Table 18.

**Table 18**

*Distribution of Emergent Themes by Organizational Representative*

Organizational Representative	Number of Emergent Themes Identified	Emergent Themes
ACTION	3	Power differentials between board members as part of disengagement Uncomfortableness Voice
CW/CWRLF	6	Low Income does not want to leave board Low Income Use their position for personal benefit Power-- by those with power who exert it Recruitment Problem-solving Listening (under voice)
MYCAP	2	Democracy Representative not actually low income
YNDC	0	

Interestingly, CW representatives shared the most emergent themes based on the narrative analysis from Round One with six themes. ACTION followed with three

themes; MYCAP with two, and YNDC did not exert any new themes into the analysis.

The exploration of the nature of the exertion of power and power differentials (8 cases, 16 references) provided one of the top areas for discussion. This is an area not well developed in the general literature but a clear concern of Freire (2000, 2011), at least in his analysis of limit-situations and disempowerment, and a subtle critique of Dewey's (1937, 2004) general lack of power analysis in structures. Panelist 4 wrote about such power differentials:

*Behaviors of those who exclude, ignore or limit interaction, talk over, minimize what is shared or won't see the value of the suggestion or idea (often will affirm it if same suggestion or idea comes from someone with more power etc.), does not help to be sure the person has what they need to help make a decision. Positive gestures of welcome have been the chair taking time to talk with the person prior to the meeting to check with their comfort level and how they want to be introduced. As discussions ensue, the chair making time for additional comments and continually inviting the person for their insight until they feel comfortable as they get to know more board members. The board chair being aware of the power dynamic and make an effort to balance it out. (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Power 1172021)*

This panelist deepened this sentiment when commenting that:

I have also witnessed where the person is totally ignored or sort of expected to show up but shut up. And where a person has been made invisible or no effort made to reach out or get the information they need. . .The board member that seems to have financial means and professional experience tends to dominate.

(File: RD 2-- OPEN- Power Differentials between board members DISENGAGEMENT 1172021). This same expert shared their own lived experience writing *“It is perceived that I have nothing worth listening to or to contribute so I am quickly shut down or talked over”* (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Power Differentials between board members DISENGAGEMENT 1172021; panelist 4).

Panelist 9 noted that:

*I think they become more quiet about decisions and that type of thing, because sometimes they are somewhat embarrassed. Sometimes they have— no one has invited them to be involved in the decision-making of a lot of agencies that they may be involved with. . . And I think that so many times, when I sit in rooms at these boards, the reaction to people in the room, the people in the room, even though some of them may work with low-income people, when they come to a board meeting, their way of interacting and expressing things change.* (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Power Differentials between board members DISENGAGEMENT 1172021).

This topic was further studied in Rounds Two and Three.

Related to the issue of power exertion and power differentials pertaining to the emergent theme of uncomfortableness (2 cases, 8 references), panelist 4 perceived this theme as very important in the analysis of the inclusion or exclusion of low-income persons on boards of directors. This expert wrote:

*Often there is an uncomfortableness because it changes the conversation because the board who might be homogeneous has to not take for granted that everyone gets it or knows what they are referring to --- it makes board members*



*uncomfortable realizing that the person that the community agency wants to serve is “rea(l)” and in front of them and may very well critique or not buy into what was thought to be the solution or give the pat on the back for what in theory seems a good idea but in practice stinks. Sometimes welcoming can be overcompensation and trying a little too hard to be welcoming rather than just shaking a person’s hand and thanking them for coming and showing their seat --- as they would with everyone else in the room. (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Uncomfortableness 1172021)*

This expert continues with their own experiences and observations, connecting uncomfortableness to another major theme, voice:

*I’ve felt the uncomfortableness of letting go of presumptions and the want for efficiency with a diverse group --- and giving into the board culture where preachers preach, people impassioned with a cause belabor it, and what seems like to me utter chaos --- actually produce results and whatever transpires works out in the end-- so it is about culture, communication and facilitating so voices are heard and decisions are made --- so all involved are part of the process. (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Uncomfortableness 1172021; panelist 4)*

Returning to the basic Freirean and Deweyan framework, voice and listening to the voices of persons (10 cases, 24 references) provided one of the most frequented emergent themes discussed by the panelists. Freire (2000, 2011) insisted on listening closely to those persons most impacted to understand their limit-situations and realities. These panelists shared that insight clearly which had not been part of structured codes generated from the general literature review on boards. Panelist 13 echoed this theme

while discussing the requirement for low-income persons to serve on these boards, writing “*Low-income persons should be involved in the decision making of an organization. Who better to know what is need and who the population is to be better served*” (File: RD 2— OPEN- Voice 1172021). Another expert outright claimed:

*I find that low-income persons are willing to serve if they are treated with respect and their voice is heard in meetings. Also, they may serve when there is an understanding that they are not looked down upon if they do not donate money, but they give time to the agency or nonprofit.* (File: RD 2— OPEN- Voice 1172021; panelist 3).

Repeating an earlier insight, panelist 12 noted that “*this is sometimes true, and I have been associated with some entities that avoid bringing the voice of the low-income member so as to simply be able to control the narrative from the entities perspective*” (File: RD 2— OPEN- Voice 1172021). This expert continued, “*There is no more important voice to contribute to the conversation regarding the services and intents of an organization than one who has been a recipient of these services*” (File: RD 2— OPEN- Voice 1172021).

Shifting to a listening mode, one expert asserted that board training and regular meetings must include “*one on one time providing info on background, on values, providing written info, listening to questions and concerns and being shown respect, patience, and sincere appreciation*” (File: RD 2— OPEN- Listening 1172021; panelist 10). This same expert wholeheartedly expressed the concern that “*Agencies must hear the input, ideas, concerns, and values of those they are providing services and resources*” and maintains that “*The ones with positive interactive experience who take the time to*

*listen and be thoughtful are the best, board members, whether low-income or high income”* (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Listening 1172021; panelist 10).

This leads to other insights from the panelists. This researcher did not probe the concept of democracy directly in the Round One questions, yet two experts noted the importance of democracy (2 cases, 2 references). Democracy remains an important topic for both Freire (2000, 2011) and Dewey (1937, 2004) in their analysis of social reality and structures. Both the acknowledgement of power and democracy by the expert panelists themselves as a necessary theme (i.e., emergent coded in Round One) impressed the importance of both concepts as derived from Freire and Dewey as part of the educational theoretical framework that initially drove this research. Rounds Two and Three continued to probe these two important ideas, especially as they impact the inclusion or exclusion of low-income persons from serving on boards of directors of community organizations designed to serve them. One panelist connected diversity of membership and board governance to democracy noting, *“just the idea that many people who are involved on boards of organizations espouses the viewpoint that multiple perspectives are needed to move the engine called progress, democracy, all the other things”* (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Democracy 1172021; panelist 5). Another panel member discussed how the board of one agency has structured democracy into some of its practices and policies reflecting that *“Key to this structure is the requirement for Low Income Representation. They are to be democratically nominated and elected by low-income individuals”* (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Democracy 1172021; panelist 2). This topic continued to be explored in the next two Delphi rounds.

As a panelist noted above, a related theme to the democratic selection of low-

income board members to a board concerns the topic of recruitment (3 cases, 6 references). One seasoned expert reflected upon how one of the boards actively engages in “*outreach to low-income friends, students, residents, service users, and neighbors*” to find low-income persons to serve on that board (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Recruitment 1172021; panelist 10). Another expert wrote that such recruitment is time consuming and often difficult in so far as it “*takes time but necessary to open the space to include the people who truly have a stake in how the agency will impact and interact with the community*” (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Recruitment 1172021; panelist 4).

Both Dewey (1937, 1939, 2004) and Freire (2000, 2011) espoused a critical insight from their theories about the nature of problem-solving as such a variant of praxis or pragmatism. The general literature on boards did not provide this insight to be tested as part of the structured themes, yet some panelists picked up on the topic of problem-solving (3 cases, 6 references) as an essential ingredient. One panelist wrote in their frustration of not being heard at times that: “*But I do have education and able to help problem solve and be resourceful. I believe a low-income person probably has similar means to offer, too*” (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Problem-solving 1172021; panelist 4). Panelist 14 inferred that in the work of their board “*Many of those on the board with low-income are more passionate about the issues of their communities*” and seem to want to be involved in problem-solving (File: RD 2-- OPEN- Recruitment 1172021).

A few panelists voiced their concerns over their own lived experiences of low-income persons serving on a common board but exhibiting a tendency to either not wanting to leave their position once their term has ended (1 case, 1 reference) or using their position for their own benefit (2 cases, 2 references). Panelist 8 shared their own

experience that *“Some low-income members have been reluctant to turn over their place on the board when their term ends”* (File: RD 2 - OPEN- Low income not want to leave 1172021) and again remarked that *“This can happen when low-income people seek specific or short term solutions (I need a rental I can afford now) versus working to obtain funding for a community housing project”* (File: RD 2 - OPEN-Low Income Use their position 1172021). This insight was tested in the next Delphi rounds to ascertain whether other experts encountered a similar situation.

Finally, one important topic related to the requirements that a low-income person serves on such a community board opened another aspect that was not noted in the general literature review for themes. Another emergent theme was that one can have a representative of the low-income community (3 cases, 4 references) on such a board but that that person does not necessarily need to be low-income themselves or could represent another anti-poverty agency. Panelist 5 stated that case very clearly from the actual workings and structures of a particular board:

*Well my experience has been that it isn't that you seek a low-income person, so much as what the agency or board is seeking, is someone to represent the low-income sector. Therefore, those become 2 different things in a way. To represent the low-income sector, you don't have to be low-income, you could be working for an agency that serves a low-income population. That becomes the definition of representing the low-income sector. I must say, I haven't come across many boards who actually seek a person defined as low-income. What my experience has been more so, is that the agency or the board is seeking an agency or an entity that represents low-income people.* (File: RD 2 - OPEN- Representative not

actually low income 1172021)

Panelist 9 shared a similar sentiment about some low-income persons asked to serve on a board:

*And they come to, many times they come to get on a board of an agency by expressing interest out— say in the church. Many times. And they don't have an understanding of what they are getting themselves into. And I think that so many times, when I sit in rooms at these boards, the reaction to people in the room, the people in the room, even though some of them may work with low-income people, when they come to a board meeting, their way of interacting and expressing things change.* File: RD 2 - OPEN- Representative not actually low income 1172021)

This aspect of the requirements, a person who is low-income versus a representative voice,<sup>1</sup> is explored in more detail in Rounds Two and Three.

These narratives provided insights into the structured themes tested from the literature review and provided additional insights gleaned from the emergent codes or themes that became the fuel for the development of clearer factors and related themes, which directly impacted the survey questions asked in Round Two and then sharpened for Round Three.

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<sup>1</sup> I do have to note at this juncture, that as a participant observer/researcher, I was asked to serve on one of these boards, MYCAP, as a representative voice of the low-income community since I served as a leader for an anti-poverty service agency in the City of Youngstown. This aspect of the validity of representation versus actual lived experienced of a low-income person remains an important concern.

## Round Two

The next step in the process, after consultations with the committee chair and the research associate, consisted in developing a survey with a 5-point Likert scale that requested each expert participant register their level of agreement or disagreement with statements derived from the themes discovered and sharpened from the more qualitative Round One. Open-ended comment boxes accompanied each question. Round One's five questions and nascent factors resulted in six factors for Round Two and Round Three analysis. The emergent themes were incorporated into the six factors and 15 themes. The analysis of the survey questions was shared in a combined framework comparing Round Two and Round Three below for ease of comparison and understanding.

Beginning on September 23, 2021, the 19 expert panelists who had originally agreed to participate in the Delphi process were sent the second round of questions, first by Dr. Alison Kaufman and then followed up by various reminders between October 1, 2021, and November 5, 2021. Fourteen panelists participated in Round Two. The characteristics of the panelists who participated in Round Two are found in Table 19.

**Table 19**

*Characteristics of Round Two Panelists (n =14)*

Characteristics	Number	Percent of Panelist Group
Executive Directors	4	29%
Board Members		
ACTION	5	36%
CW/CWRLF	1	7%
MYCAP	5	36%
YNDC	3	21%
Below Poverty	1	7%
Above Poverty	12	86%

Not Respond	1	7%
Hispanic - YES	0	0%
African American	6	43%
Caucasian	8	57%
Female	9	64%
Male	5	36%
Age Group		
35-44	1	7%
45-54	2	14%
55-64	3	21%
65+	8	57%

Four of the executive directors participated along with 10 board members. Recalling that each of the executive directors serve on other boards, the analysis shows that both ACTION and MYCAP had five representatives (36% each respectively), followed by YNDC with three representatives (21%), and CW/CWRLF with one representative (7%). Twelve of the participants representing 86% recorded above the poverty threshold, with one person not reporting. Round Two included one person reporting living below the poverty level.

None of the panelists identified as Hispanic; six (43%) were African American, and eight (57%) noted that they were Caucasian. Nine (64%) panelists reported being female, while five (36%) were male. The clear majority, including eight (57%) of the experts, reported being over 65 years of age, with three experts (21%) registering their age between 55-64.

Between the months of November and December in 2021, the survey data was analyzed using SPSS for each question, searching for various levels of agreement or disagreement. Besides general demographic analysis for each question, an analysis of



factor reliability was performed using Scale Analysis/Reliability tests resulting in various Cronbach's alpha scores.

On the qualitative level, each of the panelist's comments became a separate Microsoft Word document, created as files, or cases, in NVivo software. This allowed coding to continue utilizing existent structured and emergent codes from Round One. No new emergent codes were ascertained in Round Two.

### **Round Three**

In early January 2022, after consultation with the committee chair and the YSU research associate, a new round of survey questions was developed from Round Two results. As mentioned earlier, the questions remained clustered by factor, but some were randomly reassigned a position in the survey form to reduce the number of times panelists recorded neutral responses. On January 5, 2022, the original 19 panelists were sent another Delphi survey via electronic mail with a link to the survey. As in Rounds One and Two, each panelist was asked if they wanted to be interviewed by Dr. Alison Kaufman rather than complete the survey form on their own. Some panelists took advantage of this offering. The Round Three Delphi process involved several weeks in January 2022 and ended on January 24, 2022, after several email reminders. Fourteen panelists participated in this final and third Delphi round. Their demographic information is presented in Table 20.

**Table 20***Characteristics of Round Three Panelists (n =14)*

Characteristics	Number	Percent of Panelist Group
Executive Directors	4	29%
Board Members	10	71%
ACTION	4	29%
CW/CWRLF	2	14%
MYCAP	5	36%
YNDC	3	21%
Below Poverty	1	7%
Above Poverty	12	86%
Not Respond	1	7%
Hispanic - YES	1	7%
African American	5	36%
Caucasian	9	64%
Female	9	64%
Male	5	36%
Age Group		
35-44	1	7%
45-54	2	14%
55-64	3	21%
65+	8	57%

Four of the executive directors participated, along with 10 board members. Recalling that each of the executive directors serve on other boards, the analysis shows that MYCAP had the largest participation with five persons representing 36% of the total; ACTION had four (29%) representatives; YNDC had three (21%) representatives; and CW/CWRLF had two (14%) representatives. Twelve of the participants representing 86% recorded above the poverty threshold, with one person not reporting. During Round Three, one expert reported living below the poverty level.

One (7%) of the panelists recorded being Hispanic; five (36%) were African American; and nine (64%) noted that they were Caucasian. Nine (64%) panelists reported being female, while five (36%) were male. The clear majority, including eight (57%) of the experts, reported being over 65 years of age, with three experts (21%) registering their age between 55-64.

Between the months of March and April in 2022, the survey data was analyzed using SPSS for each question searching for various levels of agreement or disagreement (to be discussed comparatively in more detail below). Besides general demographic analysis for each question, an analysis of the factor reliability was performed using Scale Analysis/Reliability tests resulting in various Cronbach's alpha scores. A comparison of these results, as well as any statistically significant findings, are shared in the subsequent chapters.

On the qualitative level, each of the panelist's comments became a separate Microsoft Word document, created as files, or cases, in NVivo software. This allowed coding to continue utilizing existent structured and emergent codes from Round One. No new emergent codes were ascertained in Round Three either. The following sections review the key quantitative and qualitative findings from Round Two comparing them with the final Round Three results.

## Chapter Five

### Quantitative Review of Rounds Two and Three

#### Reliability Analysis for the Factors

Using the Delphi method, this study engaged expert panelists from the Youngstown case study to provide normative and policy directions regarding the nature of low-income persons' involvement on the board of directors of community service or development agencies. A goal was to identify opportunities and barriers (i.e., limitations) for such structural inclusion of low-income voices in corporate decision-making (i.e., policy formation and normative understanding) regarding the very agencies designed to serve their needs. Survey questions were developed for Rounds Two and Three of the Delphi method based on the identification of various factors or areas, with subunit themes derived from the literature and further refined by comments provided by the panelists themselves. Round One consisted of panelists providing narrative responses to open-ended questions, which in turn further clarified the questions utilized in Round Two and then refined in Round Three based on the responses from Round Two. The questions in the survey for both Rounds Two and Three were based on a 5-point Likert scale, with some ranking questions inserted in Round Three only.

Six factors, along with an accompanying hypothesis, were developed from the literature and from Round One to be tested related to the opportunities and obstacles for persons who are low-income to be structurally involved with the boards of directors of community service agencies. The factors explored are shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

*Factors for Analysis*

<p><i>Factor A H1) Low-income and marginalized persons' voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities.</i></p>	<p><i>Factor B. H2) Low-income and marginalized persons are not trained in corporate governance to serve as leaders on the boards of CDCs and CSAs.</i></p>	<p><i>Factor C H2a) Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.</i></p>	<p><i>Factor D. H3) Low-income &amp; marginalized persons disenfranchised &amp; disempowered from such engagement on boards; H3a) Low-income &amp; marginalized persons perceived by others as token representatives on these boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as token.</i></p>	<p><i>Factor E: H4) Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused; H4a) CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.</i></p>	<p><i>Factor F: H5) Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations</i></p>
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Each of these factors, and themes, were tested for their reliability using SPSS relevant tools. Some factors required the transformation of some variables from negative to positive direction for better comparison, while some factors required more nuanced analysis to group like with like. In some cases, since various emergent themes were incorporated into existing factors, such placement may have caused some lowering of the reliability score. In Table 21, the results for the Cronbach's alpha reliability tests are reported for each unidimensional factor.

**Table 21***Round Three SPSS Analysis: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Scores for Factors A-F with**Subsets*

Coded Variables in the Survey	Transfo rmed A3, A8	A1,A3, A4	C1,2, 3,4,5, 6	C3,4, 5,6	C1,2	All D1 and D2	D1_1 _45; D1_2 _47	D2_1_ 51; D2_2_ 53; D2_4_ 57				
									D - ALL	D-1	D-2	E
Factors	A 1	A-2	B	C- All	C-1	C-2	D - ALL	D-1	D-2	E	F	
Cronbach's Alpha	0.53	0.68	0.54	0.15	0.21	0.29	0.79	0.8	0.75	0.47	0.46	
Mean	3.61	3.3	4	3.34	3.39	3.25	2.96	3.25	2.96	2.91	3.19	
Mean Sd	0.5	0.94	0.54	0.35	0.42	0.64	0.65	1	0.8	0.47	0.48	
SD M	1	0.76	0.99	0.84	0.83	0.66	0.75	0.35	0.46	1.15	1.17	
SD Sd	0.37	0.61	0.58	0.26	0.35	0.43	0.37	0.54	0.52	0.33	0.43	
Variables	8	3	6	6	4	2	7	2	3	6	7	

In some cases, variables were recalculated to determine if certain variables provided greater reliability results. For example, in the case of Factor C, when all the variables related to that factor were tested, the Cronbach's alpha was very low ( $\alpha = .15$ ), but when variables were re-calculated together, there was a slight increase in their reliability scores ( $\alpha = .21$ ,  $\alpha = .22$ ). The factors' reliability scores rank from a high of  $\alpha = .80$  in Factor D to a low of  $\alpha = .15$  in Factor C. The general literature (Bobbitt, 2021) suggests that a Cronbach's alpha above .8 is good, between .7 to .8 is acceptable, and between .6 and .7 is questionable. Since there are few variables and few cases, the numbers may be low, but this is the first time in this research that these factors have been calculated since there were no previous tools available to utilize to measure these factors. On numerous

occasions, Cronbach's alpha increased from factors tested in Round Two to those utilized in Round Three. This is reported in each section of the findings for each factor/area.

### ***Consensus Scale***

Throughout the analysis of the survey results, a consensus level ranking scale was employed. This served as an interpretative method regarding the panelists' responses to each variable using a 5- point Likert scale with some questions requesting either a rank order or an affirmation of a statement. The goal of the Delphi method is to uncover areas of agreement pertaining to positions (e.g., policies) or normative understandings to inform leaders of possible policy areas or better ways to understand an issue or issues. Areas of disagreement are as important for similar reasons of policy formation or recommendations. Their level of consensus rankings (i.e., agree/disagree) helps to inform the findings and recommendations rooted in the purpose of a multi-phase Delphi method.

The scale is found in Table 22. This method provides a means to interpret how the panelists tend toward agreeing or disagreeing in each variable. For instance, as a proxy for analysis, if the panelists have a 93% combined score of *strongly agree* and *agree* (or *strongly disagree/disagree*) then it would be classified as *strong consensus*. In transforming and recoding variables in SPSS, *strongly agree and agree* are coded 3, *neutral* is coded 2, and *strongly disagree and disagree* are coded 1 to obtain *agree/neutral/disagree* frequencies. If the panelists' provided a 51% level of disagreement on a specific variable, then it would be coded as *majority disagree*.

**Table 22***Consensus Ranking Codes and Number System*

Rank Code	Rank Numbering System
Strong agree	1
Strong disagree	2
Moderate agree	3
Moderate disagree	4
Majority agree	5
Majority disagree	6
Weak agree	7
Weak disagree	8
No apparent	9
Agree or Disagree Combined Scores	
Strong consensus	>90%
Moderate consensus	70-89%
Majority consensus	50-69%
Weak consensus	30-49%
No apparent consensus	<29%

In Table 23, the results from Round Two show the frequency of the 38 variables per level of consensus rankings and the percent of the total.



**Table 23***Rankings of Consensus in Round Two Survey*

Rank Code	Value	Frequency	Percent
Strong agree	1	6	15.80%
Strong disagree	2	1	2.60%
Moderate agree	3	6	15.80%
Moderate disagree	4	1	2.60%
Majority agree	5	11	28.90%
Majority disagree	6	2	5.30%
Weak agree	7	5	13.20%
Weak disagree	8	3	7.90%
No apparent	9	3	7.90%
Total		38	100%

As shown in Table 23, nearly 29% of the variables found that the panelists had a consensus of *majority agree* with 11 variables out of 38 at this ranking. In Round Two, the panelists ranked six variables (15.8%) at *strongly agree* and at *moderate agree*, respectively. Findings for each factor and individual variables is discussed below. Round Three is the definitive finding since that round of the Delphi method provided the panelists with their final opinions to be registered regardless of their opinions recorded in Round One, which was qualitative only, and Round Two.

Table 24 displays the results for Round Three and a final column that compares the increase or decrease of frequencies and percentages between Rounds Two and Three.

**Table 24***Rankings of Consensus in Round Three Survey, with comparison with Round Two*

Rank Code	Value	Frequency	Percent	Comparison 2 to 3
Strong agree	1	3	7.14%	Decrease
Strong disagree	2	1	2.38%	Same
Moderate agree	3	8	19.05%	Increase
Moderate disagree	4	2	4.76%	Increase
Majority agree	5	12	28.57%	Same
Majority disagree	6	4	9.52%	Increase
Weak agree	7	2	4.76%	Decrease
Weak disagree	8	5	11.90%	Increase
No apparent	9	5	11.90%	Increase
Total		42	100%	

As Table 24 shows, the panelists remained constant in their rankings of *majority agree* consensus as it remained the most frequently ranked status in 12 out of 42 variables (28.6%). There was a *decrease* in the number/frequency of panelists engaging in *strong* consensus in *agreement* and a *decrease* in the number and frequency of panelists engaging in *weak* consensus in *agreement*. there was an *increase* in the number and frequency of panelists engaging in *moderate agreement*, *moderate disagreement*, *majority disagreement*, *weak disagreement*, and *no apparent* consensus. *Strongly disagree* remained the same as well.

Besides the six factors that each variable is associated with, there were 15 various themes that probe in more depth the various aspects of the factors themselves. Some themes cut across several factors purposefully to serve as an interpretative aid to understand better any nuances that emerged from the literature review and open-ended

comments by the panelists. A reliability statistics test (i.e., Cronbach’s alpha) investigated each theme or connected themes. The themes and related reliability test scores are found in Figures 6-10 and Tables 25-29.

**Figure 6**

*Themes 1A and 1B Derived from Literature and Interviews*

<i>Theme 1A: Politically and structurally there is a new moment of punctuated equilibrium in social policy to re-introduce and implement maximum feasible participation (MFP)</i>	<i>Theme 1B: Convergence of new accountability and new governance movements promote certain skills and may provide an opening for MFP for low income.</i>
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**Table 25**

*Reliability Score Themes 1A, 1B*

Variables	Themes 1 A 1B	
	without A2_5	with A2_5
Cronbach's Alpha	0.58	0.44
Mean	3.31	3.33
Mean SD	0.46	0.38
SD Mean	1.13	1.23
SD-SD	0.37	0.35
Items	10	11

As can be seen in Figure 6 and Table 25, Themes 1A and 1B registered a  $\alpha = .44$  Cronbach’s alpha when all 11 variables were calculated, but the reliability score increased to  $\alpha = .58$  when one of the variables was removed, which focused on proxies for low-income voices as related to the themes. This grouping of themes aimed to ascertain the emergence of a new timeliness and urgency to involving low-income persons on boards and how that urgency is connected to various movements of new governance and accountability.

**Figure 7**

*Themes 2, 3 and 4*

<i>Theme 2: Few board training opportunities exist for persons who are low-income and disenfranchised.</i>	<i>Theme 3: Training programs focus on agency, resource development, or institutional theory thus recruiting persons who exhibit those skills.</i>	<i>Theme 4: Board training and formation programs are rooted in specific andragogy that highlights privatized ideology rather than Deweyan experience or Freirean dialogue.</i>
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**Table 26**

*Reliability Scores for Themes 2, 3 and 4*

Variable	Themes 2, 3, 4
Cronbach's Alpha	0.54
Mean	4.01
Mean SD	0.54
SD Mean	0.99
SD-SD	0.58
Items	6

The three themes, found in Figure 7 and Table 26, related to board trainings and obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of  $\alpha = .54$  displaying moderate cohesion.

**Figure 8**

*Themes 5A, 5B and 6*

<i>Theme 5A: Preferred engagement with persons who have professional skills.</i>	<i>Theme 5B: Professionalization of skills required for oversight determines who should serve on boards.</i>	<i>Theme 6: Recruitment of persons with social connections and donor knowledge.</i>
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**Table 27**

*Reliability Scores for Themes 5A, 5B and 6*

Variables	Themes 5A, 5B	Theme 6
Cronbach's Alpha	0.24	0.66
Mean	3.36	3.3
Mean SD	0.42	0.58
SD Mean	1	0.86
SD-SD	0.43	0.34
Items	6	6

Reviewing Figure 8 and Table 27, Themes 5A and 5B found a low Cronbach's alpha score of  $\alpha = .24$  which sought to explore the professionalization of board selection.

Theme 6 obtained a Cronbach's alpha score of  $\alpha = .66$  which focused on recruitment of persons with social connections and donor knowledge.

**Figure 9**

*Themes 7, 8 and 9*

<i>Theme 7: The decoupling of agencies from specifically distressed neighborhoods to more regional responsibilities.</i>	<i>Theme 8: Identity politics highlights gender, race, and sexual orientation away from class status; persons at intersectionality preferred over those who live poverty alone.</i>	<i>Theme 9: Low income and marginalized persons can sense that they might be tokens on such a board.</i>
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**Table 28**

*Reliability Scores for Themes 7, 8 and 9*

Variables	Theme 7	Theme 8	Theme 9
Cronbach's Alpha	N/A	0.57	0.75
Mean		3.71	2.9
Mean SD		0.7	0.8
SD Mean		0.61	0.46
SD-SD		0.54	0.52
Items	1	2	3

Figure 9 and Table 28 review another set of themes and reliability scores. Theme 7 on geographic responsibility of board coverage consisted in only one variable, thus, no test was conducted. For Theme 8 regarding other forms of diversity representation, a Cronbach's alpha score of  $\alpha = .7$  was obtained, and Theme 9 pertaining to tokenism found a Cronbach's alpha score of  $\alpha = .75$ .

**Figure 10**

*Themes 10, 11, 12 and 13*

<i>Theme 10: Institutional isomorphism via coercive, mimetic, and normative forms influence board inclusion.</i>	<i>Theme 11: Board members and staff reach out to those in their social networks to replace or include.</i>	<i>Theme 12: Engagement of the margins requires disruption.</i>	<i>Theme 13: Market and privatization ideologies drive focus for who to include on boards related to functions.</i>
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**Table 29***Reliability Scores for Themes 10, 11, 12 and 13*

Variables	Theme 10	Theme 11	Theme 12	Theme 13
Cronbach's Alpha	0.59	0.74	0.41	0.66
Mean	3.2	3.57	3.1	2.9
Mean SD	0.31	0.67	0.4	0.4
SD Mean	1.09	0.74	1.06	1.08
SD-SD	0.24	0.36	0.37	0.27
Items	19	5	11	13

Reviewing the data in Figure 10 and Table 29, Theme 10 relates to variables investigating institutional isomorphism, as directly as possible, and obtained a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .59$ . Theme 11 further investigated such isomorphism by focusing on recruitment by like-minded individuals and obtained a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .74$ . Theme 12 countered the tendencies toward institutional isomorphism by engaging panelists to deal with disruption and going to the margins to break that tendency. Theme 12 found a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .41$ . Finally, Theme 13 explored the private and market forces and ideologies within the general topic of institutional isomorphism and secured a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .66$ . Later in this chapter, the themes are discussed in more detail regarding how they sort in the consensus rankings.

### **Major Findings**

Table 30 reports the rankings of all the variables by consensus order and certain statistically significant findings (e.g., Kendall's Tau, Pearson's Point-Biserial correlation) based on various demographic details of the expert panelists. Some of those variables include their role in the agency as defined by either a CEO or a board member only;

gender; income as above or below poverty (\$25,999); racial identification; age, which did not provide any correlation; and agency affiliation from the Youngstown case study. For each variable, Kendall's tau and a Pearson's Point-Biserial correction was run for each demographic factor to ascertain whether any had statistically significant findings. These findings are noted in Table 29 and are discussed in more detail below.

### ***Strong Consensus Findings***

**Strong Consensus in Agreement.** In Table 29, there are three variables rated as a *strong consensus in agreement* which presents some key findings for this research:

1. There was *strong consensus in agreement* that “*It is important to have a low-income person on a community agency board even though there might not be a requirement to do so*” (Mode - 8 - Strong agree; Mean 4.42; SD .85; A5\_11) which is found in Factor A and can help inform Themes 1A, 1B and 10 found in the literature. This nuanced opinion that it remains important today to include low-income persons' voices on boards of directors but that it should not be required is an important thread throughout this analysis. This finding is in some conflict, or at least in nuanced relationship, with a *moderate consensus in agreement* that the panelists hold that if an agency receives government funding, then a low-income person should be required to serve (F2\_74). There was also *moderate consensus in agreement* that boards should require a least one low-income person participation on boards (F7\_84).
2. There was *strong consensus in agreement* that “*All persons serving on a board of a community organization that serves low-income people must be trained on the special needs of low-income persons*” (Mode - 7 - Strong



Agree; Mean 4.42; SD .65; B1\_59). This is another important finding regarding board trainings in terms of content and opportunity, informing Themes 2, 3 and 4 as they relate to training.

3. There was a *strong consensus in agreement* that “*Training for board members should help them with their skills in problem-solving*” (Mode - 10 - Strong Agree; Mean 4.57; SD .85; B3\_63) which also helps to direct policy and normative understandings regarding board trainings, again informing Themes 2, 3 and 4.

**Table 30***Round Three Rankings by Consensus Order of All Variables with Noted Statistical Findings and Themes.*

Scale	Factor and Variable A=Factor A	Consensus	Notes/Statistical Findings Correlations	Themes
1	A5_11_LIImportantNonREQ	Strong consensus agree		1A, 1B, 10
1	B1_59_AllBoardTrainedinLIneeds	Strong agree		2, 3 and 4
1	B3_63_TrainProblemSkills	Strong agree		2, 3 and 4
2	E6_30_NOLongerImportantLIServes	Strong disagree		1A, 1B, 10, 13
3	A7_15_TodayImportantLIBoard	Moderate consensus agree	A CEOs/Boards differ $\tau_b = .47$ , $n = 14$ , $p = .018$ . The point- biserial test does not show any statistical difference; B Gender differ $\tau_b = -.55$ , $n = 14$ , $p = .032$ ; $r_{pb} = -.62$ , $n = 14$ , $p = .018$ )	1A
3	B2_61_LISpecialTrainingActive	Moderate agree	86% high end	2, 3 and 4
3	B4_65_TrainDemocracySkills	Moderate agree	1 missing	2, 3 and 4
3	C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable	Moderate agree		5A, 5B, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13

3	E7_32_OPINBestRep	Moderate agree	1 missing	1A, 1B, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13
3	F1_72_BothLIProSkills	Moderate agree	Race - $\tau b = -.53, n = 14, p = .042$	5A, 5B, 10, 13
3	F2_74_GOVTMoneyLIREQUIRED	Moderate agree		1A, 1B, 10
3	F7_84_ImportantRequire1LI	Moderate agree		1A, 1B, 10
4	A8_17_EnoughLIAreadyBoards	Moderate consensus disagree		1A, 1B
4	F6_82_INCONVENIENTalwaysfindLI	Moderate disagree		12
5	A1_3_REQLawServesLIBoard	Majority agree	A CEOs/Board differ ( $\tau b = .6, p = .001; rpb = .66, n = 14, p = .010$ ); B Agency Affiliation differs, ( $rpb = -.54, n = 14, p = .045; \tau b = -.45, n = 14, p = .052$ )	1A, 1B, 12
5	A2_5_NonLIRepLI	Majority agree	Agency Affiliation differs ( $\tau b = .63, n = 14, p = .010; rpb = .7, n = 14, p = .005$ )	10
5	A4_9_REQLawFedDollarsLI	Majority agree	CEOs/Boards Differ ( $\tau b = .56, p = .003; rpb = .6, n = 14, p = .023$ )	1A, 1B, 10
5	A9_19_OPINBoardDo	Majority agree		1A, 1B, 10, 12

5	B5_67_TrainOrgRunSkills	Majority agree	CEO/Boards differ $\tau b = -.41, n = 14, p = .055$ ; Bi-serial point not significant	2, 3 and 4
5	C1_33_LIUsePositionBenefit	Majority agree	Gender: $\tau b = .7, n = 14, p = .009$ ; (rpb = .68, $n = 14, p = .007$ )	10, 12 Emergent
5	D1_1_45_MembersNotKnowLItoAsk	Majority agree		6, 11, 12
5	D1_2_47_OtherDIVERSITYthanLI	Majority agree	Race - $\tau b = .51, p = .052$	8
5	E2_22_SELECTbyWhoTheyKnow	Majority agree		11
5	E3_24_SELECTWellKnown	Majority agree		6,10,11,13
5	E5_28_SELECTLIBestWay	Majority agree	Role - $\tau b = .6, n = 14, p = .022$ ; (rpb = -.63, $n = 14, p = .017$ )	1A, 1B, 10, 12
5	F3_76_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh	Majority agree	Gender (rpb = -.53, $n = 14, p = .050$ )	5A, 5B, 6, 10, 13
6	A3_7_VoiceLISelf	Majority disagree	Race differs ( $\tau b = -.53, n = 14, p = .036$ ; rpb = -.53, $n = 14, p = .051$ )	1A, 1B, 10, 12
6	D2_3_55_BoardsNOTLISTENLI	Majority disagree		5A, 5B, 12, 13
6	E4_26_ALLLookALIKE	Majority disagree	1 missing	10, 13
6	F5_80_POLFINCULIdeasLookAlikeLI Excluded	Majority disagree	Gender $\tau b = -.66, n = 14, p = .009$ ; (rpb = -.69, $n = 14, p = .006$ )	10, 13

7	C3_37_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills	Weak agree	Agency Affiliation - $\tau b = .46, n = 14, p = .058$ ; $rpb = .53, n = 14, p = .053$ )	5B, 6, 10, 11, 13
7	C5_41_DifficultLILargeGeography	Weak agree		7
8	A6_13_HardLIBoard	Weak consensus disagree	Race differs ( $\tau b = .83, n = 14, p = .001$ ; $rpb = .87, n = 14, p < .001$ )	12
8	B6_69_TrainGiveMoneySkills	Weak disagree	Race - $\tau b = .52, n = 14, p = .04$ ; $rpb = .56, n = 14, p = .037$ )	2, 3 and 4
8	C6_43_NOLibeLikeForProfits	Weak disagree	Income - $\tau b = -.55, n = 14, p = .032$ ; ( $rpb = -.6, n = 14, p = .022$ ). Agency Affiliation - $\tau b = .46, n = 14, p = .055$ ,	10, 13
8	D2_1_51_LISelfTokens	Weak disagree	However, 36% agree	9
8	F4_78_RULESIDEASothersLIrep	Weak disagree	Income - $\tau b = -.61, n = 14, p = .018$ .; ( $rpb = -.62, n = 14, p = .018$ ) Race - $\tau b = .64, n = 14, p = .014$ ; ( $rpb = .67, n = 14, p = .009$ )	10, 13
9	C2_35_LIResistLeaving	No apparent		10, 12Emergent
9	D1_3_49_SomeBoardExertPOWER	No apparent		5A, 5B, 12, 13

9	D2_2_53_MembersSeeLIasTokens	No apparent	1 missing case; Gender - $\tau b = -.54, n = 13, p = .044$ ; $rpb = -.57, n = 13, p = .044$ females more in agreement/neutral and males in disagreement)	9
9	D2_4_57_LIUncomfortable	No apparent		9
9	E1_20_SELECTbyGiveMoney	No apparent		6, 10, 13

**Strong Consensus in Disagreement.** There was a fourth important finding. The panelists held a *strong consensus in disagreement* that “*Times are different. It is no longer important that low-income persons serve on an agency board*” (Mode - 7-Disagree; Mean 1.64; SD 0.84; E6\_30). Thus, arguing positively that it remains important that the low-income voice finds a structural place on the board of directors. These four *strong consensus* findings provide some deeply held policy and normative positions from the panelists informing Themes 1A, 1B, 10, and 13.

### ***Moderate Consensus Findings***

**Moderate Consensus in Agreement.** Eight variables ranked *moderate consensus in agreement*, and two variables showed *moderate consensus in disagreement*. Some key findings that acquired *moderate consensus in agreement* include:

1. Board involvement: “*Today more than ever it is important that low-income persons be included in the boards of community agencies*” which found some statistically significant differences based on roles and gender (71%, mode - 7-Agree; A7\_15; Mode; Mean 3.7; SD 1.13).
2. Training: “*There should be opportunities for low-income persons who serve on a board to be trained so that they can be actively involved in board meetings*” (86%; Mode Strong Agree -8; Mean 4.42 SD 0.76; B2\_61).
3. Training: “*Training for board members should help them with their skills to live in a democracy (like different ways of including others in board decision-making)*” (79%, mode: Strong Agree - 8; Mean 4; SD 1.2; B4\_65).

4. Recruitment of low-income persons: *“There are low-income persons in the community who are willing and able to serve on community boards”* (71%; bimodal 5 - Agree/Strongly Agree; Mean 4.07; SD 0.83; C4\_39).
5. Opinion summary statement: *“We need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies”* (71.4%, mode - 10 - 1st selection; Mean 1.36; SD 0.77; E7\_32OPINON)
6. Low-Income and professional skills for board service: *“A person can both be low-income and have professional skills in order to serve on a community agency board.”* There were some differences based on race which was statistically significant. (84%, bimodal - 6 - Agree and Strongly Agree; Mean 4.14; SD 1.09; F1\_72).
7. Requirement for low-income person serving on board if governmental monies received by agency: *“If an agency receives governmental funding to serve low-income persons, then they should be required to have a low-income person serve on their board.”* (79%, mode - 6- Agree; Mean 4; SD 0.68; F2\_74). This somewhat goes against an earlier *strong consensus in agreement* that the panelists held that low-income persons should serve but that it should not be required (A5\_11).
8. Requirement for low-income person involvement on boards: *“It is important today that community agencies require at least one low-income person on their board”* (79%; mode - 7 - Agree; Mean 3.92; SD 1.07; F7\_84). This somewhat goes against an earlier *strong consensus in agreement* that the



panelists held that low-income persons should serve but that it should not be required (A5\_11), and a *moderate agreement* reported above (F2\_74).

**Moderate Consensus in Disagreement.** There were two statements wherein the panelists concurred with a *moderate consensus in disagreement*. These findings include:

1. Extent of low-income persons participation on boards: “*There are enough low-income persons already serving on community agency boards and nothing more is needed*” (86%; bimodal 6- Disagree and Strongly Disagree; Mean 1.78; SD 0.89; A8\_17).
2. Extent of finding low-income persons to serve on boards: “*It would be very inconvenient to always find low-income persons to serve on these boards*” (72%, mode -6- Strongly Disagree; Mean 2.07; SD 1.26; F6\_82).

### ***Majority Consensus Findings***

**Majority Consensus in Agreement.** Overall, the panelists held a *majority consensus in agreement* in about 28% of the policy statements (12 variables) and 9.5% (4 variables) in the *majority consensus in disagreement*. Some of these variables had statistically significant findings discussed in more detail below.

1. There was a continued *majority consensus* between rounds in *agreement* that *a person who him/herself is not low-income can represent the low-income voice* on a board of directors (A2\_5\_NonLIRepLI, 57% Agree, Mean 3.6, SD 0.76). This paralleled the variable found in *majority disagreement* below (A3\_7\_VoiceLISelf) related to the role of other representatives other than a low-income person.

2. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* regarding that a *low-income person ought to be required* to serve on the board of an agency that *serves low-income persons*, which seemed at some variance with other statements regarding the requirement of low-income involvement  
(A1\_3\_REQLawServesLIBoard, 50% Agree, Mean 3.4 SD 1.34).
3. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* that a *low-income person ought to be required* to serve on the board of an agency that *receives government assistance* to serve low-income persons, which seemed at some variance with other statements regarding the requirement of low-income involvement  
(A4\_9\_REQLawFedDollarsLI, 50% Agree, Mean 3.57, SD 1.01).
4. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* with the statement of position on the role of low-income persons on the board:
  - a. The highest ranked is: “*Require that a low-income person serves on the board*” (50%).
  - b. The second-largest opinion noted: “*Voluntarily include a low-income person on the board.*” (36%).

This seems to be in keeping with the general nuance that low-income persons ought to be involved on boards but not necessarily required. Again, this position only garnered a simple *majority consensus in agreement* while the second highest regards voluntary engagement  
(A9\_19\_OPINBoardDo, 50% Agree).

5. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* that “*Training for board members should provide them with the skills needed to run an organization*” (B5\_67\_TrainOrgRunSkills, 57% Agree, Mean 3.35, SD 1.21).
6. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* with the statement “*Low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit*” (C1\_33\_LIUsePositionBenefit, 50% Agree, Mean 3.4, SD .65).
7. There was *majority consensus in agreement* that “*Board members do not consider asking low-income persons to serve on boards since they do not know many low-income persons to ask*” (D1\_1\_45\_MembersNotKnowLItoAsk, 64% Agree, Mean 3.14, SD 1.29).
8. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* that “*Most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (such as race, gender, orientation) than in a person’s income status (low-income) when they ask them to serve on their boards*” (D1\_2\_47\_OtherDIVERSITYthanLI, 57% Agree, Mean 3.35, SD 0.84).
9. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* that *board members tend to seek other persons who they know to serve on the board* (E2\_22\_SELECTbyWhoTheyKnow, 57% Agree, Mean 3.5, SD .85).
10. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* that *board members tend to seek other persons who are well-known (“connected”) in the community to serve on their boards* (E3\_24\_SELECTWellKnown, 64% Agree, Mean 3.7, SD 0.99).

11. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* that the *best way to represent low-income people on an agency that serves such persons is to require that a low-income person serve on that board*, which, again, was in variance with the panelists' general opinion about the importance of such representation but not its requirement. The nuanced position about necessary engagement and requirement remained a constant opinion among the panelists (E5\_28\_SELECTLIBestWay, 64% agreement, Mean 3.71, SD 0.83).
12. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* that “*there are many informal rules and ideas for community service boards to follow the example of others in having well-connected, professional, and high-income persons serve on their boards*” (F3\_76\_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh, 50% Agree, Mean 3.21, SD .89).

### **Majority Consensus in Disagreement Findings.**

1. There was a *majority consensus in disagreement* in that “*The only way the concerns of low-income persons can be represented on a board of a community organization is when a low-income person herself or himself serves on that board*” (A3\_7\_VoiceLISelf, 50% Disagree, Mean 2.92, SD 1.26). This position seems in keeping with the *majority consensus in agreement* above (A2\_5\_NonLIRepLI).
2. There was a *majority consensus in disagreement* that “*Most boards invite low-income persons to participate on their boards but do not really “listen” to their concerns*” (D2\_3\_55\_BoardsNOTLISTENLI, 50% Disagree, Mean 2.5, SD 0.94).

3. There was a *majority consensus in disagreement* that “*Boards all have the same type of person serving. They all look alike*” thus, appearing to the panelists that there was limited institutional isomorphism (E4\_26\_ALLLookALIKE, 64% Disagree, Mean 2.07, SD 0.95).
4. There was *majority consensus in disagreement* that “*There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other which usually means that low-income persons are excluded from the board*” (F5\_80\_POLFINCULIdeasLookAlikeLIExcluded, 64% Disagree, Mean 2.28, SD 0.99).

These and other findings obtained from panelists’ agreements and disagreements are discussed in more detail below in each section.

### **Key Findings - Factor A**

This research aimed to probe the opportunities and obstacles for low-income persons to be structurally engaged as members of the boards of directors of community service or development organizations. Factor A explored and hypothesized that *low-income and marginalized persons’ voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities*. The variables selected for Factor A attempted to probe whether the expert panelists, from their own experiences, perceived that low-income persons are structurally engaged, or not, on their own boards and others. The purpose was not to analyze the specific board’s or agency’s practices of the organizations from which they were selected, but the goal was to have them provide their expert opinion regarding this and other topics, in general, as a part of this normative and policy Delphi process.

In terms of factor reliability statistics, Table 31 displays the results of a Cronbach's alpha test for those variables utilized in Round Two, while Table 32 shows the results for those variables tested in Round Three.

**Table 31**

*Reliability Analysis for Round Two - Factor A*

Factors	A
Cronbach's alpha	0.01
Mean	4.25
Mean Sd	0.44
SD M	0.89
SD Sd	0.44
Variables	6

**Table 32**

*Reliability Analysis for Round Three - Factor A*

Factors	Transformed	
	A3, A8	A1, A3, A4
	A1	A-2
Cronbach's alpha	0.53	0.67
Mean	3.61	3.3
Mean Sd	0.5	0.94
SD M	1	0.76
SD Sd	0.37	0.61
Variables	8	3

Based on results in Round Two, as well as some added and more precise questions in Round Three, there were some changes in the wording of the questions in Round Three. The resulting Cronbach's alpha for Factor A increased from a score of  $\alpha = .01$  in Round Two to a score of  $\alpha = .53$  on Round Three with some variables transformed to indicate

similar negative/positive directions (agreement/disagreement). When three specific variables (A1, A3 and A4) were tested for reliability in Round Three, the Cronbach's alpha score was  $\alpha = .67$ .

### ***Discussion***

In Round Two, there seemed to be a strong consensus that low-income persons should serve on the boards of community organizations that serve low-income persons. There was also a strong consensus that they should not be required to serve because a low-income person receives services from this organization. There was general agreement that low-income persons need to be involved on such boards, but there was uncertainty on how their voice can best be heard. There was uncertainty if such representation should be required. There was debate if others who are not low-income themselves can represent a low-income person adequately.

In Round Three, incorporating insights from themes IA, 1B, 5B, 10 and 12 dealing with the convergence of a new urgency in accountability and governance along with the professionalization of skills, institutional isomorphism, and the disruptive nature of engagement with low-income persons on boards, there was generally less agreement between Round Two and Round Three. In Round Three itself, there was less agreement that there should be a requirement for an agency to include a low-income person on their board of directors. The panelists seemed to conclude that such low-income representation is important and timely but should not be a requirement of either service commitment or governmental financial assistance for such services. Therefore, as the factor's hypothesis suggested, and the panelists agreed, low-income voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors of those organizations that serve such persons and communities,

but efforts should be made to engage such voices without any specific requirement. Table 33 shows the variable name, the mean, and standard deviation (based on a Likert 5-point scale), related themes, agreement/disagreement transforming a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagreement=1; disagreement=2; neutral=3; agree=4; strongly agree=5) to a 3-point Likert scale (disagree=1; neutral=2; agree=3), and the consensus in agreement or disagreement.



**Table 33***Factor A - Round Three Variables, Mean, Standard Deviation, Related Themes, Agree/Disagreement Spread, and Consensus*

Variable Factor A	Mean	S. Deviation	Themes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Consensus
A1_3_reqlawservesliboard	3.4	1.34	1a, 1b, 12	50%	21%	29%	Majority agree
A2_5_nonlirepli	3.6	0.76	10, 1a, 5b	57%	36%	7%	Majority agree
A3_7_voiceliself	2.92	1.26	1a, 1b, 10, 12	36%	14%	50%	Majority disagree
A4_9_reqlawfeddollarsli	3.57	1.01	1a, 1b, 10	50%	35%	14%	Majority agree
A5_11_liimportantnonreq	4.42	0.85	1a, 1b, 10	93%	0%	7%	Strong agree
A6_13_hardliboard	2.92	0.83	12	29%	36%	36%	Weak disagree
A7_15_todayimportantliboard	3.7	1.13	1a	71%	14%	14%	Moderate agree
A8_17_enoughlialreadyboards	1.78	0.89	1a, 1b	7%	7%	86%	Moderate disagree
A9_19_opinboarddo	1.85*	0.95	1a, 1b, 10, 12	50%*			Majority agree * on statement number 1

***Specific Findings for Factor A (a-1)***

*(a-1) Finding: A person who is not low income can represent the low-income voice on a board.*

As shown in Table 34, there seemed to be a continued *majority agreement* that a person who themselves is not low-income can represent the low-income voice on a board of directors. However, in Round Three, there seemed to be some connection between the agency affiliation and their opinion on this matter that was statistically significant. ACTION members were more inclined to be neutral or in disagreement, while MYCAP members were more inclined to agree. There seemed to be no major difference between the CEOs and the board members, though board members agreed with the statement, while the CEOs were divided.

**Table 34**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor A (a-1)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Non-LI can Represent LI	A1_2_RepresentLI Majority agree	A2_5_NonLIRepLI Majority agree
Rank Order	5	5
		Agency Affiliation differs ( $\tau_b = .63, n = 14, p = .010$ ; $r_{pb} = .7, n = 14, p = .005$ )

There was a strong, positive association between agency affiliation, which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .63, n = 14, p = .010$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between agency affiliation and this variable, and there was a positive correlation between this requirement and the panelist’s role, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = .7, n = 14, p = .005$ ) (Table 33 - A2\_5\_NonLIRepLI).

**Comments From Panelists – Round Two.** The number in parenthesis after each quote is used to match the same panelists, though all requested anonymity.

- *Functional and high performing non-profit boards have many types of people including those directly impacted and those with professional expertise such as legal and finance. A sound mix of people ensures strong governance. (Panelist 1)*
- *Especially true if the one who is not low-income has another connection to the low-income population. (Panelist 3)*
- *If we want to truly be of service to a mission serving an aspect of a population --- then it is only right to have representation. But not just token representation but to bring people into the conversation an organization is having about the community it serves. (Panelist 4)*
- *While people who represent does have one perspective, they may not have the same perspective as a low-income person. People need to represent themselves when possible. (Panelist 7)*
- *Some low-income people feel an entitlement and are angry, so them to serve on a board — are they serving to help or because they were not granted the privilege they deserve? (Panelist 8)*
- *That’s how I am working with a board because of experience in healthcare. I was in management, and I experienced working with people and discussing where they are. (Panelist 9)*
- *I think every effort should be made to have low-income representation, only when that is not possible should a non -low-income person take their*

*place on a board. (Panelist 11)*

- *Although someone that serve low-income families can be a voice for their constituents, a true measure of low-income individual input would best be served by direct input from low-income individuals. (Panelist 12)*
- *Since we work with Low-income persons, and understand their plight, we would be ideal to represent them on certain boards. (Panelist 13)*
- *I agree a person who is not low income can be the advocate for those who are low income but having them on the board is essential for representation. (Panelist 14)*

**Comments from Panelists – Round Three.** As in the section above, the number in parenthesis after each quote is used to match the same panelists, while maintaining anonymity.

- *Related to question 4, compassion for the less fortunate is a driver of service to low-income persons. (Panelist 2)*
- *If this person who claims to represent low-income folks is close to the demographic by address or friendly connection, they can represent the views of the low-income community. (Panelist 3)*
- *Depends on the relationship and cultural sensitivity of the board member. I would also say this of the person with low income invited to be on the board. (Panelist 4)*
- *A person who is not low income can use his/her resources- financial and intellectual- to benefit the organization. (Panelist 6)*
- *Some training on low-income people's issues would be helpful. (Panelist 8)*

- *If you are involved in your community and you do things with all types of people and learn about them... If you really want to serve the people, you need to be involved with their lives. (Panelist 9)*

**Specific Findings for Factor A (a-2)**

*(a-2) Finding: It is not true that only a person who is low-income can represent the low-income voice on a board.*

Table 35 shows that there seemed to be a *majority consensus in agreement* in Round Two that *“Only if a low-income person serves on a board of directors of a community organization can you say that their voice is being heard,”* yet this became a *majority consensus in disagreement* in Round Three with a similar statement that *“The only way the concerns of low-income persons can be represented on a board of a community organization is when a low-income person herself or himself serves on that board.”*

**Table 35**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor A (a-2)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Only LI can represent LI	A6_12_OnlyLIVoice	A3_7_VoiceLISelf
	Majority agree	Majority disagree
Rank Order	5	6
		Race differs ( $\tau_b = -.53, n = 14, p = .036$ ; $r_{pb} = -.53, n = 14, p = .051$ )

There was a strong, negative association between race and this variable, which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = -.53, n = 14, p = .036$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between race and the statement *“The only way*

*the concerns of low-income persons can be represented on a board of a community organization is when a low-income person herself or himself serves on that board.”*

There was a negative correlation between this requirement and race, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = -.53, n = 14, p = .051$ ). Caucasians inclined to be in more agreement, while African Americans were more in disagreement with this statement. With the rewording of the statement between Round Two and Round Three, a shift occurred from *agreement* to *disagreement*. It seemed in Round Three, this variable matched or confirmed the finding from the other statement that persons who are not low-income can represent low-income voices on a board, yet African Americans and Caucasian panelists seemed to disagree further (A3\_7\_VoiceLIself).

#### **Comments from Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Their voice may be only the ideas of one being served. Take caution that other voices are not being heard. One voice may not be fully representative. (Panelist 3)*
- *It seems that too many boards who are made up of primarily higher income people even if they came out of having be low income ---- can be out of touch with the reality faced by the recipients of the services the mission endeavors to provide. For example, moving maternal care to a predominantly white suburb and expect people who just lost their community hospital to then find transportation to an area they do not feel comfortable being in --- board members might not be too aware that transportation or the ability to teledoc or whatever would prove difficult for some. Or if doing a food program assuming the donated food served is*

*edible to the people receiving it. If culturally say a majority of a population Muslim or require kosher etc. The best way to know culturally what makes sense is to talk to people themselves. (Panelist 4)*

- *This can be accomplished to some degree through focus groups and advisory boards. (Panelist 5)*
- *It is one way for their voice to be heard but not the only way. (Panelist 7)*
- *A person that lives in the situation tends to understand what the other person of their status is going through. You have to walk a mile in their shoes to understand — you can empathize, but not really know. (Panelist 8)*
- *A lot of low-income people are willing to speak out in public, the board may learn from people speaking in the public. (Panelist 9)*
- *No. The low-income person must then fully participate in proceeding and not simply sit through meetings and conferences. (Panelist 12)*
- *Not necessary, other ways can be used to hear the VOICE of the low-income community. (Panelist 13)*

#### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three.**

- *A way to better service - not "the only way". (Panelist 2)*
- *Having the low-income person on the board is not critical if there is no one from that community available. Also, there may be a close ally available to give voice to the low-income community. (Panelist 3)*
- *The organization should have processes for program and client feedback. (Panelist 6)*

- *Many non-low-income people have some understanding of what it means to be low income. (Panelist 8)*
- *The right-minded person can serve the low-income community, but they really have to want to understand the low-income community. (Panelist 9)*

***Specific Findings for Factor A (b)***

*(b) Finding: There was a reduction in agreement between rounds regarding the requirement that a low-income person ought to be required to serve on the board of an agency that either serves low-income persons or receives government assistance to serve low-income persons.*

Table 36 shares that there seemed to be a change from Round Two to Round Three regarding the agreement lessening for the requirement that an organization that serves low-income persons, or one which receives government assistance, provides such services from a *strong agreement* in Round Two to a *majority agreement* in Round Three. Roles (Board v. CEO) and agency affiliation displayed some differences that were statistically significant.



**Table 36**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor A (b)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Two	Round Two	Round Three	Round Three
Low income must be on board if agencies serve low-income or receives public monies	A2_4_L		A5_10_	A1_3_RE	
	IMustB	A3_6_Re	BeRequ	QLawSer	A4_9_RE
	eInvolv	quiredLI	iredIncl	vesLIBoa	QLawFed
	ed	OnBoard	udeLI	rd	DollarsLI
	Strong agree	Moderate agree	Strong agree	Majority agree	Majority agree
Rank Order	1	3	1	5	5

A  
CEOs/Bo  
ard differ  
( $\tau_b = .6, p = .001$ ;  
 $r_{pb} = .66, n = 14, p = .010$ ); B  
Agency  
Affiliatio  
n differs,  
( $r_{pb} = -.54, n = 14, p = .045$ ;  $\tau_b = -.45, n = 14, p = .052$ )

CEOs/Boa  
rds Differ  
( $\tau_b = .56, p = .003$ ;  
 $r_{pb} = .6, n = 14, p = .023$ )

There was a strong, positive association between roles (CEO in agreement) that “*It should be a requirement in law that if an organization serves low-income persons, then that organization must have a low-income person on the board of directors,*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .6, p = .001$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between role on the board or CEO and if “*It should be a*

*requirement in law that if an organization serves low-income persons, then that organization must have a low-income person on the board of directors.*” There was a positive correlation between this requirement and the panelist’s role, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = .66, n = 14, p = .010$ ). Another point-biserial correlation was conducted on agency affiliation and this requirement. There was a negative correlation between this requirement and agency affiliation, which was statistically significant [ $(r_{pb} = -.54, n = 14, p = .045)$ ; ( $\tau_b = -.45, n = 14, p = .052$ )]. ACTION and CW/CWRLF members and the CEOs of the agencies seemed to be in more agreement than general board members. MYCAP and YNDC members leaned in disagreement that it should be a requirement in law that if an organization serves low-income persons that a low-income person must serve on that board. CEOs seemed to be more inclined to agree with the requirement that a low-income person must serve if the agency receives government assistance than board members as shown in Table 35 (A1\_3\_REQLawServesLIBoard; A4\_9\_REQLawFedDollarsLI).

**Comments from Panelists – Round Two (A2).**

- *Including a low-income person on the board is good if the group is respectful of the wisdom that the low-income person has through their experiences. It is also necessary for the low-income person to be enabled to contribute with extra information that they may not have the experience to fully understand. (Panelist 3)*
- *The input would be informative in the decision-making process and in finding solutions in the middle where input from all stakeholders could come together and formulate solutions, mutual learning, and move*

*forward the conversation to address the larger systemic issues. (Panelist 4)*

- *Persons on the board understand the plight of those that are low-income. (Panelist 8)*
- *We have to carefully choose the low-income person, someone who understands and can hold a conversation and express themselves in an understandable way. (Panelist 9)*
- *Although we can represent low-income persons, as an organization, what better way to work with the low-income community than to have them on a board. (Panelist 13)*

#### **Comments from Panelists – Round Two (A3).**

- *I'll admit, I'm not so sure about required. I think that is where the tokenism sort of happens when you place an expectation or requirement on people. As with any board member, there has to be a level of willingness to participate, and an invitation extended. Or an application process. An interview or just talking over coffee to help encourage or to see how much a person can offer in terms of service and time. A lot of people are indeed working poor or working shift jobs. The meeting structure of time and place would have to be conducive to people's ability to get to a meeting site and or be able to ZOOM or whatever --- transportation etc. need to be factored in. (Panelist 4)*
- *A board needs the perspective of someone who is "there" or has been "there." (Panelist 5)*

- *I've served with low-income people on the board, she was very good at expressing needs and talking to people and bringing back information.*  
(Panelist 9)
- *At times, the board itself, when not involving low-income individuals, is only speculating the true needs of the target client.* (Panelist 12)
- *If they feel comfortable serving, on various boards that work with low-income community.* (Panelist 13)

**Comments from Panelists – Round Two (A5).**

- *While just stating that it shouldn't be a requirement placed on low-income persons to have to be on a board if they receive services. I think it is a good to require boards to include --- with education on not treating people like tokens --- but that a relationship is built with the community such that the board and community being served by the organization creates a balance so that all decisions are not made from one perspective --- that there is room for diversity in the discourse so that it bumps up the effectiveness of a decision --- because it has truly taken in the mission and who it endeavors to serve.*  
(Panelist 4)
- *Including even one person helps the low-income people to feel valued and they do have a different perspective of what their lifestyle is than I would. They would help me with expressing themselves.* (Panelist 9)
- *I believe that this is the case with no questions.* (Panelist 12)

### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three (A1).**

- *One cannot legislate compassion.* (Panelist 2)
- *Any organization that claims to serve low-income persons should have a close relationship with the low-income community. If they are doing their job, this relationship should induce the organization to include the low-income voice on the board. It need not be law but should be encouraged by other charitable organizations.* (Panelist 3)
- *A law of this nature would be tough to enforce and probably create tension among board members.* (Panelist 5)
- *The organization rather than government should be the decision maker.* (Panelist 6)
- *When the service area is multi-county or larger it may be hard to convene regularly.* (Panelist 8)
- *Not a requirement or law, but they should be encouraged to find someone. If it's a law, you may get someone who isn't serving their population and may just serve themselves.* (Panelist 9)
- *It is also important to prepare those individuals, so they understand the roles and responsibilities if board members and assure them their opinions count and have equal value as anyone else on the board.* (Panelist 11)

### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three (A4).**

- *In my experience on the Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership Board (MYCAP) low-income representation is legislated by a*

*democratically elected representative for low-income people by low-income people. Therefore, a vehicle for low-income people to serve exists at least in the CAP world. (Panelist 2)*

- *The law can be clear, but the intent of the organization is much more important. A consensus of the importance of having a voice for the low-income community on the board is an organization's responsibility. You can force an organization to do this, but if the spirit is not there, having that voice on the board may only happen on paper. (Panelist 3)*
- *Mandating participation doesn't always equalize or as intentionally inclusive. It kind of be tokenism....and there might be a superficial experience. (Panelist 4)*
- *The government is a stakeholder. (Panelist 6)*
- *You want the right person and someone who is interested, not someone who is forced. It shouldn't be a law. (Panelist 9)*
- *You need to hear from people effected by poverty. (Panelist 11)*

#### ***Specific Findings for Factor A (c)***

*(c) Finding: In Round Three, there seemed to be a strong agreement among the panelists that it is important that low-income persons serve on community agencies' board of directors but that it should not be required. Furthermore, there was moderate agreement that it remains important today that low-income persons serve on such boards.*

These focused questions, arising from Round Two analysis, were not asked specifically in that round, but were only present in Round Three as Table 37 shows.

**Table 37**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor A (c)*

Variable Comparable	Round Three	Round Three
Important for low-income to serve on boards but not required; and as important today.	A5_11_LIImportantNonREQ	A7_15_TodayImportantLIBoard
	Strong agree	Moderate agree
Rank Order	1	3
		A CEOs/Boards differ $\tau_b = .47, n = 14, p = .018$ . The point-biserial test does not show any statistical difference; B Gender differ $\tau_b = -.55, n = 14, p = .032$ ; $r_{pb} = -.62, n = 14, p = .018$

There was a moderate, positive association between roles with CEOs in agreement more with the position that *“Today more than ever it is important that low-income persons be included in the boards of community agencies”* which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .47, n = 14, p = .018$ ). The point-biserial test did not show any statistical difference.

There was also a strong, negative association between gender with females in more agreement that *“Today more than ever it is important that low-income persons be included in the boards of community agencies”* which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = -.55, n = 14, p = .032$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between gender and *“Today more than ever it is important that low-income persons be included in the boards of community agencies,”* which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = -.62, n = 14, p = .018$ ). This statement’s result concurred with other statements that low-income participation on boards is important but should not be required. (Table 36 - A5\_11\_LIImportantNonREQ; A7\_15\_TodayImportantLIBoard

### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three (A5).**

- *Perspective through shared experience is important and valuable.*  
(Panelist 2)
- *If it makes sense for the vision Mission of the organization and truly inclusive and operations is truly engaged with the community it outreaches to...* (Panelist 4)
- *People regardless of income are part of the community.* (Panelist 6)
- *New insights are always helpful.* (Panelist 8)
- *Has to be a want to do things.* (Panelist 9)
- *You need to have their voice and perspective.* (Panelist 11)

### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three (A7).**

- *We all know that a board's is charter is to set direction for an agency. Who better to contribute than one immersed in the low-income community.*  
(Panelist 2)
- *Nonprofits doing outreach are changing...organizational development if it is organic and attune to societal changes...federal funding and many major funders changing priorities...it's important to be that much more inclusive and draw from the community being served.* (Panelist 4)
- *With pandemic there are more low-income people many with different needs.* (Panelist 8)
- *They should be there, but sometimes they need understanding and training before they can function.* (Panelist 9)
- *Raising rates of poverty make it more important.* (Panelist 11)



**Specific Findings for Factor A (d)**

(d) Finding: There seemed to be some consensus in disagreement with the statements related to having a hard time including low-income persons on boards and that there seems to be an adequate number of low-income persons already serving on such boards.

There was *weak consensus in disagreement* that it is hard to involve low-income persons on these boards as shown in Table 38.

**Table 38**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor A (d)*

Variable Comparable	Round Three	Round Three
It is hard work to include low-income persons to serve or that there may be sufficient numbers of low income already serving	A6_13_HardLIBoard	A8_17_EnoughLIAreadyBoards
None in Round 2	Weak disagree	Moderate disagree
Rank Order	8	4
	Race differs ( $\tau_b = .83, n = 14, p = .001$ ; ( $r_{pb} = .87, n = 14, p = <.001$ )	

There was a strong, positive association between race and the statement “*It is hard work to include low-income persons on a board,*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .83, n = 14, p = .001$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between race and “*It is hard work to include low-income persons on a board.*” There was a positive correlation between race and “*It is hard work to include low-income persons on a board,*” which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = .87, n = 14, p = <.001$ ). African Americans inclined to be more in *disagreement*. Further, there seemed to be a stronger *moderate consensus in disagreement* that there are enough low-income persons already

involved on such boards and that nothing more needs to be done at this time. This followed the general thinking by the panelists that low-income voices are important to include on boards but should not be required to do so; yet, more needs to still be done to engage low-income persons since it is not difficult to do, and there are not enough low-income persons already engaged. See Table 37 for additional details (A6\_13\_HardLIBoard; A8\_17\_EnoughLIAreadyBoards).

**Comments from Panelists – Round Three (A6).**

- *It is work to identify low-income candidates to serve. The pool of candidates is broad and diverse. Discernment of motivation to serve is key. (Panelist 2)*
- *Including a low-income person on the board requires a closer relationship with those served. This can be a challenge. (Panelist 3)*
- *Yes it is...assessing DEI, cultural sensitivity and potentially having to shift the organizational culture which includes the board governance...assuming that board operates under traditional norms of people with money serving. (Panelist 4)*
- *Income is not necessarily a determinant of ability to participate. You need to find the right person. (Panelist 6)*
- *Especially to have continued participation. (Panelist 8)*
- *It can be. We've had to have people do pick-ups because of transportation limitations. (Panelist 9)*
- *It can be challenging but worth the effort. (Panelist 11)*

### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three (A8).**

- *Really!* (Panelist 2)
- *I don't have that data.* (Panelist 3)
- *Not consistently.... boards might try for a time but then when it comes to fiscal responsibility challenges decision making. Time and effort to be truly inclusive can be a lot for some organizations. One way is to have a fiscal agent type of board and an advisory board working together. Advisory would be made up of people of low income, advocates, people from community, social service providers etc. Fiscal —people with financial and legal skills* (Panelist 4)
- *We can always improve by board governance and development.* (Panelist 6)
- *The nature of the low-income community is changing.* (Panelist 8)

### ***Specific Findings for Factor A (e)***

*(e) Finding: In Round Two, as emergent from narratives in Round One, it was clear that the statement that if a low-income person receives assistance from an agency that he/she must serve on the board was clearly in strong disagreement with the panelists and was not repeated in Round Three.*

It was clear from parts of the narrative comments and strong reactions in *disagreement* that a low-income person should not be required to serve on a board if they received services from the agency as shown in Table 39. The structure of this question in Round Two lead to much misinterpretation and as a result, it was discarded in Round Three.

**Table 39***Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor A (e)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Low-income persons must serve on the board if they received services	A4_8_LIMustServe Strong disagree	N/A
Rank Order	2	

**Comments from Panelists – Round Two.**

- *I lean towards disagreeing. That it not be a requirement. But really an invitation and then time taken to encourage participation even offering a mentor. Any new board member needs a mentor, really. Anyhow, just make it more personal rather than a requirement for receiving services. It's difficult enough already for folks, build a relationship and not a contract or expectation. Again that expectation or requirement becomes tokenism really quick unless you put that expectation on ALL the board members. (Panelist 4)*
- *Just because some receives benefits doesn't mean they are adequate to serve. (Panelist 8)*
- *Some low-income recipients of benefits are not the proper voice for the masses. (Panelist 12)*
- *They should not be required to serve on the board. (Panelist 13)*

***Specific Findings for Factor A (f)***

*(f) Finding: There was a majority consensus in agreement with the statement of position on role of low-income persons on the board: "Require that a low-income*

*person serves on the board” ranked the highest at 50%; “Voluntarily include a low-income person on the board” was the second largest opinion with 36%.*

The CEOs clustered, though not statistically significant, that there should be a requirement that a low-income person serves on the board. This represented the majority opinion followed in second place by the voluntarily inclusion of a low-income person on the board. This seemed to be in keeping with the general opinion, divided by role on the board, that low-income persons ought to be included on these boards of directors, yet there seems to be less interest in legal requirements than in voluntary action. There was even less agreement regarding the role of a representative voice. See Tables 40 and 41. (A9\_19\_OPINBoardDo and Figure 4)

**Table 40**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor A (f)*

Variable Comparable	Round Three
Opinion: Statement of Position on Role of low income on the board	A9_19_OPINBoardDo
“Require that a low-income person serves on the board”	Majority agree
Rank Order	5

**Table 41**

*Selection of Best Statement by Panelists Regarding Opinion (A9\_19\_BoardDo)*

Opinion: Description of what a community agency board should do...	Number	%
Require that a low-income person serves on the board	7	50.0%
Allow a board member who is not himself/herself low-income to serve as a representative of the low-income community	2	14.3%
Voluntarily include a low-income person on the board.	5	35.7%

There were no additional comments from panelists for this factor.

### **Key Findings - Factor B**

Factor B explored and hypothesized that *low-income and marginalized persons are not trained in corporate governance to serve as leaders on the boards of CDCs and CSAs*. The variables selected for factor B attempted to probe whether the expert panelists perceived, from their own experiences, whether low-income persons have access or opportunities to be trained for them to serve on governance boards. The purpose was not to analyze the specific boards or agency's practices of the organizations from which they were selected, but the goal was to provide their expert opinion regarding this and other topics as a part of this normative and policy Delphi process.

In terms of factor reliability statistics, Table 42 displays the results of a Cronbach's alpha test for the variables utilized in Round Two, while Table 43 shows the results for the variables tested in Round Three.

**Table 42**

*Round Two Factor B Reliability Analysis*

Factors	Factor B
Cronbach's alpha	0.56
Mean	3.77
Mean Sd	0.54
SD M	1.1
SD Sd	0.43
Variables	7

**Table 43**

*Round Three Factor B Reliability Analysis*

Factors	Factor B
Cronbach's alpha	0.54
Mean	4
Mean Sd	0.54
SD M	0.99
SD Sd	0.58
Variables	6

The Cronbach's alpha for Round Two at  $\alpha = .56$  remained relatively stable in Round Three, measuring  $\alpha = .54$ . Fewer changes were made to these questions in Round Three, except for a specific ranking of training issues.

***Discussion***

In Round Two, there was a *strong agreement* that there should be training for board directors of community agencies on the needs of low-income persons. There was also a *strong agreement* that there should be training for low-income persons to be actively involved in board decision-making. Round Two found a *strong agreement* that training should help board members with problem-solving. There was some consensus that training should help board members in their practice of democracy by serving on the board. There was little agreement about the training for board members related to managing the organization. There was little agreement on whether enough training programs for board members are offered. There was little agreement on whether board training should focus on giving money to the organization.

In Round Three, incorporating aspects from themes 2, 3 and 4 related to board training, there was a *strong consensus in agreement* among the panelists that trainings for

board members ought to include aspects that help all board members better understand the specific needs of low-income persons and families. There was a *strong consensus in agreement* in both Rounds Two and Three, that there should be opportunities for board training to include problem-solving skills. There seemed to be a *moderate consensus in agreement* that low-income persons ought to receive trainings to help them become more actively involved in boards. There was a *moderate consensus in agreement* by the panelists that board training does provide a chance to practice democracy. There seemed to be a *weak consensus in disagreement* that board training should provide skills to share their financial gifts with the organization, thus the finding that board training should not focus on this effort or skill. For this finding, there were some differences based on race which is statistically significant. There seemed to be a shift from Round Two, which found *no apparent consensus* among the panelists, to Round Three where there seemed to have been a *majority consensus in agreement* that such training on how to run an organization ought to be included for board members. Barely statistically significant, there was some inclination that board members support this aspect more, while the CEOs were split. There were no, or few known, programs offered locally for low-income persons to be trained to serve on boards of directors. “*Training should be for all board members in order for them to understand better the issues facing low-income persons if the agency serves low-income communities*” was ranked the most important by the panelists as what they think about the priority of board training. It seemed that the hypothesis that low-income and marginalized persons are not trained in corporate governance to serve as leaders on the boards of CDCs and CSAs seemed to resonant with the fact that the panelists could not clearly articulate the offerings available in the local



community. Their *moderate consensus in agreement* regarding the need for specific training for low-income people to be actively involved in boards also demonstrated this point. Rather, all board members should have trainings aimed at helping them learn more about the issues and needs of low-income persons in the communities they serve. See Table 44 for more details.

**Table 44***Factor B Variables, Means & Standard Deviations (based on 5-point Likert scale), Themes, Agree/Disagree and Consensus**Ranking*

Factor B Variable	Mean	S. Deviation	Themes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Consensus
B1_59_AllBoardTrainedinLIneeds	4.42	0.65	2, 3, and 4	93%	7%	0%	Strong agree
B2_61_LISpecialTrainingActive	4.42	0.76	2, 3 and 4	86%	14%	0%	Moderate agree
B3_63_TrainProblemSkills	4.57	0.85	2, 3, and 4	93%	0%	7%	Strong agree
B4_65_TrainDemocracySkills	4.46	0.78	2, 3, and 4	79%	14%	0%	Moderate agree
B5_67_TrainOrgRunSkills	3.35	1.21	2, 3, and 4	57%	14%	29%	Majority agree
B6_69_TrainGiveMoneySkills	2.85	1.46	2, 3, and 4	36%	29%	36%	Weak disagree
B7_71_OPINRankTraining			2, 3, and 4				See rank order

**Specific Findings for Factor B (a)**

(a) Finding: All board members should be offered trainings that help them understand the specific issues and needs related to low-income families.

There seemed to be *strong consensus in agreement* in both rounds that board trainings must, or should, include some aspects that assist all board members to better understand the needs of the low-income families and persons that they serve. Table 45 (B1\_59\_AllBoardTrainedinLNeeds) represents this data.

**Table 45**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor B (a)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
All board members should receive trainings that help them understand better the low-income persons that they serve	B5_22_TrainingUnderstandL I	B1_59_AllBoardTrainedinLNeeds
	Strong agree	Strong agree
Rank Order	1	1

**Comments from Panelists – Round Two.**

- *True for those boards who serve low-income persons.* (Panelist 3)
- *Yes. As mentioned previously --- first and foremost is an understanding of the mission and why (issues) and who the mission endeavors to serve.*  
(Panelist 4)
- *If applicable yes.* (Panelist 7)
- *They need to hear what is going on to know, but until they experience it — - experience is the teacher.* (Panelist 8)

- *How can you be understanding and sympathetic to someone if all of your life you've been privileged? You have to pay attention to what low-income needs are. (Panelist 9)*
- *The Board should work together to have a comprehensive understanding of the tasks at hand. (Panelist 12)*

**Comments from Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Board members ought to know about the people they serve. (Panelist 2)*
- *This training would be very helpful, some people have never been to our low-income areas in town, and you can learn a lot by just going into their area and walking and talking to people. They'll know you don't live there and make sure someone says something to you. (Panelist 9)*

***Specific Findings for Factor B (b)***

*(b) Finding - Persons who are low-income serving on boards ought to receive special training to be actively involved in boards.*

There seemed to be a *moderate consensus in agreement* that low-income persons ought to receive training to help them become more actively involved in boards from both Rounds Two and Three as shown in Table 46 (B2\_61\_LISpecialTrainingActive).

**Table 46**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor B (b)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Persons who are low-income serving on boards ought to receive special training to be actively involved in boards	B4_20_TrainingSpecialActiveLI	B2_61_LISpecialTrainingActive
	Moderate agree	Moderate agree

Results were improved, as in Round Two, there were two panelists who disagreed, but in Round Three, two panelists moved to neutral, with none registering disagreement.

#### **Comments from Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Possibly a board mentor may be able to fill in the blanks for those with less experience in this role. A special training program is insulting and discounting that person's own experiences. (Panelist 3)*
- *Really for all members. But because there might be unfamiliarity with regards to the purpose of a board and how best to stay engaged with it. An understanding that it is a commitment of time and for some resources. A chance to contribute talents and networks to bolster the mission is as significant. To encourage confidence and support in the development of the person. (Panelist 4)*
- *To feel comfortable with be an equal member of the board and be actively involved. (Panelist 7)*
- *It prepares them for the meetings. It lifts their skills for future boards and service. (Panelist 8)*
- *Training specifically in the words that you use and how to use them. (Panelist 9)*
- *Depending on the complexity of the Board needs. (Panelist 12)*

#### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Training for ALL board members! (Panelist 2)*
- *This applies to all persons who serve on boards. (Panelist 5)*

**Specific Findings for Factor B (c)**

*(c) Finding - Trainings for boards should include problem-solving skills.*

There was *strong consensus in agreement* in both Rounds Two and Three that there should be opportunities for board training to include problem-solving skills, as shown in Table 47 (B3\_63\_TrainProblemSkills).

**Table 47**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor B (c)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Trainings for boards should include problem-solving skills	B7_26_TrainingProblem	B3_63_TrainProblemSkills
	Strong agree	Strong agree
Rank Order	1	1

**Comments from Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Yes. If unfamiliar with nonprofit sector or culture of an organization or the population they serve -- problems are solved probably more communally than systemically with heavy formal structures. It is sometimes difficult for MBA or JD's or engineers and other professionals to adapt to what may see to them a less formal way --- the storming, norming --- that has to happen in community conversations --- people have to express the issue, it's impact and thrown out suggestions onto the table --- and then discuss and come to a point of solving the issue etc. The solution may not very well be the most obvious one. (Panelist 4)*

- *If you're just meeting to meet, that's a problem. Too many boards just meet to meet — you need to be a part of the solution to the problem.*

(Panelist 8)

- *It should provide information for problem solving and how to interact with other people to solve the problems.* (Panelist 9)

- *In order to best serve the board problem solving is paramount.* (Panelist 12)

### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Understanding of the ever-changing variables in life experiences.*

(Panelist 2)

- *The goal should be to help them, but maybe it shouldn't be "should." Background matters a lot and people may have a hard time speaking out.*

(Panelist 9)

### ***Specific Findings for Factor B (d)***

*(d) Finding: Board trainings provide a chance to learn how to practice democracy.*

There was a *moderate consensus in agreement* by the panelists that board training does provide a chance to learn how to practice democracy as shown in Table 48

(B4\_65\_TrainDemocracySkills).

**Table 48**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor B (d)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Board trainings provide a chance to learn how to practice democracy	B6_24_TrainingDemocracy	B4_65_TrainDemocracySkills
	Moderate agree	Moderate agree
Rank Order	3	3

In Round Three, the wording differed but remained consistent with the findings from Round Two. In Round Three, the nuance was “*like different ways of including others in board decision-making.*”

**Comments from Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Yes. Ideally. In the best sense of what democracy is. It is the freedom to be able to contribute to the process by which all in a community are impacted. That it's aim is not a false equality but a balanced understanding of all parties as stakeholders regardless of position, power, influence etc. --- that there is a mutual understanding that discourse has to happen in order to come to an understanding of action. Much like Peter Block's Community and countless others who have written about community-based organizing. (Panelist 4)*
- *Democracy is not an accurate word. Although everyone on the board has a vote, an executive committee steers the agenda. Democracy assumes that one votes his/her own opinion. A board member as a fiduciary should work in the best interest of the organization. (Panelist 6)*



- *Board processes may be set up my state or federal government and you have to follow them. (Panelist 9)*
- *As long as there is all around participation, and the right members, democracy should prevail. (Panelist 12)*

**Comments from Panelists – Round Three.**

- *It's your thought process and how you want people to treat you, is how you treat other people. (Panelist 9)*

**Specific Findings for Factor B (e)**

*(e) Finding: Trainings for board members should not focus on sharing their financial gifts with the organization.*

Table 49 shows there seemed to be a *weak consensus in disagreement* that board training should provide skills to share their financial gifts with the organization; thus, the finding that board training should not focus on this effort or skill.

**Table 49**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor B (e)*

Variable Comparable	Round 2	Round 3
Trainings for board members should focus on sharing their financial gifts with the organization.	B3_18_TrainingFinGifts	B6_69_TrainGiveMoneySkills
	Weak disagree	Weak disagree
Rank Order	8	8
	Race - $\tau_b = .52, n = 14, p = .04;$ rpb = $.56, n = 14, p = .037$ )	

There was a strong, positive association between race and “*Training for board members should provide them with skills in giving money to the organization,*” which was

statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .52, n = 14, p = .04$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between race and “*Training for board members should provide them with skills in giving money to the organization.*” There was a positive correlation between this requirement and race, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = .56, n = 14, p = .037$ ). Interestingly, African Americans were more inclined to disagree, while Caucasians were more inclined to agree that board training should help board members share their financial gifts with the organization which was statistically significant. (B6\_69\_TrainGiveMoneySkills)

#### **Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Focusing on financial contributions turns off many very inspirational persons.* (Panelist 3)
- *Not entirely, training for boards should be focused on the mission and population it endeavors to serve. To know first and foremost why and then determine how best you can support the board. For some, donating "time" is as significant as financial support. Being able to run a zoom meeting or doing the marketing for free and so forth. We know the financial support is significant, of course, but not the exclusive purpose of a nonprofit board.* (Panelist 4)
- *There should be some financial commitment on the part of the board but that should not be the paramount criteria.* (Panelist 5)
- *One component but it is important to understand everyone brings something different to the table usually the least of which is money.* (Panelist 7)

- *Some boards ask too much, some are too high.* (Panelist 8)
- *Requiring a financial donation privileges people who are more financially capable, but then may be at a disadvantage for understanding people.* (Panelist 9)
- *Financial gifts should be left to the discretion of each board.* (Panelist 12)

### **Comments from Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Board members need to be articulate in telling "the agency story" to engender interest in the agency mission.* (Panelist 2)
- *A quality gift means something different to each person.* (Panelist 6)
- *Even if small amount. Make clear that serving and attending meeting counts as in-kind contribution.* (Panelist 8)
- *Gift-giving should be based on how you feel in your heart, not through a training, but maybe interacting with people.* (Panelist 9)

### ***Specific Findings for Factor B (f)***

*(f) Finding: There was a majority consensus in agreement that Training for board members should provide them with the skills needed to run an organization.*

There seemed to be a shift from Round Two, which found *no apparent consensus* among the panelists, to Round Three, where there seems to have been a *majority consensus in agreement*, that training on the skills needed to run an organization ought to be included for board members as shown in Table 50.

**Table 50**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor B (f)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Training for board members should provide them with the skills needed to run an organization.	B2_16_TrainingKnowledgeRun	B5_67_TrainOrgRunSkills
	No apparent	Majority agree
Rank Order	9	5
		CEO/Boards differ $\tau_b = -.41, n = 14, p = .055$ ; bi-serial point not significant

There also seemed to be a *moderate negative* correlation between roles, with board members more inclined to support this training, while CEOs were split. This was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = -.41, n = 14, p = .055$ ). The bi-serial point correlation did not show any correlation that was statistically significant. (B5\_67\_TrainOrgRunSkills)

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Much more is involved. The knowledge to run the organization is the executive director's job. (Panelist 3)*
- *It can go either way. It is best to interview or build a relationship with the community --- to get to know people in such a way that you become familiar with their circumstances and might be surprised that you may very well have very highly educated people or people who have a lot of experienced obtained outside of schooling. Not everyone with an MBA or JD is necessarily versed in how to run a nonprofit organization. As an example, churches often call upon its members to volunteer and*

*organize events. There is a lot of hidden talents in the community --- it just takes building relationships to uncover them. (Panelist 4)*

- *It is also important to understand the concept of governance and the difference between governance and administrative operations. (Panelist 5)*
- *Board's do not run an organization. Running an organization/operations is a part, but not the focus of a training program. Policy, fundraising, and oversight of the Executive Director, not operations is the focus of a board. (Panelist 6)*
- *Board training should in part be focused on that but also about the process and so much more. (Panelist 7)*
- *Before you can serve on a board you need to know who and why and the mission statement — what is the purpose. Are you just a body? Are you there to fulfill a need? (Panelist 8)*
- *Different boards focus on different things and being on the board has helped me understand how things are done. Training is always necessary. (Panelist 9)*
- *Teaching Mission and the vision is more important. (Panelist 11)*
- *Board training should cover a broad range of topics that would help individuals consider a broad range of need respectively. (Panelist 12)*

### **Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Training should focus on leadership skills. Operations is the role of management. (Panelist 2)*

- *Although the board is a critical voice, the running of the organization needs to lie in the executive director. (Panelist 3)*

**Specific Findings for Factor B (g)**

*(g) Finding: There are no, or few known, programs offered locally for low-income persons to be trained to serve on boards of directors.*

In Round Two, the panelists displayed a *weak consensus of agreement* that there might be programs for training low-income board persons to be board members as shown in Table 51 (B1\_14\_LocalTrainingPro). This question was not asked again in Round Three since there seemed to be little knowledge by this panelist group of possible offerings.

**Table 51**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor B (g)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
There are programs offered locally for low-income persons to be trained to serve on boards of directors	B1_14_LocalTrainingPro Weak agree	N/A
Rank Order	7	

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *A good idea which is why I agree but not aware of too many programs. I am guessing organizations seeking board members might develop such a program and fold it into their training of new board members. (Panelist 4)*

- *This is kind of a deficit statement that assumes that low-income people need special training to serve on a board. (Panelist 5)*
- *Low income does not equate to special low-income training. All board members should be trained together, being educated with the same information. Income level, both low, high or middle, character and life experience are factors that make a person a valued board member. (Panelist 6)*
- *No comment on this one, the boards I'm on train their own people — but am not sure about out in the community. (Panelist 9)*
- *Most Community Action programs have orientation and Board training especially for the low-income sector on the Board. (Panelist 11)*
- *Any worthwhile training should definitely advance the contributions of the low-income individuals on the board. (Panelist 12)*
- *I am not aware of too many boards available for training in our area. (Panelist 13)*

***Specific Findings for Factor B (h)***

*(h) Finding: “Training should be for all board members in order for them to understand better the issues facing low-income persons if the agency serves low-income communities” was ranked the most important by the panelists regarding what they think about the priority of board training.*

Several statements based on each of the variables were presented in Round Three only for the panelists to rank from highest (1) to lowest (6) as shown in Table 52

(B7\_71\_OPINRankTraining). “*Training should be for all board members in order for them to understand better the issues facing low-income persons if the agency serves low-income communities*” was ranked the most important by the panelists regarding what they think about the priority of board training.

**Table 52**

*Rank Order for B7\_71\_OPINRankTraining*

Rank	Mean Rank
Training should be for all board members in order for them to understand better the issues facing low-income persons if the agency serves low-income communities.	1.64
There should be special training for low-income persons so that they become more actively involved with the board.	2.43
Board training should help persons improve solving problems	3.36
Board training should help them with their skills to live in a democracy.	3.64
Board training should focus on how the organization is managed and operated.	4.00
Board training should focus on how a board member provides money to the agency.	5.93

**Key Findings - Factor C**

Factor C explored and hypothesized that *low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.*

The variables selected for Factor C attempted to probe whether the expert panelists perceived, from their own experiences, whether low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through their service on governance boards. The



purpose was not to analyze the specific boards or agency’s practices of the organizations from which they were selected, but the goal was to provide their expert opinion regarding this and other topics as a part of this normative and policy Delphi process.

In terms of factor reliability statistics, Table 53 displays the results of a Cronbach’s alpha test for the variables utilized in Round Two, while Table 54 shows the results for those variables tested in Round Three.

**Table 53**

*Round Two Factor C Reliability Test*

Factors	Area C
Cronbach's alpha	0.69
Mean	3.63
Mean Sd	0.73
SD M	0.87
SD Sd	0.4
Variables	5

**Table 54**

*Round Three Factor C Reliability Test, with/Variations*

Factors	C1,2,3,4,5,6	C3,4,5,6	C1,2
	Area C- All	Area C-1	Area C-2
Cronbach's alpha	0.15	0.21	0.29
Mean	3.34	3.39	3.25
Mean Sd	0.35	0.42	0.64
SD M	0.84	0.83	0.66
SD Sd	0.26	0.35	0.43
Variables	6	4	2

Between Round Two and Round Three, the reorganization and rewording of the various variables decreased the Cronbach's alpha from  $\alpha = .69$  to  $\alpha = .15$ . There were slight improvements if only limited numbers of variables were tested (i.e.,  $\alpha = .21$  and  $\alpha = .29$ , respectively). There were three questions that separately dealt with social connections, wealth, and professional skills of low-income persons in Round Two; however, those three were into one variable in Round Three. This could account for the discrepancy, as it reduced the cohesion of the variables measured in this factor. Additionally, some questions regarding low-income persons' resistance to leaving the board after their term is completed, along with their use of their positions while on the board, may have also impacted the reliability score for this factor. The factor originally aimed at securing consensus around the availability and willingness of low-income persons to serve on such agency boards.

### ***Discussion***

In Round Two, there was some agreement that low-income persons in the community are willing to serve on a board of directors if asked. There was some agreement that low-income persons may not be asked to serve on boards since other members seek persons with social connections, wealth, or professional skills. There seemed to be some agreement that low-income persons do not use their position on the board for their own benefit, nor do they refuse to give up their position. There was little agreement on whether the change from more neighborhood-based organizations to larger geographical ones has impacted how low-income persons are asked to serve on a board.

In Round Three, the key hypothesis that there are no low-income persons available to serve did not find support among the panelists as shown in Table 55. The

table also explores insights from Themes 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13 regarding professionalization of skills, recruitment of persons with various and similar connections, geographic boundaries, diversity, isomorphic institutionalism, difficulties seeking low-income persons, and market-driven ideologies. Panelists were in *moderate agreement* amongst themselves that low-income persons in the community are willing and able to serve on community boards. There was a *weak consensus in agreement* that low-income persons would be asked to serve on a board if they had social connections, wealth, or professional skills. This ranked higher in consensus with *agreement* when separated in Round Two, with differences noted due to agency affiliation which was statistically significant. There was *weak consensus in agreement* in the variable “*It is difficult to get low-income persons to serve on a board that serves a larger geographic region rather than a specific neighborhood.*” There was a *majority consensus in agreement* among the panelists that low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit; however, there were statistically significant differences between males and females. There was *no apparent consensus* in Round Three that low-income persons who serve on a community agency board resist leaving when their term ends, yet, the change of wording between Rounds Two and Three may have created less clarity. There was a *weak consensus in disagreement* that community boards do not include low-income persons because they want to act more like for-profit companies.

**Table 55***Factor C Variables, Means & Standard Deviations (based on 5-point Likert scale), Themes, Agree/Disagree and Consensus**Ranking*

Variable	Mean	S. Deviation	Themes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Consensus
C1_33_LIUsePositionBenefit	3.4	0.65	10, 12Emergent	50%	43%	7%	Majority agree
C2_35_LIResistLeaving	3.07	1	10, 12Emergent	21%	50%	29%	No apparent
C3_37_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills	3.42	0.76	5B, 6, 10, 11, 13	43%	50%	7%	Weak agree
C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable	4.07	0.83	5A, 5B, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13	71%	29%	0%	Moderate agree
C5_41_DifficultLILargeGeography	3.28	0.73	7	43%	43%	14%	Weak agree
C6_43_NOLibeLikeForProfits	2.78	0.8	10, 13	21%	36%	43%	Weak disagree

**Specific Findings for Factor C (a)**

(a) Finding: There was moderate consensus in agreement that there are low-income persons in the community who are willing and able to serve on community boards.

As shown in Table 56 (C4\_39\_LIWillingAbleAvailable), there was moderate consensus in agreement in both Rounds Two and Three that there are low-income persons in the community who are willing and able to serve on community boards.

**Table 56**

*Comparing Round and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor C (a)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
There are low-income persons willing and able to serve on boards of community agencies.	C1_28_LIWillingServe	C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable
	Moderate agree	Moderate agree
Rank Order	3	3

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *I think so, if the work of establishing a relationship within the community has been done and ongoing. (Panelist 4)*
- *I’ve heard people, especially within our churches (the missionary women), a lot of low-income people there will express interest in the Boards at different organizations. (Panelist 9)*
- *Sometimes it seems as though the easy choice is selected instead of the proper choice. (Panelist 12)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Low income is not an indicator of the value of a person. (Panelist 2)*

- *Not sure. But there are ways with time and effort to build up people who have potential and interest. (Panelist 4)*
- *The challenge is to find and recruit them. (Panelist 8)*
- *They may be there, but the things they've gone through as a low-income person, they may not trust boards and other people. (Panelist 9)*

**Specific Findings for Factor C (b)**

*(b)Finding: There was weak consensus in agreement that low-income persons would be asked to serve on a board if they had social connections, wealth, or professional skills.*

There was a *weak consensus in agreement* with this statement by the panelists with some differences among agency affiliation which was statistically significant as shown in Table 57.

**Table 57**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor C (b)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Two	Round Two	Round Three
Low-income persons would be asked to serve on a board if they had social connections, wealth, or professional skills.	C2_30_ProSkillsNotLI	C3_32_SeekingWealth	C4_34_SocialConnections	C3_37_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills
	Majority agree	Majority agree	Moderate agree	Weak agree
Rank Order	5	5	3	7
				Agency Affiliation - $\tau_b = .46, n = 14, p = .058$ ; $r_{pb} = .53, n = 14, p = .053$ )

There was a weak, positive association between agency affiliation and “*Low-income persons would be asked to serve on a board if they had social connections, wealth, or professional skills*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .46, n = 14, p = .058$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between agency affiliation and “*Low-income persons would be asked to serve on a board if they had social connections, wealth, or professional skills.*” There was a positive correlation which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = .53, n = 14, p = .053$ ) with MYCAP more in agreement, while ACTION was more *neutral*. Others were split. This question in Round Three combined three questions from Round Two which had received a *moderate* or *majority consensus in agreement* that low-income persons would be asked to serve if they had social connections, wealth, or professional skills. Data are shown in Table 57 (C3\_37\_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills). This statement may have had too many options which potentially weakened the level of consensus.

#### **Comments by Panelists – Round Two (C2).**

- *However, that sounds like an excuse.* (Panelist 3)
- *Yes, it happens and on one hand it is the discretion of a board to seek out what is needed to fill blind spots they may have or especially when it comes to the fiscal responsibilities. It may be necessary to hold several positions for people in the community (low-income) and then the some for professional types and then some for advocates and financial contributors.* (Panelist 4)
- *True, but a board should be diversified and inclusive.* (Panelist 6)

- *Just because a person is professional... maybe they struggled to get there. (Panelist 8)*
- *This is my experience. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two (C3).**

- *This takes the direction of some nonprofits to serve the needs of the elite. (Panelist 3)*
- *In your first round of questions, you said these are community boards. There are other ways low-income persons can contribute. (Panelist 6)*
- *A board that is active and cares about what is going on is more focused on the problem-solving thing. They want someone more based on knowledge. (Panelist 8)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two (C4).**

- *Boards often recommend people within their own networks. (Panelist 1)*
- *Once again, all about the money. (Panelist 3)*
- *Depending on the type of board, boards want connections to gain connections that can get things happening, and make things move. (Panelist 8)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *They are required to participate in board functions, skill sets and community connections are relevant to that end. (Panelist 2)*
- *Serving on a board can help build connections. (Panelist 8)*
- *I was asked for my professional skills, so I agree with this. (Panelist 9)*



**Specific Findings for Factor C (c)**

*(c) Finding: There was weak consensus in agreement that It is difficult to get low-income persons to serve on a board that serves a larger geographic region rather than a specific neighborhood.*

Shown in Table 58 (C5\_41\_DifficultLILargeGeography), there was a *weak consensus in agreement* that it is difficult to get low-income persons to serve on a board that serves a larger geographic region rather than a specific neighborhood in both Rounds Two and Three. This finding remained, even though the wording was changed in Round Three.

**Table 58**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor C (c)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
It is difficult to get low-income persons to serve on a board that serves a larger geographic region rather than a specific neighborhood.	C5_36_Geography	C5_41_DifficultLILarge Geography
	Weak agree	Weak agree
Rank Order	7	7

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *The question remains who are they serving and who are they exempting from services. (Panelist 3)*
- *If the mission of the organization is to serve low-income then larger geographical concerns is an excuse to exclude low-income board members. (Panelist 6)*

- *A lot of people feel like they don't care about us. It's the same mentality of getting people to vote. (Panelist 8)*
- *That's the reason we need to spread out more, and ask people from other places. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Local is valuable. (Panelist 2)*
- *Travel to meetings is a challenge. We switched to quarterly instead of monthly but that loses continuity. (Panelist 8)*
- *Transportation is always a concern, and they may not travel out of their own area. (Panelist 9)*

***Specific Findings for Factor C (d)***

*(d) Finding: There was moderate consensus in agreement that low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit.*

This question was worded differently in Round Two than in Round Three. In Round Three, it was worded more precisely to ask if “*Low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit.*” There was a *majority consensus in agreement* responding to this statement. This mirrored the *majority consensus in disagreement* when worded differently in Round Two as shown in Table 59 (C1\_33\_LIUsePositionBenefit).

**Table 59***Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor C (d)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit	C6_38_LIOwnBenefit	C1_33_LIUUsePositionBenefit
	Majority disagree	Majority agree
Rank Order	6	5
	Differently worded	Gender: $\tau_b = .7, n = 14, p = .009$ ; (rpb = $.68, n = 14, p = .007$ )

There was a strong, positive association between gender and “*Low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit,*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .7, n = 14, p = .009$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between gender, with female participants more *neutral*, and “*Low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit.*” There was a positive correlation which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = .68, n = 14, p = .007$ ). Males were in more *agreement*, while females were more *neutral*.

#### **Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *That may be true for all folks on a board. There are many reasons to serve on a board some may be to fulfill personal mission. (Panelist 3)*
- *It could be so by the nature and mission of the organization. But as discussed above, there is one person one vote on a board. Boards create policy it would be difficult to use their position for their own benefit. (Panelist 6)*

- *There may be a small minority of people who would say that — most people who want to get things done. (Panelist 8)*
- *This isn't always the case in my experience. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *If the selection, nomination criteria is sound through a conflict of interest document executed by all board members. (Panelist 2)*
- *They understand the mission of the organization. (Panelist 6)*
- *New member training helps assure this. (Panelist 8)*
- *They personally may not do that, but as people get to know them they may turn up to talk to them more and see/hear their thoughts. (Panelist 9)*

***Specific Findings for Factor C (e)***

*(e) Finding: There was no apparent consensus in Round Three that low-income persons who serve on a community agency board do not resist leaving when their term ends.*

In Round Two, there was *moderate consensus in disagreement* when worded as “*Low-income persons who serve on boards of community agencies do not want to give up their position as a person serving on the board.*” Thus, as shown in Table 60 (C2\_35\_LIResistLeaving), due to language changes and other nuances in Round Three, there was little consensus among the panelists whether a low-income person resists leaving their position once their term is complete.

**Table 60**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor C (e)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Round Three - Low-income persons who serve on a community agency board do not resist leaving the board when their term ends.	C7_40_LINotGiveUp	C2_35_LIResistLeaving
Round Two - Low-income persons who serve on boards of community agencies usually do not want to give up their position as a person serving on the board.	Moderate disagree	No apparent
Rank Order	4	9

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Codes of regulations dictate board terms. I have more experience that privileged wealthy board members feel entitled to stay on the board way past their term limit. A well-educated board member understands term limits. (Panelist 6)*
- *I've not found this. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *I have no experience here. (Panelist 2)*
- *The challenge is to get them to fill out their term. (Panelist 8)*
- *There are advantages for them. (Panelist 9)*

***Specific Findings for Factor C (f)***

*(f) Finding: There was a weak consensus in disagreement that community boards do not include low-income persons because they want to act more like for-profit companies.*

This statement was tested only in Round Three. There was a *weak consensus in disagreement* with this statement with differences by income. Panelists above the poverty

line responded more in *disagreement* which was statistically significant. There was disagreement with agency affiliations which is statistically significant, though it was not confirmed with a Pearson’s correlation analysis. Results are shown in Table 61 (C6\_43\_NOLibeLikeForProfits).

**Table 61**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor C (f)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Community boards do not include low-income persons because they want to act more like for-profit companies.	None	C6_43_NOLibeLikeForProfits
		Weak Disagree
Rank Order		8
		Income - $\tau_b = -.55, n = 14, p = .032$ ; (rpb = $-.6, n = 14, p = .022$ ). Agency Affiliation - $\tau_b = .46, n = 14, p = .055$ ,

There was a moderate, negative association between income and “*Community boards do not include low-income persons because they want to act more like for-profit companies*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = -.55, n = 14, p = .032$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between income and “*Community boards do not include low-income persons because they want to act more like for-profit companies.*” There was a negative correlation which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = -.6, n = 14, p = .022$ ). Those above the poverty line tended to disagree with this statement. There was a weak, positive association between agency affiliation and “*Community boards do not include low-income persons because they want to act*

*more like for-profit companies*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .46, n = 14, p = .055$ ), though not confirmed by a point-biserial correlation test.

### **Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Hope not.* (Panelist 2)
- *We long ago rejected this.* (Panelist 8)
- *There are different kinds of boards, and some may want to act that way.* (Panelist 9)

### **Key Findings – Factor D**

Factor D explored and hypothesized that *low-income and marginalized persons are disenfranchised and disempowered from engagement on boards, perceived by others as token representatives on these boards, and they see themselves as tokens.* The variables selected for this Factor D attempted to probe whether the expert panelists, from their own experiences, perceived whether low-income and marginalized persons are disenfranchised and disempowered from engagement, as well as if they perceived them as tokens or think that low-income persons see themselves as tokens. The purpose was not to analyze the specific boards or agency’s practices of the organizations from which they were selected, but the goal was to provide their expert opinion regarding this and other topics as a part of this normative and policy Delphi process.

In terms of factor reliability statistics, Table 62 displays the results of a Cronbach’s alpha test for the variables utilized in Round Two. Table 63 shows the results for the variables tested in Round Three.

**Table 62***Round Two Reliability Tests for Factor D*

Factors	Area D
Cronbach's alpha	0.84
Mean	3.05
Mean Sd	0.83
SD M	0.67
SD Sd	0.47
Variables	6

**Table 63***Round Three Reliability Tests for Factor D with/Subsets*

Factors	Area D - ALL	Area D-1 Know Others (D1_1; D1_2)	Area D-2 Tokenism (D2_1, D2_2, D2_4)	Area D-3 Power Differentials (D1_3, D2_3)
Cronbach's alpha	0.79	0.8	0.75	0.16
Mean	2.96	3.25	2.96	2.67
Mean Sd	0.65	1	0.8	0.7
SD M	0.75	0.35	0.46	0.66
SD Sd	0.37	0.54	0.52	0.65
Variables	7	2	3	2

In Round Two, the Cronbach's alpha for this factor, composed of six variables, registered  $\alpha = .84$ . In Round Three, this factor was broken into several distinct parts to more closely represent the statements being analyzed. Taking all seven variables into account in this round, the Cronbach was  $\alpha = .79$ . In isolation, a focus on knowing others registered at  $\alpha = .8$ ; a focus on tokenism registered at  $\alpha = .75$ ; and a final group focused on power differentials dramatically fell to  $\alpha = .16$ . Between the rounds, Cronbach's alpha



was similar at  $\alpha = .84$  in Round Two and  $\alpha = .79$  for Round Three. This change is likely due to adjustments in the questions.

### ***Discussion***

In Round Two, there was little agreement as to whether most board members knew low-income persons to invite for board positions. There was some agreement that boards may be more interested in having persons who have differences in race, gender, or orientation than a person's income status for board membership. There was little agreement on whether non-low-income persons on boards exert power over low-income persons who may serve on the board.

Additionally, in Round Two, there was agreement, at times, that low-income persons serving on a board see themselves as tokens. There was little agreement regarding that low-income persons feel uncomfortable serving on a board. There seemed to be no agreement on whether boards ask low-income persons to serve on their boards but do not really listen to their input.

Round Three incorporated elements from Themes 5A, 5B, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 which focused on professionalization of skills, diversity, tokenism, similar connections, engagement on the margins, and market-driven ideologies. These themes are explored in Table 64. In Round three, there was a *majority consensus in agreement* that board members do not consider asking low-income persons to serve on boards since they do not know many low-income persons to ask. There was a *majority consensus in agreement* that most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (e.g., race, gender, orientation, etc.) rather than a person's income status (i.e., low-income) when they ask them to serve on their boards. There were statistically significant differences based on

race. There is *no apparent consensus* with slight *disagreement* that some board members exert power over low-income board members and really do not listen to them, even though the wording was slightly different between rounds.

Regarding the experience of tokenism explored in Round Three, there seemed to be a *weak consensus in disagreement* that most low-income persons perceive that they are tokens if asked to serve on a board. There seemed to be *no apparent consensus* regarding whether most board members see low-income persons serving on the board as tokens. Some differences were noted based on gender that were statistically significant. Females tended to be in more *agreement* with that statement. There seemed to be *no apparent consensus*, or a *weak agreement* at best, from Round Two that “*Most low-income persons on a community board feel uncomfortable serving on such a board.*” This was exhibited somewhat in Round Three, though the wording was slightly different between the rounds. It seemed that in Round Two, there was *no apparent consensus*, yet in Round Three, there was *majority consensus in disagreement* that most boards invite low-income persons to participate on their boards but do not really listen to their concerns.

It is interesting to note that the panelists acknowledged that low-income persons are not often asked to serve on boards since many current members of boards do not know low-income persons to ask. Further, it seemed that boards are more likely to focus on other issues related to diversity rather than income status. There did not appear to be any exertion of power by non-low-income board members over persons who are low-income. There did not appear to be any sense of tokenism experienced by low-income persons themselves as perceived by the panelists. In their experience, board members did

not see low-income persons as tokens. The panelists did not sense that low-income persons on the board experience uncomfortableness in their service, though, some may experience being uncomfortable. The panelists seemed to also believe that low-income persons are invited and are listened to by other board members.

**Table 64***Factor D Variables, Means, Standard Deviations (based on 5-point Likert scale), Themes, Agree/Disagree, and Consensus**Ranking*

Variable	Mean	S. Deviation	Themes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Consensus
D1_1_45_MembersNotKnowLItoAsk	3.14	1.29	6, 11, 12	64%	7%	29%	Majority agree
D1_2_47_OtherDIVERSITYthanLI	3.35	0.84	8	57%	21%	21%	Majority agree
D1_3_49_SomeBoardExertPOWER	2.85	0.95	5A, 5B, 12, 13	29%	36%	36%	No apparent
D2_1_51_LISelfTokens	2.92	1.14	9	36%	21%	43%	Weak disagree
D2_2_53_MembersSeeLIasTokens	2.92	1.03	9	21%	43%	29%	No apparent
D2_3_55_BoardsNOTLISTENLI	2.5	0.94	5A, 5B 12, 13	14%	36%	50%	Majority disagree
D2_4_57_LIUncomfortable	3.07	0.73	9	29%	50%	21%	No apparent

**Specific Findings for Factor D (a)**

*(a)Finding: There was majority consensus in agreement that board members do not consider asking low-income persons to serve on boards since they do not know many low-income persons to ask.*

This statement was adjusted between Rounds Two and Three to ask a more precise question due to the *weak consensus* derived from Round Two. With a slight rewording, the panelists shared a *majority consensus in agreement* that board members do not consider asking low-income persons to serve on board since they do not know many low-income persons to ask. Table 65 (D1\_1\_45\_MembersNotKnowLItoAsk) shows this data.

**Table 65**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor D (a)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Board members do not consider asking low-income persons to serve on boards since they do not know many low-income persons to ask.	D6_52_BoardNot KnowLI	D1_1_45_MembersNot KnowLItoAsk
	Weak agree	Majority agree
Rank Order	7	5

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *If people thought hard enough they could find someone.* (Panelist 8)
- *In most areas, we know where the low-income housing is and all that. You could go recruit. You could have a community meeting and invite them in.* (Panelist 9)

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Boards ought to know their constituents.* (Panelist 2)
- *We know many low-income persons but many are too busy with the challenges of low-income existence.* (Panelist 8)
- *They know people, they just choose not to ask -- especially in this area. They look down on low-income people, rather than looking to them to gain knowledge.* (Panelist 9)

**Specific Findings for Factor D (b)**

*(b)Finding: There was a majority consensus in agreement that most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (e.g., race, gender, orientation) than in a person’s income status (i.e., low-income) when they ask them to serve on their boards.*

Table 66 shows that there seemed to be consistent majority consensus in agreement in both Rounds Two and Three, though worded slightly differently, that most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (e.g., race, gender, orientation) than in a person’s income status (i.e., low-income).

**Table 66**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor D (b)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (such as race, gender, orientation) than in a person’s income status (low-income) when they ask them to serve on their boards.	D3_46_Diversity Other	D1_2_47_OtherDIVER SITYthanLI
	Majority agree	Majority agree
Rank Order	5	5
		Race – $\tau_b = .51, n = 14,$ $p = .052$

There was a strong, positive association between race and “*Most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (such as race, gender, orientation) than in a person’s income status (low-income) when they ask them to serve on their boards,*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .51, n = 14, p = .052$ ) (Table 63 - D1\_2\_47\_OtherDIVERSITYthanLI). Caucasians seemed to be in more agreement with this statement than African Americans. A point-biserial correlation was conducted but did not find a statistically significant correlation.

#### **Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *It appears at times to be the case. Sometimes, the focus becomes less about the mission and the low-income community it endeavors to serve and more about issues related to race, sex and orientation. While all important and necessary to address --- if you focus too much on individual causes and not the community --- then might be losing track of those who need services most --- (Panelist 4)*
- *Variety is the spice of life, a little of everything is good. (Panelist 8)*
- *The boards around here tend to call people about being on the board that are on their level — not low-income, they are employed at a decent job. (Panelist 9)*

#### **Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Unfortunately. (Panelist 2)*
- *We know many low-income persons, but many are too busy with the challenges of (their) low-income existence. (Panelist 8)*

**Specific Findings for Factor D (c)**

*(c) Finding: There was no apparent consensus with slight disagreement that some board members exert power over low-income board members and really do not listen to them.*

There was *no apparent consensus* in Rounds Two and Three, with some trending to *disagree*, regarding the statement that board members exert power over low-income board members and really do not listen to them. Table 67 (D1\_3\_49\_SomeBoardExertPOWER) shares this data.

**Table 67**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor D (c)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Some board members exert power over low-income board members and really do not listen to them.	D5_50_PowerOverLI	D1_3_49_SomeBoardExertPOWER
	No apparent	No apparent
Rank Order	9	9

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *There are always people on boards who wish to diminish the voice of many others. (Panelist 3)*
- *It happens, but there may be a few who do it but not everyone. Some people are power hungry. (Panelist 8)*
- *I've seen it done. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Not my experience. (Panelist 2)*



- *We screen and train new members to avoid this.* (Panelist 8)
- *I've watched this behavior in some rooms.* (Panelist 9)

***Specific Findings for Factor D (d)***

*(d)Finding: Regarding the experience of tokenism, there seemed to be a weak consensus in disagreement that most low-income persons perceive that they are tokens if asked to serve on a board. There seemed to be no apparent consensus whether most board members see low-income persons serving on the board as tokens, with differences based on gender that are statistically significant; females tended to be in more agreement with this statement.*

Though the Round Two wording differed from two distinct questions in Round Three, in Round Three there seemed to be *weak consensus in disagreement* regarding the self-perception of low-income persons regarding their tokenism. There was *no apparent consensus* whether board members see low-income persons as tokens. In Round Two, there was a *majority consensus in agreement* with the earlier worded statement “*Most low-income persons perceive that they are tokens if asked to serve on a board*” as shown in Table 68 (D2\_1\_51\_LISelfTokens; D2\_2\_53\_MembersSeeLIasTokens).

**Table 68**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor D (d)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three	Round Three
Most low-income persons perceive that they are "tokens" if asked to serve on a board. (Round 3)	D1_42_Token	D2_1_51_LISelfTo kens	D2_2_53_Member sSeeLIasTokens
Most board members see low-income persons serving on the board as tokens (Round 3)	Majority agree	Weak disagree	No apparent
Rank Order	5	8	9
			Gender - $\tau_b = -.54$ , $n = 13$ , $p = .044$ ; $r_{pb} = -.57$ , $n = 13$ , $p = .044$

*Note.* One missing case.

In Round Three, there was a strong, negative association between gender and *most board members seeing low-income persons serving on the board as tokens*, which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = -.54$ ,  $n = 13$ ,  $p = .044$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between gender and “*Most board members see low-income persons serving on the board as “tokens”*”. There was a negative correlation, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = -.57$ ,  $n = 13$ ,  $p = .044$ ). Females tended towards *agreement/neutral*, and males tended more in *disagreement*.

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Depends on how the relationship between the organization and community is established and what the understanding is for the purpose of the board. (Panelist 4)*

- *It may depend on race — particularly if individuals are Black — a lot of Black people may feel like they are a token on the board and the board includes them to make them look good or don't look prejudice. (Panelist 8)*
- *Because they are many times in the room, but they are not asked to participate on committees, or they are not asked for input when you have general meetings. They may be ignored. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Difficult to answer some of these questions. I think they are broad generalizations and there is so much nuance on and organization by organization basis based on the org culture. It's hard to say. There are certainly cases where this is the case but also plenty of board that value input from all members. (Panelist 1)*
- *Not my experience. (Panelist 2)*
- *It really depends on the offer to serve on the board and how well the person is treated as an equal. (Panelist 3)*
- *We seek low-income member input and when they miss a meeting call them, explain the issue, and get their vote. (Panelist 8)*
- *They see advantages and how to improve their area. (Panelist 9)*

***Specific Findings for Factor D (e)***

*(e)Finding: There seemed to be no apparent consensus, or weak agreement at best, from Round Two that “Most low-income persons on a community board feel*

*uncomfortable serving on such a board.” This was exhibited somewhat in Round Three.*

This question was worded slightly differently in Round Two, which found a *weak consensus in agreement*, and there was some slight *agreement* in Round Three; however, there was *no apparent consensus* as shown in Table 69 (D2\_4\_57\_LIUuncomfortable).

**Table 69**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor D (e)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Most low-income persons on a community board feel uncomfortable serving on such a board.	D4_48_LIUuncomfortable	D2_4_57_LIUuncomfortable
	Weak agree	No apparent
Rank Order	7	9

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *This can be true if the board is not managed to eliminate this perception. (Panelist 3)*
- *Yes, and it does depend on how the organization is engaged and engaging the board and community. (Panelist 4)*
- *Hopefully, not. An inclusive board should have a mentorship program for all board members. (Panelist 6)*
- *Even if the motive isn't right or they don't have a lot to bring, they may feel like it looks good and sounds good to be on a board. (Panelist 8)*

- *A lot of them do not mind, and I've been on boards in the area where we've had several low-income people and speak out.* (Panelist 9)

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Again, not my experience.* (Panelist 2)
- *They may feel uncomfortable at first, but after a few months, I think they feel like they fit. Once they gain comfort with the surroundings... Board members learn to talk to them to be helpful.* (Panelist 9)

**Specific Findings for Factor D (f)**

*(f) Finding: There was a majority consensus in disagreement, at best, that most boards invite low-income persons to participate on their boards but do not really listen to their concerns.*

Though the wording was slightly different between Rounds Two and Three, it seemed that in Round Two, there was *no apparent consensus*; however, in Round Three, there was *majority consensus in disagreement* that most boards invite low-income persons to participate on their boards but do not really listen to their concerns. Table 70 (D2\_3\_55\_BoardsNOTLISTENLI) shares this data.

**Table 70**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor D (f)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Most boards invite low-income persons to participate on their boards but do not really “listen” to their concerns.	D2_44_BoardNotListenLI	D2_3_55_BoardsNOTLISTENLI
	No apparent	Majority disagree
Rank Order	9	6

### **Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *It's disheartening to witness and hard to engage a person once they feel they are not heard or feel minimized. It's conflicting to them. I have experienced this as a woman and then as a religious. I have often left a board or an organization because it literally waste of my time to have to play into the power differentials and take time to sit in on meetings only to be patronized and assumed that somehow I represent something that fulfills their obligation. So, to see that done to a person low-income or not --- is frustrating to witness. Value people and their time --- if what they have to say makes no difference to you or you are dismissive of them --- then don't patronize them and keep them on "just because" --- it's rude and dishonest. (Panelist 4)*
- *A lot of people want to say “look at us” — like when someone says, “one of my best friends is Black” — they want to show that they aren't prejudice or they don't want you feel inferior. (Panelist 8)*
- *Many times on the boards are the wealthiest and highest educated people, they don't feel they can really interact and have a conversation with low-income people. (Panelist 9)*
- *Every board that I have been an apart of has actively engaged low-income individuals they were involved. (Panelist 12)*

### **Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Again, not my experience. (Panelist 2)*

- *We seek LI member input and when they miss a meeting call them, explain the issue, and get their vote. (Panelist 8)*
- *I haven't really found this in my experience. They've been invited and listened to, especially since it's tied to funding. (Panelist 9)*

### **Key Findings – Factor E**

Factor E explored and hypothesized that practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income persons *are widely accepted and diffused and that CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.* The variables selected for this factor attempted to probe whether the expert panelists perceived, through their own experiences, whether there are wide-spread accepted practices and policies which aim to exclude low-income persons from serving on boards. Additionally, whether the panelists think that low-income persons' participation on boards is necessary. The purpose was not to analyze the specific boards or agency's practices of the organizations from which they were selected, but the goal was to provide their expert opinion regarding this and other topics as a part of this normative and policy Delphi process.

In terms of factor reliability statistics, Table 71 displays the results of a Cronbach's alpha test for the variables utilized in Round Two. Table 72 shows the results for the variables tested in Round Three.

**Table 71***Round Two Reliability Tests for Factor E*

Factor	E
Cronbach's alpha	0.77
Mean	3.25
Mean Sd	0.65
SD M	1.02
SD Sd	0.35
Variables	9

**Table 72***Round Three Reliability Tests for Factor E*

Factor	E
Cronbach's alpha	0.47
Mean	2.91
Mean Sd	0.47
SD M	1.15
SD Sd	0.33
Variables	6

There was a change from Round Two (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha = .77$ ) with nine variables to Round Three (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha = .47$ ) with six variables. These changes were likely due to adjustments in wording and rethinking questions pertaining to this hypothesis.

***Discussion***

In Round Two, there seemed to be some agreement that board members often seek other persons who they know personally. There was some agreement that board members seek socially connected persons to serve on the board. There was also limited agreement that boards usually do not select low-income persons to serve but would select



low-income persons if their financial donors required it. There was limited agreement that persons selected to serve on a board are usually those able to donate money. There was limited agreement that it would not be difficult to require low-income individuals' participation on boards. There was some weak agreement that it was not hard to find low-income persons to serve on boards. As well, there was weak agreement that agencies do not all have the same types of persons serving on the board.

In Round Three, incorporating elements from Themes 1A, 1B, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13 that explored any new urgency in governance and accountability, social connections, isomorphic institutionalism, similarities, engaging the margins, and market-drive ideologies, there seemed to be an aspect of institutional isomorphism, or copying, either by choice or requirement, operative in these community boards on how board members are selected. It was also noted, with some nuances, that low-income persons are not excluded by choice or requirement. Table 73 shares this data. For instance, in Round Three, there was a *majority consensus in disagreement* that all these boards look alike, thus, appearing to the panelists that there is limited institutional isomorphism. The panelists seemed to hold a *majority consensus in agreement* that board members tend to seek other persons who they know to serve on the board, speculating that if there are few low-income board members already on the board, then few low-income persons will be known to be asked to serve on an agency board. Panelists shared a *majority consensus in agreement* that board members tend to seek other persons who are well-known (i.e., connected) in the community to serve on their boards. There was a change in opinion from *majority agreement* in Round Two to *no apparent consensus*, with leanings in *disagreement* in Round Three, that board members are usually selected based on their

ability to give money to that organization. However, the panelists did not seem to agree that the role of low-income persons on these community agencies have diminished in importance. This was demonstrated by a *strong consensus in disagreement* that “*the times are different; it is no longer important that low-income persons serve on an agency board*” in Round Three, and a *majority consensus in disagreement* that it would “*difficult to require that a community agency always have a low-income person serve on the board*” in Round Two. Further, from Round Two, there was a *weak consensus in disagreement* that it is hard to find low-income persons to serve, which points to the fact that such persons do exist and are available to serve.

It seems that there was agreement against the hypothesis that the exclusion of low-income persons from these boards is now diffused, or widely accepted, or their participation is not needed at some level. Rather, through exploring the hypothesis about diffusion and exclusion, there were findings in Round Three of a *majority consensus in agreement* that the best way to represent low-income people on an agency that serves such persons is to require that a low-income person serve on that board. Differences based on role were statistically significant with CEOs in more agreement than Board members. At the same time, there was *majority consensus in agreement* in Round Two that boards of community service organizations would only have low-income persons serve on their board if their funding source required it. Additionally, from Round Two was that these community agency boards mostly select persons who are not low-income to serve on their boards. In a forced choice selection in Round Three, there was *moderate consensus in agreement* that “*we need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies.*”

**Table 73***Factor E Variables, Means, Standard Deviations (based on 5-point Likert scale), Themes, Agree/Disagree, and Consensus**Ranking*

Variable	Mean	S. Deviation	Themes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Consensus
E1_20_SELECTbyGiveMoney	2.78	0.89	6, 10, 13	21%	43%	36%	No apparent
E2_22_SELECTbyWhoTheyKnow	3.5	0.85	11	57%	29%	14%	Majority agree
E3_24_SELECTWellKnown	3.7	0.99	6,10,11,13	64%	21%	14%	Majority agree
E4_26_ALLLookALIKE	2.07	0.95	10, 13	7%	21%	64%	Majority disagree
E5_28_SELECTLIBestWay	3.71	0.83	1A, 1B, 10, 12	64%	29%	7%	Majority agree
E6_30_NOLongerImportantLIServes	1.64	0.84	1A, 1B, 10, 13	7%	0%	93%	Strong disagree
E7_32_OPINBestRep* (1=highest)	1.36	0.77	1A, 1B, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13	71%			Moderate agree

**Specific Findings for Factor E (a)**

(a)Finding: Board members tend to seek other persons who they know to serve on the board.

There was a *majority consensus in the agreement* that board members tend to seek persons that they know to serve on their boards. In Round Two, this question was separated by staff and board members seeking others that they know; however, in Round Three, it was reduced to only asking about how board members seek other board members. Even in Round Two, there was a *moderate consensus in agreement* with future board members being sought by staff members of persons they know, and board members doing the same. Thus, if few low-income board members already serve on the board, then few low-income persons will be asked to serve on that board. Table 74 (E2\_22\_SELECTbyWhoTheyKnow) shares more information.

**Table 74**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor E (a)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Two	Round Three
Boards members tend to seek other persons who they know to serve on the board.	E5 62 Members KnownByBoard	E6 64 Members KnownByStaff	E2 22 SELECTbyWhoTheyKnow
	Moderate agree	Majority agree	Majority agree
Rank Order	3	5	5

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two (E5).**

- *Many times, it is by the organization they work for that recruit them.*  
(Panelist 9)

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two (E6).**

- *You get to the now the staff when you go into buildings or organizations, you introduce yourself, and that’s how it gets spread.*

(Panelist 9)

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Personally known to have a passion for the service provided by the agency.* (Panelist 2)
- *That is because it is often difficult to fill board seats...especially with members who have a passion for the agency mission.* (Panelist 5)
- *We try to get to know them first.* (Panelist 8)

***Specific Findings for Factor E (b)***

*(b)Finding: Board members tend to seek other persons who are well-known in the community to serve on the board.*

Though the questions were worded slightly different in Round Three from Round Two, there remained a *majority consensus in agreement* that board members tend to seek other persons who are well-known (i.e., connected) in the community to serve on their boards. This information is shown in Table 75 (E3\_24\_SELECTWellKnown).

**Table 75**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor E (b)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Board members tend to seek other persons who are well-known in the community to serve on the board.	E3_58_WellConnected	E3_24_SELECTWellKnown
	Moderate agree	Majority agree
Rank Order	3	5

### **Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Not however to the exclusion of "non-connected" members, including low-income candidates. (Panelist 2)*
- *They choose people who are active, seen, and well known because it helps them recruit people and helps with having someone out there who can spread their thought processes for their board. (Panelist 9)*

### **Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Experientially well-known to have a passion for the service provided by the agency. (Panelist 2)*
- *This is necessarily not a good way to develop a board. (Panelist 6)*
- *We try to get to know them first. (Panelist 8)*
- *This is a big mixture. That's how I got on the board because people knew who I was from my work in the hospital. (Panelist 9)*

### ***Specific Findings for Factor E (c)***

*(c) Finding: There was a change in opinion from majority agreement in Round Two to no apparent consensus with leanings in disagreement in Round Three that board members usually are selected based on their ability to give money to that organization.*

There seemed to have been a change in opinion regarding the selection of board members due to their ability to provide donations to the organization from Round Two to Round Three, even though the wording was slightly different. In Round Three, there seemed to be *no apparent consensus*, yet there was a leaning to *disagreement* with this statement. Table 76 (E1\_20\_SELECTbyGiveMoney) shares the data.

**Table 76**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor E (c)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Board members usually are selected based on their ability to give money to that organization	E9_70_MembersDonors	E1_20_SELECTbyGive Money
	Majority agree	No apparent
Rank Order	5	9

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *This does happen frequently — your social life matters.* (Panelist 9)

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Sad but true. Funding is key to operation but a heart for the need of the service provided ought to be the driver.* (Panelist 2)
- *This depends on how the organization is funded.* (Panelist 6)
- *Our board does not do this. We mainly rely on grant funding and community minded donors.* (Panelist 8)
- *There is a mixture. Different boards are so different. You are looking for people who understand, who also function as a financial benefit/to support financially.* (Panelist 9)
- *That's why boards need to have a broader definition of how low-income individuals can contribute to boards.* (Panelist 11)

**Specific Findings for Factor E (d)**

*(d)Finding: There seemed to be strong consensus in disagreement that “the times are different; it is no longer important that low-income persons serve on an*

agency board” in Round Three. There was a majority consensus in disagreement that it would be “difficult to require that a community agency always have a low-income person serve on the board” in Round Two, as well as a weak consensus in disagreement that it is hard to find low-income individuals to serve.

There seemed to be some *disagreement* in Round Two that it would be difficult to require an agency to have a low-income person serving on the board. Repeated even more strongly in Round Three was the finding that the times today are not so different in that the participation of low-income persons on the board is still important. Further, from Round Two, there was a *weak consensus in disagreement* that it is hard to find low-income persons to serve, as shown in Table 77 (E6\_30\_NO Longer Important LIServes). There seemed to be an agreement against the hypothesis that the exclusion of low-income persons from boards is now diffused, widely accepted, or their participation is not needed at some level.

**Table 77**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor E (d)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Two	Round Three
The times are different; it is no longer important that low-income persons serve on an agency board” (Round 3) and that it would be “difficult to require that a community agency always have a low-income person serve on the board” (Round 2) and it is Difficult to find low-income persons to serve.	E8_68_DiffToReqLIalways	E7_66_LIHardToFind	E6_30_NO Longer Important LIServes
	Majority disagree	Weak disagree	Strong disagree
Rank Order	6	8	2



### **Comments by Panelists – Round Two (E7).**

- *If organizations took the time to look and talked to people, they could get the proper person to serve. (Panelist 8)*
- *People recruiting are sometimes people who provided services, so they should be able to find people. (Panelist 9)*
- *It is simply a matter of taking the time to include low-income individuals. (Panelist 12)*

### **Comments by Panelists – Round Two (E8).**

- *Some people may really fight against that. They may feel the person has nothing to bring. (Panelist 8)*
- *Many low-income people do not feel comfortable in a room with a bunch of people who have a PhD or Masters of whatever. They may not feel comfortable with them. I probably won't be in a suit if I'm low-income. (Panelist 9)*

### **Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Just the opposite because times are different! (Panelist 2)*
- *It may mean more work recruiting diverse members. (Panelist 8)*
- *They still need them. (Panelist 9)*

### ***Specific Findings for Factor E (e)***

*(e)Finding: There is consensus in disagreement that “Boards all have the same type of person serving. They all look alike.” from Round Three.*

To further the panelists' rejection of the hypothesis of exclusionary isomorphism, there was consensus in *disagreement* that “Boards all have the same type of person

*...serving. They all look alike*” from Round Three. Though worded differently in Round Two, in Round Three, there remained a *majority consensus in disagreement* with this statement that boards all look the same, even though this consensus was weaker in Round Two as shown in Table 78 (E4\_26\_ALLLookALIKE).

**Table 78**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor E (e)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
Boards all have the same type of person serving. They all look alike (Round 3).	E1_54_BoardSimilar	E4_26_ALLLookALIKE
	Weak disagree	Majority disagree
Rank Order	8	6

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Not clear* (Panelist 3)
- *Boards need diversity.* (Panelist 6)
- *Most board members are similar, they chose people with a similarity.* (Panelist 8)
- *Boards many times are people who provide services, so there is a difference right there.* (Panelist 9)
- *Diversity should be the basis of their organization.* (Panelist 13)

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Not my experience.* (Panelist 2)
- *My limited experience is the opposite. I serve on a diverse board, although I am also aware of boards that all look alike.* (Panelist 3)

- *We seek diverse members income-wise.* (Panelist 8)

### ***Specific Findings for Factor E (f)***

*(f)Finding: There seemed to be a majority consensus in agreement that the best way to represent low-income people that the agency serves is to require that a low-income person serves on that board (Round Three). However, at the same time, there was a majority consensus in agreement that boards of community service organizations would only have low-income persons serve on their board if their funding source required it (Round Two) and that these community agency boards mostly select persons who are not low-income to serve on their boards (Round Two).*

There was a strong, positive association between role and “*The best way to represent low-income people an agency serves is to require that a low-income person is on that board,*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .6, n = 14, p = .022$ ) A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between role and “*The best way to represent low-income people an agency serves is to require that a low-income person is on that board.*” There was a positive correlation, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = -.63, n = 14, p = .017$ ), with CEOs tending to be in more agreement, while board members were more spread. Furthermore, from Round Two, there was *majority consensus in agreement* that community service agencies would only have low-income persons serve on their boards if funding sources required it and that these boards mostly select persons who are not low-income to serve on their boards. Data is shown in Table 79 (E5\_28\_SELECTLIBestWay).

**Table 79**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor E (f)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Two	Round Three
Majority consensus in Agreement that the best way to represent low-income people and agency serves is to require that a low-income person is on that board (Round Three), and that boards of community service organizations would only have low-income persons serve on their board if their funding source required it (Round Two) and these community agency boards mostly select persons who are not low-income to serve on their boards (Round Two).	E2_56_BoardsSelectNonLI	E4_60_LIOnlyIf FundersRequire	E5_28_SELECTLI BestWay
Rank Order	Majority agree 5	Majority agree 5	Majority agree 5 Role - $\tau_b = .6, n = 14, p = .022$ ; (rpb = $-.63, n = 14, p = .017$ )

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two (E2).**

- *Most of the boards in this area and others, they come to the professionals in town who are working with or through organizations that provide services to low-income people. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two (E4).**

- *Regrettably this is probably more prevalent than not. (Panelist 2)*
- *They may not do it unless it is required. (Panelist 8)*

- *Many boards would choose not to have low-income persons because they feel like they can't communicate and don't have the education.*

(Panelist 9)

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *A good way, not necessarily the best way.* (Panelist 2)
- *But that can mean a lot of board turnover* (Panelist 8)
- *It's nice if there is a low-income person, but there is no need to require it. In your requirement, the person that accepts may not be the best person for that board.* (Panelist 9)

***Specific Findings for Factor E (g)***

*(g)Finding: There was moderate consensus in agreement that “we need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies.”*

In a forced-choice selection, there was a *moderate consensus in agreement* with the statement, “*we need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies*” (Table 80; E7\_32\_OPINBestRep).

**Table 80**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor E (g)*

Variable Comparable	Round Three
We need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies.	E7_32_OPINBestRep
	Moderate agree
Rank Order	3

Table 81 shows the forced choice opinions.

**Table 81***Forced Choice Opinions - What Best Represents Your Opinion?*

Opinion	N	%
We need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies.	10	71.4%
There are currently a good number of low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies.	1	7.1%
Boards of community agencies look like any other organization and do not necessarily represent the voices of low-income persons.	2	14.3%
Missing	1	7.1%

**Key Findings – Factor F**

Factor F explored and hypothesized that there are *various operative governance values and practices, legal or regulatory requirements, privatization or marketization forces, and ideology that influences the exclusion of low-income persons from serving on the governance boards of community-based corporations*. The variables selected for this factor attempted to probe whether the expert panelists, based on their own experiences, perceived whether there are operative governance values and practices, legal and regulatory requirements, or even forces derived from privatization and marketization ideologies that may influence the exclusion of low-income persons from serving on boards of community organizations. The purpose was not to analyze the specific boards or agency’s practices of the organizations from which they were selected, but the goal was to provide their expert opinion regarding this and other topics as a part of this normative and policy Delphi process.

In terms of factor reliability statistics, Table 82 displays the results of a Cronbach's alpha test for the variables utilized in Round Two, and Table 83 shows the results for the variables tested in Round Three.

**Table 82**

*Round Two Reliability Tests for Factor F*

Factors	Area F
Cronbach's alpha	-0.02
Mean	3.57
Mean Sd	0.54
SD M	0.9
SD Sd	0.62
Variables	3

**Table 83**

*Round Three Reliability Tests for Factor F*

Factors	Area F
Cronbach's alpha	0.46
Mean	3.19
Mean Sd	0.48
SD M	1.17
SD Sd	0.43
Variables	7

There was an improvement in Round Three regarding the reliability statistic from  $\alpha = -.02$  in Round Two to  $\alpha = .46$  in Round Three. This may have resulted from rethinking and rewording various questions, as well as adding more variables.

## *Discussion*

In Round Two, there seemed to be a *strong agreement* that low-income persons are not asked to serve on agency boards because they do not have the professional skills required. There seemed to be some agreement that if an organization receives government funding, then it should be required to have a low-income person serve on its board. There was little agreement whether a community agency board may not ask a low-income person on their board because of their desire to look like other private market-driven organizations.

With additional details shown in Table 84, Round Three incorporated elements from Themes 1A, 1B, 5A, 5B, 10, 12 and 13 dealing with the new urgency of accountability and governance, professionalization of skills, isomorphic institutionalism, engaging the margins, and market-driven ideologies. Though worded slightly differently from Round Two, there was *moderate consensus in agreement* that a person can both be low-income and have professional skills in order to serve on a community agency board. Differences were noted based on race, which was statistically significant. In opposition to the hypothesis about private market forces and ideology, there was *moderate consensus in agreement* among the panelists, increasing from Round Two, that if an agency receives governmental funding to serve low-income persons, then they should be required to have a low-income person serve on their board. There were mixed levels of consensus among the panelists regarding market-ideology policies and forces for boards to look more like private boards that exclude low-income persons from board service. In Round Two, there was a *weak consensus in agreement* that “*One reason low-income persons are not asked*



*to serve on boards is that these community organizations want to look more like private market organizations.”*

In Round Three, three separate questions were asked to probe the institutional isomorphic principle of trends toward privatization and market pressures to conform to similar-type boards. There was *majority consensus in agreement* that “*there are many informal rules and ideas for community service boards to follow the example of others in having well-connected, professional, and high-income persons serve on their boards,*” though there was a statistically significant difference between genders, as females were more in agreement. However, there was *weak consensus in disagreement* that “*Community service boards usually just accept ideas and rules they heard from other organizations without thinking about how low-income persons are represented on the board*” with differences in income (i.e., low-income tended to agree) and race (i.e., African Americans tended to disagree) that were statistically significant. The panelists held a *majority consensus in disagreement* that “*There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other which usually means that low-income persons are excluded from the board.*” with gender finding differences (i.e., males trending to disagree) that were statistically significant.

Overall, it seemed that the panelists maintained some level of *consensus in disagreement* that there are existent rules and policies that aim to exclude low-income persons from board service, though there are forces that suggest that boards should have a certain type of board member who is well-connected, professional, and high-income (BoardSource, 2009, 2011, 2021; Carver, 2011; Carver & Carver, 2001, 1996). However, this pressure to conform seemed to be balanced by the panelists' consensus that low-

income persons should not be excluded from board service and do not generally accept ideas from the private sector about low-income involvement. In difference to the hypothesis, there was a *moderate consensus in disagreement* that “*it would be very inconvenient to always find low-income persons to serve on these boards,*” so the panelists seemed to concur that there is no such inconvenience to find low-income persons to serve as board members. Interestingly, in opposition to the hypothesis of factors and forces to the contrary, the panelists recorded a *moderate consensus in agreement* that “*It is important today that community agencies require at least one low-income person on their board.*” How that requirement is framed, more as a voluntary process over a governmental mandate, remains a key area of future research.

**Table 84***Factor F Variables, Means & Standard Deviations (based on 5-point Likert scale), Themes, Agree/Disagree, and Consensus**Ranking*

Variable	Mean	S. Deviation	Themes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Consensus
F1_72_BothLIProSkills	4.14	1.09	5A, 5B, 10, 13	86%	7%	7%	Moderate agree
F2_74_GOVTMoneyLIREQUIRED	4	0.68	1A, 1B, 5A, 5B, 10	79%	21%	0%	Moderate agree
F3_76_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh	3.21	0.89	5A, 5B, 6, 10, 13	50%	21%	29%	Majority agree
F4_78_RULESIDEASothersLIrep	2.71	0.83	10, 13	14%	50%	36%	Weak disagree
F5_80_POLFINCULIdeasLookAlikeLIExc luded	2.28	0.99	10, 13	14%	21%	64%	Majority disagree
F6_82_INCONVENIENTalwaysfindLI	2.07	1.26	12	14%	14%	72%	Moderate disagree
F7_84_ImportantRequire1LI	3.92	1.07	1A, 1B, 10	79%	14%	7%	Moderate agree

**Specific Findings for Factor F (a)**

*(a)Finding: There was moderate consensus in agreement that a person can both be low-income and have professional skills to serve on a community agency board, with some differences based on race which were statistically significant.*

In Round Two, there was a *strong consensus in agreement* that often low-income persons are not selected to serve on boards since they may not have the needed professional skills. In Round Three, while it was worded slightly differently, it was found that there was a *moderate consensus in agreement* among the panelists that a person can both be low-income and have the professional skills needed to serve on a board as Table 85 (F1\_72\_BothLIProSkills) shows.

**Table 85**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor F (a)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
There is moderate consensus in agreement that a person can both be low-income and have professional skills to serve on a community agency board.	F2_74_LINotPro Skills	F1_72_BothLIPro Skills
	Strong agree	Moderate agree
Rank Order	1	3
		Race - $\tau_b = -.53, n = 14, p = .042$

There was a strong, negative association between race and “*A person can both be low-income and have professional skills in order to serve on a community agency board,*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = -.53, n = 14, p = .04$ ), with African Americans in

more agreement. A point-biserial correlation was conducted but did not find race statistically significant.

**Comments by Panelists – Round Two.**

- *This can be overcome by adequate board training for all board members. (Panelist 2)*
- *They are looking at them as low-income and low education. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Retiree's! (Panelist 2)*
- *But if they lack such skills this can be part of training. (Panelist 8)*

***Specific Findings for Factor F (b)***

*(b)Finding: There was moderate consensus in agreement that if an agency receives governmental funding to serve low-income persons, then they should be required to have a low-income person serve on their board.*

In Round Two, there was *majority agreement* among the panelists, and in Round Three, there seemed to be an increase in the level of agreement (i.e., moderate) that if an agency receives government funding to serve low-income persons, then they should be required to have a low-income person serve on their board. Data appears in Table 86 (F2\_74\_GOVTMoneyLIREQUIRED).

**Table 86***Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor F (b)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
If an agency receives governmental funding to serve low-income persons, then they should be required to have a low-income person serve on their board.	F3_76_GovtMustLI	F2_74_GOVTMoneyLI REQUIRED
	Majority agree	Moderate agree
Rank Order	5	3

**Comments By Panelists – Round Two.**

- *This is my experience.* (Panelist 2)
- *Many times, low-income people are skeptical. They hear about boards and see names of people of power and finance in the community. Low-income people feel embarrassed. We need to learn how to talk with them, around them, and to them.* (Panelist 9)

**Comments By Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Should have a recruiting process.* (Panelist 2)

***Specific Findings for Factor F (c)***

*(c) Finding: There were mixed levels of consensus among the panelists regarding market-ideology policies and forces for boards to look more like private boards excluding low-income persons from board service. Overall, it seemed that the panelists maintained some level of consensus in disagreement that there are existent rules and policies that aim to exclude low-income persons from board service; however there are forces that suggest that boards should have a certain type of board member that are well-connected, professional, and have a high-*

*income. This pressure to conform seemed to be balanced by the panelists' consensus that low-income persons should not be excluded from board service and do not generally accept ideas from the private sector about low-income involvement.*

In Round Two, there was *weak consensus in agreement* with the statement “*one reason why low-income persons are not asked to serve on boards is that these community organizations want to look more like private market organizations.*” In Round Three, three separate questions were asked to probe this institutional isomorphic principle of trends toward privatization and market pressures to conform to similar type boards.

There was *majority consensus in agreement* that “*there are many informal rules and ideas for community service boards to follow the example of others in having well-connected, professional, and high-income persons serve on their boards.*” A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between gender and “*There are many informal rules and ideas for community service boards to follow the example of others in having well-connected, professional, and high-income persons serve on their boards.*” There was a negative correlation between this requirement and gender, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = -.53, n = 14, p = .050$ ), as females were in more agreement. Kendall’s tau-b did not find any statistical significance between this variable and gender.

However, there was *weak consensus in disagreement* that “*Community service boards usually just accept ideas and rules they heard from other organizations without thinking about how low-income persons are represented on the board,*” with differences in income (i.e., low-income trending to agree) and race (i.e., African Americans trending

to disagree) that were statistically significant. There was a strong, negative association between income level and “*Community service boards usually just accept ideas and rules they heard from other organizations without thinking about how low-income persons are represented on the board,*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = -.61, n = 14, p = .018$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between income and “*Community service boards usually just accept ideas and rules they heard from other organizations without thinking about how low-income persons are represented on the board.*” There was a negative correlation between this requirement and income, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = -.62, n = 14, p = .018$ ), with low-income trending to agree with this statement. There also was a strong, positive association between race and “*Community service boards usually just accept ideas and rules they heard from other organizations without thinking about how low-income persons are represented on the board,*” which was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = .64, n = 14, p = .014$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between race and “*Community service boards usually just accept ideas and rules they heard from other organizations without thinking about how low-income persons are represented on the board.*” There was a positive correlation between this requirement and race, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = .67, n = 14, p = .009$ ), with Caucasians trending to be in *neutral in agreement* with this statement, while African Americans tended to disagree.

The panelists held a *majority consensus in disagreement* that “*There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other which usually means that low-income persons are excluded from the board.*” Statistically significant differences were noted with gender, as males tended to disagree. There was a strong,



negative association between gender and “*There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other*” which usually means that low-income persons are excluded from the board. This was statistically significant ( $\tau_b = -.66, n = 14, p = .009$ ). A point-biserial correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between gender and “*There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other.*” There was a negative correlation between this requirement and gender, which was statistically significant ( $r_{pb} = -.69, n = 14, p = .006$ ). Males tended to disagree with this statement, while females were more spread across the spectrum as Table 87 (F3\_76\_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh; F4\_78\_RULESIDEASothersLIrep; F5\_80\_POLFINCULIdeasLookAlikeLIExcluded) shows.

**Table 87**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor F (c)*

Variable Comparable	Round 2	Round 3	Round 3	Round 3
Market policies and forces for boards to look more like private boards excluding low-income persons from board service.	F1_72_Private Look	F3_76_RULE SIDEASConn ectProHigh	F4_78_RULES IDEASothersLI rep	F5_80_POLFIN CULIdeasLookA likeLIExcluded
	Weak agree	Majority agree	Weak disagree	Majority disagree
Rank Order	7	5	8	6
		Gender (rpb = -.53, n = 14, p = .050)	Income - $\tau$ b = -.61, n = 14, p = .018.; (rpb = -.62, n = 14, p = .018) Race - $\tau$ b = .64, n = 14, p = .014; (rpb = .67, n = 14, p = .009)	Gender $\tau$ b = -.66, n = 14, p = .009; (rpb = -.69, n = 14, p = .006)

**Comments By Panelists – Round Two.**

- *Mine is a qualified agree to the extent education and medical organizations are non-profit and may be less inclined to invite low-income people to join their boards. (Panelist 2)*
- *I don't feel that that is a motive. (Panelist 8)*  
*Most of them you can't be because of the rules and regulations for agencies. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three (F3).**

- *All models are wrong, some however are useful. (Panelist 2)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three (F4).**

- *Sad if true. (Panelist 2)*

*Both sides of this question can be correct according to which board it is. (Panelist 9)*

**Comments by Panelists – Round Three (F5).**

- *As I look around at boards -- I notice this. (Panelist 9)*

***Specific Findings for Factor F (d)***

*(d)Finding: There was a moderate consensus in disagreement that “it would be very inconvenient to always find low-income persons to serve on these boards.”*

This statement was only posed in Round Three. Table 88

(F6\_82\_INCONVENIENTalwaysfindLI) shows that the panelists seemed to concur that there is no such inconvenience to find low-income persons to serve on these boards.

**Table 88**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor F (d)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
It would be very inconvenient to always find low-income persons to serve on these boards.	N/A	F6_82_INCONVENIENTalwaysfindLI Moderate disagree
Rank Order		4

**Comments By Panelists – Round Three.**

- *Look harder. (Panelist 2)*
- *It may be inconvenient because you can't divulge people's personal information. (Panelist 9)*

**Specific Findings for Factor F (e)**

*(e)Finding: There was moderate consensus in agreement that “It is important today that community agencies require at least one low-income person on their board.”*

This statement was tested in Round Three to provide another opportunity for panelists to register their opinion on such a requirement. Table 89 (F7\_84\_ImportantRequire1LI) shows there was *moderate consensus in agreement* that there should be some requirement of at least one low-income person serving on a governance board, but there was no specific question probing how that requirement ought to be fulfilled.

**Table 89**

*Comparing Round Two and Round Three Variables for Finding Factor F (e)*

Variable Comparable	Round Two	Round Three
It is important today that community agencies require at least one low-income person on their board.	N/A	F7_84_ImportantRequire1LI
		Moderate agree
Rank Order		3

There were no comments offered by panelists in Round Three for Factor F (e).

## Chapter Six

### Analysis of Themes

Throughout the analysis of various findings for each factor, numerous themes have been identified and discussed to provide more nuanced analysis for each factor. In this section, the variables utilized for each theme, along with analysis of their consensus rankings, are briefly discussed.

In Table 90, Themes 1A and 1B show how the variables were informative aspects to the various factors.

Factors and themes explored in Table 90 include:

- *Factor A*: Low-income and marginalized persons' voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities.
- *Factor E*: Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused. CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.
- *Factor F*: Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations.
- *Theme 1A*: Politically and structurally there is a new moment of punctuated equilibrium in social policy to re-introduce and implement maximum feasible participation (MFP).

- *Theme 1B:* Convergence of new accountability and new governance movements promote certain skills and may provide an opening for MFP for low income.

**Table 90**

*Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Themes 1A and 1B: Urgency and Punctuated Equilibrium - New*

*Governance and New Accountability*

Round Three: Themes 1A and 1B Urgency Punctuated Equilibrium	Factor A	Factor E	Factor F	Theme 1A	Theme 1B	Consensus	Ranking
A5_11_LIImportantNonREQ						Strong agree	1
E6_30_NOLongerImportantLIServes						Strong disagree	2
A7_15_TodayImportantLIBoard						Moderate agree	3
E7_32_OPINBestRep						Moderate agree	3
F2_74_GOVTMoneyLIREQUIRED						Moderate agree	3
F7_84_ImportantRequire1LI						Moderate agree	3
A8_17_EnoughLIAreadyBoards						Moderate disagree	4
A1_3_REQLawServesLIBoard						Majority agree	5
A4_9_REQLawFedDollarsLI						Majority agree	5
A9_19_OPINBoardDo						Majority agree	5
E5_28_SELECTLIBestWay						Majority agree	5
A2_5_NonLIRepLI						Majority agree	5
A3_7_VoiceLISelf						Majority disagree	6

As can be seen, Factors A, E, and F all contained variables regarding aspects of a new urgency for low-income persons' inclusion on boards due to the governance and accountability movements identified in the literature review. The colored blocks mark the intersection between the variable, factor, and theme. As reported earlier, several variables recorded strong agreement or strong disagreement in their respective consensus. The panelists hold *strong consensus in agreement* that it is important to include low-income persons on the board, but it is not a requirement. They hold in *strong consensus in disagreement* that it is no longer important for low-income persons to serve on boards. Thus, it seems there is a critical finding that as the new governance and new accountability movements attest, there is not an urgency, though with some nuances, for some form of structural inclusion of low-income persons on boards of community service agencies. Moderate consensus findings were reported earlier in this research, along with rankings of other comparable variables.

Table 91 discusses three themes related to the issue of trainings for potential low-income persons for board service, as well as what types of training might be useful or necessary for any board member.

Factors and themes explored in Table 91 include:

- *Factor B: H2* - Low-income and marginalized persons are not trained in corporate governance to serve as leaders on the boards of CDCs and CSAs.
- *Theme 2:* Few board training opportunities exist for persons who are low-income and disenfranchised.



- *Theme 3:* Training programs focus on agency, resource development, or institutional theory thus recruiting persons who exhibit those skills.
- *Theme 4:* Board training and formation programs are rooted in specific andragogy that highlights privatized ideology rather than Deweyan experience or Freirean dialogue.

**Table 91***Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Themes 2, 3, 4: Board Training*

Round Three: Themes 2, 3, and 4 Training	Factor B	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Census	Rank
B1_59_AllBoardTrainedinLIneeds					Strong agree	1
B3_63_TrainProblemSkills					Strong agree	1
B2_61_LISpecialTrainingActive					Moderate agree	3
B4_65_TrainDemocracySkills					Moderate agree	3
B5_67_TrainOrgRunSkills					Majority agree	5
B6_69_TrainGiveMoneySkills					Weak disagree	8

The panelists hold two variables in *strong consensus of agreement*, namely that all board members ought to receive training that helps them understand the issues faced by low-income persons and communities. Such training needs to help all deal with problem-solving skills. Two of the variables indicate a *moderate consensus of agreement* among the panelists in that board training should be available for low-income board members so that they are more actively engaged in board affairs. They hold a *moderate consensus in agreement* that such training and board engagement should involve skills for democratic practices.

Table 92 displays how the panelists ranked their consensus on Themes 5A and 5B which probed their insights on the professionalization of skills needed, or expected, for board service taken from the literature review.

Factors and themes explored in Table 92 include:

- *Factor A:* Low-income and marginalized persons' voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities.
- *Factor C:* Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.
- *Factor D:* Low-income & marginalized persons disenfranchised & disempowered from such engagement on boards; Low-income & marginalized persons perceived by others as token representatives on these boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as a token.
- *Factor F:* Various operative governance values and practices,

legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations.

- *Theme 5A:* Preferred engagement with persons who have professional skills.
- *Theme 5B:* Professionalization of skills required for oversight determines who should serve on boards.

**Table 92***Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Themes 5A, 5B: Professionalization of Skills for Board Service*

Round Three: Professionalization of Skills for Board Service	Factor A	Factor C	Factor D	Factor F	Theme 5A	Theme 5B	Consensus	Rank
F1_72_BothLIProSkills				Light Green		Light Green	Moderate agree	3
F2_74_GOVTMoneyLIREQUIRED				Light Green			Moderate agree	3
C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable		Light Blue			Light Blue	Light Blue	Moderate agree	3
F3_76_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh				Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Majority agree	5
A2_5_NonLIRepLI	Light Green					Light Green	Majority agree	5
D2_3_55_BoardsNOTLISTENLI			Light Orange		Light Orange	Light Orange	Majority disagree	6
C3_37_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills		Light Blue				Light Blue	Weak agree	7
D1_3_49_SomeBoardExertPOWER			Light Orange		Light Orange	Light Orange	No apparent	9
D2_4_57_LIUncomfortable			Light Orange				No apparent	9

Three variables ranked with a *moderate consensus in agreement* that regardless of skill set...:

- a person can be both low-income in their income range, yet also possess professional skills;
- community agencies ought to have at least some requirement that a low-income person serve on the board if that agency receives governmental funding to serve low-income; and
- there are low-income persons available and willing to serve on such boards.

The panelists hold in *majority consensus in agreement* that there may be rules or ideas diffused through the sector that “*There are many informal rules and ideas for community service boards to follow the example of others in having well-connected, professional, and high-income persons serve on their boards.*” This displays some level of institutional isomorphism regarding the desire, or near obligations, that skilled persons serve on boards.

Simultaneously, the panelists also concur with *majority consensus in agreement* that a person of higher income can represent low-income persons on such boards. The panelists hold in *majority consensus in disagreement* that board members do not listen to low-income persons, as it seems that most panelists believe their fellow board members do, in fact, listen to low-income persons serving on their boards regardless of their professional skill sets.

The panelists weighed in with their expert opinions on the theme related to securing board members who have social or donor connections, shown in Table 93 below.

Factors and themes explored in Table 93 include:

- *Factor C*: Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.
- *Factor D*: Low-income & marginalized persons disenfranchised & disempowered from such engagement on boards; H3a) Low-income & marginalized persons perceived by others as token representatives on these boards; Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as token.
- *Factor E*: Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused; CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.
- *Factor F*: Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations.
- *Theme 6*: Recruitment of persons with social connections and donor knowledge.

**Table 93**

*Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Theme 6: Recruitment of Board Members with Social and Donor Connections*

Round Three - Recruitment of Board Members with Social and Donor Connections	Factor C	Factor D	Factor E	Factor F	Theme 6	Consensus	Rank
C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable						Moderate agree	3
E7_32_OPINBestRep						Moderate agree	3
D1_1_45_MembersNotKnowLItoAsk						Majority agree	5
E3_24_SELECTWellKnown						Majority agree	5
F3_76_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh						Majority agree	5
C3_37_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills						Weak agree	7
E1_20_SELECTbyGiveMoney						No apparent	9



Table 93 displays that there are two variables ranked as *moderate consensus in agreement*. One aspect to note was that there are low-income persons willing and able to participate who can offer their own connections and possible donors or supporters. Further, the panelists provide a *moderate consensus in agreement* that boards needed “*more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies*” regardless of their social or donor connections. The panelists find with a *majority consensus in agreement* that:

- it is possible board members do not really know many low-income persons to recruit for board membership;
- there are pressures or assumptions that a board should select persons who are well known in the community; and
- there may be some institutional isomorphic tendencies to secure socially-connected persons to serve on these boards.

Table 94 below shows the panelists hold a *weak consensus in agreement* that it is difficult to recruit and maintain a low-income person on a board of a community development or services organization due to its change from more local services to a larger geographic area. With such weak agreement, it seems that this claim in the literature does not hold much sway for the panelists in this study.

Factors and themes explored in Table 94 include:

- *Factor C*: Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs
- *Theme 7*: The decoupling of agencies from specifically distressed neighborhoods to more regional responsibilities.

**Table 94**

*Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Theme 7: Decoupling from Neighborhood to Regional Geography*

Round Three - Theme 7 Decoupling from Neighborhood to Regional Geography	Factor C	Theme 7	Consensus	Rank
C5_41_DifficultLILargeGeography			Weak agree	8

Below, Table 95 shows the panelists maintain, with *moderate consensus in agreement*, that there are low-income persons available and willing to serve on boards. There is also *majority consensus in agreement* that there may be other diversity issues impacting the recruitment and selection of board members other than an individual’s income status, especially low-income persons.

Factors and themes explored in Table 95 include:

- *Factor C*: Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.
- *Factor D*: Low-income & marginalized persons disenfranchised & disempowered from such engagement on boards; Low-income & marginalized persons perceived by others as token representatives on these boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as a token.
- *Theme 8*: Identity politics highlights gender, race, and sexual orientation away from class status; persons at intersectionality preferred over those who live poverty alone.

**Table 95**

*Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Theme 8: Identity Politics and Diversity Over Low Income*

Round Three - Theme 8 Identity Politics Over Low Income	Factor C	Factor D	Theme 8	Consensus	Rank
C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable				Moderate agree	3
D1_2_47_OtherDIVERSITYthanLI				Majority agree	5

Table 96 provides insights into the discussion about the panelists’ perceptions of tokenism, either by low-income persons themselves or by board members towards those who are low-income.

Factors and themes explored in Table 96 include:

- *Factor D:* Low-income & marginalized persons disenfranchised & disempowered from such engagement on boards; Low-income & marginalized persons perceived by others as token representatives on these boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as a token.
- *Theme 9:* Low income and marginalized persons can sense that they might be tokens on such a board.

**Table 96***Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Theme 9: Tokenism*

Round Three - Theme 9 Tokenism	Factor D	Theme 9	Consensus	Rank
D2_1_51_LISelfTokens			Weak disagree	8
D1_3_49_SomeBoardExertPOWER			No apparent	9
D2_2_53_MembersSeeLIasTokens			No apparent	9
D2_4_57_LIUncomfortable			No apparent	9

From the panelists' opinions, it seems that there is very little consensus regarding such perspectives. As well, there is little agreement whether there is any perception of other board members exerting power over low-income persons who might be serving on boards. One area that emerged from the Round One narrative pertained to the idea that some low-income persons may experience some level of uncomfortableness as they serve on a board. This idea was tested in Rounds Two and Three. In this final round, it seems that the expert panelists have no level of consensus on this topic. The tokenism and power dynamics require further study with more specific questions.

The area of institutional isomorphism, a key idea being reviewed in this research, is one of the more complex themes which required questioning from various perspectives within several factors. Table 97 attempts to visualize the connecting variables and factors.

Factors and themes explored in Table 97 include:

- *Factor A*: Low-income and marginalized persons' voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities.
- *Factor C*: Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.

- *Factor E*: Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused; CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.
- *Factor F*: Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations.
- *Theme 10*: Institutional isomorphism via coercive, mimetic, and normative forms influence board inclusion.

**Table 97**

*Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Theme 10: Institutional Isomorphism*

Round Three - Theme 10: Isomorphism	Factor A	Factor C	Factor E	Factor F	Theme 10	Consensus	Rank
A5_11_LIImportantNonREQ	■				■	Strong agree	1
E6_30_NOLongerImportantLIServes			■		■	Strong disagree	2
E7_32_OPINBestRep						Moderate agree	3
F1_72_BothLIProSkills				■	■	Moderate agree	3
F2_74_GOVTMoneyLIREQUIRED				■	■	Moderate agree	3
F7_84_ImportantRequire1LI				■	■	Moderate agree	3
A2_5_NonLIRepLI	■				■	Majority agree	5
A4_9_REQLawFedDollarsLI	■				■	Majority agree	5
A9_19_OPINBoardDo						Majority agree	5
C1_33_LIUsePositionBenefit		■			■	Majority agree	5
E3_24_SELECTWellKnown			■		■	Majority agree	5
E5_28_SELECTLIBestWay			■		■	Majority agree	5
F3_76_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh				■	■	Majority agree	5
A3_7_VoiceLISelf	■				■	Majority disagree	6
E4_26_ALLLookALIKE			■		■	Majority disagree	6
F5_80_POLFINCULIdeasLookAlikeLIExclud ed				■	■	Majority disagree	6
C3_37_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills		■			■	Weak agree	7
C6_43_NOLibeLikeForProfits		■			■	Weak disagree	8

F4_78_RULESIDEASothersLIrep					Weak disagree	8
C2_35_LIResistLeaving					No apparent	9
E1_20_SELECTbyGiveMoney					No apparent	9

Table 97 shows that the panelists hold a *strong consensus in agreement* that having a low-income person on a community board remains important, but it does not need to be a requirement. This insight helps to better understand institutional isomorphism's pressures for nonprofit boards to conform as a sector to certain practices and policies. Two elements are highlighted in this strong agreement statement of a need for low-income inclusion but not a requirement. First, regardless of various pressure points, which are explored further in Theme 13 later in this paper, the expert panelists hold a very strong position that low-income persons should be involved on boards, yet structurally, that it should not be a requirement. Simultaneously, however, there is a *strong consensus in disagreement* that it is no longer important to include low-income persons on boards. Further, there is *moderate consensus in agreement* that boards needed "*more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies*" and that if an agency receives federal funding for services to low-income communities, then a low-income person should be required to serve. When asked slightly differently about the requirement to engage low-income persons on such boards if that agency receives federal dollars, the panelists only recorded a *majority consensus in agreement* in Round Three from a *moderate agreement* in Round Two. The opinion by the panelists that "*It is important today that community agencies require at least one low-income person on their board*" shares *majority consensus agreement* that there should be some requirement that a low-income person serves on the board.

Other variables rank in the majority consensus area, which again seems to display certain ambiguities about the requirements or desires to include low-income persons on these boards. Such nuances include that inclusion should be done voluntarily, and others



can represent the voices of low-income persons without requiring a low-income person to serve on governance boards for these agencies. On the other hand, there is *majority consensus in disagreement* that “*Boards all have the same type of person serving. They all look alike*” and that “*There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other which usually means that low-income persons are excluded from the board.*” These argue against the perception, at least, that institutional isomorphism, regarding certain ways boards have representation from low-income persons, is not totally diffused throughout this sector.

The 1964 community action policy of MFP attempted to require low-income participation as part of the structural inclusion of these voices on governance boards (Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, p. 516). Over time, it seems that that structural policy, which was overturned several years later, remains a topic of ambiguity by those who serve low-income communities. There seems to be a desire for a practice of inclusion of low-income persons on boards but without any structural or policy level requirement to do so. Therefore, it seems that this idea of practice over a policy requirement is diffused among these organizational experts. This indicates some level of institutional isomorphism that is, at best, mimetic and normative but not coercive. The nuances from this theme, generated by several variables crossing through various factors, appear to display a level of ambiguity or nuance and a struggle for clarity on institutional isomorphism’s effect on the structural inclusion of low-income persons on governance boards.

The area of institutional isomorphism requires more careful consideration in future research. This project has helped to identify that among experts in the field of

practice, the issue of structural inclusion by policy over practice is still debated and unresolved. With this research, it does not seem that the panelists experienced the urgency of the new accountability and new governance movements identified in the literature to coercively require the structural inclusion of low-income persons on governance boards. Still, some normative or mimetic ideas may be at play with the panelists' acknowledgment that more low-income persons need to be included. There ought to be such inclusion, yet without policy coercion.

Table 98 displays the theme of how current boards and staff of community organizations tend to recruit and select board members who they know, thus oftentimes missing an opportunity to recruit and select a low-income person to serve on the board.

Factors and themes explored in Table 98 include:

- *Factor C:* Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.
- *Factor D:* Low-income & marginalized persons disenfranchised & disempowered from such engagement on boards; Low-income & marginalized persons perceived by others as token representatives on these boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as a token.
- *Factor E:* Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused; CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.

- *Theme 11:* Board members and staff reach out to those in their social networks to replace or include.

**Table 98**

*Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Theme 11: Board and Staff Reach Out to Those Persons They Already Know*

Round Three - Theme 11: Board/Staff Reach Out Own Social Networks	Factor C	Factor D	Factor E	Theme 11	Consensus	Rank
C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable					Moderate agree	3
E7_32_OPINBestRep					Moderate agree	3
D1_1_45_MembersNotKnowLItoAsk					Majority agree	5
E2_22_SELECTbyWhoTheyKnow					Majority agree	5
E3_24_SELECTWellKnown					Majority agree	5
C3_37_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills					Weak agree	7

There is, as represented in the other analysis above, *moderate consensus in agreement* that there is a need for “*more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies.*” Additionally, it is known that there are low-income persons willing and able to serve, yet there seems to be other practical indicators as to why low-income persons are not asked to serve. From an analysis of variables from this theme, there is *majority consensus in agreement* that board members, in fact, may not know any low-income persons to ask to serve and tend to select persons that they know or who happen to be well-known in the community.

Table 99 displays the variables and factors connected to Theme 12, which seeks to discuss how involvement of low-income persons is an engagement of the margins, and such an engagement may require disruptive practices or policies. Since there was no official requirement for any low-income person to serve on these governance boards per the literature review, an act of policy or even practice might include some disruptive behaviors.

Factors and themes explored in Table 99 include:

- *Factor A:* Low-income and marginalized persons’ voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities.
- *Factor B:* Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.
- *Factor D:* Low-income & marginalized persons disenfranchised & disempowered from such engagement on boards; Low-income & marginalized persons perceived by others as token representatives on these

boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as a token.

- *Factor E*: Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused; CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.
- *Factor F*: Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations.
- *Theme 12*: Engagement of the margins requires disruption.

**Table 99**

*Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Theme 12: Engagement of the Margins Requires Disruption*

Round Three - Margins Require Disruption	Factor A	Factor B	Factor D	Factor E	Factor F	Theme 12	Consensus	Rank
C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable		■				■	Moderate agree	3
E7_32_OPINBestRep							Moderate agree	3
F6_82_INCONVENIENTalwaysfindLI					■	■	Moderate disagree	4
A1_3_REQLawServesLIBoard	■					■	Majority agree	5
A9_19_OPINBoardDo							Majority agree	5
C1_33_LIUsePositionBenefit		■				■	Majority agree	5
D1_1_45_MembersNotKnowLItoAsk			■			■	Majority agree	5
E5_28_SELECTLIBestWay				■		■	Majority agree	5
A3_7_VoiceLISelf	■					■	Majority disagree	6
D2_3_55_BoardsNOTLISTENLI			■			■	Majority disagree	6
A6_13_HardLIBoard	■					■	Weak disagree	8
C2_35_LIResistLeaving		■				■	No apparent	9
D1_3_49_SomeBoardExertPOWER			■			■	No apparent	9

It seems that the panelists do not exhibit any strong consensus on variables that indicate disruptive actions to include low-income persons which may indicate that to do so is not that disruptive after all. Involving low-income persons does not seem to be a radical action requiring disruption at the margins of society. Rather the panelists indicate several variables as *moderate consensus in agreement* that there remains a need for more low-income participation, yet there are persons willing and able to serve on these governance boards. Another important insight from this theme is that the panelists are in *moderate consensus in disagreement* with the statement that it is inconvenient to recruit and engage low-income persons on these boards. According to the experts in this study, it is not that disruptive to engage those on the margins (e.g., low-income persons), so it is possible, at least in practice, to include such voices on governance boards.

Table 100 shows how the panelists concur with several variables that seek to incorporate Theme 13, which deals with ideological forces identified in the literature review about market and privatization of corporate governance. This theme also has some relationship to Theme 10 on institutional isomorphism, as some of the literature review uncovered that there is a strong tendency for the nonprofit sector to emulate, either through normative, mimetic or even coercive processes, the lessons and insights of the for-profit market and private sector. As uncovered in the analysis of Theme 10, there is an ambiguity about the desire to practice more inclusive efforts with low-income persons without requiring such actions in policy.

Factors and themes explored in Table 100 include:

- *Factor C*: Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs.



- *Factor D*: Low-income & marginalized persons disenfranchised & disempowered from such engagement on boards; Low-income & marginalized persons perceived by others as token representatives on these boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as a token.
- *Factor E*: Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused; CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary.
- *Factor F*: Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations.
- *Theme 13*: Market and privatization ideologies drive focus for who to include on boards related to functions.

**Table 100**

*Round Three Consensus Ranking of Variables for Theme 13: Market and Privatization Ideology*

Round Three - Theme 13: Market and Privatization Ideology	Factor C	Factor D	Factor E	Factor F	Theme 13	Consensus	Rank
E6_30_NOlongerImportantLIServes						Strong disagree	2
C4_39_LIWillingAbleAvailable						Moderate agree	3
E7_32_OPINBestRep						Moderate agree	3
F1_72_BothLIProSkills						Moderate agree	3
E3_24_SELECTWellKnown						Majority agree	5
F3_76_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh						Majority agree	5
D2_3_55_BoardsNOTLISTENLI						Majority disagree	6
E4_26_ALLLookALIKE						Majority disagree	6
F5_80_POLFINCULIdeasLookAlikeLIExcluded						Majority disagree	6
C3_37_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills						Weak agree	7
C6_43_NOLibeLikeForProfits						Weak disagree	8
F4_78_RULESIDEASothersLIrep						Weak disagree	8
D1_3_49_SomeBoardExertPOWER						No apparent	9
E1_20_SELECTbyGiveMoney						No apparent	9

It seems that market and privatization forces do not have as big of an impact on the expert panelists in this study. Clearly, it seems the panelists argue that it is still important and timely to engage low-income persons on their boards of directors despite any privatization pressures not to do so or for-profit market ideologies to the contrary. The panelists' *strong consensus in disagreement* that it is no longer important for such inclusion demonstrates this.

The question regarding their view that "*Community boards do not include low-income persons because they want to act more like for-profit companies*" generated a *weak consensus in disagreement*, thus displaying that privatization and market forces do not seem to be predominant in their perspectives. However, though it is a *weak consensus in disagreement*, there is a large neutral selection in the survey. The panelists also shared their opinion about institutional isomorphism in general, which is connoted to Theme 10, with a *weak consensus in disagreement* that "*Community service boards usually just accept ideas and rules they heard from other organizations without thinking about how low-income persons are represented on the board.*" The panelists do not seem very engaged in their acceptance, or even rejection, of such an ideological influence from the private and market sector, so there may be something happening with this variable. This theme requires more analysis in future research.

## Chapter Seven

### **Analysis of Qualitative Data**

In this chapter, an analysis utilizing NVivo software to code panelists' survey responses from Rounds One, Two, and Three shows the frequencies and number of responses provided by the participants. In Round Three, based on the coding of the 14 panelists who submitted comments to the survey, it seems that panelists reduced their overall commentary compared to the other two rounds. In Round Three, the participants provided a bit more reflection on the requirement of boards to engage low-income persons on the boards of community agencies, yet consistently noted that a representative who is not low-income themselves could in fact represent the low-income voice. They also noted several practical issues around low-income persons' participation with larger organizational structures (i.e., geography) and general recruitment and retention. Finally, they shared that it is important, and still necessary, to go to the margins to listen to low-income persons.

Overall, in Round Three, there was not as much reaction to disengagement topics, per se, except how boards may tend toward recruiting new board members from their own social networks, as well as some hints of operative tokenism. Some participants reflected on how a person's worth is not determined by their economic status; thereby, there was some ambivalence around a requirement in law for low-income persons to serve on community services or development boards. Only one expert mentioned the operative policy of including low-income persons, or a representative, to their board.

Panelists provided limited input on the topic of engaging the margins and listening to those who are low-income. Several were open to going out to find people to

participate or share their perspective with the organization. It seems important to some panelists that boards and their organizations need to know their clients. There was some concern that there needs to be more low-income persons' involvement on boards or other processes of listening.

Training issues were discussed by the experts, with more attention to calls for trainings that help all members of the board understand better the needs of low-income persons and communities, as well as trainings focused on management. There was little note of reflections on organizational problem-solving or democratic practices.

Interestingly, the panelists did not share much around any policies, practices, or ideas from other organizations regarding institutional isomorphism. However, some experts noticed that indirect, or even direct, forces might be influencing their exclusion of low-income persons. The issue of diversity over income issues found little interest within the commentary sections.

Table 101 provides an overview of the responses based on the literature review's structured, or a priori, themes, as well as emergent themes that developed from Rounds One and Two. It is also inclusive of comments gleaned from Round Three. In Table 101, the narrative analysis is sorted by those elements that developed into variables to be tested through analysis of Factors A through F and various incorporated themes. From the literature review, five structured elements with subcodes were tested:

- the “urgency” of the moment aiming at punctuated equilibrium from the convergences of new governance and new accountability movements;

- opportunities, content, and methods of available, or desired, trainings for board members and low-income persons specifically;
- forms of disenfranchisement of, or by, low-income persons regarding board service, such as disengagement, social connections, income, professionalization of skills, diversity and identity politics, and tokenism;
- policies and practices that support institutional isomorphism that include legal frames, social networks, and the ability to engage the margins; and
- ideological factors that also shape institutional isomorphism such as market privatization, professionalization of skills, and accountability requiring certain types of persons who can serve on a board.

Other aspects of qualitative analysis emerged from Round One and provided materials for further qualitative and quantitative analysis. These emergent codes included:

- democratic practices
- low-income persons' willingness to leave or not leave the board after their term limits
- low-income persons' interest in using their position on the board to acquire other goods and services
- power of, and over, low-income persons by board members including power differentials
- problem-solving skills

- recruitment of low-income persons and issues around engaging the margins for such persons to serve
- the credibility of non-low-income persons representing low-income persons on various boards
- the level of uncomfortableness low-income persons may experience while serving on a board of a community service or development organization

For the purpose of interpreting the NVivo software analysis utilized for all commentaries provided by the panelists in all three rounds, each panelist is a case, and each case may have several mentions of a code in one, or all, of its subcategories. The references measure the number of times anything related to that coded narrative was noted by panelists. In each round, no more than 21 cases are involved, since only 21 panelists were invited to provide any commentary. However, that panelist (i.e., case) may have mentioned the coded topic on numerous occasions. Several of the codes have subcategories, as noted above. These subcategories are then added together to offer a quantitative analysis of the total number of cases and references.

**Table 101**

*Comparison of Cases and References from Structured and Emergent Narrative Code Analysis from Round One (Narrative Only), Round Two (Survey) and Round Three (Survey). NVivo.*

Qualitative Narrative Responses											
Combined Rounds One - Three	R1 Cases	R1	R2 Cases	R2	R3 Cases	R3	Total	Total	Factors	Theme(s)	
Codes\\Moment	7	8	0	0	2	3	9	11	E	1A, 1B, 12	
Codes\\Moment\\Urgency	5	8	2	2	7	14	14	24	A, C, E	1A, 1B, 12	
Total Moment	12	16	2	2	9	17	23	35			
Codes\\Training	9	15	0	0	0	0	9	15	B, D	2, 3, 4,	
Codes\\Training\\Content	9	11	6	14	11	39	26	64	B	2, 3, 4,	
Codes\\Training\\Methods	5	6	6	11	6	19	17	36	B	2, 3, 4,	
Codes\\Training\\Opportunities	12	14	6	6	3	10	21	30	B	2, 3, 4,	
Total Training	35	46	18	31	20	68	73	145			
Codes\\Disenfranchisement	6	7	0	0	0	0	6	7	D	4	
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Disen gagement	7	12	2	6	2	4	11	22	C, D	2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13	
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Lack of social connections	6	14	4	16	7	15	17	45	C, D	2, 5A, 6, 7, 11, 13	
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Perce ption of class or income status	7	22	5	13	8	11	20	46	C, D	3, 6, 13	
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Perce ption of professional credentials	9	19	4	14	3	5	16	38	B, C, D	2, 3, 5A, 5B, 7, 13	
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Perce ption of race or ethnicity Diversity	4	12	1	1	5	8	10	21	D	8, 9	
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Perce ption of tokenism	13	23	2	4	8	19	23	46	D	8, 9	
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Perce ption wrong gender or sexuality	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	3	D	8	
Total Disenfranchisement	52	109	1	54	35	65	105	228			



Codes\\Policies	6	7	1	1	2	2	9	10	E, F	1B
Codes\\Policies\\Isomorphism	14	46	9	40	11	51	34	137	A, B, E, F	1B, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13
Codes\\Policies\\Required Low Income participation*	14	49	8	20	15	44	37	113	A, E, F	8, 10
<b>Total Policies</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>250</b>		
Codes\\Practices	10	30	0	0	0	0	10	30	D, E, F	1B, 11, 12, 13
Codes\\Practices\\On the margins*	13	28	6	23	28	71	34	122	C, D, E, F	1B, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13
Codes\\Practices\\Social Networks	8	14	9	38	8	29	25	81	D, E, F	1B, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13
<b>Total Practices</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>233</b>		
Codes\\Ideology	4	4	0	0	0	0	4	4	F	1A
Codes\\Ideology\\Accountability	7	13	6	19	6	41	19	73	A, D, E, F	1A, 1B, 10, 12
Codes\\Ideology\\Market and Privatization	2	3	6	23	8	25	16	51	B, E, F	1B, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13
Codes\\Ideology\\professionalizati on of leadership	8	21	8	25	4	14	20	60	E, F	1B, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 10, 13
<b>Total Ideology</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>188</b>		
Codes\\New Emergent\\Democracy	2	2	2	2	4	5	8	9	F	1A, 1B, 4
Codes\\New Emergent\\Low income does not want to leave	1	1	3	4	4	5	8	10	C	12, 13
Codes\\New Emergent\\Low Income Use their position	2	2	3	5	5	8	10	15	C	12, 13
Codes\\New Emergent\\Power	2	2	3	9	2	4	7	15	F	13
Codes\\New Emergent\\Power Differentials between board members Disengagement	6	14	2	6	5	8	13	28	F	2, 4, 9, 12, 13

Codes\\New Emergent\\Problem-solving	3	6	1	1	3	6	7	13	B	4, 5A, 5B, 13
Codes\\New Emergent\\Recruitment	3	6	2	14	10	24	15	44	C, D, F	2, 3, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13
Codes\\New Emergent\\Representative not actually low income	3	4	7	11	10	16	20	31	E	1A, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 10, 13
S shCodes\\New Emergent\\Uncomfortableness	2	8	4	13	4	6	10	27	C	5A, 5B, 9, 12, 13
SubTotal Emergent Other	24	45	27	65	47	82	98	192		
Codes\\New Emergent\\VOICE	7	11	7	19	11	35	25	65	A, E	1A, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13
Codes\\New Emergent\\VOICE\\Listening	3	13	1	4	8	11	12	28	E, F	4, 9, 12
Total Voice/Listening	10	24	8	23	19	46	37	93		

*Note.* There are two codes marked with an asterisk. These codes seem to include more than the normal number of cases which could be a result of either double counting some cases, an error in the software, or a user error.

In Table 101 under the topic of nature of the moment today (reflecting on Factors A, C, and E; Themes 1A, 1B, and 12), which tests the literature review's findings regarding the convergence of the new accountability and the new governance movements, the panelists provided relatively few comments. Nine cases noted this reality, with 11 total responses throughout all three rounds. Most of these comments were provided during the Round One qualitative phase, with none made in Round Two, and few made in Round Three. However, regarding any reflection on the urgency of engaging low-income persons to these boards, there were 14 cases and 24 references to this topic throughout the three rounds, with the greatest amount of commentary occurring in Round Three with seven cases and 14 references. Adding these two categories together, moment and moment/urgency, 23 cases noted this coded series with 35 references to that code. In terms of their overall frequencies compared to other codes and their subcategories, this analysis of 23 cases and 35 references is analyzed later in Table 102.

The comments related to training (reflecting on Factors B and D; Themes 2, 3 and 4) generated commentary by the panelists. Table 98 notes that, in total, there were 73 cases with 145 responses to this general topic inclusive of commentaries on sub-topics of content (26 cases, 64 responses), methods (17 cases, 36 responses), and opportunities (21 cases, 30 responses) in all three rounds. Round One seemed to generate the most commentary (35 cases, 46 responses), followed by Round 3 (20 cases, 66 responses). The subcategory of context for the trainings seems to have generated a larger portion of the narrative (26 cases, 64 responses), especially during Round Three (11 cases, 39 responses).

The codes related to disenfranchisement (reflecting on Factors B, C and D; Themes 2, 3, 4, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 13) engaged the panelists with 105 cases mentioning one of the subcategories with 228 references, in total, for all three rounds. Round One had frequent mentions (52 cases, 109 responses) on the overall category of disenfranchisement. The analysis shows that within this general structured code, the subcategory of tokenism obtained frequent mentions (23 cases, 46 responses) in all three rounds. The next most frequently mentioned code pertained to the issue surrounding “*perception of class or income status*” as a means of disenfranchisement (20 cases, 46 responses). Interestingly, the least mentioned aspect of disenfranchisement noted by the panelists related to tensions between issues connected to other forms of diversity such as “*gender of sexual orientation*” (2 cases, 3 responses), and this aspect was only commented upon in Round Three. Other sub categorical codes under disenfranchisement include general disengagement (11 cases, 22 responses), lack of social connections (17 cases, 45 responses), lack of professional credentials (16 cases, 38 responses), and perception of race or ethnicity/diversity (10 cases, 21 responses).

The topic of policies that may structure exclusion and point to some form of institutional isomorphism (reflecting on Factors A, B, E and F; Themes 1B, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 13) generated notable commentary among the expert panelists. In general, there were 71 cases and 250 responses. Comments related specifically to insights on institutional isomorphism registered 34 cases, with the most present in Round One, and 137 responses, again mostly registered during Round One. Some panelists provided insights into the general code of policies (9 cases, 10 responses) commenting on perception, or reality, of structural exclusion. The panelists further noted that they did have some

commentary on the requirement that low-income persons participate in these community boards (37\* cases, 113 responses). This general code of policies, including the subcategory of isomorphism, seems to have generated the most commentary. Likely, this is because several factors and themes overlap to ascertain insights into this important lens generated from the literature review on structural pressures to engage in policies that may, in fact, exclude or include low-income persons on community boards of directors.

Another corollary to policies that may structurally include or exclude low-income persons pertains to actual or perceived practices of such actions (reflecting on Factors C, D, E and F; Themes 1B, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13). Overall, the practices code recorded 69 cases with 233 references. Generally, the panelists provided some input on the topic of practices (10 cases, 30 responses). In this code, the subcategory of *on the margins* is a means to capture any commentary which indicates that there is concern or interest in engaging persons who live at the margins of society (e.g., low-income persons). In this case, there seems to be a discrepancy (\*) in Round Three calculations about the number of cases (i.e., 28) and the reality that only 14 cases are counted. This may be due to user error, double counting in some form, or a miscalculation by the software. Regardless, it does seem that during the various rounds, there was commentary pertaining to the nature of going to the margins to include such voices (Round One – 13 cases, 28 responses; Round Two – 6 cases, 23 responses) as discussed in the literature review. The subcategorical code, *social networks*, provides a means to track commentary around how one's community of friends, acquaintances, and co-workers may influence various practices pertaining to the recruitment and selection of low-income persons to serve on

these boards. Twenty-five cases provided 81 responses with a seemingly equal number of responses in each round.

Derived from the literature review, the final structured code delves into the topic of ideology, including three subcategories that aim to understand the pressures for organizations to engage in accountability, reactions to market forces and privatization, and the professional skills needed for leadership of such institutions (reflecting on Factors A, B, D, E and F; Themes 1A, 1B, 4, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 10 and 13). In general, the code ideology included 59 cases with 188 responses. There were 20 cases that commented on the nature of the professionalization of leadership (60 responses), while 19 cases provided 73 responses on the ideological factor of accountability. Market forces and privatization perspectives provided the least commentary (16 cases, 51 responses). Only four cases provided any responses to the general theme of ideology, with four responses tallied.

Eleven emergent codes developed from Round One's qualitative process (reflecting on all six factors and all 13 themes). In general, 135 cases provided 285 responses to all 11 emergent codes with some subcategories. The one code that seemed to elicit the most responses pertained to voice and its subcategory listening. The general code of voice (reflecting Factors A and E; Themes 1A, 1B, 10, 11, 12 and 13) found 25 cases with 65 responses indicating some level of interest in this emergent code. Regarding listening (reflecting on Factors E, F; Themes 4, 9 and 12), 12 cases offered 28 responses.

The next emergent code that obtained many cases pertains to the issue of whether there can be a "*representative of the low-income voice who is not actually low-income*"

(reflecting Factor E; Themes 1A, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 10 and 13) with 20 cases and 31 responses. The next level of activity revolves around the codes of power and its subcategory of *“Power differentials between board members as a part of disengagement.”* For the code power as an aspect of exclusion (reflecting on Factor F; Theme 13), seven cases provided 15 responses. Its subcode of power differential (reflecting on Factor F; Themes 2, 4, 9, 12 and 13) recorded 13 cases with 28 responses. Together, this code related to power and power differentials elicited 20 cases with 43 responses.

Fifteen cases mentioned recruitment (reflecting Factors C, D and F; Themes 2, 3, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 13) as an issue with 44 responses. The emergent code of uncomfortableness (reflecting Factor C; Themes 5A, 5B, 9, 12 and 13) secured 10 cases with 27 responses. Equally with 10 cases with 15 responses, panelists responded to the emergent code *“Low income persons use their position”* to their own advantage (reflecting Factor C; Themes 12 and 13). Eight cases discussed how *“Low income persons may not want to leave”* their board positions once their term expires (reflecting Factor C; Themes 12 and 13) with 10 responses.

The final two emergent codes focus on skill sets that board members should acquire, or at least be trained on, as they work on a board of directors for a community service or development agency. One of these two emergent codes focuses on problem-solving as an appropriate skill to serve on these boards (reflecting Factor B; Themes 4, 5A, 5B and 13). There were seven cases providing 13 responses to this emergent code. Finally, eight cases discussed the skill and nature of engaging in democracy (reflecting Factor F; Themes 1A, 1B and 4) eliciting nine responses. Even though the topic of

democratic practice or skill had been identified in the general literature derived from Dewey (1937, 2004) and Freire (2000, 2011), it was during Round One that this code and theme arose. It is important to note that this factor was not explicitly asked in Round One, but this topic emerged from the panelists' commentary and continued to elicit discussion during Rounds Two and Three. This is an important topic that notes how the theme of democracy, as a practical skill set and a framework itself, emerged from the experts devoid of any coaching from the Deweyan or Freirean literature.

Table 102 sorts the codes and their various subcategories by the number of references found in all three rounds.

**Table 102**

*Number of Coding References by Frequency – Rounds One, Two, and Three. NVivo.*

Codes	Number of Coding References
Codes\Policies\Isomorphism	137
Codes\Practices\On the margins*	122
Codes\Policies\Required low-income participation*	113
Codes\Practices\Social Networks	81
Codes\Ideology\Accountability	73
Codes\New Emergent\Voice	65
Codes\Training\Content	64
Codes\Ideology\Professionalization of leadership	60
Codes\Ideology\Market and Privatization	51
Codes\Disenfranchisement\Perception of class or income status	46
Codes\Disenfranchisement\Perception of tokenism	46
Codes\Disenfranchisement\Lack of social connections	45



Codes\\New Emergent\\Recruitment	44
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Perception of professional credentials	38
Codes\\Training\\Methods	36
Codes\\New Emergent\\Representative not actually low income	31
Codes\\Practices	30
Codes\\Training\\Opportunities	30
Codes\\New Emergent\\Power differentials between board members disengagement	28
Codes\\New Emergent\\Voice\\Listening	28
Codes\\New Emergent\\Uncomfortableness	27
Codes\\Moment\\Urgency	24
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Disengagement	22
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Perception of race or ethnicity diversity	21
Codes\\New Emergent\\Low income use their position	15
Codes\\New Emergent\\Power	15
Codes\\Training	15
Codes\\New Emergent\\Problem-Solving	13
Codes\\Moment	11
Codes\\New Emergent\\Low-Income does not want to leave	10
Codes\\Policies	10
Codes\\New Emergent\\Democracy	9
Codes\\Disenfranchisement	7
Codes\\Ideology	4
Codes\\Disenfranchisement\\Perception wrong gender or sexuality	3

---

As shown, *isomorphism*, or concepts related to this code, again received the most frequent commentary with 137 responses, probably reflecting that this structured code cuts through many factors and themes, as well as provides a major thematic in the

literature on boards of directors. Though there were some difficulties in calculating cases, the structured code *on the margins*, or capturing related concepts to that notion, presented 122 times in that the panelists seem concerned about the nature of engaging low-income and other marginalized persons on boards. Again, this is manifested in the 113 responses related to conversations about the *requirement to include low-income persons* on boards.

The structure code of *practices/social networks* found 81 responses. Panelists provided comments about the nature of recruitment and selection of boards as related to their own social connections. The code related to *ideology/accountability* registered 73 responses, as panelists noted that trends requiring accountability may provide either an obstacle or opportunity for the inclusion of low-income persons on these boards. In this vein, the next sorted frequency measures 65 responses regarding the emergent code related to *voice*. It seems that for the panelists, an angle for accountability might be related to the inclusion or exclusion of voices, especially those of low-income persons. *Proper training* seems to also be an important aspect, as the code content elicited 64 responses. The content was not explored in detail, thus opening an area of future research.

Two structured codes related to ideology ranked next in frequencies of responses. The issue related to the *professionalization of leadership* garnered 60 responses, and *market and privatization forces* had 51 responses, which shows how some of these ideological pressures may be at work in the panelists' understanding of forces that exclude or include low-income persons.

Four structured codes related to *disenfranchisement* follow closely behind the issues noted above pertaining to ideology. The *perception of class or income status* and

*perception of tokenism* codes both drew 46 responses each. These were closely followed by 45 responses to the structured code *lack of social connections*. There were 44 responses to the emergent code *recruitment*, and 38 responses referring to *perception of professional credentials*. *Proper training/methods* registered 36 responses as a reminder by the panelists that such training could provide help in the recruitment or active participation of low-income persons on boards.

The emergent code *representative not actually low-income* registered at 31 responses. Two structured codes followed, as both *practices* and *training/opportunities* each registered 30 responses. The emergent code *power differentials between board members as a form of disengagement*, and the code of *voice/listening* each registered 28 responses. The emergent code *uncomfortableness* found 27 responses.

The structured code *urgency* had 24 responses, followed closely by *disenfranchisement/disengagement* with 22 responses, and *disenfranchisement/perception of race or ethnic diversity* with 21 responses. The emergent code *low income use their position* elicited 15 responses, and so did the emergent code *power* as well as the structured code, *training*.

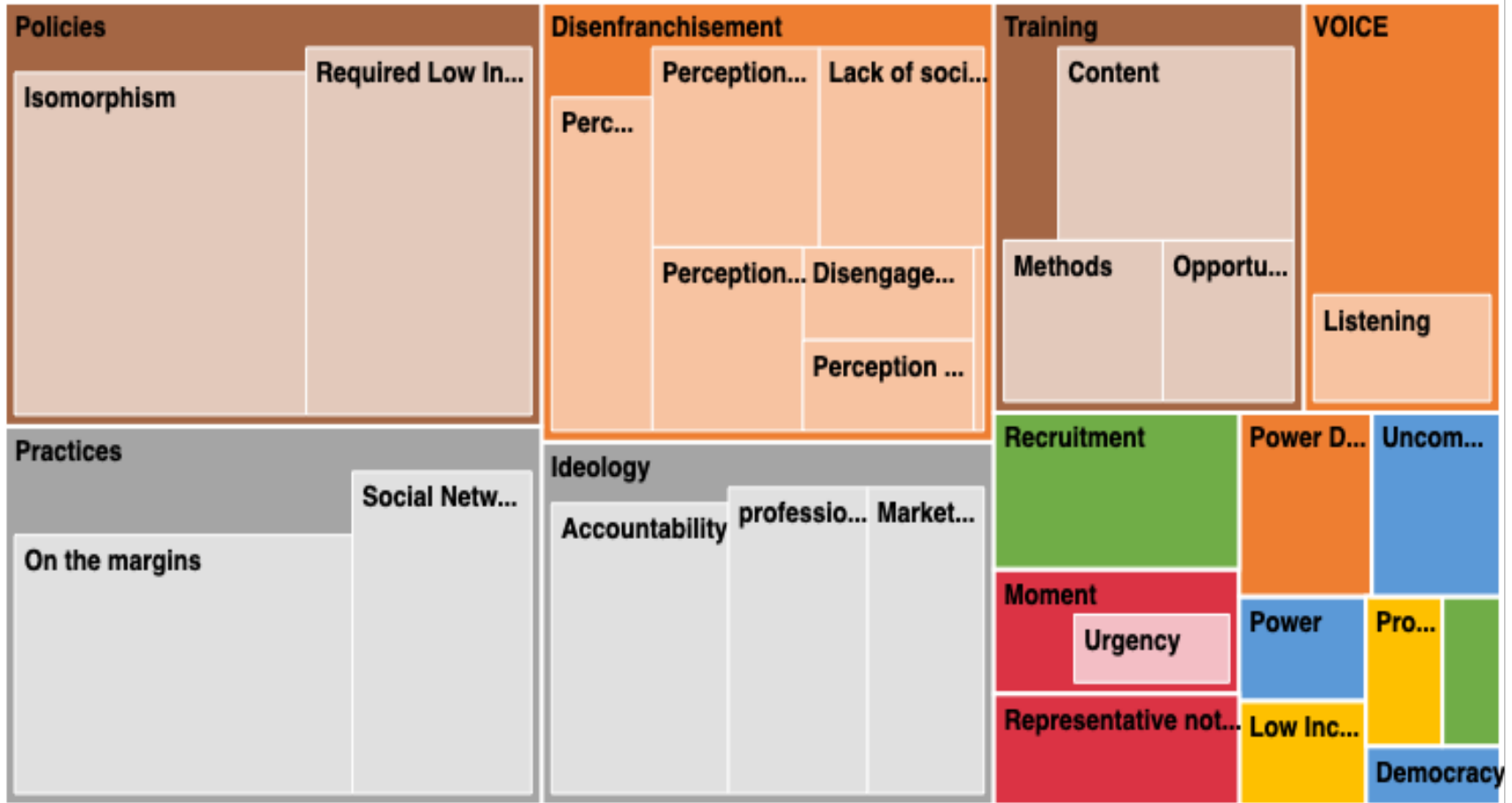
The emergent code *problem-solving* found 13 responses, followed by a structured code identifying a new *moment* with 11 responses. The emergent code *low income not want to leave when their term expires* had 10 responses, and *policies* also had 10 mentions. The emergent code pertaining to *democracy* ranked nine responses, followed by seven responses for *disenfranchisement* in general. Four responses emerged for *ideology* in general, and only three responses were present for the structured code

*disenfranchisement/perception of wrong gender or sexuality* as the least discussed coded item.

Figure 11 provides a visualization, produced from NVivo software, of the frequencies of references for each of the structured and emergent codes and their subcategories. This visualization displays the information gleaned from Rounds One, Two, and Three to depict the frequencies of commentary but is not a proxy vote of what issues are most important. Rather, the analysis of the survey questions and the commentaries from Rounds Two and Three provide more insight into areas of consensus or disagreement. However, the frequency analysis does indicate areas (i.e., codes) that generated conversations.

**Figure 11**

*Narrative Frequency Block Representation from Rounds One, Two, and Three by Structured and Emergent Codes. Number of Coding References by Frequency. NVivo.*



## **Analysis of Social Networks**

This section provides an analysis of the social connections between various organizations in this study, reviewing how the CEOs and other board members of these five organizations are socially networked. As previously discussed, the five organizations involved in this study provided a current slate of directors serving on their boards. For the purposes of this study, 71 board members currently serve on at least one of these five organizations, including the author of this research project as a participant observer. There are also four CEOs since two of these organizations share one chief executive officer position.

Seven persons were identified who served on more than one board. Four of these seven were the CEOs of the four organizations. Each one of these CEOs served on another board that was not their organization. Three other CEOs served on the board of ACTION, while one other CEO served on the board of CW/CWRLF, one other CEO served on the board of MYCAP, and one CEO served on the board of YNDC. What is also learned is that one CEO (ACTION) serves on the board of directors of the other four organizations, while all the three other CEOs serve on the board of directors of ACTION. Thus, ACTION's CEO seems to be a major social network hub actor in the organizational landscape being studied in this case. There were three board members who cut across multiple organizational boards. Three of the board members served on the board of ACTION, while two served on the board of CW/CWRLF. Only one other board member served on the board of MYCAP.

Again, totaling the CEO and board member connections between different boards, ACTION maintains double the number of social networking connections, followed by

CW/CWRLF with three connectors, MYCAP with two connectors, and YNDC with only one other social connector, which is a CEO of another organization and not another organizational board member.

Table 103 displays a more detailed distribution of how the seven social network connectors engage with other boards.

**Table 103**

*Social Network Analysis: Connections of Specific Social Networkers by Distribution, Frequency and Organizational Connections (n = 7)*

Overlapping Board Members	Frequency	ACTION	CW/CWRLF	MYCAP	YNDC
CEO 2	3	CEO ACTION	CW BD	MYCAP BD	YNDC BD
Board member 3	2	ACTION BD		MYCAP BD	
Board member 1	2	ACTION BD	CW BD		
Board member 2	2	ACTION BD	CW BD		
CEO 4	1	ACTION BD		CEO MYCAP	
CEO 3	1	ACTION BD	CEO CW		
CEO 1	1	ACTION BD			CEO YNDC
Total		7	4	3	2

CEO 2 serves on the boards of the four other organizations, while board member 3 connects with two boards, ACTION and MYCAP. Board member 1 and board member 2 both connect with the ACTION and CW/CWRLF board, while CEO 4 connects with the ACTION board only. CEO 4 only has one connection with the ACTION board, as well as CEO 3. In this distribution of both CEOs and other board members, ACTION is the main social network hub since all seven connectors interact with ACTION either as the CEO or another board member. CW/CWRLF ranks the second highest in social network

connections with four, followed by MYCAP with three, and YNDC with only two connections.

Table 104 transposes these connection frequencies into percentages.

**Table 104**

*Social Network Analysis: Connections by the Social Networkers, by Percentage Among Themselves and Percentage of Total Board Members*

Agency	Connections	Percentage connection by social networkers ( $n = 7$ )	Number of Connections per Board Positions ( $n = 71$ )
ACTION	7	100%	9.9%
CW/CWRLF	4	57.1%	5.6%
MYCAP	3	42.9%	4.2%
YNDC	2	28.6%	2.8%

The first percentage analysis discusses the social network connections of the seven identified CEOs and board members who serve on more than one board. As can be seen, ACTION represents a 100% connection hub with all other organizations either via the ACTION CEO's connections or other CEOs and board members serving on ACTION's board. Overall, ACTION has a social network presence of nearly 10% throughout these five organizations with seven connections out of 71 total board members.

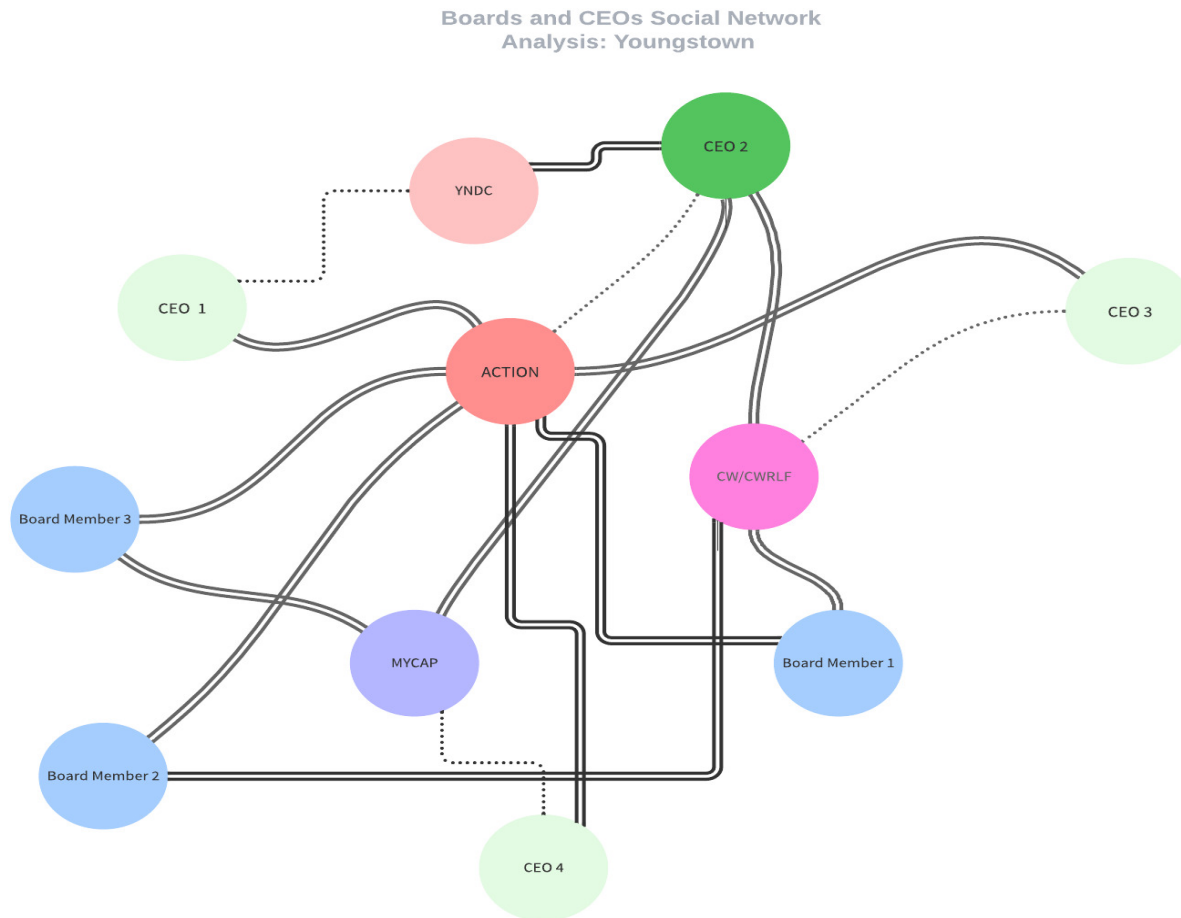
CW/CWRLF social networkers account for 57.14% of the key connectors, with a presence in nearly 6% percent of the total number of board members. MYCAP accounts for 42.9% of the connections and a 4.2% percent presence throughout the five boards, while YNDC has the least social network connections representing 28.6% of the connectors and only a 2.8% throughout the board network. ACTION represents the largest hub in this social network of community service and development organizations in



this case study. Figure 12 and Figure 13 show the frequency and intensity of connections with the four CEOs and three board members for three personal actors, along with four organizational nodes for a total of 11 nodes. A node is an object in a relationship in a network, while a hub is a node with larger than average links between objects (Kadushin, 2012, p. 14). The double line represents a person that serves on the board of that organization, while the dotted line represents the CEO's relationship with their own organization. As shown with the frequency of connecting lines, CEO 2 from ACTION provides a major hub of social networking, as well as the ACTION organizational node (i.e., the hub organization) itself.

**Figure 12**

*Social Network Analysis Nodes, Edges, and Hubs of CEOs and Board Members. (n =11) Per Analysis of Those Serving on More Than One Board.*



**Figure 13**

*Social Network Analysis Nodes, Edges, and Hubs of CEOs and Board Members. (n =11) Per Analysis of Those Serving on More Than One Board.*

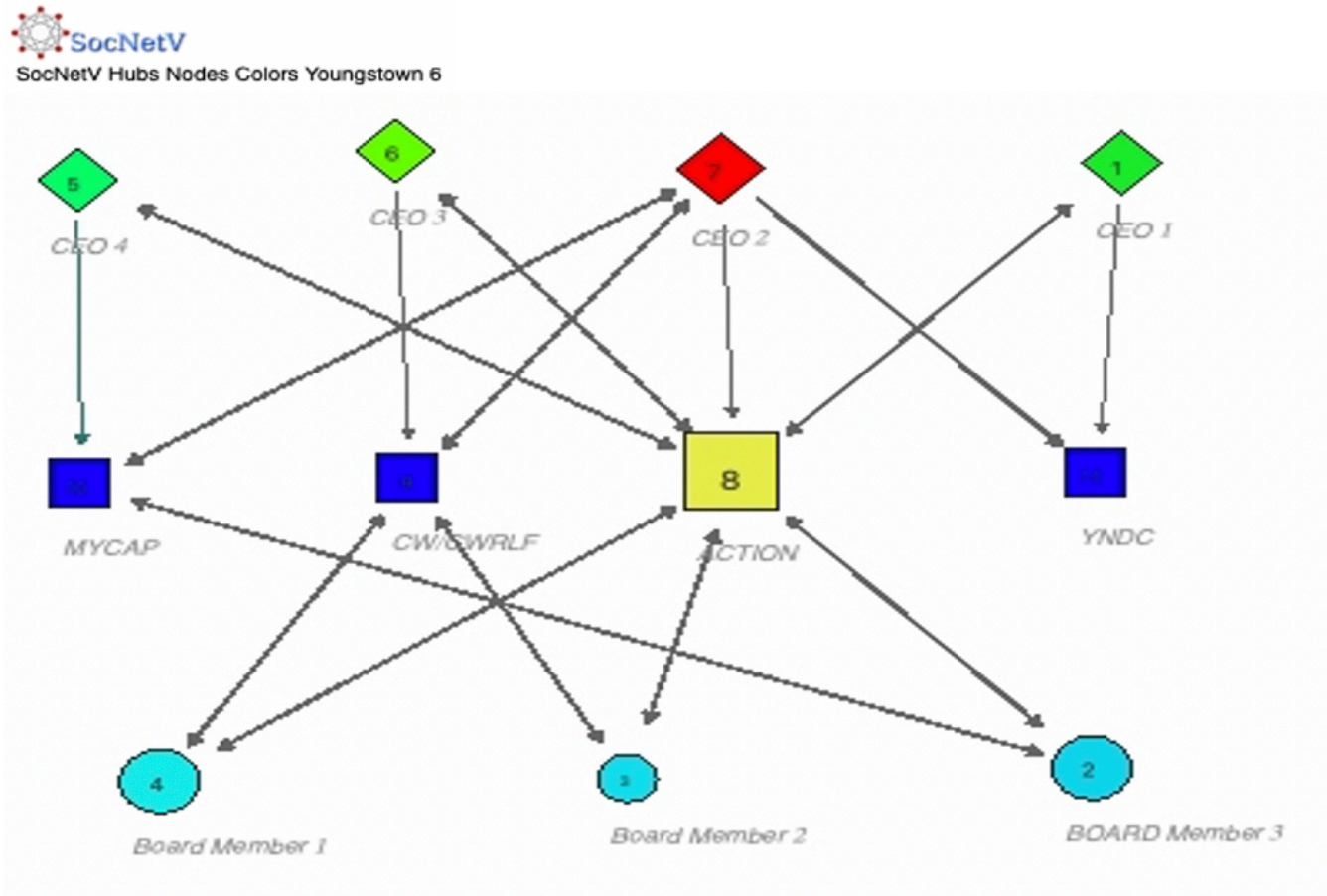


Table 105 provides the degree centrality as calculated by the SocNetV software analyzing the edge line weights. CEO to organization is 1.0; CEO to board of organization is 3.0. A board member to board of organization is also 3.0 to differentiate the relationship between a CEO and his/her board and when a person, either as a CEO of another agency or a board member only, serves on the board itself since that implies governance authority as opposed to management roles.

**Table 105**

*Social Network Analysis Nodes, Edges, and Hubs of CEOs and Board Members. (n = 11) Per Analysis of Those Serving on More Than One Board. Degree Centrality. SocNetV software.*

Node	Label	DC	DC'	%DC'
1	CEO 1	3	0.04	4.05
2	Board Member 3	6	0.08	8.11
3	Board Member 2	6	0.08	8.11
4	Board Member 1	6	0.08	8.11
5	CEO 4	4	0.05	5.41
6	CEO 3	4	0.05	5.41
7	CEO 2	10	0.14	13.51
8	ACTION	19	0.26	25.68
9	CW/CWRLF	10	0.14	13.51
10	MYCAP	6	0.08	8.11
11	YNDC	0	0	0

From Table 105, it is evident that ACTION registers at 19 degrees centrality.

CW/CWRLF has 10 degrees, while CEO 2 also has 10 degrees. ACTION and CEO 2 are not only nodes, but they are hubs (Kadushin, 2012, p. 14) within this landscape based on degree centrality. CEO 3 and 4 register with four degrees centrality, while CEO 1 has

only three degrees. Board members 1, 2, and 3 each share six degrees centrality. MYCAP, as an organization, registers six degrees centrality, and YNDC has the least degrees centrality at zero.

It is important to note that ACTION along with CW/CWRLF were created by investments from the CCHD which provides a stronger Freirean understanding of the involvement of low-income persons on governing boards for both community organizations and community development agencies. In a third ranking area of social connections, MYCAP was founded as, and remains, the CAA created under the MFP policy that emerged and ended; however, it remains the hoped-for practice of the CAA movement to engage the low-income community at least through representative voice. YNDC, which has the fewest social connections via boards and CEO networkers, started as a venture of a local foundation which did not engage in any policy or practice related to the necessity of low-income involvement on their board.

Due to the small sample size, this study did not generate a means to test the social network relationships regarding sharing knowledge, perspectives, or engaging in any institutional isomorphism regarding governance and engagement with low-income persons. For future studies, it would be helpful to investigate how these crossover relationships, especially with ACTION as the hub institution, have impacted corporate governance and generated any institutional isomorphism in the Mahoning Valley regarding the engagement of low-income persons on boards.

## Chapter 8

### Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter provides a recapitulation of the findings and highlights the statements of opinion that garnered a strong, moderate, or majority consensus of agreement or disagreement, along with a brief summation. Connections are made between the findings from the current study and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Limitations of this research, along with problems encountered during this project, are presented. Implications from this research, as well as offerings for future studies, are also addressed. In the final two sections, reflections on contributions offered by this researcher and an autobiographical reflection offer some conclusions and learnings. Voices of panelists provide final insights gleaned from the Delphi process.

#### Recapitulation of Purpose and Findings

Should low-income persons have a direct role or voice in the governance structure of the very institutions created to serve their needs? The assembled panelists maintain nuanced positions of consensus in this regard. From the beginning, five questions framed this research project, although a factor was added based on the Round One generative themes process. The factors were:

**Factor A:** How are the voices of low-income and marginalized persons structurally incorporated into boards of directors, especially those organizations that serve such persons and communities?

**Factor B:** How are low-income and marginalized persons formed and prepared in both technical knowledge and governance obligations, using relevant adult educational processes, to serve on such community corporations?

**Factors C and D:** How are low-income and marginalized persons disenfranchised from such engagement? How is such disenfranchisement related to disempowerment, and (*added after Round One*) are low-income persons willing to serve?

**Factor E:** How do practices and policies regarding the structural inclusion (or exclusion) of such voices get diffused and generally accepted?

**Factor F:** How do operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, and privatization/marketization forces and ideology impact incentives or obstacles to the inclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations?

Low-income persons do not seem to be as directly included as the nature of the organizations would predict. They are not structurally required to be in the boardrooms that finalize programs in response to their needs. When budgets are set and services are designed, their presence is requested, but it is not required. From this study's experts, there is a *strong agreement* that low-income persons should have their voices heard in the governance structures that determine the spending of public and private funds that impact them or are meant to serve their needs. Still, there is hesitancy and nuanced consensus about its requirement.

Throughout this research, training continued to focus on specific needs, such as problem-solving and learning about the needs of persons served. It remained common among the panelists that low-income persons, indeed, wanted to participate and were normally available for service.

The panelists also found common ground that most persons did not see low-income persons on their boards as tokens. They warned against tendencies to make others uncomfortable, disempowered, or disenfranchised, and they urged proper engagement.

The panelists were not as clear in their consensus about known or unconscious practices or policies operative by other boards or regulatory bodies that structurally included or excluded low-income persons from service on their boards of directors. The panelists noted that incorporating the voices of low-income persons remained a critical and timely process and endeavor.

Presented below are some of the results found in this research that utilized a three-round Delphi method composed of an expert panel of board members and chief executive officers of community service organizations in Youngstown, Ohio. The goal of this Delphi process focused on eliciting normative and policy recommendations from practiced experts on how low-income persons ought to be included in corporate decision-making. This research project developed a scale, investigating six factors with 15 interrelated themes, to measure the level of consensus of agreement or disagreement among the expert panelists. Data was utilized from Round Two and Round Three to ascertain how specific issues related to board governance gleaned from the extant literature and the generative themes found in Round One.

Table 106 summarizes consensus level findings by factors that lead to policy implications and further studies.



**Table 106**

*Number of Position Statements by Panelists of Strong, Moderate, and Majority Consensus (both Agree and Disagree) by Factor, based on Research Questions*

Factors	Total	Strong Consensus	Moderate Consensus	Majority Consensus
Factor A - Structural Inclusion	7	1	1	5
Factor B - Training	5	2	2	1
Factor C - Recruitment and availability of low-income persons (added after Round One) and D - Disempowerment and Tokenism	6	0	2	4
Factor E - Practices, Diffusion, and Urgency	7	1	2	4
Factor F - Forces regarding regulatory requirements	5	0	3	2
Total	30	4	10	16

***Summary of the Findings at Different Levels of Consensus***

**Strong Consensus.** Four variables that rated as a *strong consensus* offer some key findings for this research:

- Structural Inclusion (Factor A): There is a *strong consensus in agreement* that “*It is important to have a low-income person on a community agency board even though there might not be a requirement to do so.*”
- Training (Factor B): There is a *strong consensus in agreement* that “*All persons serving on a board of a community organization that serves low-income people must be trained on the special needs of low-income persons.*”

- Training (Factor B): There is a *strong consensus in agreement* that “*Training for board members should help them with their skills in problem-solving.*”
- Practices, Diffusion, and Urgency (Factor E): There is a *strong consensus in disagreement* that “*Times are different. It is no longer important that low-income persons serve on an agency board.*”

The panelists register *strong agreement* that it is “*important to have a low-income person on a community agency board even though there might not be a requirement to do so*” (Factor A). This element pertains to a critical finding of this research that experts insist on the structural incorporation of the voice of low-income persons on boards of agencies; however, they would not go as far as to say that such a direct voice must be a required member of the board of directors. This is echoed in the panelists' *strong consensus in disagreement* that “*it is no longer important that low-income persons serve on an agency board*” (Factor E). This reaffirms their agreement that the low-income voice remains an important structural element of any organization, even all these years after the official United States policy of MFP morphed from a required voice to a recommended voice in the late 1960s, without any clear indication on how to engage those low-income voices in a meaningful and long-term way.

In terms of the urgency of the moment to include low-income persons on the boards of community services agencies, panelist 13 wrote:

...a Community Board can be more effective in the community if it requires low-income persons to serve on the board. A stronger, influential, progressing board

of directors should always recruit a low-income person to serve on their board to strengthen the community. (File: RD 2 - Urgency 1172021).

Panelist 7 noted: *“As board members, we need to advocate on behalf of the population to include low-income persons who serve on the board. We cannot make decisions based without the involvement of those we serve. It makes no sense!”* (File: RD 2 - Urgency 1172021).

However, panelist 5 had differing positions in their comments about such a requirement. This panelist noted:

I don't think the person should be required. I think the agency should be required to make every effort to seek low-income persons to serve on their board. I kind of know what you mean. But it's kind of almost like saying, 'This is the way that you earn your keep, because we're helping you or people like you, you should serve.' I don't like that idea, because it's almost like, that's really what a token appointment is for somebody. And then you force me to come onto a board, and then you negate me. What could be worse? (File: RD 2 - Required Low Income Participation 1172021)

This panelist then reconsiders the role of representative voice and wrote:

I'm on one board where the requirements, it's national and a state requirement, this has to be a tripartite board to include an equal number of members, but here is how it is different, an equal number of members from the low-income sector, the private sector, and the political arena. So, when you say low-income sector, I would say of the persons representing the low-income sector, maybe two are low-income. I know one definitely is. The remainder either work for, or they're doing

volunteer work for an agency that serves the low-income sector, so they were appointed by that agency. (File: RD 2 - Required Low Income Participation 1172021)

Panelist 15 was not convinced that there should be such a requirement for low-income participation on these community boards, noting:

They must be. I won't say they must be. I think it would be nice to have them on because they do have a strength, some of them don't have a say as to why their income is that amount or anything like that, but I should have a say, but to say that they must is kind of broad to me. I think it is important, but I still get stuck on that word 'must.' [T]hey should have the opportunity to serve on boards, but it's not a must. I don't know if I would say required, because required makes me think they would get anybody just to stick them on there to say that they would have a token, so they have a body. I think it would be good. I think it would be feasible. But for them to make it mandatory, no. (File: RD 2 - Required Low Income Participation 1172021)

Others commented that the requirement is critical. Panelist 1 said:

I think it depends on the type of organization. If the organization serves low-income people then they should definitely be involved in decision making. I think it is critical to have some representation from the communities and constituents you serve to fulfill your mission and be held accountable. (File: RD 2 - Required Low Income Participation 1172021)

Panelist 13 concurred:

Low-income persons should be involved in the decision-making of an

organization. Who better to know what is needed and who the population is to be better served. Low-income persons should absolutely serve on Community board. They would bring better information to the organization through experience. The inclusion of low-income people enhances a board especially when that person is trained on how a board works. This inclusion is necessary for community agencies. The statement (no longer important) is false. (File: RD 2 - Required Low Income Participation 1172021)

One element that might help the structural incorporation, required or recommended, pertains to training, which was one area of clear and strong consensus. Panelists were in strong agreement that an intentional level of various types of training aimed at helping all board members understand the special needs of low-income persons and focused on the development of problem-solving skills (Factor B) were needed. These two findings are important recommendations to board governance and leadership training programs, as well as to organizations themselves. Board member training requires a focus on the needs and realities of the persons being served, especially those who are low-income and experience poverty. This in line with the Freirean and Deweyan understanding of responding to one's reality (i.e., limit-situations) and engagement with practical knowledge (Dewey, 1937, 2004; Freire, 2000, 2011). Similarly, the strong agreement in consensus that problem-solving skills should be a mandatory component of such training highlights the praxis and pragmatic elements of effective adult learning.

Listening to panelist 5:

*I would say that in my experience there's been training, but it hasn't been any different than any other board member, for it to be different it might actually be*

*discriminatory. But I can speak to the fact that we have had, well one of the boards that I'm involved with, we have a tripartite board that requires equal representation from the low-income sector. And what we've had mainly is persons who are not necessarily low-income, but represent low-income institutions and entities. However, we also have been fortunate enough to have a few low-income people actually representing agencies that serve low-income people. They themselves are still low-income by that definition. . .But as far as training is concerned, I don't see any difference in the training of members, period. Maybe, I don't know how you do this, but part of the training without... you don't want to single an entity out, by saying, "We need to take time to train you how to treat low-income people"... you probably wouldn't do that, it would defeat your purpose. I suppose that what probably needs to happen, there probably needs to be an intentional intent to actually include in the training issues that would be germane or important to low-income people. (File: RD 2 - Training 1172021)*

Panelist 4 provided a more skeptical note:

I think board education often is lacking across the board. For some organizations, it is hard to get board members that truly represent the diversity (racial, economic and skills) and so they go with people's willingness to just show up. So, often someone who might not have the means to financially contribute [to] the board feels left out or sort of hesitant to contribute to the discussions. The board member that seems to have financial means and professional experience tends to dominate. Board education needs to include ways to make sure all members are valued. (File: RD 2 - Methods 1172021)

**Moderate Consensus.** There are eight variables ranking *moderate consensus in agreement*, and two variables showing *moderate consensus in disagreement*. Key findings that acquired *moderate consensus in agreement* include:

- Training (Factor B): *“There should be opportunities for low-income persons who serve on a board to be trained so that they can be actively involved in board meetings.”* As noted above, it seems that the experts acknowledged a need for specialized training for low-income persons to assist in their active engagement on a board yet preferred more universal training on the needs of low-income persons.
- Training (Factor B): *“Training for board members should help them with their skills to live in a democracy (like different ways of including others in board decision-making).”* This aspect of training for democratic practices emerged from the Round One narratives. This finding highlight that the experts point to Deweyan and Freirean constructs of the practice of democracy, institutions, and adult learning (Dewey, 1937, 2004; Freire, 2000, 2011).
- Recruitment and availability of low-income persons (Factor C): *“There are low-income persons in the community who are willing and able to serve on community boards.”* The panelists recognized that low-income persons living in the community remain willing and able to serve on the boards of directors of these organizations if asked.
- Practices, Diffusion, and Urgency (Factor E): *“Today more than ever, it is important that low-income persons be included in the boards of*

*community agencies.*” This finding relates to a previous statement in strong agreement about the need for low-income involvement. Yet, the wording about its urgency today mutes its level of consensus to the moderate level.

- Practices, Diffusion, and Urgency (Factor E): “*We need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies.*” From a list of forced choices, the panelists selected their opinion about the urgency of low-income persons serving on the boards of directors. There is *moderate consensus in agreement* that there remains such a need to include more low-income voices.
- Forces regarding regulatory requirements (Factor F): “*A person can both be low-income and have professional skills in order to serve on a community agency board.*” The panelists agreed that one’s income does not determine one’s professional abilities or talents. Even though market or regulatory forces may impress upon boards the need for professional skill sets for board service, this does not preclude the inclusion of low-income persons. This provides some insight into the mimetic, normative, or coercive institutional isomorphic forces that encourage certain types of board members, in that professional skills and income status need not be mutually exclusive.
- Forces regarding regulatory requirements (Factor F): “*If an agency receives government funding to serve low-income persons, then they should be required to have a low-income person serve on their board.*”



This position is somewhat in conflict with an earlier *strong consensus in agreement* that the panelists held that low-income persons should serve, but it should not be required. It seems that when an agency obtains public monies, some requirements should occur. This continues the nuanced positioning of the panelists regarding requirements versus recommendations.

- Forces regarding regulatory requirements (Factor F): “*It is important today that community agencies require at least one low-income person on their board.*” Again, this consensus opinion by the experts seems in nuanced opposition to an earlier *strong consensus in agreement* that the panelists held that low-income persons should serve, but it should not be required, as well as a *moderate agreement* pertaining to governmental funding as reported above.

There are two statements wherein the panelists concurred with a *moderate consensus in disagreement*. These findings include:

- Structural Inclusion (Factor A): “*There are enough low-income persons already serving on community agency boards and nothing more is needed.*” The panelists disagree that there are enough low-income persons already structurally included on boards, furthering their opinion that low-income persons need to be involved.
- Recruitment and availability of low-income persons (Factor C): “*It would be very inconvenient to always find low-income persons to serve on these boards.*” The panelists concurred that such inconvenience in recruiting

and engaging low-income individuals to serve on these boards of directors does not exist. As confirmed above in a differently worded question that obtained *moderate consensus in agreement*, such persons are available.

**Majority Consensus.** Those opinions in *majority consensus of agreement* include:

- Structural inclusion (Factor A): *“A person who him/herself is not low-income can represent the low-income voice on a board of directors.”* This opinion parallels the variable found in *majority disagreement* below related to the role of representatives other than a low-income person. The issue of others representing the low-income voice remains a nuanced position regarding who can speak for low-income persons and their required or recommended inclusion.
- Structural inclusion (Factor A): *A low-income person ought to be required to serve on the board of an agency that serves low-income persons.* This seems at some variance with other statements regarding the requirement of low-income involvement.
- Structural inclusion (Factor A): *A low-income person ought to be required to serve on the board of an agency that receives government assistance to serve low-income persons.* This also seems at some variance with other statements regarding the requirement of low-income involvement.
- Structural inclusion (Factor A): The highest-ranked opinion from the forced choices was *“Require that a low-income person serves on the board.”* This seems to be in keeping with the general nuance that low-

income persons should be involved on boards but are not necessarily required. Again, this position only garnered a simple *majority consensus in agreement*, while the second-highest ranked opinion regards voluntary engagement.

- Training (Factor B): *Training for board members should provide them with the skills needed to run an organization.* Along with problem-solving and democratic practices and skills, the experts share some agreement that board members need training in operations.
- Recruitment and availability of low-income persons (Factor C): *Low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit.* Concerns had been raised in Round One about the possible abuse by low-income persons if they should be included on a board of directors. The panelists hold a majority consensus that such abuse does not occur.
- Disempowerment and Tokenism (Factor D): *Board members do not consider asking low-income persons to serve on boards since they do not know many low-income persons to ask.* Panelists acknowledged that disempowerment relates to one's social networks and engagement of currently serving board members with the low-income community. Social networking can be a means of disenfranchisement.
- Disempowerment and Tokenism (Factor D): *Most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (such as race, gender, orientation) than in a person's income status (low-income) when they ask them to serve on their boards.* The panelists acknowledge the shifts from

the inclusion of low-income persons to other issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEI&B) as a form of disengagement.

- Practices, Diffusion, and Urgency (Factor E): *Board members tend to seek other persons who they know to serve on the board.* Related to Factor D above pertaining to social networks, this expert opinion confirms this question related to the diffusion of ideas and practices that may include or exclude persons who are low-income from serving on boards of directors. Having broad or narrow social networks matter.
- Practices, Diffusion, and Urgency (Factor E): *Board members tend to seek other persons who are well-known (“connected”) in the community to serve on their boards.* This expert opinion acknowledges that there may be pressures to recruit and obtain certain types of persons to serve on these agency boards that might exclude low-income individuals. However, wealth and connectedness are not mutually exclusive.
- Practices, Diffusion, and Urgency (Factor E): *The best way to represent low-income people on an agency board that serves such persons is to require that a low-income person serves on that board.* Again, this is in variance with the panelists' general opinions about the importance of such representation but not its requirement. The panelists' nuanced position about necessary engagement and requirements remains a constant nuanced opinion.
- Forces regarding regulatory requirements (Factor F): *“There are many informal rules and ideas for community service boards to follow the*

*example of others in having well-connected, professional, and high-income persons serve on their boards.*” This opinion shared by the panelists demonstrates that there are rules, conscious or not, that a certain type of person is the ideal candidate for a position on the board, which might in fact exclude low-income persons. This provides some insights into institutional isomorphism’s mimetic, normative, and coercive forces at work that experts would acknowledge such informal rules and ideas regarding who should serve on a board.

Those variables in *majority consensus in disagreement* include:

- Structural inclusion (Factor A): *The only way the concerns of low-income persons can be represented on a board of a community organization is when a low-income person herself or himself serves on that board.* This position seems in keeping with the *majority consensus in agreement* with other opinions, and it remains an aspect of the nuanced opinion regarding required versus recommended inclusion.
- Disempowerment and Tokenism (Factor D): *Most boards invite low-income persons to participate on their boards but do not really “listen” to their concerns.* This expert opinion acknowledges that there seems to be a practice from their experience that low-income persons are in fact listened to and given similar respect as others in the decision-making process.
- Practices, Diffusion, and Urgency (Factor E): *Boards all have the same type of person serving. They all look alike,* thus appearing to the panelists

that there is a limited level of institutional isomorphism. This is an area that needs to be further explored.

- Forces regarding regulatory requirements (Factor F): *There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other which usually means that low-income persons are excluded from the board.* Related to the previous opinion, these panelists seem to acknowledge a limited level of institutional isomorphism that needs to be further explored.

Table 107 provides a summation, by factor and level of consensus (both agree and disagree), of the expert panelists in Round Three.

**Table 107**

*Position Statements by Panelists of Strong, Moderate, and Majority Consensus (both Agree and Disagree) by Factor, Based on Research Questions*

Factors	Strong Consensus	Moderate Consensus	Majority Consensus
Factor A - Structural Inclusion	Agree: “It is important to have a low-income person on a community agency board even though there might not be a requirement to do so.”	Disagree: “There are enough low-income persons already serving on community agency boards and nothing more is needed.”	Agree: “A person who him/herself is not low-income can represent the low-income voice on a board of directors.”  Agree: A low-income person ought to be required to serve on the board of an agency that serves low-income persons.  Agree: A low-income person ought to be required to serve on the board of an agency that receives government assistance.  Agree:” Require that a low-income person serves on the board.”  Disagree: “The only way the concerns of low-income persons can be represented on a board of a community organization is when a low-income person herself or himself serves on that board.”

Factor B -  
Training

Agree: “All persons serving on a board of a community organization that serves low-income people must be trained on the special needs of low-income persons.”

Agree: “Training for board members should help them with their skills in problem-solving.”

Agree: “There should be opportunities for low-income persons who serve on a board to be trained so that they can be actively involved in board meetings.”

Agree: “Training for board members should help them with their skills to live in a democracy (like different ways of including others in board decision-making).”

Agree: “Training for board members should provide them with the skills needed to run an organization.”

Factor C -  
Recruitment and  
availability  
of low-  
income  
persons  
(added  
after  
Round  
One)

and

Factor D -  
Disempowerment and  
Tokenism

Factor C:

Agree: “There are low-income persons in the community who are willing and able to serve on community boards.

Disagree: “It would be very inconvenient to always find low-income persons to serve on these boards.”

Factor C:

Agree: “Low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit.”

Factor D:

Agree: “Board members do not consider asking low-income persons to serve on boards since they do not know many low-income persons to ask.”

Agree: “Most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (such as race, gender, orientation) than in a person’s income status (low-income) when they ask them to serve on their boards.”

Disagree: “Most boards invite low-income persons to participate on their boards but do not really “listen” to their concerns.”



Factor E -  
Practices,  
Diffusion,  
and  
Urgency

Disagree: “Times are different. It is no longer important that low-income persons serve on an agency board.”

Agree: “Today more than ever it is important that low-income persons be included in the boards of community agencies.”

Agree: “We need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies.”

Agree: “Board members tend to seek other persons who they know to serve on the board.”

Agree: “Board members tend to seek other persons who are well-known (“connected”) in the community to serve on their boards.”

Agree: “The best way to represent low-income people on an agency board that serves such persons is to require that a low-income person serves on that board.”

Disagree: “Boards all have the same type of person serving. They all look alike.”

Factor F -  
Forces  
regarding  
regulatory  
requiremen  
ts

Agree: “A person can both be low-income and have professional skills in order to serve on a community agency board.”

Agree: “There are many informal rules and ideas for community service boards to follow the example of others in having well-connected, professional, and high-income persons serve on their boards.”

Agree: “If an agency receives governmental funding to serve low-income persons, then they should be required to have a low-income person serve on their board.”

Disagree: “There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other which usually means that low-income persons are excluded from the board.”

Agree: “It is important today that community agencies require at least one low-income person on their board.”

## **Relationship with Previous Research**

The literature review in Chapter Two disclosed the current state of research in various areas such as:

- operative governance theories, values, and practices
- the non-profit community development/service organizational sector with a special focus on the history of MFP and disenfranchisement
- the theoretical constructs of innovation diffusion and organizational adaptation
- an analysis of operative constructs pertaining to technical knowledge due to privatization and marketization ideologies and operative theories
- a brief analysis of the nature and inclusion of voices in decision making.

The chapter identified various generative themes and limit-situations gleaned from the literature review that informed this study.

This research project adds various insights to the literature so that the voice of low-income persons will not be absent from the non-profit governance and social welfare literature. In general, there is little evidence of concern in the non-profit governance literature (Middleton, 1987; Powell, 1987; Powell and Steinberg, 2006) that deals directly with the overall question of whether low-income persons should be structurally included on community agency boards of directors. Even the literature regarding diversity and inclusion continues to side-step issues of income status (Farred, 2000; Levey, 2020). Since major shifts have occurred in social welfare policy from the heyday of the War on Poverty and its insistence on MFP, little research or concern focuses on this specific topic (Alcock, 2005; Anderson, 1967; Arnstein, 1972; Beito, 2000; Bell & Wray, 2004;

Bloomberg & Rosenstock, 1968; Boone, 1972; Brieland, 1971; Camacho, 1980; Cazenave, 2007; Davidson, 1969; Fessler, 1970; Gillette, 2010; Gittell, 1977; Kelly, 1977; Kornbluh, 2007; Kramer, 1969; Kravitz, 1969; Landsberger, 1972; LaRochelle, 2016, 2019; Levitan, 1967, 1969; Marris & Rein, 1982; Melish, 2010; Mildred, 1994; Moynihan, 1969; Naples, 1998a, 1998b; Nemon, 2007; O'Connor, 2009; Rosenthal, 2018; Rubin, 1969; Schmitt, 2012; Schryer, 2018; Strange, 1972; Sundquist, 1969; Wofford, 1969; Yarmolinsky, 1969; Zarefsky, 1977).

One key contribution from this research project is the addition of utilizing the Delphi method. Few studies have engaged low-income persons and board members directly about their own experience in serving on a board of directors of a social welfare agency (Geiger, 2005; Ostrower & Stone, 2006; Rubin, 1969). The Delphi process engaged expert board members regarding their opinions about the nature of an urgency, or *punctuated equilibrium* (Baumgartner et al., 2014; Jones & Baumgartner, 2012; Harvey, 2020) or *Overton window of political possibility* (Putnam, 2020; Skocpol, 2013; Szałek, 2013), in policy formation to judge an opening for a new focus on MFP of low-income persons on boards. The results found a strong consensus in agreement that low-income persons need to be engaged, but the experts maintained a nuanced opinion regarding a requirement over a recommendation for inclusion. Further, this study added to the literature regarding new governance and new accountability movements (Liebman & Sabel, 2003; Melish 2010) as experienced in both education and social welfare movements. There seems to be a consensus that MFP is an important and urgent aspect of proper governance and appropriate accountability. Still, the requirement for such direct

inclusion of low-income persons on boards of directors remains nuanced. There seems to be normative and mimetic but not coercive urgency.

This research provides some insights into the literature related to mainstream non-profit organizational formation programs for board members (Batts, 2011; Carver & Carver, 1996, 2001, 2011; Duca, 1996; Green & Griesinger, 1996; Knowles et al. 2005; Pigg, 2002; Wean 2020). First, based on Round Two analysis, few experts could name community-based board training programs; in Round Three, the expert panelists noted their own internal board training programs. There seems to be a dearth of appropriate training opportunities. Second, it seems from various consensus statements found in this research that board training, where and when available, remains steeped in basic fiduciary responsibilities; however, the panelists recognized that even that was inadequate and requested more training in operations and problem-solving. Third, panelists concurred that training should focus on helping all board members better understand the needs of low-income communities. Fourth, they recognized the importance of training in democratic practices. Fifth, the panelists noted that special training ought to be offered for low-income persons to help them be actively engaged in corporate governance. The recognition by these panelists of training in problem-solving and democratic processes adds to the Deweyan and Freirean literature (Betz, 1992; Dewey, 1937, 2004; Freire, 2000, 2011; Giroux, 2020; Irwin, 2012) confirming the recognition of the need for proper adult andragogy rooted in pragmatism and democratic practices. The actual Delphi process itself, with these selected experts, adds to the Deweyan and Freirean literature by allowing practitioners to engage in reflective thinking that helps “face the situation” (Irwin, 2012). This process also allows experts to engage in the articulation in an iterative

form of dialogue to garner generative themes and limit-situations, while including those most impacted to practice and experiment in democratic endeavors in that “all those who are affected by social institutions must have a share in producing and managing them” as Dewey noted (Dewey, 1937, p. 401). The very act of participating in the Delphi process required the panelists to face their own situations and imagine ways of improving their work by self-reflecting on the role of low-income persons on their corporate boards as a constitutive element of the democratic practice.

Much of the literature reviewed reveals that after the heyday of the early years of the War on Poverty with policymakers’ insistence on MFP, a general backlash against such requirements prevailed (Alcock, 2005; Arnstein, 1972; Melish, 2010; Moynihan, 1969; Naples, 1998a, 1998b; Rubin, 1969; Schryer, 2018). This research provides a nuanced consensus agreement by the panelists that low-income persons ought to be involved in corporate governance but did not go as far as to require inclusion. This finding of a nuanced position on that requirement provides insights into the changes that boards may undergo after certain funding sources end their support to these organizations. For example, both ACTION and CW/CWRLF Loan Fund received monies from the CCHD which required a clear majority of at least 51% low-income persons on governance boards. Originally, the MYCAP was directly engaged in the MFP federally-funded process. Only one group, the YNDC, did not experience this policy demand as part of their funding or founding. This change from a clear commitment to a consensus of agreement that low-income persons should be included but not required to serve on boards adds to the literature on how boards or institutions may morph over time or be

influenced by other forms of mimetic, normative, or coercive institutional isomorphism (Abzug & Simonoff, 2019; Castillo, 2018; DiMaggio & Powell, 1989).

Another finding from this research that adds to the literature related to institutional isomorphism and is connected to voice relates to the agreement of the experts in this study that persons who are not low-income can represent low-income voices on these boards (Castillo, 2018; Gilligan, 1983; Khazei, 2011; McDowell, 2015; Rome et al., 2010; Smith, 1997). This willingness to accept representative voices rather than direct voices of those who are low-income raises an issue about the nature of engaging the voices of those most impacted by organizational decisions (Dovi, 2003, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Law, 2013; Mansbridge, 1999; Morone, 1998; Morone & Kilbreth, 2003; Riger, 1993; Wright, 2011) and adds to the literature on participant-observers serving in such a role as represented in this research (Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014).

The literature review found that marketization and privatization ideologies (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Dean, 2012; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Smith & Stone, 1988; Stoecker, 2008, 2013) can find roots in social welfare sector practices and structures accrued from shared social networks. Additionally, influences from institutional isomorphism increase pressures to professionalize and adopt private market paradigms and practices. This forces many community development and service organizations' staff and boards to recruit board members with technical skills and social connections for governance (Abzug & Simonoff, 2019; Castillo, 2018; DiMaggio & Powell, 1989). Much of the literature regarding the functioning of boards highlights these professional skills as a requirement for due diligence and other strategic functions of the board (Frisch & Servon, 2006; Silverman, 2009). The skills needed to ensure compliance with public

regulations, like Sarbanes-Oxley, and remain savvy with private financial arrangements favor persons with those attributes. This research's contribution to the literature on institutional isomorphism (Abzug & Simonoff, 2019; Castillo, 2018; DiMaggio & Powell, 1989) includes the expert panelists' consensus opinions that low-income persons can certainly be limited in income, but they can still be socially connected and share their professional skills. This resists some of the mimetic, normative, or even coercive forces of various public and private funding sources that promote the need for boards to engage more technically adept professionals, wealthy, and socially connected persons to govern such community organizations. An insight from the panelists includes that it might be that current board members, who mostly earn above the poverty line, may not know low-income persons to recruit and engage on these boards, rather than succumbing to the forces dictating what types of persons should be on boards of directors. The literature review noted the intentionality required to reach out to engage those who have been disenfranchised, which involves a level of disruptive action (Hardina, 2003; 2005; 2006; 2011; Hardina & Malott, 1997).

One must reach beyond one's own social networks (Borgatti et al., 2013; Granovetter, 1973, 1982, 1983; Lubbers et al., 2020; Mahajan & Peterson, 1985; Safford, 2009; Valente, 1995) and prevailing paradigms of delivering board members for governance to engage the margins (Romano, 2019) This reaching out to the margins, in turn, could influence the expansion or creation of new social networks, or even hubs (Kadushin, 2012), and provide new insights for another round of institutional isomorphism. The panelists in this research noted that it might be true that current board members may not know low-income persons, thus missing an opportunity to recruit and



engage such persons; yet, the panelists also agree that there are low-income persons who are willing and able to serve if they were asked. Boards do not have enough low-income persons serving at this time, and panelists agree that more engagement is needed. In other words, the panelists noted that perfectly willing and able low-income persons are available to serve on these boards, and with some intentionality, these persons could be formed and engaged in board governance.

The experts agreed in this research that tokenism needs to be a conscious concern for boards, but in general, these community boards have successfully engaged low-income persons on their boards of directors (Hardina, 2006, 2011, 2014; Romano, 2019). This adds to the literature regarding tokenism and disenfranchisement in that there is no obstacle, according to these experts, to find, recruit, train, and engage low-income persons to serve on boards while making them feel comfortable and heard. It can be done and done well.

Another theme in the literature focused on decoupling the locality and regionality of community organizations formed to serve certain distressed neighborhoods and a larger geographic region to increase efficiencies, thus requiring more professionalization of board members (Guo, 2007; Silverman, 2005, 2009). The experts in this research project were not able to find a minimum level of consensus regarding that decoupling, thus requiring more research in this area of concern.

The War on Poverty identified persons who resided in low-income census tracts and who made less than the poverty income threshold as the focus of engagement on community agencies' boards of directors. Over time, that focus shifted away from preferencing low-income persons from low-wealth communities to persons of a specific

race or ethnicity, gender, and/or sexual orientation. In the literature review, board composition analysis focused on the inclusion and representation of persons of color, their gender, orientation, and age, while few noted the importance or specificity of persons of low-wealth economic status (Brown-Dean, 2019; Farred, 2000; Levey, 2020). The expert panelists noted this shift but remained committed to ensuring that low-income individuals ought to be involved, but not required, to serve. This insight adds to the general identity politics and DEI&B literature. Income still matters as an aspect of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (Brown-Dean, 2019; Farred, 2000; Levey, 2020).

### **Limitations of this Research**

The Delphi method provided a means of engaging a panel of experts who actively serve on boards of directors of community organizations. The process attempted to elicit 21 experts in the local field of community service agencies, as the literature concurs that a panel of 15-20 provides proper insights. This research secured 15 persons in total, with 14 consistent participants in all three rounds. Though the minimum based on the literature did participate, the plan was to secure a few more participants (Ludwig, 1997, p. 2). Of note, however, is that the panelists were selected through a random selection process from a field of 71 possible board members, excluding this participant-observer. This random selection provided protection against researcher bias and lack of diversity. Further, to mitigate against any research bias, this research project utilized a third-party researcher as the implementer of the survey and provided opportunities for panelists to contact her for an oral interview and assistance with the surveys. This element added to the level of trust by the panelists and mitigated any real or perceived power differentials.

Since 15 participants engaged in Round Two and Round Three surveys utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, this number of cases provided some limitations to statistical analysis using SPSS. However, the most appropriate statistical tools for scales and low numbers of participants were used. Statistical analysis could be more robust with a larger sample. The goal of utilizing the Delphi method was not to garner a larger sample size of board members but to engage a group of experts to reflect over three rounds to develop consensus on policy or normative options and/or opinions. Thus, the statistical analysis provided insights from Rounds Two and Three to the qualitative analysis and noted any statistical differences if present. The results demonstrated that there were specific positions that generated statistically significant differences which provide fodder for future research.

Another limitation relates to the chosen local field of study. This study utilized the board members as the field of participants selected from five community service or community development organizations in one city, Youngstown, Ohio. This city is well-known and provided a level of trust for the experts to engage in the Delphi process. A case study, of course, provides limited insight into a complex issue (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Engaging panelists from one city, even though the participants did not know who else was a participating expert, allowed the richness of the tensions and issues in a local community to come to light without groupthink or positional power relations being obstacles. A perspective from one community emerged in this case study, which can help inform future studies and continue the literature trend related to MFP (Alcock, 2005; Arnstein, 1972; Cazenave, 2007; Melish, 2010; Naples, 1998a, 1998b; Schryer, 2018) that focused on specific communities.

Another limitation of this study is related to the development of the various factors and themes derived from the literature and from Round One of the Delphi process. Of course, other scholars may have established an alternative organization of the factors and themes, yet this was the first time that such factors and themes had been organized and tested; others can clarify, re-order, and add more in future research. Another limitation relates to the actual qualitative coding from the Round One narrative analysis and other comments derived from Round Two and Round Three. Others may have coded differently or offered different structured or emergent codes. Hopefully, other scholars in the future will continue this line of research and provide clearer codes.

### **Problems Arising During This Research**

Several issues arose during this research process. One issue relates to engaging the expert panelists that were randomly selected from a list of 71 possible board members derived from the five corporations involved in this case study. Several attempts were made to elicit their engagement, with some rejections, until finally 21 agreed to participate. Ultimately, two persons formally withdrew for health reasons during Round One, while four persons withdrew informally by not participating after several contacts and requests to participate.

Another issue emerged regarding participation among the 21 participants who agreed to be experts in the Delphi process. After multiple attempts through emails and phone calls, only 14 of the 21 experts participated in Round One. After multiple attempts through emails and phone calls, 14 with one person different from Round One, participated in Round Two. After multiple attempts through emails and phone calls, 14 persons participated in Round Three. One person participated in Round Two, not in

Round Three, and one engaged in Round Three but not in Round Two. The 15 persons who participated provided fully-filled-out surveys and provided dense commentaries. A further concern that arose during this process pertains to the nature of coding quantitative data utilizing a specific software tool. NVivo provided much ease of use and analytic power. Every tool has its own limitations for coding, and others may have selected other tools. Coding itself, both using structured codes and identifying emergent codes, is an act of interpretation, and other researchers may have done it otherwise, especially when assigning multiple codes to specific narratives. Throughout the coding process, the discipline of coding and cross-coding was used to garner the fullest interpretation possible.

### **Implications of Findings**

Several implications derive from this research project utilizing the Delphi method. First, this study reveals a policy recommendation that low-income persons should be included on community agencies' boards of directors. Still, the experts in this study retain a more nuanced position of recommending over the requiring of such inclusion. The current panelists' hesitancy of a policy position for a federal mandate regarding the structural inclusion of low-income persons on boards of agencies funded to provide services to them echoes back to the struggles of the late 1960s when the MFP requirement appeared then quickly ended after heated debates (Camacho, 1980, Cazenave, 2007; LaRochelle, 2016, 2019).

Second, the energies around the new governance and the new accountability movements may exist per the literature review. Still, these experts do not concur that there is an immediate urgency to require low-income persons on corporate boards

determining the allocation of public funds, and other philanthropic monies aimed to serve low-income communities. The panelists find consensus that low-income persons are available and capable of serving on boards. There is not an overwhelming number of low-income individuals already serving in that capacity. The nexus of the new accountability and new governance movements requiring the structural inclusion of low-income persons on boards of directors has not yet bubbled to the top of their demands, at least in this case study. The panelists' insistence on some level of inclusion of low-income individuals provides some nascent glimmer into the policy recommendations emerging from these two movements, yet no immediate moment of *punctuated equilibrium* or an *Overton window* for a policy change seems imminent. However, the debates about diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging may require a new way of thinking about the inclusion of low-income persons.

Third, the panelists' hesitancy against a requirement poses another implication on the normative level. Since the panelists concur that it is legitimate, but not required, to include low-income voices on federally funded-organizations, other community organizations could, in fact, perceive that they too should not be required to structurally include the low-income voice. Through the diffusion of ideas and practices, aspects of mimetic and normative institutional isomorphism curbed earlier enthusiasm about the structural inclusion of low-income persons by other like-minded anti-poverty agencies though not formally required through earlier federal policies (Camacho, 1980; Cazenave, 2007; LaRochelle, 2016, 2019). Private non-profits funded by private monies, like the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, in this study had an earlier requirement of low-income inclusion, but once that funding ended, the low-income inclusive

requirement seemed to lapse. Isomorphic pressures may exist, whether consciously or not.

Fourth, the panelists' consensus about representative voice rather than a direct inclusion of a low-income person offers another implication. Some community-based agencies attempted various means to include low-income persons in their governance structures, but perhaps other issues and representative voices took priority. At best, community agencies sought representative voices of low-income persons through proxies with the basics of inclusion as recommended, not required. This has an impact on the ongoing corporate governance of community agencies that are designed and funded to provide these services to low-income communities without a requirement to structurally include them in decision-making. In other words, a representative voice suffices for corporate governance.

This raises an insight for the current DEI&B literature in that it might be acceptable for a proxy voice to represent ethnic and racial groups, or persons who are members of the LBGTQ+ community, or larger geographic regions. Thus, a fifth implication regards current debates about board policies and practices concerning DEI&B. Can someone just represent these other voices? Can a straight white higher income cis male represent aspects of those other voices? If so, then there appears to be no problem. However, if not true, then how can a white straight higher income male who works for an anti-poverty agency legitimately represent a low-income person? This represents the case of this researcher's own *participant as observer* (Gold, 1958; Moore & Savage, 2002; Takyi, 2015) role on several boards.

A sixth implication from this research pertains to board training and formation. During Round Two of the Delphi process, only a few panelists could name a training program for boards that they relied on, participated in, or were available to the public. Panelists recognized that their organization had some levels of training for their own board members. One implication from this finding is that training programs need to be developed and offered in communities to form low-income persons and others to be active and effective board members. A second implication related to training recognizes the panelists' strong consensus that all board members need to be trained on the needs of low-income persons, families, and communities. A third implication also recognizes the need for training that helps board members engage in problem-solving and democratic practices of decision-making. As reviewed in the literature section, board training manuals, as used by many organizations, really do not seem to offer much in these above stated topics (BoardSource, 2009, 2011, 2021; Carver & Carver, 1996, 2001, 2011). This research provides fodder for newly developed materials, hopefully with more sensitivity to low-income needs and democratic practices desired by Dewey (1937, 2004) and Freire (2000, 2011).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

One area for future research relates to the power or limitation of a localized case study. Another Delphi method study could be used, but it should enlarge the database of community service agencies either in a region, state, or at the national level. This would allow for a larger cross section of expert panelists or other leaders to share their opinions found in this research pertaining to the opportunities or barriers to the structural inclusion of low-income persons on boards of directors. The consensus agreement statements found



in this research could be tested on a grandeur scale to discover if these local panelists in Youngstown, Ohio provided the norm through their nuanced opinions about these matters, or if other patterns emerge.

Another area for further research concerns the exploration, in more detail, of differences between groups or demographics found in some of the consensus statements. For example, this case study revealed statistically significant differences between groups for some statements. For instance, even the *moderate consensus in agreement* found in the statement “*Today more than ever it is important that low-income persons be included in the boards of community agencies*” revealed statistically significant differences between the genders of the panelists, as well as their roles (i.e., CEO or board member). Several other statements of consensus found other statistically significant differences that could be explored in more depth as to why such differences might exist.

A further area for future research concerns the opinion statements that registered only *weak* or *no apparent* consensus in this research. Seven position statements in this study ranked at a *weak consensus*. Five of these statements tended towards disagreement, two tended towards agreement, and five landed with no apparent agreement at all. Many of these statements were variations of other statements that received higher ranked consensus, but it would be interesting in future research to engage in another round of dialogue with the expert panelists as to their reasoning for their rankings to determine if other nuances emerge.

Another area for future research might include retesting the various factors and themes asserted in this research with another group of experts utilizing the Delphi method. This would provide the opportunity to improve the precision of the questions and

glean changing consensus statements, as well as track any shifts in opinions. If refined by future researchers, these factors and themes may help future scholars deepen the general and specific literatures of boards and governance, especially regarding opportunities and obstacles for inclusion of marginalized voices.

Future studies might include more questions that delve deeper into the concept of mimetic, normative, and coercive institutional isomorphism. This research showed that mimetic, normative, and coercive forces may influence how community boards practice board governance, especially as it pertains to low-income involvement. The area of how boards can be influenced by other boards or related private market forces in other fields deserves more attention, though this research provided some analysis related to this issue.

Research in the future may consider exploring how existing board training and formation programs develop and implement their curriculum especially related to their andragogical underpinnings. Effective and appropriate adult educational processes must be intentionally incorporated in board training. Research could also be conducted on how various Deweyan and Freirean aspects of pragmatism and democracy form board members for corporate decision-making. The actual discovery of accessible board training programs in localities, states, and nationally as a database for sharing would provide useful information.

Through the Delphi method, it might be a fascinating study to explore how persons serving on community service or development boards perceive their work as improving problem-solving skills and encouraging the practice of democracy itself. These two areas of concern for the experts would provide an opportunity to explore how they, or others, perceive the nature and elements of problem problem-solving and

democratic practices in decision-making. A related question concerns the future study of how the service as a board member on a community agency, or any non-profit organization, trains persons to be engaged in democratic decision making and problem-solving skills. Additionally, exploring how those skills get transferred to work in other organizations and sectors, including the political and economic sphere that directly impacts anti-poverty work, could provide useful information.

Another area for future research might include a study on how, and to what extent, board training programs exist, or could be developed, to help all board members of community organizations that serve low-income communities to better understand the needs and assets of low-income persons themselves. This concern about proper training on the needs of persons who are low-income ranked in *strong consensus in agreement* and seemed to suggest that none existed, but there is a need for it to be developed.

Another area of future research pertains to the extent on how the new governance and the new accountability movements incorporate the need or urgency for low-income persons to be structurally included in corporate governance. A more intensive Delphi study with experts in those movements might be revealing.

A future research project may include a more extensive social network analysis of the leaders of a community and how one person or one organization could influence the practices and policies of a sector of organizations and leaders. This research project found that one person and one organization clearly acted as major hubs, yet this study did not probe more deeply into how those hubs work or influence practices and policies between and among persons and institutions. This area is ripe for future analysis.

The utilization of a Q-Sort method might prove valuable in a future study of a similar expert panel or a focused group of chief executive officers or board members only. Such a study could be used to investigate the panelists' subjectivity on their held viewpoints either over time or between different groups (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

Future research projects might involve a Delphi method engaging only low-income persons who serve on boards to acquire their understanding of the topics and issues raised in this research and to further develop the factors and themes utilized here. Such an engagement of only low-income persons might shed light on the various incentives and obstacles to the structural inclusion of low-income individuals on governance boards.

### **Researcher's Contribution to Research**

One major contribution of this study to current research on non-profit boards and their governance pertains to the development of six factors and 15 themes that analyze opportunities for, and obstacles to, the structural inclusion of low-income persons on the boards of directors of those agencies created to serve them and their communities. These factors and themes provide a framework for analysis for future research on how to understand the nature of inclusion on boards of directors. Another related contribution pertains to creating a tool to measure consensus levels from strong, moderate, majority, weak, and no apparent consensus. This ranking scale provides a means to test future consensus statements by experts to track changes over time and in intensity.

The Delphi method of expert board members found some nuance in the policy position of whether low-income persons should be required or recommended to serve on the governance boards of those agencies designed to serve their needs. This research of

directly listening and engaging experts on a panel of members serving on those boards contributed to the general literature on governance. Additionally, it related to the specific literature on the fate of MFP as articulated during the War on Poverty's federal policy debates and through other funding mechanisms. This research further contributed to the analysis of new governance and new accountability movements, as income status as a fundamental requirement for legitimacy in governance decision-making has not yet arrived at a *punctuated equilibrium* or *Overton window* moment requiring urgent policy changes in corporate governance in the social welfare sector. A time may come again for such an opening, like the War on Poverty's fixation on MFP, but that is not quite today, at least for these experts engaged in this Delphi process.

Few researchers, in this light, are focused on income status as a major element of the growing DEI&B literature. The nature of representative voice, wherein the expert panelists in this research project found consensus that it was acceptable for those other than low-income themselves to be representative of that community, sheds some light on the very nature of diverse voices with other categories. If it is acceptable, according to these expert practitioners, to have a representative of the low-income perspective, then maybe other voices can find solace in having others represent them. This insight may prove problematic for other DEI&B advocates. If that is the case, then income status as a research topic may again rise to the forefront as it had been during the early days of War on Poverty and the work of anti-poverty agencies.

The notion of being considered a token and the self-understanding of being a token voice explored in this research contributes to the field of discourse about disenfranchisement and disengagement. The experts involved in this study urge some

caution around tokenism in general and specifically as related to a requirement for low-income persons' involvement on governance boards. However, the experts found that with some training and properly facilitated meetings, such tokenism can be reduced, and there was no real excuse not to find low-income persons to serve on the boards. Low-income persons have skills, knowledge, connections, and insights that can provide leadership for community agencies, but often board members who are not low-income fail to connect with available persons since they are not part of their own networks.

This study also contributed to social network analysis by showing in a case study how one organization and one person can serve as integral hubs, possibly influencing decision making and diffusing policies and practices. Though this research did not measure the actual influence of these two hubs (i.e., a person and an organization), it demonstrates that social network theory can provide insights into community leadership and trends.

Another contribution of this research is exploring the construct and application of institutional isomorphism and its mimetic, normative, and coercive forces on the non-profit sector. The diffusion of ideas, practices, and policies between and among sectors and institutions can have an impact on how organizations are governed and operated. This research showed that some level of institutional isomorphism occurs in the non-profit, social welfare, and anti-poverty sectors, especially related to the structural inclusion of low-income persons in governance.

The random selection of a panel of expert governance practitioners of community agencies aimed at poverty alleviation provides an insight into research aimed at highlighting voices of those most impacted. The Delphi method provided an opportunity

for their voice to be heard and analyzed, without power differentials or group think being a major factor that could occur using other research methods. Additionally, the voices of those most impacted were not lost in a larger survey panel of experts or practitioners. The expert panel process amplified their voice and concerns. The anonymous process available through the Delphi method allows board members, and others, to voice their opinions while developing consensus policy and normative statements that may impact future governance policies and practices.

This project further contributed to the Delphi methodology by analyzing how this very process incorporates proper adult andragogy rooted in Deweyan and Freirean theory. The challenges of facing one's reality, listening to those most impacted, generating themes and limit situations, and seeking pragmatic solutions that promote democratic practices can be found in a proper utilization of the Delphi method incorporating these theoretical constructions in their very application.

Finally, another implication from this research concerns asserting recommendations for organizational practices and policies based on the various statements of consensus. One reason why there are relatively few low-income persons serving on these community boards of directors might be a result of the opinion that board members tend to seek persons who they know. Many of these above poverty level income persons noted that they did not know many low-income persons themselves but believed that low-income persons could engage at the ready. It would be recommended that all persons who serve on these community agency boards expand their social networks to include more low-income people, especially through attempts to listen to their concerns by visiting with low-income individuals and ultimately recruiting them on

their boards. Any board member that provides a representative voice, such as this researcher did for one organization, ought to engage with those on the margin in a more intentional manner to truly listen to the voices of those most impacted. The board member can then play the role of a hub in the social networking of a local community so that the representative voice might connect persons and institutions as effectively as possible. If an expansion of one's social network occurred, along with more intentional engagement with those on the margin, it could disrupt the current tendencies to include like-income situated persons while listening to those most impacted. This might shift the mimetic and normative forces of institutional isomorphism while limiting regulatory coercion. The structural inclusion of low-income persons on a community agency governance board could remain at a recommendation level and not a requirement.

## **Conclusions**

### **Autobiographical Reflection**

There are at least five lessons from this research project that impact me directly and connect back to my stance taken in Chapter One. They are my...

- role as a participant-observer and a representative voice;
- fascination with the concepts of MFP and institutional isomorphism
- role as a leader in anti-poverty work
- interest in adult education and formation through training in governance
- concern about the engagement of the voices of those on the margin and its relationship to democracy



### *Participant-Observer*

As a participant-observer in this case study, since I currently serve on two of the five organizations and had served as an officer of another one of these institutions, it concerned me about my ability to conduct this research. Yet, as the Delphi process developed and a third-party facilitator provided guidance and outreach, I grew comfortable with the arm's length process of engagement. Furthermore, the trust level that occurred between the panelists and me may be a reason for completed surveys and open commentary that other researchers may or may not receive. On the other hand, as a participant-observer, as the discussion and consensus process unfolded, two aspects piqued my interest: what was my opinion about the nuanced position by the panelists about required versus recommended inclusion of low-income persons on governance boards and could a white straight cis-male who was not low-income ever represent low-income voices in decision-making?

As noted, I had served on the MYCAP, or earlier known as the Youngstown Community Action Agency, as that representative voice since I worked for an anti-poverty social welfare organization in the community. I felt that I tried to be faithful to that representation, but somehow understood that I could not possibly know all the obstacles and assets of the low-income community. That service as a representative voice pricked my conscience to be ever vigilant about listening to those on the margin and trying to be an advocate for those I represented, thus informing personal passion for this research project. Pertaining to the nuanced position of required versus recommended, I started this research project with a bias towards a requirement that a low-income person serve on these boards, especially as policies and practices of DEI&B continue to be

refined and diffused. It would seem, based on my pre-judgement, that regardless of the expert panelists selected from these five anti-poverty agencies, there would have been a stronger preference for the policy requirement of such low-income inclusion. Their nuanced positions found in this Delphi study caused me to rethink that we were in fact in a new round of accountability and governance influenced by institutional isomorphic pressures.

### ***Maximum Feasible Participation and Institutional Isomorphism***

As noted in the personal stance section in the introductory chapter, an editor challenged me during the peer review process of my first academic published paper about theology and political economy. That editor asked me to include a section on MFP in that paper to which I drew a blank and remained silent during our discussion. I had no idea what MFP entailed. The editor kindly walked me through that concept and offered suggested readings. That construct found its way into my first publication and has haunted me ever since. This research project is the fruit of that blank and silent moment when I first discovered the concept of MFP and its importance in anti-poverty social policy and practices. This led me to the on-going fascination with institutional isomorphism as a political economic construct to help explain how organizations diffuse practices and policies among and between sectors, tending to normalize how institutions are to look, act, and most importantly for this research, be governed. What I learned in this research project is that both concepts are not well known and are not explored in detail in the non-profit social welfare sector. These concepts will continue to influence my work and research.

### ***Anti-Poverty Leadership***

In that light, as stated above, since I formerly served as an executive leader and corporate governance practitioner of a local anti-poverty agency, and now shifted my labors on the national level, lessons gleaned from this project will influence my advocacy in federal social policy and research agenda. The Delphi method will continue to be utilized by me as I engage other expert panelists in anti-poverty work to increase my listening to the voices of those most impacted by poverty.

### ***Training and Formation for Governance***

In my position as a national leader in an anti-poverty social welfare organization, I have influence over the availability of training and the design of formation programs for board governance. Insights gleaned from this research regarding learning more about the needs of low-income communities, and the request for more training in problem-solving process and democratic decision making, equip me to incorporate these elements into programs. Other critical insights on formation and training, however, grew from delving into this project's analysis of the philosophical insights from John Dewey and Paulo Freire. These two educational theorists have assisted me in better understanding proper adult andragogy and compelled me to incorporate those learnings in the training and formation programs I am currently designing and implementing at the national level.

### ***Engagement of the Voices of Those on the Margin and Its Relationship to Democracy***

As noted above and in the personal stance section, I have been concerned about how organizations and leaders listen to the voices of those most impacted and on the margins. My training from, and leadership of, the local office of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development impressed upon me, as an organizational leader, that those who

are most vulnerable and marginalized deserve the utmost respect. They also warrant a concerted effort to hear directly from them about their needs, wants and aspirations, as well as the opportunity to be part of the solution and organizational implementation of services and more importantly “must have a share in producing and managing them” (Dewey, 1937, p. 401). The Delphi method provided me with a proper analytical process and tool for one such engagement, aiming at developing consensus on best practices and policies. Even more so, the concern about the most marginalized connects back for me as an organizational leader and board governance practitioner myself, to engage in forming persons by utilizing democratic practices and processes. Institutions should be governed by those most impacted, thus engaging persons in the very practice of decision-making influencing how we believe and act for democracy, which was a key concern for both John Dewey and Paulo Freire. My commitment to democratic governance incorporating those most impacted in the decision-making process grows due to this research project.

### ***Listening to Voices***

In conclusion, due to the very nature of this research project which explored expert panelists’ consensus on possible policies and norms on the opportunities and obstacles to the structural inclusion of low-income persons on the governance boards of directors of those agencies established to serve them, it must end by listening to those very voices of the experts who participated in this project:

*I find that low-income persons are willing to serve if they are treated with respect and their voice is heard in meetings. Also, they may serve when there is an understanding that they are not looked down upon if they do not donate money, but they give time to the agency or non-profit. . . Having the low-income person*

*on the board is not critical if there is no one from that community available. Also, there may be a close ally available to give voice to the low-income community. . . Any organization that claims to serve low-income persons should have a close relationship with the low-income community. If they are doing their job, this relationship should induce the organization to include the low-income voice on the board. It need not be law, but should be encouraged by other charitable organizations. The law can be clear, but the intent of the organization is much more important. A consensus of the importance of having a voice for the low-income community on the board is an organization's responsibility. You can force an organization to do this, but if the spirit is not there, having that voice on the board may only happen on paper. (Panelist 3).*

*There are assumptions that money, status, influence etc. weighs more than lived experience or a want to advocate for the community you represent. I have been on boards where it is clear that the members were invited for their professional influence or financial means and such. They seem out of touch with the services or population in the community where the agency delivers services. Then I have been on boards where it is primarily people from the community and issues or opportunities get sidelined because it becomes a town hall session rather than pulling together ideas and next steps. Both boards never seemed to benefit the agency and the agency spent more time accommodating the members or appeasing. Sometimes it's the agency that becomes disempowered because of overcompensating etc. I have seen where people are disempowered with*

*superficial or patronizing gestures by board members --- knowing full well they are asking their input but talk over or dismiss the contribution or minimize it. I have also witnessed where the person is totally ignored or sort of expected to show up but shut up. And where a person has been made invisible or no effort made to reach out or get the information they need, perhaps they prefer email over mailings or don't have a printer to print documents etc. or no one makes themselves available to answer questions. We take a lot for granted and assume everyone has access or can afford access to simple things like WIFI, reliable transportation, etc. Sometimes it's one person tasked with representing all low income people --- rather than inviting several people who with a similar experience of low-income --- so it makes it more welcoming and they are not a token. . . It really gets down to changing perceptions and assumptions of the influencers or dated board policies that somehow equate the ideal member as a white male influential rich make a good board member who has memorized Robert's Rule of Order. . . Why would you want to run a community agency meant to serve the community biased towards those who are not in engaged or experienced with the community it's mission serves? If the community is primarily low income they are impacted by whatever the board decides. If it's a board that is use to being a fundraising board --- needs board education about the true purpose of a board which is to fulfill the mission --- not just hold the annual fundraising activities. It is about relationship building and making sure the mission extends beyond the board room. . . If we want to truly be of service to a mission serving an aspect of a population --- then it is only right to have*

*representation. But not just token representation but to bring people into the conversation an organization is having about the community it serves. . . While just stating that it shouldn't be a requirement placed on low income persons to have to be on a board if they receive services. I think it is a good to require boards to include --- with education on not treating people like tokens --- but that a relationship is built with the community such that the board and community being served by the organization creates a balance so that all decisions are not made from one perspective --- that there is room for diversity in the discourse so that it bumps up the effectiveness of a decision --- because it has truly taken in the mission and who it endeavors to serve. . . It's disheartening to witness and hard to engage a person once they feel they are not heard or feel minimized. It's conflicting to them. I have experienced this as a woman and then as a religious. I have often left a board or an organization because it literally waste of my time to have to play into the power differentials and take time to sit in on meetings only to be patronized and assumed that somehow I represent something that fulfills their obligation. So, to see that done to a person low-income or not --- is frustrating to witness. Value people and their time --- if what they have to say makes no difference to you or you are dismissive of them --- then don't patronize them and keep them on "just because" --- it's rude and dishonest. (Panelist 4)*

*If a low-income person is on a board, then effort must be made to make sure that person is put in a position where they participate in important decision making and not in some sort of—it needs to be meaningful, and there needs to be a way to*

*make sure that that occurs, through committees, and that sometime falls on board chairperson to make sure they look at committee assignments and they make sure they look at—And the other thing is that you need to get to know everybody on your board well enough, and that includes low-income people to know what their strengths, talents, and personality quirks are. It serves you well to know those kinds of things. There are times where I have strategically asked that a person of low-income would rise to the occasion and answer, because I knew them well enough and I knew the situation well enough, that they would say, “Oh. This is mine. I got something I could add to this.” (Panelist 5).*

*A person that lives in the situation tends to understand what the other person of their status is going through. You have to walk a mile in their shoes to understand — you can empathize, but not really know. (Panelist 8)*

*Through conversations with some of the people, and they’re coming onto the board for information, but are afraid or embarrassed even many times in meetings to ask some of the questions that they may have about low-income. . . To me, there are advantages to having them there because then they could give some customer impact in many situations, but I think they become more quiet about decisions and that type of thing, because sometimes they are somewhat embarrassed. Sometimes they have— no one has invited them to be involved in the decision-making of a lot of agencies that they may be involved with. And they come to, many times they come to get on a board of an agency by expressing*



*interest out— say in the church. Many times. And they don't have an understanding of what they are getting themselves into. And I think that so many times, when I sit in rooms at these boards, the reaction to people in the room, the people in the room, even though some of them may work with low-income people, when they come to a board meeting, their way of interacting and expressing things change. . . Many low-income people do not feel comfortable in a room with a bunch of people who have a PhD or Masters of whatever. They may not feel comfortable with them. I probably won't be in a suit if I'm low-income. . . It's nice if there is a low-income person, but there is no need to require it. In your requirement, the person that accepts may not be the best person for that board. . . . Many times low-income people are skeptical. They hear about boards and see names of people of power and finance in the community. Low-income people feel embarrassed. We need to learn how to talk with them, around them, and to them.*

(Panelist 9)

*At times, the board itself, when not involving low income individuals, is only speculating the true needs of the target client. . . It is simply a matter of taking the time to include low income individuals.* (Panelist 12)

*I also have served on boards with inclusion of low-income persons and have found that the input received is invaluable. At times, as with everything in life, the people that utilize programs and services are most often the people that have the most knowledge of what is good and bad with these services. I have not had any*

*experiences regarding formal rules to exclude low-income persons. I have been a part a few boards that had formal rules to include low-income individuals and this was done with no issues. (Panelist 14)*

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## Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Via email or SurveyMonkey  
(2.10.2021)

Informed Consent: Participants 18 years of age and older

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for returning the information regarding your interest in participating in this study.

My name is Brian Corbin, and I am a student at YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY working on a doctorate degree in educational leadership. I am conducting a research study entitled **Can the Poor Have Their Say? Structural Incorporation of Low-income Voices in Corporate Governance**. This research project will analyze perspectives from participants (“experts”) on their experience of inclusion or obstacles to engagement pertaining to service on the board of directors of community service agencies established purposely to serve the interests and needs of low-income persons and communities.

In this letter, I am asking you to return this note after you have read it and acknowledged it, and also return the Qualifications Questionnaire (attached).

Your participation will involve answering open-ended questions and ranking responses through a series of three (3) iterative rounds that will take place through e-mail and via a Survey Monkey platform over the course of several months.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without penalty or loss of benefit to yourself. The results of the research study may be published but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party. In this research, there are no foreseeable risks to you.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, a possible benefit of your participation is to help identify what obstacles and opportunities exist for low-income persons to serve on nonprofit boards. Another benefit may be that as results are shared through publication and consulting by the author, changes to board recruitment and training may be initiated by various nonprofits, as well as suggestions made to policymakers about the need for more inclusion on boards of persons who have been marginalized in the past.

### Appendix A (Continued)

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at 330-565-4232 or e-mail me at [brcorbin@student.ysu.edu](mailto:brcorbin@student.ysu.edu)

As a participant in this study, you should understand the following:

1. You may decline to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without consequences.
2. Your identity will be kept confidential and only the researcher will know the identity of the complete panel of experts.
3. Brian Corbin, the researcher, has thoroughly explained the parameters of the research study and all of your questions and concerns have been addressed.
4. This study will not include any interviews, but a coding process to assure that anonymity of your name is protected.
5. Data will be stored in a secure and locked area. The data will be held for a period of three years, and then destroyed.
6. The research results will be used for publication.

If you have any other questions, you can contact Karen Larwin, PhD at [khlarwin@ysu.edu](mailto:khlarwin@ysu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject, please call the Office of Research Services at YSU at 330.941.2378.

“By signing (selecting YES) this form you acknowledge that you understand the nature of the study, the potential risks to you as a participant, and the means by which your identity will be kept confidential. Your signature on this form also indicates that you are 18 years old or older and that you give your permission to voluntarily serve as a participant in the study described.”

YES NO

Name

Date

Email address

Or

Signature of the interviewee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Qualification Questionnaire

Utilize either email or SurveyMonkey  
(2.10.2021)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for returning your form with your interest in participating in a research study.

My name is Brian Corbin, and I am a student at YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY working on a doctorate degree in educational leadership. I am conducting a research study entitled **Can the Poor Have Their Say? Structural Incorporation of Low-income Voices in Corporate Governance**. This research project will analyze perspectives from participants (“experts”) on their experience of inclusion or obstacles to engagement pertaining to service on the board of directors of community service agencies established purposely to serve the interests and needs of low-income persons and communities.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine your eligibility as an “expert” participant in a Delphi Research study to learn from participants (like you) on their experience of inclusion or obstacles to engagement pertaining to service on the governance boards of community service agencies established purposely to serve the interests and needs of low-income persons and communities.

The process is to gather responses to open-ended questions and develop themes from a panel of experts. Your name has surfaced as a possible participant for the panel of experts. If selected, you will not know the names of the other panel members because as a means to eliminate bias only the researcher knows the identity of the panel. The questions will be sent to you through e-mail to participate in a Survey Monkey process and you will respond by means of the Survey Monkey tool. To be considered as panel participants, individuals must have had some training or a direct involvement or association with various nonprofit boards. The study will consist of three (3) iterative rounds of open-ended questions, with clarifying questions and rankings in various rounds. The questions will be designed to take about 30-45 minutes to respond, and you will be given a four-day window to reply.

To assure quality findings, this research project seeks individuals interested in helping nonprofit leaders and policymakers to understand the obstacles and opportunities for low-income persons who have been excluded to be better prepared and to be recruited to serve on such nonprofit boards.

## Appendix B (Continued)

To be considered as a participant in the research, and that you meet the minimum training or experience involved with nonprofit boards, please describe your experience here:

A. I have (select all that apply):

1. Served on a board of a nonprofit organization
2. Never served on a board of a nonprofit organization
3. Been a member of a program that trains persons to be a member of a board of a nonprofit organization
4. Been a member of a program that trains persons to be community leaders

Please explain more about the items you noted above:

B1. I consider myself to be:

HISPANIC

YES NO

B2. I consider myself to be:

1. African American
2. Asian
3. Caucasian
4. Native American
5. Pacific Islander
6. Prefer not to report

C. Which of these describes your personal income last year?

\$0

\$1 to \$9 999

\$10 000 to \$25 999

\$26 000 to 49 999

\$50 000 to 74 999

\$75 000 to 99 999

\$100 000 to 149 999

\$150 000 and greater

Prefer not to answer

## Appendix B (Continued)

D. I am:

1. Male
2. Female
3. Other/Prefer not to report

E. Age: 20 – 29 30 – 39 40 – 49 50 – 59 60 – 69 70+ Prefer not to report

F. If selected please indicate the preferred e-mail address you would like to receive the open-ended questions (the subject line will always read **Can the Poor Have Their Say? Research**): E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

F. Please provide a contact telephone number:

The confidentiality of all participants will be protected by the researcher. Your responses will not be disclosed to anyone, and participation is voluntary (and may be withdrawn at any time). To withdraw, simply do not respond to the question.

There is no anticipated risk or stressors to participants other than time constraints, but the benefit may be the opportunity to help identify ways to help low-income persons who have been historically excluded from service on nonprofit boards to find opportunities to be included.

Researcher contact information:

Name: Brian R. Corbin

Title: Youngstown State University, a doctoral candidate

Phone: 330-565-4232 E-mail: [brcorbin@student.ysu.edu](mailto:brcorbin@student.ysu.edu)

If you have any other questions, you can contact Karen Larwin, PhD at [khlarwin@ysu.edu](mailto:khlarwin@ysu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject, please call the Office of Research Services at YSU at 330.941.2378.

If you feel your rights have been violated, please contact the Chair identified above.

If you are not 18 or older, please do not complete this questionnaire or participate in the study.

If you know of someone that might be willing to participate in the study, please add the name and contact information below:

**Appendix B (Continued)**

By selecting YES, I understand the purpose of the research and I understand my rights.

YES NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
email address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

Invitation to Participate  
Via email or letter of invitation  
(12.5.2020)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Your name was selected to participate in a research study.

My name is Brian Corbin. I am completing a research study in partial fulfillment for my doctorate in educational leadership and administration. I am developing a research study as my dissertation to learn more about the obstacles and opportunities for low-income persons to serve on boards of nonprofit community service agencies and to recommend ways for such persons to be considered and included for such service. Your name has been identified as a possible “expert” to be a participant in this research.

If you are concerned about how low income and marginalized persons could be included in nonprofit boards and would like to help develop future opportunities, please complete and sign (you may sign, scan and return, or sign electronically in the following format: /s/ YOUR NAME 01/04/2021) to me at either [BRCorbin@student.yzu.edu](mailto:BRCorbin@student.yzu.edu) or at 2251 Eisenhower Avenue, Apartment 719, Alexandria, VA 22314.

If you express an interest by returning this form, a follow-up Informed Consent document and Qualification Questionnaire to verify your knowledge and note some demographic data will be sent for your completion.

The intent of the researcher is to assemble the best panel of experts available.

More will be described later if you are selected for the panel, but panel members will not know who the other participants are, and the researcher will monitor and protect your confidentiality.

The study will consist of a series of three (3) rounds of open-ended questions and some opportunities to rank various statements sent and received through e-mail and using the Survey Monkey platform.

Thank you for considering your role as a participant.

I know your time is valuable, but the future of nonprofit governance may be affected by the quality of the study.

Regards,

Brian R. Corbin, doctoral researcher



## Appendix D

Delphi Round One Survey Questions

Via Survey Monkey  
12.5.2020

Thank you for participating in this research study. You have been selected to participate due to your experience, training, and/or knowledge of serving on boards of directors for community organizations. We will be utilizing the Delphi method with three (3) rounds of questions/comments over the course of several months.

Before we begin this Round, permit me to provide you some information and ask you some follow up questions regarding your informed consent.

The researcher requests your consent for participation in this study entitled **Can the Poor Have Their Say? Structural Incorporation of Low-income Voices in Corporate Governance**. This consent form asks you to allow the researcher to use your comments to enhance understanding of the topic. This research proposal has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Youngstown State University (IRB #.....).

This questionnaire asks for your preferences about whether to remain anonymous or to allow the researcher to name you and your [school/organization/business] and to quote you directly.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific question.

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of the research records or data, and all data will be destroyed in three years.

By submitting this form you are indicating that you have read the description of the study, are over the age of 18, and that you agree to the terms as described.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of this consent letter, please contact me at 330-565-4232 or [BRCorbin@student.ysu.edu](mailto:BRCorbin@student.ysu.edu). This study is being supervised by Dr. Karen Lawin, who serves as the Chair of this dissertation. She can be reached at phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

## Appendix D (Continued)

If you feel your rights have been violated, please contact the Chair identified above.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Brian

### Question 1 Informed Consent

**\* 1. I agree to participate in the research study. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or consequences.**

Yes

No

### Question 2 Informed Consent

**\* 2. I grant permission for the data generated from this survey to be used in the researcher's publications on this topic.**

Yes

No

I grant permission under the following conditions:

### Question 3 Informed Consent

**\* 3. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Choose one of the following options:**

I agree that a brief synopsis can be included in the documentation of the research, including my name, school/organization/business name and brief bio. I understand that I will be asked to provide a brief bio and that I will be asked to approve this synopsis. I understand that no other personal information will be communicated.

I prefer to remain anonymous and to have no professional information or organization or business name included in the researcher's publications based on this study.

### Question 4 Informed Consent

**\* 4. Choose one of the following options:**

## Appendix D (Continued)

I grant permission for the researcher to use direct, attributed quotations from my interview.

I grant permission for the researcher to use my responses in aggregate or anonymous statements, but I prefer to maintain confidentiality and request that any comments are presented without attribution to me.

### Question 5 Informed Consent

**\*5. Please type your name in the box below to indicate agreement to participate in this study.**

\_\_\_\_\_

### *Round 1 Survey Questions*

*In this round, Round 1, the questions are designed to tap into your lived experience about the nature of boards of community service agencies and/or community development organizations (referred to as “community agencies”). The questions, during this round, are meant to engage you in some reflection. They are by design open-ended questions. Other Rounds will ask for more input along with your prioritization and rankings of various concepts that emerge from this Round 1 and themes developed from current literature on boards and the involvement of low-income persons. Please share your insights and thoughts from your own lived experience. You are the expert.*

*QUESTION 1. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how “community agencies” involve low-income persons in their decision-making process?*

*QUESTION 2. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how low-income persons are trained to serve on the board of directors of “community agencies”?*

*QUESTION 3. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how low-income persons are willing to serve on boards of “community agencies”?*

## Appendix D (Continued)

*QUESTION 4. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how low-income persons might have been disenfranchised or disempowered to serve on boards of “community agencies”? Do you find this true? Why or why not? How?*

*QUESTION 5. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how low-income persons may have been seen (or you have felt yourself if you are low income) to be a “token” representative on a board of “community agencies”? Do you find this true? Why or why not? How?*

*QUESTION 6. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how low-income persons may have experienced practices (informal ways, behaviors) of various persons or groups that either welcome or exclude low-income persons to serve on such boards of “community agencies”? Did you find this true? Why or why not? How?*

*QUESTION 7. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how low-income persons may have experienced policies (formal rules) that either welcome or exclude low-income persons to serve on such boards of “community agencies”? Did you find this true? Why or why not? How?*

*QUESTION 8. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how low-income persons may have experienced welcome or exclusion by persons already on those boards that might involve or reject low-income persons serving on boards of “community agencies”? Did you find this true? Why or why not? How?*

*QUESTION 9. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, “community agencies” boards no longer may see that low-income persons must be an important participant in decision-making? Did you find this true? Why or why not? How?*

*QUESTION 10. What has been your experience on, or what is your opinion about, how various public opinions, social forces, and/or general values might now argue that it is no longer necessary for low-income persons to be involved on the boards of “community services”? Do you find this true? Why or why not? How?*

*QUESTION 11: Do you think that low-income persons should be required to serve on the board of directors of “community agencies” that were established to serve the needs of low-income persons and communities? YES or NO. Explain.*

## Appendix E

DELPHI Round 2 Questions

9-12-2021 DRAFT

9-18-2021 REVISION per KL suggestions

9-23-2021 Sent to Delphia panelists via Alison

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=F4pyOAeXSU->

[MmyecGkA4wdLCCoeWocxIkn6sVexGmjIURU1QU1ZZOUNROFBTREZRWFZSMjlPTDVTMS4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=F4pyOAeXSU-MmyecGkA4wdLCCoeWocxIkn6sVexGmjIURU1QU1ZZOUNROFBTREZRWFZSMjlPTDVTMS4u)

10-29-2021 First 14 panelists data reported/compiled

### NOTES:

1. Using Dale-Chall Score between 6-8.
2. Please DO NOT include The THEMES or the TOPICS all in brackets.
3. Timing: From my understanding a simple sentence Likert is a 1 point question. You add up all the points then divide by 7.5 to get the “minutes” it will take to take the survey. But that method is based on a grid. So if each sentence has “Comment box” I add a point. So there are 38 questions and 39 comment boxes. Thus 77 points divided by 7.5=10.2 minutes as an approximation.

---

Dear Expert Panelists,

Thank you for your participation in Round 1 of the Delphi process for this research project on low-income persons’ involvement on boards. Thank you for your excellent insights.

Now in Round 2, you will be asked to provide answers regarding how you agree or disagree with certain statements based on your Round 1 insights and from the literature around this topic.

You will be asked to share your opinion on how strongly you agree or disagree with a statement. The scale is as follows:

1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Your expert insights are appreciated.

(QUESTION 1 on SURVEY): Name for tracking

## Appendix E (Continued)

**There will be a section after each question for you to write any comments you may wish to share.** This survey should take you about 10-15 minutes to complete and should be completed in one sitting.

### A. Low-Income Persons formal involvement on boards.

[Topic Area A: H1) Low-income and marginalized persons' voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities.]

In Round 1, some panelists noted that persons who are not low income but work with organizations that fund or serve low-income families could represent low-income persons on a board. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement:

QUESTION A1 (2). It is acceptable for a person who is not low-income to represent low-income persons on a board of an agency that serves low-income persons. [Theme 1A; Theme 5B] **A1\_2\_RepresentLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(3) COMMENT BOX: Comments

In Round 1, over 80% of you agreed that a low-income person must be involved on a board that serves low-income persons. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

QUESTION A2 (4). A low-income person must be involved on a board of an organization that serves low-income persons. [Theme 10] **A2\_4\_LIMustBeInvolved**

(5) 1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT BOX: Comments

In Round 1, 70% of the panelists noted that low-income persons should be required to serve on a board of directors of an organization that serves low-income people. In some comments, several panelists understood that statement to mean that if a low-income person receives some assistance that they are required to serve. Others interpreted that statement to mean that a board should have a requirement that low-income individuals be involved on the board. The next two statements are related to this information. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statement:

QUESTION A3 (6). It is required that a low-income person serves on the board of directors of agencies that serve low-income people. [Theme 1A]

**A3\_6\_RequiredLIONBoard**

## Appendix E (Continued)

1 2 3 4 5

(7) COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION A4 (8): If a low-income person receives services from an organization, then that person must be required to serve on its board of directors. [Theme 9]

**A4\_8\_LIMustServe**

1 2 3 4 5

(9) COMMENT BOX: Comments

In Round 1, nearly 90% of the panelists disagreed with the statement that it is “**no longer important** to include low-income persons on a board of directors of agencies serving low-income persons.” How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following two statements:

QUESTION A5 (10): An organization that serves low-income persons should be required to include a low-income person on its board of directors. [Theme 1B]

**A5\_10\_ShouldBeRequiredIncludeLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(11) COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION A6 (12): Only if a low-income person serves on a board of directors of a community organization can you say that their “voice” is being heard. [Theme 12]

**A6\_12\_OnlyLIVoice**

1 2 3 4 5

(13) COMMENT BOX: Comments

### **B. Training opportunities for low-income persons to serve on boards.**

[Topic Area B. H2) Low-income and marginalized persons are not trained in corporate governance to serve as leaders on the boards of CDCs and CSAs]

Some of you noted that there are opportunities for low-income persons to be trained to serve on local boards of directors. Here are some questions related to the formation and education of low-income board members.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

## Appendix E (Continued)

QUESTION B1(14): There are programs offered locally for low-income persons to be trained in order to serve on boards of directors. [Theme 2] **B1\_14\_LocalTrainingPro**

1 2 3 4 5

(15)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION B2 (16): Board training programs should focus on the knowledge needed to run the organization. [Theme 3] **B2\_16\_TrainingKnowledgeRun**

1 2 3 4 5

(17) COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION B3 (18): Training programs for boards should focus on sharing their financial gifts to run the organization. [Theme 3] [Theme 3] **B3\_18\_TrainingFinGifts**

1 2 3 4 5

(19)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION B4(20): There is a need for special training programs for low-income persons to serve on boards designed to help them be actively involved in board meetings. [Theme 4] **B4\_20\_TrainingSpecialActiveLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(21)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION B5(22): Board training should help all board members understand issues specific to low-income families. [Theme 4] **B5\_22\_TrainingUnderstandLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(23)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION B6(24): Training for board members provides a chance to learn how to practice democracy. [Theme 4] **B6\_24\_TrainingDemocracy**

1 2 3 4 5

(25)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION B7(26): Training for board members should teach persons how to problem solve. [Theme 4] **B7\_26\_TrainingProblem**

1 2 3 4 5

(27)COMMENT BOX: Comments



## Appendix E (Continued)

### C. The willingness of low-income persons to serve on boards

[Topic Area C H2a) Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs]

Some of you noted in your comments in Round 1 that some low-income persons may be hesitant to serve on boards of these organizations. Here are some questions:

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

QUESTION C1(28): There are low-income persons in our community who are willing to serve on a board of directors of an organization that serves low-income families if they were asked. [Theme 5A and Theme 6] **C1\_28\_LIWillingServe**

1 2 3 4 5

(29)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION C2(30): One reason why low-income persons may not be asked to serve on a board is that current members of the board seek persons with professional skills who may not be low-income. [Theme 5A] **C2\_30\_ProSkillsNotLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(31)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION C3(32): One reason why low-income persons may not be asked to serve on boards is that organizations are looking for persons who have wealth. [Theme 6] **C3\_32\_SeekingWealth**

1 2 3 4 5

(33)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION C4(34): One reason why low-income persons may not be asked to serve on boards is that organizations are looking for persons who have social connections. [Theme 6] **C4\_34\_SocialConnections**

1 2 3 4 5

(35)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION C5(36): One reason why low-income persons may not be asked to serve on a board is that that organization deals with larger geographical concerns and is not necessarily concerned with the neighborhoods in which low-income persons live. [Theme 7] **C5\_36\_Geography**

1 2 3 4 5

## Appendix E (Continued)

(37)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION C6(38): Low-income persons who serve on boards of community agencies want to use their position for their own benefit. [Theme 13; Theme 10] **C6\_38\_LIOwnBenefit**

1 2 3 4 5

(39)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION C7(40): Low-income persons who serve on boards of community agencies usually do not want to give up their position as a person serving on the board. [Theme 13; Theme 11] **C7\_40\_LINotGiveUp**

1 2 3 4 5

(41)COMMENT BOX: Comments

### **D. Boards seek low-income persons to serve on boards**

[Topic Area D. H3) Low-income and marginalized persons are disenfranchised and disempowered from such engagement on boards; H3a) Low-income and marginalized persons are perceived by others as “token” representatives on these boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as “token” representatives if they serve on these boards]

In your comments from Round 1, several of you mentioned your concern about low-income persons being treated as “tokens” or being perceived as “tokens” as they serve on these boards. Here are some questions about this topic.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

QUESTION D1(42): Low-income persons who serve on a board oftentimes feel as though they are “tokens.” [Theme 9] **D1\_42\_Token**

1 2 3 4 5

(43)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION D2(44): Organizations ask low-income persons to serve on their boards in order to say that they have a low-income person on their board, but do not usually actively listen to them. [Theme 9] **D2\_44\_BoardNotListenLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(45)COMMENT BOX: Comments

## Appendix E (Continued)

QUESTION D3(46): Currently, organizations are more interested in other aspects of having a diverse board (such as race, sex, or orientation) rather than if a board member is low-income. [Theme 8] **D3\_46\_DiversityOther**

1 2 3 4 5

(47)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION D4(48): Low-income persons feel “uncomfortable” serving on a board of directors of a community organization. [Theme 13; Theme 9; Theme 5B] **D4\_48\_LIUncomfortable**

1 2 3 4 5

(49)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION D5(50): Persons who are not low-income serving on a board of directors sometimes exert power over low-income persons in order to diminish their voice. [Theme 13; Theme 5B; Theme 9] **D5\_50\_PowerOverLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(51)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION D6(52): Most persons who serve on boards of directors of community agencies do not know many low-income persons to recruit as board members. [Theme 6; Theme 11] **D6\_52\_BoardNotKnowLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(53)COMMENT BOX: Comments

### **E. Formal policies and practices that include or exclude low-income persons from board membership**

[Topic Area E: H4) Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused; H4a) CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons’ participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary]

In your Round 1 comments, few of you experienced or witnessed any formal rules or even informal practices that excluded low-income persons to serve on these organizations’ boards. Here are some questions to explore this area in more detail.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

## Appendix E (Continued)

QUESTION E1(54): Boards of organizations that serve low-income persons are made up of a similar type of board member. [Theme 10] **E1\_54\_BoardSimilar**

1 2 3 4 5

(55)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION E2(56): Boards of community service organizations mostly select persons who are not low income to serve on their boards. [Theme 10; Theme 6]

**E2\_56\_BoardsSelectNonLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(57)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION E3(58): Boards of community service organizations mostly select persons to serve on their boards who are well connected in the community. [Theme 10; Theme 6]

**E3\_58\_WellConnected**

1 2 3 4 5

(59)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION E4(60): Boards of community service organizations would only have low-income persons serve on their boards if their funding source required it. [Theme 10]

**E4\_60\_LIOnlyIfFundersRequire**

1 2 3 4 5

(61)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION E5(62): Persons selected to serve on boards of community service organizations frequently are those who are known by other members of the board.

[Theme 11] **E5\_62\_MembersKnownByBoard**

1 2 3 4 5

(63)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION E6(64): Persons selected to serve on boards of community service agencies frequently are those who are known by the organization's staff. [Theme 11]

**E6\_64\_MembersKnownByStaff**

1 2 3 4 5

(65)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION E7(66): It is hard to find low-income persons to serve on boards of community service agencies. [Theme 12] **E7\_66\_LIHardToFind**

## Appendix E (Continued)

1 2 3 4 5

(67)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION E8(68): It would be difficult to require that a community agency always have a low-income person serve on the board. [Theme 12] **E8\_68\_DiffToReqLIalways**

1 2 3 4 5

(69)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION E9(70): Persons selected to serve on boards of community service organizations frequently are those who know donors who can donate to that organization. [Theme 6; Theme 10] **E9\_70\_MembersDonors**

1 2 3 4 5

(71)COMMENT BOX: Comments

### **F. Trends that include or exclude low-income person's participation on boards**

[Topic Area F: H5) Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations.]

In some of your comments, you noted some trends that might discourage community services organizations from seeking low-income persons from serving on their boards. Here are some questions related to this topic.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

QUESTION F1(72): One reason why low-income persons are not asked to serve on boards of community agencies is that these organizations want to look more like private market organizations. [Theme 10, Theme 13] **F1\_72\_PrivateLook**

1 2 3 4 5

(73)COMMENT BOX: Comments

QUESTION F2(74): One reason why low-income persons are not asked to serve on boards of community agencies is that these organizations sometimes perceive that a low-income person does not have the professional expertise needed to serve on their boards. [Theme 10; Theme 5B] **F2\_74\_LINotProSkills**

1 2 3 4 5

(75)COMMENT BOX: Comments

**Appendix E (Continued)**

QUESTION F3(76): If a community agency uses governmental monies to serve low-income families, then that organization must be required to have a low-income person serve on its board. [Theme 1A; Theme 1B] **F3\_76\_GovtMustLI**

1 2 3 4 5

(77)COMMENT BOX: Comments

COMMENT BOX

**G. General Comments - Please use the Comment Box to provide any insight, reflections, ideas or disagreements.**

(78)COMMENT BOX: Any further thoughts?

## Appendix F

### FINAL ROUND 3 SURVEY QUESTIONS - Corbin

Based on Round 2 Analysis

12-26-2021; Approved 12-28-2021; Survey opened 1-5-2022

*Dale-Chall Score tested between 5-7.5*

*45 Questions (previous Round 2 - 38 questions) Approximately outer range - 24 minutes*

*Order changed from original to now A, E, C, D, B, F (using random number generator)*

Areas in YELLOW not to be included in the survey; just tracking purpose

CODED 1-8-2022

\*\*\*

Dear Panelists,

Thank you for participating in these various Delphi Rounds of questions regarding how low-income persons can serve on boards of directors. Before you answer some questions for Round 3, you will read about areas of agreement found from Round 2. For this research project, this final Round aims to find areas of consensus or disagreement in order to develop policy ideas. Some questions may seem similar to Round 2 questions, but Round 3 questions are a final chance to provide your input and comments. It should take between 15-20 minutes to complete. Again, thank you for your participation.

1. Please type your NAME in the box (for demographic purposes only):

BOX:

2. I agree to participate in this Round 3 survey.  
YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

Area A

**[Area A H1) Low-income and marginalized persons' voices are not structurally incorporated into boards of directors in those organizations that serve such persons and communities.]**

### SECTION 1:

In Round 2, there seems to be a strong consensus that low-income persons should serve on the boards of community organizations that serve low-income persons. There is also a strong consensus that because a low-income person receives services from this organization they should not be required to serve. There is some general agreement that low-income persons need to be involved on such boards but there is some uncertainty on how their voice can best be heard. There is some uncertainty if such representation should be required. There was some debate if others who are not low-income themselves can represent a low-income person adequately.

## Appendix F (Continued)

Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

**Q1.3 It should be a requirement in law that if an organization serves low-income persons then that organization must have a low-income person on the board of directors. A1\_3\_REQLawServesLIBoard**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

4 Comments

**Q2.5 A person who is not low-income himself or herself can represent low-income persons on a community agency board of directors. A2\_5\_NonLIRepLI**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

6 Comments

**Q3.7 The only way the concerns of low-income persons can be represented on a board of a community organization is when a low-income person herself or himself serves on that board. A3\_7\_VoiceLISelf**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

8 Comments

**Q4.9 It should be a requirement in law that if an organization receives federal dollars to serve low-income persons then a low-income person must serve on that board. A4\_9\_REQLawFedDollarsLI**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

10 Comments

**Q5.11 It is important to have a low-income person on a community agency board even though there might not be a requirement to do so. A5\_11\_LIImportantNonREQ**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

12 Comments

**Q6.13 It is hard work to include low-income persons on a board. A6\_13\_HardLIBoard**



## Appendix F (Continued)

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

14 Comments

**Q7.15 Today more than ever it is important that low-income persons be included in the boards of community agencies. A7\_15\_TodayImportantLIBoard**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

16 Comments

**Q8.17 There are enough low-income persons already serving on community agency boards and nothing more is needed. A8\_17\_EnoughLIAAlreadyBoards**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

18 Comments

**Q9.19 Please select the statement that best describes your opinion as to what a community agency board should do: A9\_19\_OPINBoardDo**

- Require that a low-income person serves on the board. = 1
- Allow a board member who is not himself/herself low-income to serve as a representative of the low-income community. = 2
- Voluntarily include a low-income person on the board. = 3
- It is not necessary for a low-income person to serve on a community agency board. =4

(9 questions)

AREA E

[Area E: H4) Practices and policies regarding the structural exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons are widely accepted and diffused; H4a) CDCs and CSAs no longer perceive low-income persons' participation in leadership through corporate governance as necessary]

### SECTION 2:

There seems to be some agreement that board members often seek other persons who they know personally. There was some agreement that board members seek persons who are socially connected to serve on the board. There was also limited agreement that boards usually do not select low-income persons to serve, but would select low-income persons if their financial donors required it. There is limited agreement that persons selected to serve on a board are usually those able to donate money. There was limited

## Appendix F (Continued)

agreement that it would not be difficult to require low-income individuals' participation on boards. There was some weak agreement that it was not hard to find low-income persons to serve on such boards. As well, there was some weak agreement that agencies do not all have the same types of persons serving on the board.

Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

**Q1.20 Boards members usually are selected based on their ability to give money to that organization. E1\_20\_SELECTbyGiveMoney**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

21 Comments

**Q2.22 Boards members tend to seek other persons who they know to serve on the board. E2\_22\_SELECTbyWhoTheyKnow**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

23 Comments

**Q3.24 Board members tend to seek other persons who are well-known in the community to serve on the board. E3\_24\_SELECTWellKnown**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

25 Comments

**Q4.26 Boards all have the same type of person serving. They all look alike. E4\_26\_ALLLookALIKE**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

27 Comments

**Q5.28 The best way to represent low-income people an agency serves is to require that a low-income person is on that board. E5\_28\_SELECTLIBestWay**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

29 Comments

## Appendix F (Continued)

### **Q6.30 Times are different. It is no longer important that low-income persons serve on an agency board. E6\_30\_NOLongerImportantLIServes**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

31 Comments

### **Q7.32 Please select the sentence that best represents your opinion (select one): E7\_32\_OPINBestRep**

- We need more low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies. =1
- There are currently a good number of low-income persons serving on boards of community agencies. =2
- Boards of community agencies look like any other organization and do not necessarily represent the voices of low-income persons. =3
- It is not that important that a board that serves low-income persons look any different than any other board when it comes to low-income person's participation. =4
- 

(7 questions)

AREA C

[Area C H2a) Low-income and marginalized persons are not willing to serve as leaders through corporate governance on CDCs and CSAs]

### **SECTION 3:**

In Round 2, there is some agreement that there are low-income persons in the community willing to serve on a board of directors if asked. There is some agreement that low-income persons may not be asked to serve on boards since other members seek persons with social connections, wealth, or professional skills. There seems to be some agreement that low-income persons do not use their position on the board for their own benefit, nor do they refuse to give up their position. There is little agreement on whether the change from more neighborhood-based organizations to larger geographical ones has impacted how low-income persons are asked to serve on a board.

Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

### **Q1.33 Low-income board members do not use their position for their own benefit. C1\_33\_LIUsePositionBenefit**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

34 Comments

## Appendix F (Continued)

**Q2.35 Low-income persons who serve on a community agency board do not resist leaving the board when their term ends. C2\_35\_LIResistLeaving**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

36 Comments

**Q3.37 Low-income persons would be asked to serve on a board if they had social connections, wealth, or professional skills. C3\_37\_LIBeAskedIfSocialWealthSkills**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

38 Comments

**Q4.39 There are low-income persons in the community who are willing and able to serve on community boards. C4\_39\_LIWillingAbleAvailable**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

40 Comments

**Q5.41 It is difficult to get low-income persons to serve on a board that serves a large geographic region rather than a specific neighborhood. C5\_41\_DifficultLILargeGeography**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

42 Comments

**Q6.43 Community boards do not include low-income persons because they want to act more like for-profit companies. C6\_43\_NOLibeLikeForProfits**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

44 Comments

(6 questions)

### AREA D

[Topic Area D. H3) Low-income & marginalized persons disenfranchised & disempowered from such engagement on boards; H3a) Low-income & marginalized persons perceived by others as “token” representatives on these boards; H3b) Low-income and marginalized persons see themselves as “token”]

## Appendix F (Continued)

### SECTION 4:

In Round 2, there is little agreement whether most board members know low-income persons to invite for board positions. There is some agreement that boards may be more interested in having persons who have differences of race, gender, or orientation rather than a person's income status for board membership. There is little agreement on whether non-low-income persons on boards exert power over low-income persons who may serve on the board.

Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

**Q1.45 Board members do not consider asking low-income persons to serve on boards since they do not know many low-income persons to ask.**

**D1\_1\_45\_MembersNotKnowLItoAsk**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

46 Comments

**Q2.47 Most boards are more interested in other issues around diversity (such as race, gender, orientation) than in a person's income status (low-income) when they ask them to serve on their boards. D1\_2\_47\_OtherDIVERSITYthanLI**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

48 Comments

**Q3.49 Some board members exert power over low-income board members and really do not listen to them. D1\_3\_49\_SomeBoardExertPOWER**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

50 Comments

[AREA D-2]

### SECTION 5:

In Round 2, there is agreement that at times low-income persons serving on a board see themselves as "tokens." There is little agreement if low-income persons feel "uncomfortable" serving on a board. There seems to be no agreement on whether boards ask low-income persons to serve on their boards but do not really listen to them.

Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

## Appendix F (Continued)

### **Q1.51 Most low-income persons perceive that they are "tokens" if asked to serve on a board. D2\_1\_51\_LISelfTokens**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

52 Comments

### **Q2.53 Most board members see low-income persons serving on the board as "tokens". D2\_2\_53\_MembersSeeLIasTokens**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

54 Comments

### **Q3.55 Most boards invite low-income persons to participate on their boards but do not really "listen" to their concerns. D2\_3\_55\_BoardsNOTLISTENLI**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

56 Comments

### **Q4.57 Most low-income persons on a community board feel uncomfortable serving on such a board. D2\_4\_57\_LIUncomfortable**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

58 Comments

(3+4=7 questions)

## AREA B

**[Area B. H2) Low-income and marginalized persons are not trained in corporate governance to serve as leaders on the boards of CDCs and CSAs]**

## **SECTION 6:**

In Round 2, there is a strong agreement that there should be training for board directors of community agencies on the needs of low-income persons. There also is a strong

## Appendix F (Continued)

agreement that there should be training for low-income persons to be actively involved in board decision-making. Round 2 also found a strong agreement that training should help board members with problem-solving. There is some consensus that training should help board members in their practice of democracy by serving on the board. There is little agreement about the training for board members related to managing the organization. There is little agreement on whether enough training programs for board members are offered. There is little agreement on whether board training should focus on giving money to the organization.

Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

**Q1.59 All persons serving on a board of a community organization that serves low-income people must be trained on the special needs of low-income persons. B1\_59\_AllBoardTrainedinLIneeds**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

60 Comments

**Q2.61 There should be opportunities for low-income persons who serve on a board to be trained so that they can be actively involved in board meetings. B2\_61\_LISpecialTrainingActive**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

62 Comments

**Q3.63 Training for board members should help them with their skills in problem-solving. B3\_63\_TrainProblemSkills**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

64 Comments

**Q4.65 Training for board members should help them with their skills to live in a democracy (like different ways of including others in board decision-making). B4\_65\_TrainDemocracySkills**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

66 Comments

**Q5.67 Training for board members should provide them with the skills needed to run an organization. B5\_67\_TrainOrgRunSkills**

## Appendix F (Continued)

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

68 Comments

### **Q6.69 Training for board members should provide them with skills in giving money to the organization. B6\_69\_TrainGiveMoneySkills**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

70 Comments

### **Q7.71 Please rank the statements (#1 is most important, #6 least important) that describe what you think about board training: B7\_71\_OPINRankTraining**

- Training should be for all board members in order for them to understand better the issues facing low-income persons if the agency serves low-income communities. =1 **B7\_71\_1\_TrainAll**
- There should be special training for low-income persons so that they become more actively involved with the board. =2 **B7\_71\_2\_SpecialforLI**
- Board training should help persons improve solving problems. =3 **B7\_71\_3\_ProblemSkill**
- Board training should help them with their skills to live in a democracy. =4 **B7\_71\_4\_Democracy**
- Board training should focus on how the organization is managed and operated. =5 **B7\_71\_5\_Manage**
- Board training should focus on how a board member provides money to the agency.=6 **B7\_71\_6\_ProvideMoney**

(7 questions)

AREA F

**[Area F: H5) Various operative governance values and practices, legal/regulatory requirements, privatization/marketization forces, and ideology influence the exclusion of low-income and marginalized persons on the governance boards of community-based corporations]**

## **SECTION 7:**

There seems to be a strong agreement that one reason why low-income persons are not asked to serve on agency boards is that they do not have the professional skills required. There seems to be some agreement that if an organization receives government funding then it should be required to have a low-income person serve on its board. There was little agreement whether the reason why a community agency board may not ask a



## Appendix F (Continued)

low-income person on their board is because of their desire to look like other private market-driven organizations.

Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

**Q1.72 A person can both be low-income and have professional skills in order to serve on a community agency board. F1\_72\_BothLIProSkills**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

73 Comments

**Q2.74 If an agency receives governmental funding to serve low-income persons then they should be required to have a low-income person serve on their board.**

**F2\_74\_GOVTMoneyLIREQUIRED**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

75 Comments

**Q3.76 There are many informal rules and ideas for community service boards to follow the example of others in having well-connected, professional, and high-income persons serve on their boards. F3\_76\_RULESIDEASConnectProHigh**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

77 Comments

**Q4.78 Community service boards usually just accept ideas and rules they heard from other organizations without thinking about how low-income persons are represented on the board. F4\_78\_RULESIDEASothersLIrep**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

79 Comments

**Q5.80 There are political, financial, or cultural ideas that all boards should look like each other which usually means that low-income persons are excluded from the board. F5\_80\_POLFINCULIdeasLookAlikeLIExcluded**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

81 Comments

**Appendix F (Continued)**

**Q6.82 It would be very inconvenient to always find low-income persons to serve on these boards. F6\_82\_INCONVENIENTalwaysfindLI**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

83 Comments

**Q7.84 It is important today that community agencies require at least one low-income person on their board. F7\_84\_ImportantRequire1LI**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

85 Comments

**Q8.86 FINAL QUESTION - What are the best means for a community organization to include, or listen to, the voice of low-income persons on a board of directors?**

COMMENT BOX:

**Q9.87 Other Comments:**

COMMENT BOX:

(9 questions)

Wed 2/24/2021 11:29 AM

To: Brian R Corbin <brcorbin@student.yzu.edu>; Karen H Larwin <khlarwin@yzu.edu>



Feb 24, 2021 11:29:39 AM EST

Karen Larwin  
Teacher Ed and Leadership St

Re: Exempt - Initial - 2021-39 Dissertation Can the poor have their say? Structural incorporation of low-income voices in corporate governance

Dear Dr. Karen Larwin:

Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board has rendered the decision below for Dissertation Can the poor have their say? Structural incorporation of low-income voices in corporate governance.

Decision: Exempt

Selected Category: Category 3.(i)(A). Research involving benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the collection of information from an adult subject through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection.

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB.

Findings: Dear Investigators,

Your research project "Can the Poor Have Their Say? Structural Incorporation of Low-income Voices in Corporate Governance" protocol (#2021-39) has been reviewed. This study seeks to gather and analyze data of participants' experience of inclusion to engagement pertaining to service on the board of directors of community service agencies that serve the interests and needs of low-income person and communities. The investigators hope that the results can

better inform these agencies on their overall mission.

The research project meets the exempt definition of 45 CFR 46.1013 (a)(i). You may begin the investigation immediately. Please note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to report immediately to the YSU IRB any deviations from the protocol and/or any adverse events that occur.

Best wishes for the successful completion of research.

Daniel J. Keown  
Designated IRB Reviewer  
Youngstown State University

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.