Community-based Organizations and Issues in Community Development

in an Era Constant Change

Terrence Thomas[1], Befikadu Legesse[2], Cihat Gunden[3]

(1. North Carolina A&T State University, USA; 2. Smart-Eco Consulting, USA; 3. Ege University, Turkey)

Abstract: The failure of top-down categorical approaches for generating solutions to many local problems has led to the adoption of alternate approaches. Many scholars believe that a confluence of local and global forces have generated complex problems, which call for new approaches to problem solving. Previously, the top-down approach relied entirely on the knowledgeable elite. Communities were seen as passive study subjects and information flow was one way only- from knowledgeable elites to the less knowledgeable community agents or community-based organization acting on behalf of communities. The objectives of this study are to provide a review of governance as a means of organizing community action to address community problems in the Black Belt Region (BBR) of the Southeastern United States, and an assessment of community problems in the BBR from the perspectives of community-based organizations (CBOs). Data was collected from CBOs via a telephone survey in eleven Southeastern states and via listening sessions conducted with CBOs in 9 Southeastern states. The study provides valuable insight regarding the challenges faced by these organizations and strategies they employ in adapting to serve their communities.

Key words: community-based organizations; community development; governance; black belt region; autonomous group action

JLE codes: D71, D73, D70

1. Introduction

The paper begins with a brief description of features of the prevailing context in which local autonomous action develops in communities, after that review of current theoretical perspectives on governance and participative governance, followed by the application of this theoretical perspective in explaining the utility and relevance of participative community governance in problem solving as viewed from an ethical and socio-technical perspective. The paper concludes with an overview of governance structures prevalent among CBOs sampled in our listening sessions, a description of the problems from the perspectives of CBOs, and a description of approaches CBOs employ in soliciting the input of the wider community in the governance process.

1.2 Prevailing Operational Environment: An Opportunity for Autonomous Group Action

Globalization is defined variously as: (a) networks of interdependencies in information, ideas, technologies,

---

products, services, and people that span intercontinental distances (Nye & Donahue, 2000); and (b) as a process to extend norms, ideas and practices beyond the context in which they were originally developed (Rosenau, 2006). The common underlying theme of these perspectives is the idea of transformational processes which transcend political and geographical jurisdictions, influencing every aspect of human endeavor through a web of dynamic interacting forces. These forces include rapid advances in communication, computer and transportation technologies, and advances in portable process technologies. The rapid technological innovation and diffusion of computer and communication technologies combine to create an extremely rich information environment and unprecedented access to information.

An information rich environment enables and nurtures a more informed, proactive and reflective citizenry more capable and willing to challenge established ways of seeing and doing things. Put another way, the ability to use information to control and reinforce established patterns of organization and behavior is severely constrained where established leadership and policy elites operate in the same information rich environment as a proactive, informed and reflective citizenry. In a rapidly globalizing world, transformative elements such as: a more reflective, informed and proactive citizenry, the proliferation of communication possibilities, continual technological change, the easy movement of technology and capital across countries, and the need to reorder our relationship with the sustenance base create a complex and dynamic operating environment in which conventional democratic institutions are failing to meet the aspirations of many citizens. As Fung and Wright (2001) observe, when the tasks of the state have become more complex and the size of political entities become larger and more diverse, the institutional forms of liberal democracy seem much less suited to the novel problems we face in the twenty-first century. They continue, "Democracy as a way of organizing the state has become to be narrowly identified with territorially based competitive elections of leadership for legislative and executive offices. Yet, increasingly, this mechanism of political representation seems ineffective in accomplishing the central ideals of democratic politics: facilitating active political involvement of the citizenry, forcing political consensus through dialogue, devising and implementing public policies that ground a productive economy and a healthy society, and, in more radical egalitarian versions of the democratic ideal, ensuring that all citizens benefit from the nation's wealth." (p. 4). Even as democratic institutions come under increasing pressures to live up to the democratic ideal, democracy seems to be spreading much faster in recent times (Giddens, 2003). In the wake of expanding democratic values and the demise of centrally planned economies, the market is seen and promoted as the most efficient and effective governance mechanism for providing goods and services. Yet, many scholars admit that market failure is a common experience. Consequently, the market cannot be relied on to solve the problems and produce all the goods and services society needs (Gronbjerg, 1999; Stiglits, 2000; Johansson, 1991). Market failure, devolution due to the pressures of globalization (Kamarck, 2000), a shift to open macro economies and the inability of the state to offer protection from powerful global market forces (Brown, Khagram, Moore & Frumkin, 2000) have combined to create opportunities for action by civil society. That is, a confluence of global and local forces defines a multidimensional space – political, social, and economic — where civil society operates to meet those needs of citizens left unmet because of market and state failure. Within this space, citizens organize to pursue objectives that are important to them. Thus the definition of civil society employed by this paper is "an area of association independent of the state and market in which citizens can organize to pursue objectives that are important to them collectively and individually." (Brown et al., 2000, p. 274)

Civil society includes groups generally referred to as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as faith-based organizations, service clubs, parent-teachers' associations, charitable societies, community

development groups, book clubs, unions, community action agencies, foundations and many others. The sheer numbers of civil groups are an indication of the level of activity of these groups in providing for the unmet needs of communities. For example, in North Carolina and South Carolina it is estimated that there are 26,212 and 11,000 NGOs respectively. The large number of civil agencies may be attributable to (a) the perception of increasing inequality and complexity brought about by the forces of globalization and the seeming inability of governments to offer protection to the most vulnerable in society, (b) the increasing interest of donors, foundations and governments in funding NGOs, and (c) the information rich environment and the proliferation of communication possibilities, the myriad of evolving issues and increasing complexity of society. These forces catalyze the development of a more proactive and reflective citizenry — a citizenry which is more cynical about pronouncements from politicians concerning what they can do. Proactive and reflective citizens in a complex globalizing environment are more concerned about economic and political questions about which they feel politicians have little to say or issues they have neglected to address. In this situation, people turn to groups which promise to offer what conventional politics is unable to deliver. Thus, people are increasingly becoming more involved in single issue groups, which play a pivotal role in raising important issues and problems that may otherwise go unnoticed in conventional political circles until it is too late (Giddens, 2003). Further, as Giddens notes, the downward push of globalizing forces creates pressure for local autonomous action.

When groups at the community level participate in making, influencing and implementing policies, take action to solve community problems, provide services and promote community values, they are involved in community governance. Because of the sheer numbers of community groups working to bridge the gap left by state and market failure, some scholars, for example, Banyan (2004), suggests that communities are becoming increasingly fragmented given the dominance of single issue groups that focus on narrow interests, leaving glaring gaps in the overall service needs of communities. Admittedly, extreme fragmentation may prove counter productive, as there is always the danger of several groups working at cross purposes and engaging in parochial turf battles. Yet, given the diversity of issues, problems, and the heterogeneity of stakeholders, what appears to be fragmentation may be just a genuine reflection of complexity of the new reality embedded in and influenced by a complex web of global forces. Moreover, fragmentation, from another perspective may be reflecting what Fung and Wright (2001) and Giddens (2003) describe as a deepening of democracy—a phenomenon spurred on by the downward pressures of global forces, and which is characterized by, among other things, the emergence of a heterogeneous array of community groups with the potential to provide political parties with a nexus close to the community and its problems. Thus, one could view what is now being called fragmentation as the differentiation which is required in a complex environment to deepen democratic processes prior the emergence of integrative structures such as collaboratives, inter-organizational and policy networks which Rhodes (1996) defines as governance.

In sum, "old democratic institutions don't work in a society where citizens live in the same information environment as those in power over them" (Giddens, 2003, p. 75). In an information rich environment, reflective and proactive citizens grasp the initiative to act to resolve issues and solve problems that central authorities seem powerless to address, or are disinterested in taking up. Additionally, the phenomenon of state and market failure plus the downward pressures created by forces discussed earlier, drive the need for local autonomous action. In this next section we review the current concepts of governance and their application to participative community governance.

2. Current Theoretical Perspective on Governance And Participative Governance

Governance may be viewed from several perspectives: (1) the creation or adoption of means and processes for guiding planning, decision-making, implementing decisions, and ensuring accountability and responsibility for actions taken (Chaskin & Garg, 1997); (2) as the capacity of an organization to stay on course in a turbulent and changing world (Collier & Rafael, 1999); (3) self organizing inter-organizational networks (Rhodes 1996); and (4) multi-level governance, which represents the dispersion of authority to supranational structures, e.g. the UN, sub national authorities, such as states, counties, local municipalities, or development districts, and informal networks, such as non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Eckerberg & Joas, 2004).

Implicit in all the above views of governance is the authority — official or otherwise bestowed — to make decisions with regards to the allocation of resources for the production of goods or services for a particular constituency. We regard the definition by Chaskin and Garg (1997) as generic process views of governance, since it identifies the core concepts of governing without suggesting how these activities should be prosecuted. Conceptually, one can locate the way governance is practiced as a process activity on a continuum. At one end would be the highly bureaucratic regulatory approach to enacting governance. At the other would be a participative open approach to governance. The Collier and Esteban (1999) concept of governance is a process view of governance, which specifies a participative approach for discharging governance activities. In the participative model, decision-making is decentralized and freedom, autonomy, trust, transparency, continual learning and creativity are nurtured. In contrast, in the bureaucratic regulatory process model, decision making is centralized and freedom, autonomy, trust, transparency and learning are constrained. The other two perspectives by Rhodes (1996) and Hooghe et al. offer a structural political view of governance, i.e., specifies governance as a network of multiple actors discharging the process of governance. Any of these structural forms could conceivably discharge their governance function in either a bureaucratic regulatory or participative mode. Given the above background, and drawing on the work of Bowels and Gintis (2000), we use the term governance in this paper to mean action taken by groups or communities to address problems in the public sphere that cannot be handled either by individuals acting alone or by markets and government.

In our field studies across the southeastern states, we have observed many community-based organizations (CBOs) and neighborhood groups that provide valuable and indispensable social services for community residents. CBOs such as the North Carolina Coalition of Rural Farm and Families, Alabama Watch, Rural Georgia Development Collaborative and Friends of Children of Mississippi exemplify governance as self-organizing inter-organizational networks. They are self organizing because they are autonomous and self-governing (Rhodes 1996), thus implying that they are not controlled by any superior power, and were not brought into being by official edict. These networks operate to fill a void in the provisioning of goods and services resulting from the failure of the state and market to provide similar goods and services. In other words, they are self organizing inter-organizational networks which practice governance as per the Chaskin and Garg process definition. They operate in the public sphere without the designated formal authority of government. The network status of these groups derives from the fact that they interact with each other and with government agencies and private entities in exchanging information and garnering resources. They depend on this interaction to survive. One example is the Georgia Rural Development Collaborative, comprising eight independent CBOs agreeing to work in a partnership. The collaborative also interacts with government agencies and foundations as they practice

governance in rural Georgia. They receive technical assistance and funding from foundations and government agencies and share information among themselves, government agencies and foundations. Another example is The North Carolina Coalition of Rural Farms and Families, a grouping of six small CBOs. They interact with Cooperative Extension, USDA agencies, with each other and with foundations as they work to provide services to small farmers in Eastern North Carolina.

Many scholars of political science believe that this form of governance — the interactive social network political form of governing- is evolving to be the dominant form of governance, eclipsing governing by a super-ordinate authority as in classical government (Rhodes, 1996; Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Eckerberg & Joas, 2004). Within these networks, it is conceivable that groups may adopt a bureaucratic or a participative form of governance.

Multilevel governance may be viewed as being similar to the networks described above with one minor difference: some members of the network are not self-organizing since they were established under the auspices of federal, state, or local government, or some other influential entity, such as, a foundation. Nonetheless, they interact in a network fashion and discharge the role of governance described above. So then, multilevel governance can include self-organizing networks as well as quasi governmental groups (groups established under the auspices of government or government agencies) or groups established under the auspice of large foundations. Community Action Agencies would be good examples of community-based organizations established under the auspices of government, these agencies were established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

The relationship among the various concept of governance may be depicted as shown in Figure 1. Generic concepts describe the activities that are the focus of governance in general. Entities may operationalize these functions of governance either as a bureaucratic top-down or participative process. The actual operations of governance may be carried out by entities organized in a multi level governance or self organizing inter-organizational network structure.

What difference does it make which governance model a community or organization adopts to coordinate the production of goods and services? Many scholars of organizational theory believe that the particular form of governance process adopted by a particular entity affects its ability to adapt to changes in the environment in which it operates, or be responsive to the needs of the constituents it serves. Organizational theorists believe that organizations that adopt the perspective of governance as coordination and control — the bureaucratic regulatory model — are inflexible and unresponsive to their task environment.
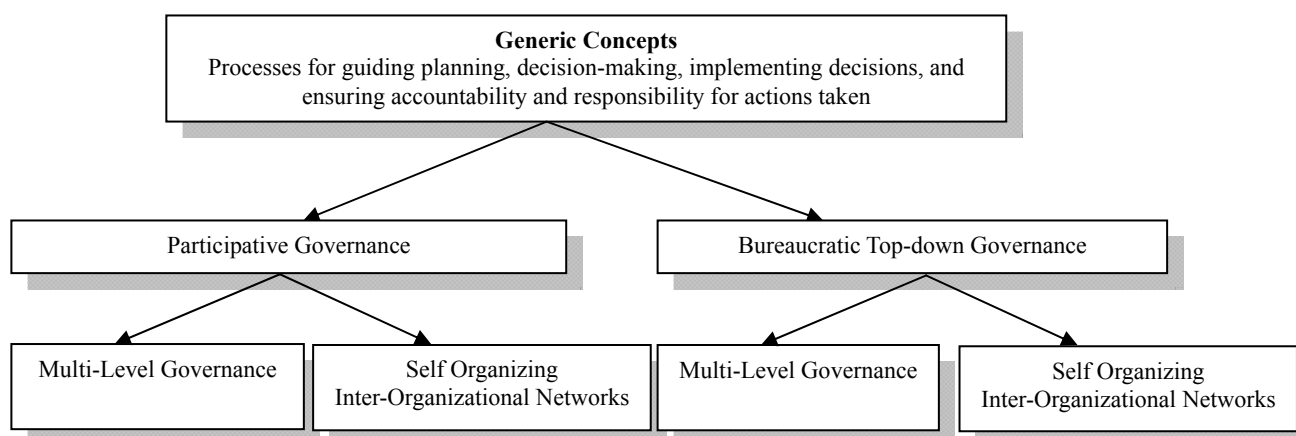

Figure 1   Schematic Representation of the Relationship Among Concepts, Process and Structure of Governance
Source: Own analysis, 2018

Bureaucratic organizations lack the participative culture that nurtures freedom, transparency, commitment, creativity and continuous learning among members. These qualities are indispensable for promoting participation, innovation and responsiveness in addressing complex diverse issues and the varied perspectives of an increasingly heterogeneous stakeholder — these are key capabilities for survival in a continually changing, complex and turbulent environment. Consequently, they determine the capacity of the organization or the community to adapt to its ever changing environment.

Globalization, the proliferation of communication possibilities, continual technological change, the easy movement of technology and capital across countries, and the need to reorder our relationship with the environment create unprecedented complexity and dynamism that require organizations to continually adjust and adopt. To survive, an organization by necessity must become participative, i.e., decision-making is decentralized; freedom, autonomy, trust, transparency and continual learning and creativity are nurtured. In this context, participative organization processes-freedom, autonomy, openness, learning and innovation — create the flexibility the organization needs to become an adaptive and open system, as opposed to becoming closed and rigid. As an open system, participative organizations develop a symbiotic relationship with the environment — influencing the environment and being influenced by it. The interface of the participative organization and the environment becomes the "focal point" of activity where the purpose and mission of the organization achieve meaning (Collier & Esteban, 1999). In this sense then, an organization achieves meaning when it responds adaptively to the needs existing in the environment, which includes not only the need for products but also for quality, service, non-invasive use of resources, collaborative partering with stakeholders and the participation of stakeholders in charting the course of the organization as wells as steering the organization on course. The central role of governance is to define purpose and chart a course for achieving the defined purpose. However, achieving purpose in a turbulent and dynamic environment is a function of adaptive capacity, and since adaptive capacity is a function of participative processes, then, the role of governance in a dynamic environment is to create conditions under which participative processes can take root and flourish. In the participative model of governance, trust, freedom, autonomy, creativity, and openness are the touchstones of participative governance. These principles enable an organization or community to deal effectively with complexity and change, and enable each community member to be vested in the participatory process.

Overarching Global forces such as trade liberalization, interconnectivity, access to mass information, emerging tension between modern and traditional cultures, continued rapid advances in technology and the massive infusion of technological innovations in our lives have created unfamiliar risks and uncertainties and have raised new issues and concerns at all levels of society. For instance, trade liberalization has occasioned ill defined risks for many enterprises. Their decision environment is no longer defined by their locality or even their national borders. It is defined by the global character of the specific industry of that enterprise. As Snyder (2007) writes, "trade liberalization poses unfamiliar risks and uncertainties for many enterprises. It also appears to be affecting the collective psychology of both blue collar and white-collar — especially males — who are increasingly unwilling to commit themselves to careers in fields that are likely to be subject to low-cost foreign competition" (p. 26). These emerging risks and uncertainties drive the momentum for organized local action to address concerns that citizens believe their leaders are powerless to address. Other emerging issues include the threat our social and industrial institutions pose to the ecological integrity of the earth, the rise of the sandwich generation, rising inequality within and among nations, corporate miss-governance and uncertainty surrounding the application of science and technology for generating solutions to our problems. These issues have begun to raise many concerns

and stir passionate debate among an increasingly diverse and reflective polity. As noted earlier, the old forms of democratic institutions are unable to fashion the heuristics needed to resolve these complex issues. According to Giddens, a deepening of democracy is required, because the antiquated mechanisms of government don't work in a society where the citizenry reside in the same information environment as those with authority over them. A reflective and proactive citizenry in an information rich environment realize that neither the church nor the state or other bulwarks of authority are omnipotent, and that leaders are more or less ordinary people. Consequently, citizens living in a global world assign less significance to the guidance of their leaders and institutions and have opted to become more self-regulating (Snyder, 2007). This desire to exercise "democratic independence" is the driving force behind the need for local autonomy as expressed through new forms of governance structures, and the need as well for more participative forms of governance.

3. Relevance and Utility of Participative Community Governance in the Current Context — Ethical Considerations

Governance as conceptualized in this paper entails a moral imperative (Collier & Esteban, 1999; Collier, 1998; Cludts, 1999; Chaskin & Garg, 1997). Collier (1998) argues that an organization is a moral agent not only in terms of the products it produces, but also with respect to purpose it seeks to fulfill and the processes it employs to attain that purpose, i.e., the end or goal of the organization as well as the means employed in pursuit of the purpose must be good, morally desirable and just. A key aspect of this ethical responsibility is recognizing the rights of citizens to have a measure of control over decisions that will have lasting impact on their lives (Chasking & Garg, 1997), and ensuring that the values and preferences embodied in society's policies align more closely with the values existing in the wider society (Rydin & Pennington, 2000). Additionally, the freedom and creativity fostered in a participative model of governance is the core of ethical of governance. MacIntyre (1984) argues that "practice" produces "moral" goods that are internal to practice. A sort of intrinsic "moral" product that is realized only from the effort of people (*or, organizations)* working cooperatively. MacIntyre specifies practice in this sense to mean a socially established cooperative endeavor. As individuals work cooperatively in pursuing standards of excellence appropriate for the particular endeavor, they learn from each other in systematic ways that enhance human power to achieve excellence and human understanding of the ends and goods involved. From this perspective, the outcomes of consensus building described by Innes and Booher (1998) and (1999) could be described as goods internal to practice, i.e., goods intrinsic to the particular endeavor, accessible only through cooperative participation in the specific endeavor. Such goods according to Innes and Booher (1998, 1999) include: social capital — trust and long term relationships; intellectual capital — mutual understanding, shared perspective of the problem, and agreed upon data; political capital — the ability to work together for agreed ends; high-quality agreements and innovative strategies. These are moral products, given that they lead to the development of the capacities of individuals and groups to work together to achieve ends that are good.

A community operates in a dynamic and complex environment, where there are diverse stakeholders holding and championing a wide range of views based on their value positions. Consequently, in the practice of participative governance, there will always be a diversity of views and values. But because there are no overarching moral principles that inform all judgments, allowing one value system to be judged as superior to the other, organizations employing the participative governance model must become "communities of discernment" where freedom and creativity are focused on searching for what is right and just in an atmosphere of conflicting

value positions (Collier & Estaban, 1999; Cludts, 1999). To resolve conflict and reach a consensus in such instances, Habermas (1993) suggests the development of appropriate search procedures for communal discernment that will enable the attainment of consensus without converting any group to the value position of other groups.

Pruzan and Thyssen (1990) argue for devising a political culture where consensus can be achieved on ethical issues. From their perspective, all stakeholders would be involved in a dialogue geared to reaching a compromise acceptable to everyone. One important result of this dialogue is the emergence of ethical rules from dialoguing that will guide decision-making and action going forward. Pruzan and Thyssen believe that governance that is based on top-down bureaucratic style of decision making, or strict conventional democratic management, (voting as a basis for decision-making) may not produce sustainable solutions. They argue that voting and top-down decisions may produce unethical decisions and would also fail to achieve the commitment, responsibility for, and identification with the results of decisions arrived at through consensus building. So then, a participative style of governance has the potential to bring many diverse stakeholders together in building commitment through dialogue and consensus in situations where there are many diverse stakeholders with conflicting values and interests, and where solutions to many complex problems require the consideration and synthesis of many different perspectives and worldviews. In a protean environment of great diversity of interests and values, community-based organizations embracing the practice participative governance may be viewed as champions for and coordinators of the interests of stakeholders.

3.1 Relevance and Utility of Participative Community Governance in the Current Context — Complex Social Problem Solving

From a general theoretical perspective, the complexity of problem situations may be thought of as lying on a continuum (Wooley & Pidd, 1981). At one end are well-defined problem situations with goals that can be clearly identified along with methods for determining satisfactory solutions. At the other end are messy situations. According to Ackoff (1974), messy problems are typified by interrelated problems that interact among each other. As a result, they are not separable into simpler problems. These problems have conflicting goals, and it is difficult to tell when a satisfactory solution to the problem has been produced. Between these two extreme situations are very complex problem situations, or what Churchman (1967) calls "wicked situations". In these situations, problems might not have conflicting goals but it is not possible to conceptualize them in a unique manner, and they do not have well defined solution conditions — the situations favorable to their resolution and procedures for finding a solution are not well specified (Dunn, 1994; George, 1994). Many of the issues and situations of concern facing communities and community-based organizations in the current global context could be classified as complex problems or wicked problems.

A basic proposition is that a problem is a social construct — an abstraction derived from a "problem situation" through the interaction of people with that situation. A natural corollary of this proposition is that different individual observers or groups will tend to view the same problem situation differently. This is because the view of the problem situation held by the individual or group is a function of differences in their experience, culture, worldview, education, and values. Thus, there are likely to be as many representations of the problem as there are stakeholders with different experience, worldview, education and values associated with a "problem situation". In solving complex problems, there is always the danger of committing a Type III error. A Type III error is committed when a problem is formulated based on a representation of the problem situation that is incorrect, incomplete, or inappropriate (George, 1994). When this situation occurs, solutions are developed that

target the wrong problem. According to George, an incorrect representation of a problem fails to recognize any of the elements making up the problem situation. For example, defining the problem situation of poverty as resulting from the religious beliefs of those experiencing poverty would be an incorrect representation of the problem of poverty. On the other hand, an incomplete representation ignores several elements of the problem situation of poverty, if we attribute poverty to just laziness of those experiencing poverty. Finally, an inappropriate representation fails to consider elements of the problem situation important to the targeted stakeholders (poverty is caused by lack of political savvy). The occurrence of a Type III error in planning or problem solving is due primarily to incomplete or inappropriate representations of the problem rather than an incorrect one (George, 1994).

From the above discussion it follows that neglecting to include a wide enough range of views or perspectives on the problem situation could lead to a wrong formulation of the problem, and the consequent development of solutions that target the wrong problem. Participatory governance by including and empowering stakeholders to become involved in the decision making process reduces the likelihood of committing a Type III error. In so doing, it has the potential to reduce costly mistakes involving the misallocation of resources, thus ensuring a better fit between formulated solutions and the problem they are intended to fix.

It should be noted that participatory governance for its own sake is not a panacea. To reap the benefits of stakeholder participation in problem solving and issue resolving, participatory governance must be implemented with full commitment to ethical principles discussed previously. In today's environment of dynamic change and diversity, participatory governance is capable of bringing diverse stakeholders together in a context of mutual commitment where differences are acknowledged and respected, and continually inspire action that strives for a "ethical consensus" through dialogue — a consensus born of ethical rules intrinsic to dialoguing. Through dialogue, people come to understand and accept that there are other points of view besides their own, and they work out rules among themselves to conduct the search for consensus. Thus, the dialogue is not regulated from rules derived from some external standards or authority. Collier and Esteban puts it this way "Participatory organizations are also grounded by a more foundational responsibility, a deep commitment of each member to the good of the 'other' whose very existence defines her own 'self' and with whom she shares a commitment to the overall task. The recognition of and respect for 'otherness' is an ethical 'glue' which in affirming difference strengthens integration and participation" (p. 183). finally, stakeholder participation enables planners and policy makers to capture unique knowledge about community problems and issues, and ensuring that the values and preferences embodied in society's policies align more closely with the values existing in the wider society (Rydin & Pennington, 2000).

4. Governance Structures and Community Problems: The Perspective of Black Belt Region (BRR) CBOs

Following Bowles and Gintis (2000) we define community-based organizations as nonprofit civic entities that are locally controlled; whose mission is to serve a particular constituency that is tied to a defined locality. These entities comprise groups of people who interact directly, frequently and in multi-faceted ways to deliver service to their constituency. CBOs are an integral part of good governance since they tackle and address problems that neither the individual acting alone or governments and markets are able to handle (Bowles & Gintis, 2000).

As CBOs discharge their governance functions their actions are influenced by their values. In this context, a value is a system of culturally derived principles that guides action. It is an emotive force whose genesis lies in one's lived experience. If these values prove successful in guiding action they will be cherished and internalized as part of a coherent system that steer future reaction to stimuli in one's environment. As values and beliefs of a group motivate successful behavior and promote good relationships among group members, they will be shared by members as the right way to get things done. Over time, with continued reinforcements, these values and beliefs become taken for granted and evolve into deeply held assumptions about how to think, feel and act (Schein, 2004). These working assumptions become what Schein calls "nonnegotiable values," which may be thought of as the underlying core of organizational culture. As a set of shared nonnegotiable values becomes taken for granted, it determines a good deal of the group's behavior. Shared rules standards of conduct, and ways of doing things evolve from these assumptions (Schein, 2004). Zdenek (1998) indicates that culture (the valued assumptions) shapes the features and practices of nonprofits which include: the mission, philosophy, service culture, structures and processes. Ott (1989) suggests that there are three strong determinants of organizational culture: the culture of the society in which the organization resides in the nature of its business and its environment, and the basic assumptions of its founders or early leaders. As discussed earlier, state and market failure create a socio-political space for CBOs to become engaged in providing goods and services for those not served by the state or market. Also as noted earlier, a more reflective and proactive citizenry in an information rich environment assign less significance to the guidance of their leaders and institutions, and have opted to become more self-regulating. Thus, these factors create fertile opportunities for charismatic civic minded individuals with a sense of social justice to found CBOs.

Given that CBOs operate essentially in the shadow of state and market failure, and given the motivation of likely founders, it is reasonable to presume that their mode of operation would be less impersonal and would be imbued more with compassion, a strong sense of social justice and a drive to get things done. In a sense, CBOs tend to be less concerned with intensive study and detailed analysis of the problem. On the ground, these values would translate into a sense of equity, sensitivity to community problems, advocacy, inclusion, transparency and problem oriented action. To make a comparison, one could argue that the core value of a university is to advance the discipline.   In contrast, community partners are action oriented. They are concerned with finding remedies rather than diagnoses of the problem at hand (Savan, 2004). In short, the university is viewed as having disciplines, while communities have problems (Kellogg Commission, 2000) that require urgent action.

5. Research Expectation/Hypotheses.

In this study our purpose is to (1) describe the issues and problems from the perspective of CBOs in the BBR, and (2) to review the governance structure BBR CBOs employ to organize action to address the problems and resolve the issues. The Black Belt Region comprises 642 counties where persistent poverty continues to be a chronic problem (Wimberley & Morris, 1995; Allen Smith J. E., Wimberley R. C. & Morris L. V., 2000; Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 2002; Tuskegee University, 2003). The region's performance on key indicator of socioeconomic wellbeing is well be below that of the national average (see Table 1). This includes such indicators as per capita income, education, birth weight, housing, and unemployment. Albrecht (1998) points out that the transformation from employment in the goods producing sector to employment in the service sector is having a number of major impacts on the communities and residents of nonmetro America. With relatively lower levels of

education and skills, nonmetro residents earned reasonably good pay working in the goods producing industries. However, nonmetro residents are only able to get low paying jobs in the emerging service industry because they lack the level of education and skills to compete for higher paying jobs in that sector. Table 1 provides a summary of socioeconomic indicators in the BBR. Note that the BBR trails the national average on each indicator shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Relative Performance of BBR and Socio-economic Indicators

Indicators	BBR	National	Difference
Education (% of persons 25 and older without high school diploma)	27.7%	19.6%	40%
Low Birth Weight (per 1000 births 1996-1998)	95.7	74.8	25%
Disease (death rate per 100,000 persons from cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.	17%*	10%	70%
Housing (% of people living in a mobile home)	24.9%	7.6%	22.8%
Unemployment	7.1%	5.8%	22%
Per Capita Income	$16,049	$21,587	$5,500

Source: Carl Vinson Institute of Government.
*Diabetes and cardiovascular disease

With regards to the perspectives of CBOs on the problems and issues, we offer the following proposition. To the extent that CBOs represent the values of their community, embrace the principles of participative governance, are problem focused and action oriented, we would expect CBOs operating in the BBR to address a different portfolio of problems from that prosecuted by CBOs elsewhere in the country, because of the imperatives of their working environment (poor socioeconomic conditions). Furthermore, we would expect that programming action would be highly specific in targeting the most basic needs of their constituents, considering the prevailing conditions of persistent poverty.

Regarding prevailing governance structures, we would expect to find a wide variety of structures because of the complex nature of the problem of poverty, the tendency for individuals and communities to embrace different perspectives of the problem, and the increasing tendency for a more reflective citizenry, with a variety of world views, to take autonomous action to address chronic problems in the face of state and market failure. We would expect CBOs as they come into existence to fall along a continuum based on the degree to which the founding members embrace the principles of participation, representation, legitimacy, and connection with the community. At one end of the continuum would be proprietary type organizations with self-renewing boards initiated and controlled by a single individual or groups of individuals. They serve the community but with little input from the community in terms of participation, representation, and connection to the community. Here, connection to the community implies representing the values of the community through advocacy, providing feedback, and establishing channels of communication to facilitate two-way flow of information as a means of building a repository of unique knowledge about community affairs and functioning. At the other end of the continuum would be membership organizations initiated by individuals or a group of individuals, government or a corporate entity, but with community participation via election of the governing board, and wider community input in program planning. The key component of participation is community in put in program planning — collaboratively identifying and organizing response to problem situations. The principles of participation, representation, connection and legitimacy are inextricably linked, since it is not likely to have bonafide representation beyond tokenism without participation. Likewise, legitimacy will be much reduced without

participation and representation, and close connection to the community, which fosters all three.

5.1 Data and Method

In this study we are interested in assessing CBOs perspectives on community development issues and problems and to describe the governance structures through which communities act to resolve issues, solve problems and provide goods and services not provided by the state or market. The study was implemented in two stages. The first stage involved conducting listening sessions in nine of the eleven Southeastern states in the BBR — Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. The second stage involved conducting a survey of CBOs.

We initiated the first stage by using key informants to identify and invite CBOs to attend listening sessions. This purposive approach enabled us to engage leaders of viable groups that were familiar with the issues and problems of their communities, and groups that were actively working to address issues of poverty in their communities. The primary purpose of the listening sessions was to collect rich data that would provide deep insight into the functioning of CBOs, and the challenges they encounter in prosecuting the mission of their respective organizations. Additionally, these listening sessions provided information that enabled us to develop a survey instrument with a higher degree of relevance and salience to the study population for the second stage of the study, the telephone survey of CBOs (Community Action Agencies). Table 2 provides a summary of participation in listening sessions.

Table 2   Listening Sessions Summary of Location and Participation

State and Location	Number of Participants
Alabama: Birmingham/Thomaston	18
Florida	5
Georgia: Darien/Sparta	17
Louisiana: Alexandria	12
Mississippi: Jackson	11
North Carolina: Rocky Mount	21
South Carolina:	8
Tennessee: Nashville	11
Texas: Longview/Tyler	26

Source: Listening Sessions analysis, 2018

For the second stage of the study we defined our population of CBOs as community action agencies (CAAs) in the eleven Southeastern Black Belt States. The Black Belt region (BBR) is defined as those states located in the Southeast where the African American population is 12 percent or greater (Wimberley & Morris, 1995; Allen Smith J. E., Wimberley R. C. & Morris L. V., 2000). We chose to use CAAs as our population of CBOs because they have a long operational history as a group, and they were specifically established by Federal mandate to address poverty, by engaging the community in the problem solving process. Additionally, an easily accessible data base was available, and they fit neatly the profile of CBOs as defined in this study. The states involved are: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. The sample frame for CAAs was obtained from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Web site http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/csbg/documents. We retrieved lists of CAAs for BBR states listed above and combined these into a single master roster containing 344 CAAs. Since the population size is a relatively small one, we decided to do a census instead of drawing a random sample from this small sample frame.

Since the list of CAAs had the business telephone of each agency we decided on conducting a telephone survey of the executive directors or their designees who are 18 years or older. Three individuals were recruited and trained on the instrument of the study to conduct the interviews.

5.2 Measures

To achieve our first objective — developing a description of community problems from the perspective CAAs — we measured the following variables:

*Challenges to community development: R*espondents were asked to rate 14 issues, derived from our listening sessions, on a seven-point scale as to the extent of the challenge they pose to community development. These issues were derived from the listening sessions mentioned above.

Structure of program portfolio: Respondents were asked to identify those problems or issues, from a list of 14 issues or problem, those that were included in their program portfolio for action. These problems were identified from our listening sessions conducted with CBOs.

The extent of satisfaction with budget authority: was measured on a five-point scale where (1) is very dissatisfied and (5) very satisfied. This variable was measured because we believed it will provide an indication of the ability of CAAs to expend funds to address emerging issues.

To meet or second objective — to review the governance structure BBR CBOs employ to organize action to address the problems and resolve issues — we measured the following variables:

Governance structure: We asked participants in the listening sessions to describe how their respective organizations were governed. This stimulatory question initiated a dialogue that produced rich data on the form, function and the practice of participative governance.

Based on information gathered on governance from the listening sessions, we also assessed the extent to which CAAs embrace and practice participative governance. In this regard the following variables were measured:

Level of community engagement: This variable was measured using thee items measured on a five point scale, where (1) is none at all and (5) a great deal. The three items are; (a) advocates for community and clients, (b) assist community to identify problems and (c) organize community to respond to problems.

Extent to which CAAs represent the values of the community: We measured this on a five point scale similar to the one we used to measure the level of community engagement.

As noted earlier, we used the listening sessions described above to identify the issues and check the relevance and salience of concepts used in this study. Further, after developing the instrument we had two CAA leaders and a member of the management team of the survey laboratory review the instrument.

5.3 Analytical Strategy

Since this study is exploratory in nature, and our response rate was just about 41%, and because we did not draw a random sample, our analysis will focus on presenting mainly descriptive data on the variables of focus. Good description of phenomenon often preceded explanation, since it is difficult to develop good explanation before we know something about the phenomenon we wish to explain. We fully recognize that mere description loses its interest unless linked to some level of causal relationship that will give policy makers and practitioners a measure of control in predicting and influencing important outcomes. There is ongoing effort to improve the response rate that would improve our ability to employ inferential techniques to enhance our analysis. We also recognized that the results of our analysis would only apply to the respondents in the sample and could not be generalized to the population with any reasonable degree of confidence. Nevertheless, the data can be used along

with comments from listening sessions to provide fairly reliable descriptions of CAAs programs.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Description of CAAs Perspective on Community Issues and Problems

Table 3 shows the program issues identified in listening sessions as important to communities in the Black Belt region, and the percentage of CAAs in our sample that include these issues in their program portfolios for action. The pattern of programming shown here indicates that a large percentage of CAAs implement programs that address the basic or survival needs of their clients. This finding is consistent with our hypothesis which posits that the condition of persistent poverty in the BBR

Table 3   Comparative Structure of Program Portfolio: Percentage of CAAs Offering Programs at BBR and National Levels

Programs	BBR n = 121	National n = 344
Housing — affordable housing	59%	46%
Health Services	60%	29%
Family Development — day care and other children's services	72%	68%
Senior Citizens' services	65%	-
Transportation	-	49%
Poverty Issues	77%	-
Job Training	61%	63%
Education — including adult literacy	56%	89%
Emergency Services Food — pantries, energy assistance, homeless shelters, domestic violence	-	91%
Food and Nutrition — Meals on Wheels, congregate feeding, food banks	-	84%
Community Coordination — Citizen participation, neighborhood and community organization, information and referrals	37%	94%

Source: Survey analysis, 2018

Carl Vinson Institute of Government (2002), will cause a larger proportion of CBOs (CAAs) to give higher priority to addressing those problems that speak directly to the basic survival needs of their constituents. As shown in Table 3 "emergency services" and "food and nutrition" programs are components of CAAs portfolio taken as a whole at the national level. We believe that CAAs in the BBR address many of the activities listed under "emergency services" and "food and nutrition" under the program area labeled as "poverty issues". 77% of CAAs provide programs that address issues related to poverty. Addressing poverty, providing health care and affordable housing are problem areas that hold special salience to individuals in the BBR, where persistent poverty is endemic. On the other hand, community coordination and education receive far less attention among CAAs in the BBR (see Table 3 above) than among CAAs taken a whole at the national level. These are instrumental issues; they do not have immediate direct impact on the survival of the individuals living in poverty as do the lack of housing or health care. In the long run, education and community coordination will equip individuals and communities to become productive and prosperous. But in the short run, they have no immediate effect in bringing relief from the lack of services that provide for the basic survival needs of the individual. Failure to address the lack of housing and health care could mean the difference between life and death for individuals affected by persistent poverty in the BBR.

These data offer support for our hypothesis that CAAs in the BBR will emphasize those issues that address

the basic survival needs of residents. Generally, in other areas such as children's services and job training (family development and employment training respectively — the labels used at the national) there seem to be little difference between the percentage of CAAs offering these programs at the BBR level and the percentage of CAAs offering them when taken as a whole at the national level.

In Table 4, the data show problem/issue areas that CAAs identified as challenges to development in their communities. These problem areas roughly mirror the areas identified in Table 1 by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (2002) as well as those areas CAAs report in Table 3 as being components of their program portfolio. If we take the ratings of 5 to 7 to mean a serious challenge to extremely challenging respectively, we note that a large percentage of CAAs report the following problems as serious to extremely challenging to community development: 90% CAAs report "employment opportunities limited to low wage jobs"; 88% CAAs report "lack of access to health care"; 86% report " lack of affordable housing"; 85% report "high adult literacy rate"; 81% report "poor transportation" and "drug abuse"; 77% and 76% of CAAs report "high rates of high school dropout" and "high rates of teen age pregnancies respectively. This pattern of data is consistent with the findings of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (2002) and the Tuskegee University (2003) regarding the endemic state of poverty in the BBR. For example, employment that is limited to low wage jobs and lack of economic vitality and low adult literacy rates would explain the lower per capita income in the BBR. Likewise, the high rates of obesity, lack of access to health care, and low adult literacy rates would, among other things, explain the higher rates of cardiovascular disease and diabetes in the BBR.

Table 4   Problem/ Issues in the BBR — CAAs' Perception of the Extent of the Challenge They Pose to Community Development

Issues	Percentage Response n = 121							
	Ratings: where (1) = no challenge and (7) = extremely challenging							
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**†**
Employ limited to low wage jobs	0.8	1.6	2.4	4.0	13.7	15.3	60.5	89.5
Lack of access to health care	1.6	0.8	3.2	6.5	25.8	23.4	38.7	87.9
Lack of economic vitality	1.6	1.6	2.4	5.6	15.3	18.5	54.0	87.8
Lack of affordable housing	1.6	0.8	4.0	8.1	15.3	24.2	46.0	85.5
Low adult literacy rate	0.0	4.0	1.6	9.7	20.2	24.2	40.3	84.7
High rate of drug abuse	1.6	1.6	3.2	12.1	17.7	21.8	41.9	81.4
Poor transportation service	2.4	4.0	6.5	6.5	16.1	30.6	33.9	80.6
High rate of high school dropout	0.8	1.6	9.7	8.9	22.6	24.2	29.8	76.6
High rates of obesity	3.3	4.1	5.7	11.4	21.1	26.0	28.5	75.6
High rates of teenage pregnancies	1.6	4.8	6.5	10.5	21.0	28.2	25.8	75.0
Poor environmental quality	8.1	8.1	8.1	17.7	25.0	15.5	16.1	56.6
Loss of small family farms	16.1	9.7	17.7	15.3	12.9	19.4	8.1	40.4
Poor quality water supply	9.7	8.9	17.7	23.4	20.2	12.1	8.1	40.4
Poor sewage disposal	12.1	8.1	16.9	25	17.7	12.1	7.3	37.1

Source: Survey analysis, 2018
†   Total of category 5, 6 and 7.

The pattern of data in Table 4 reveals a number of noteworthy features: (1) Even though many economists indicate that unemployment rate is low and the economy continues to grow, 89% of CAAs in the BBR see the lack of well paying jobs as a serious challenge to economic development. In the listening sessions, participants argue

that unemployment is not the problem; the problem is a lack of jobs that provide a livable wage. This observation by participants is consistent with the literature on patterns of employment in nonmetro areas. As noted earlier, many rural residents do not have the skills to benefit from high paying employment opportunities in the emerging service economy. As a result, they are only able to take advantage of the low wage jobs in the emerging service sector. (2) Table 4 reveals that CAAs perceive many more problems as serious to extremely challenging to community development than they report as being addressed as part of a program of action, for example, high rates of drug abuse, poor transportation service, high rates of high school dropout, high rates of obesity and high rates of teenage pregnancies. Additionally, a larger percentage of CAAs report affordable housing, adult literacy, health services and job training as a more serious challenge to extremely challenging to community development than report these problems as part of their program of action. This discrepancy between what problems are perceived as posing a serious challenge to community development, and those problems that are actively addressed through a program of action, may be due to a lack of financial resources, deficient technical expertise, inability to attract funding, restrictive budget authority, and asymmetry in world view at the board and executive levels.

6.2 Governance Structure

Table 5   Typology and Description of Governance Structures

Typology	Descriptive Comments
Proprietorships	Autonomous groups founded by a charismatic individual or group of like minded individuals. This is the most basic unit or building block of governance structures — the autonomous CBO. Community participation is limited to board members selected by founding members from the community. Boards are self-renewing. Connections to the community are made via news letters, consultation with community leaders, needs assessments, and through special community informants. An example of this would be North Carolina Coalition of Farm Families and the Black Belt Community Foundation
Collaboratives	An affiliation of autonomous community-based organizations agreeing to work together to address community development issues by leveraging and pooling resources. An example is the Rural Georgia Development Collaborative. Connection to the community is made through individual members, news letters, consultations, needs assessments and community informants.
Umbrella Groups	A type of membership organization that offers service to fee paying members. Member organizations are autonomous CBOs which pursue their own programmatic interests. Umbrella organizations are usually well funded and staffed with professionals. An example would be the Nonprofit Resource Centre of Alabama (NRCA).
Representative	In these organizations, the governing body is comprised of representatives from the community selected on the basis of demographic and or geographic criteria. A certain proportion of the board may be elected at large by the community served, other positions are appointed ex officio, based on demographic criteria. Community action agencies (CAAs) are examples of this model.
The Barber Shop Model	A group of concerned individuals agreeing to organize themselves to address a pressing problem, usually without a commitment to establish an organization as a "going concern". These are transient entities or "on demand" entities that come into existence for the expressed purpose of addressing a pressing problem. As soon as the problem is resolved the group disappears. The barber shop metaphor indicates that the genesis of such transient groups occur where people have an opportunity to interact informally.

The data in Table five was condensed from comments and observation gleaned from listening sessions. This typology is not exhaustive. There may be many structures in existence among CBOs that differ in varying degrees from our typology presented here. The data has limitations, because participants in the listening sessions were not selected randomly. Therefore, the data may not be truly representative of the prevailing types of governance structures existing in the BBR, when viewed in the strictest scientific sense. However, we believe that the models and comments offer a good picture of the existing situation, since the information came from participants who

were purposively selected for their knowledge of the CBO sector in the BBR. The description provided above represents governance structures at the micro level or the level of the organization. At the macro or community level, umbrella groups and collaboratives would represent self organizing inter-organizational networks, while CAAs would represent a network of governance structures established under the auspices of the government. All of these organizations, represent one dimension of multi-level governance — governance at the community level, which may operate collaboratively or independently of federal, state or local governments.

At the micro level, it may prove useful to view these models along a "theoretical" evolutionary scale, where the "barber shop model" evolves into the "proprietary model", which evolves into "collaboratives", collaboratives, in turn, evolve into a representative type of "umbrella-groups". This theoretical depiction of the evolutionary process of governance structures, represents an increasing level of community participation; participation that evolves from mere consultation and solicitation of information to increasing degrees of community involvement and community connection.

6.3 Participative Governance Among CAAs

Tables 6 and 7 present descriptive statistics for the variables we believe indicate the levels at which CAAs engage their communities in the governance process. In Table 6, it is clear that CAAs are very much involve in representing the values of their communities, in being advocates for their communities, in assisting communities to identify problems, and in organizing their communities to respond to problems (the mean score on these measures range from 4.3 to 4.61 on a scale of 5).

Table 6   Descriptive Statistics for Indicator Variables of Degree of Participation

Variables	Mean	Max	Std. Deviation	N
Extent to which organization represents values of community in its programs	4.61	5	.663	121
Extent to which organizations are advocates for community and clients	4.64	5	.654	124
Extent to which organizations assist community in identifying problems	4.52	5	.692	124
Extent to which your organizations organize community to respond to problems	4.30	5	.855	124
How satisfied you are with your budgetary authority to adapt funding to address emerging problems	3.23	5	1.273	123

Source: Survey analysis, 2018

CAAs' level of connection and engagement with the community indicate that they are well informed about community problems. The findings of our listening sessions, the findings of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and that of Tuskegee University support CAAs' perspectives on the problems in the BBR. These finding provide support for the commonly held view that CBOs are reliable repositories of knowledge about their communities. In general the close connection of CBOs with their communities suggests that policy makers and planners should intensify their efforts to find meaningful ways to engage CBOs in the planning and policy-making process. CAAs' low satisfaction with their budgetary authority 3.2 on a scale of 5, where 2 is dissatisfied and 4 satisfied — may be reflecting the discrepancies that exist between what they see as challenges to community development (Table 4) and the problems they are able to address through budget provisions (Table 3). In other words, CAAs feel stymied in their efforts to address problems they view as holding back community development, because of budgetary restrictions (categorical funding).

In Table 7 below describes the relationship among the variables we used to indicate the closeness of connection between CAAs and their communities.

Table 7 Ivariate Correlations among Indicator Variable of Community Engagement (n = 121)

Attributes	Extent to which organization represents community values in programs	Advocates for community	Assists community to identify problems
Advocates for community	0.334 (**)	1.00	
Assist s community to identify problems	0.328 (**)	0.477 (**)	1.00
Organizes community to respond to problems	0.344 (**)	0.471 (**)	0.668 (**)

Source: Survey analysis, 2018
**Pearson correlations significant at the .000 level

We note that note the extent to which CAAs represent the values of their communities is positively correlated with CAAs' level of advocacy on behalf of their communities(r = .334), the degree to which CAAs assist communities identify their problems (r = .328) and the extent to which CAAs are involved in organizing communities to respond to these problems (r = .334). These results are consistent with the notions of a responsive and participative style of governance, since CAAs or any CBO that purport to represent the values of their communities in their programs will engage in activities that advocate for community concerns, help communities identify problems and organize communities to address their problems. Further support for the participative orientation to governance among CAAs is found in the moderate positive correlations between the variables "advocating for the community" and "assisting the community to identify problems" (r = .477) and "organizing the community to respond to problems" (r = .471), see Table 7. Finally, the moderately strong correlation (Newton and Rudestam, 1999) between the variable "assisting communities to identify problems" and "organizing them to respond to problems" (r = .668) is further evidence that CAAs practise a holistic participatory approach to governance that goes beyond the tokenism of consultation and the ad hoc town hall meeting, often used to legitimize a plan after it has been conceived by elite planners and policy makers. Saxton (2005) describes this approach as providing input and being heard. We believe these findings are an indication that CAAs are responding to the demands of a more reflective citizenry for active involvement in resolving problems and issues that affect them directly. A more reflective and better informed citizenry wants to be active agents of their own development. We concur with Saxton (2005) that participation must move beyond current practice of including employee, clients, customers or stakeholders in operational decision making. We believe that real participation should be strategic instead of being operational. In this sense, the organization is thinking holistically by envisioning the relationship between the various components of the organization and its environment, and positioning itself to take advantage of emerging opportunities to serve its clients. Finally, to be strategic means truly reflecting the values of those it purports to serve, since it positions the organization to respond to the needs of the community it purports to represent (Graetz, 2002). Reflecting the values of the community served, ensures that the organization meets the moral and ethical imperative, which, in part, stipulates that the design of fair and equitable policies and programs must be informed by the values, needs, priorities and concerns of the individuals and families they will affect (Chaskin & Garg, 1997).

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The evidence presented in this paper tends to support the view that poverty still persist in the Black Belt Region of the Southeastern United States, despite the efforts of several agencies to improve the quality of life for residents in this region. Table 3 shows that the program portfolio of CAAs in the Southeast or Black Belt states

differ from programs that CAAs, taken as a whole, offer nationally. In the Southeast, a greater percentage of CAAs tend to emphasize programs that address the basic needs of their clients (health care, affordable housing, transportation and poverty issues) when compared to CAAs taken as a group at the national level. Even though the evidence is based largely on the self reports of CAAs, and listening sessions conducted with a broader base of CBOs operating in the Southeast, and notwithstanding the limitations of the data, we believe we can say with a fair degree of confidence that the results reflect the situation on the ground, because other studies have reported similar findings. For example, the findings of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (2002) report "Dismantling Persistent Poverty in the South", Tuskegee University (2003) report "Persistent Poverty in the South A community-Based Perspective" and the Chesterfield-Marlboro Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (2007) "Community Assessment".

Poverty is a very complex system of problems, comprised of many interacting sub problems, which are not separable into simpler problems. Further, it is not possible to conceptualize a complex problem, such as poverty, in a unique manner. Additionally, poverty and similar complex problems do not have well defined solution conditions — the situations favorable to their resolution and procedures for finding a solution are not well specified (Dunn, 1994; George, 1994). Yet, instead of adopting a systems approach to addressing the problem of poverty, the tendency is to reduce the problem to its component parts and deal with each separately, as if each part is separate and unrelated to the other. As a result, while progress is made in one area, others may lie fallow and impede or make progress difficult to achieve in other areas.

This fragmented approach may explain the persistence of poverty in the Southeastern United States, because overall success in alleviating poverty depends on the achievement of measured progress in several areas simultaneously. For example, in our listening sessions we learned that providing jobs alone will not suffice in relieving the difficulties of poverty. Many individuals were placed in jobs but could not keep these jobs because of lack of transportation, health care, and affordable housing. Participants argued that the first call on the wage of these disadvantage individuals is paying the rent. And after this is done, there is hardly any money left for paying for transportation to get to work, or to pay for basic health needs. Consequently, these individuals aren't able to get to work on time, or they miss work because of simple illnesses. Eventually, such individuals are not able to keep their jobs, because of tardiness and absenteeism. Another example, drawn from the experience of CBOs in Greensboro North Carolina, will illustrate the application of a holistic approach to addressing a complex problem. In responding to the call to resettle survivors of hurricanes Rita and Katrina, the Greensboro Crisis Resolution Council brought together a number of CBOs to develop a plan to service the needs of the survivors. After initial discussions, groups were assigned to provide service to the survivors based on their expertise. But it was soon realized that a better and more effective approach was to, as they put it, "provide a complete care-team" or a "one-stop shop" where each individual could receive service that address all their needs, without having the survivors visit multiple service providers to have their needs met. As these examples demonstrate, policy makers need to promote an integrative or collaborative approach to problem solving. Additionally, collaborative problem solving should be based on information gathered firsthand from those who are affected by the problem to be solved. We would recommend the adoption, in concept, of the Greensboro Crisis Resolution Council model to bring CBOs together in a collaborative framework to address poverty issues at the community level in the Southeast. Policy makers should attempt to provide a comprehensive care team to address the needs of communities faced with persistent poverty.

Table 4 shows discrepancies between the focus of CAAs' program portfolio and what they perceive to be

challenges to the development of their communities. This discrepancy may be due to the categorical nature of the state and federal support CAAs receive, the preferences of private funding agencies and the dynamics of CAAs' decision making process. To address this discrepancy, we would recommend a more flexible and responsive approach be taken in funding CAAs programs, and in the budgeting of funds to meet emerging needs of communities. Funding and budget flexibility would make it possible for CAAs to respond to current conditions on the ground. Additionally, CAAs' boards should adopt a more systematic approach to decision making, which would remove, or reduce the impact of personal preferences or ideologies on the decision making process.

Finally, participative and collaborative approaches are new ways of working together to solve problems that demand adjustments from all parties involved, as well as the development of new skills and attitudes. Even though such skills and attitudes may be acquired through experience, we believe that CAAs should train their board and staff and community agents in collaborative problem solving and participatory techniques.

References

Ackoff (1974). *Redesigning the Future: A systems Approach to Societal Problems*, Wiley & Sons, New York.

Banyan Margaret E. (2004). "Wiring organizations for community governance: Characteristics of high organizational citizenship", *Administrative Theory &Praxis*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 325-344.

Bass.Samuel L. (2007). *Chesterfield-Marlboro Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. 2006 Community Assessment*, Chesterfield-Marlboro Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.

Bowles Samuel and Gintis Herbert (2000). *Social Capital and Community Governance*, University of Massachusetts.

Bennett F. and M. Roberts (2004). *From Input to Influence: Participatory Approaches to Research and Inquiry into Poverty*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Brown David L., Khagram Sanjeev, Moore Mark H. and Frumkin Peter (200). *Governance in a Globalizing World*, Nye Joseph S. and Donahue John D. Cambridge (Eds.), Massachusetts: Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Carl Vinson Institute of Government (2002). *Dismantling Persistent Poverty in the South*, University of Georgia.

Chaskin Robert J. and Garg Sunil. *The Issue of Governance in Neighborhood-based Initiatives*.

Churchman C. W. (1967). "Wicked problems", *Management Science*. Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 141-142.

Cludts S. (1999). "Organization theory and ethics of participation", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 21, pp. 157-171.

Collier J. (1998). "Theorizing the Ethical Organization", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 621-654.

Collier J and Esteban R. (1999). "Governance in the participative organization: Freedom, creativity and ethics". *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 21, pp. 173-188.

Dun W. N. (1994). *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction* (2nd ed.), Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice Hal.

Freeman R and Gilbert R. (1992). "Business, ethics and society: A critical agenda", *Business and Society*, Vol. 31, No. 1.

Freeman R. (1994). "The politics of stakeholder theory: Some future directions", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4.

Fung Archon and Wright Erik Olin. (2001). "Deepening democracy: Innovations in empowered participatory governance", *Politics & Society*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 5-41.

Giddens A. (2003). *Runaway World*, New York: Routledge.

Graetz Fiona (2002). "Strategic thinking versus strategic planning: Towards understanding the complementarities", *Management Decision*, Vol. 40, No. 5, pp. 456-462.

Gronbjerg K. and Smith R. S. (199). "Nonprofit organizations and public policies in the delivery of human services", in: C. T. Clotfelter & T. Ehrlich (Eds.), *Philanthropy and Nonprofit Sector in a Changing America*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Habermas J. (1993). *Justification and Application*, translated by Ciaran Cronin, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Hooghe L. and Marks G. (2003). "Unraveling the Central state, but how? Types of multi-level governance", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, pp. 233-243

Innes J. E. and Booher D. E. (1999). "Consensus building and complex adaptive systems: A framework for evaluating collaborative planning", *American Planning Association,* Vol. 65, No. 4, p. 412.

Johansson Per Olov. (1991). *An Introduction To Modern Welfare Economics*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kofman Fred and Senge Peter (1993). "Communities of commitment: The heart of learning organizations", *Journal of Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 5-23.

Kamarck Elaine Ciulla (2000). *Governance in a Globalizing World*, Nye, Joseph S. and Donahue, John D. (Eds.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Kellogg Commission (2000). *Renewing the Covenant: Learning, Discovery, and Engagement in a New Age and Different World*, Washington DC: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

Macintyre Alasdair (1984). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (2nd ed.), University of Notre Dame Press.

National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (2000). *Successful Models Community-Based Participatory Research*, Edited by L.R. O'Fallon, F. L.

Newton Rae R. and Rudestam Kjell Erik (1999). *Your Statistical Consultant*, Sage Publications Inc..

Nutt Paul C. (1984). "Types of organizational decision processes", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 414-450.

Nye Joseph S. and Donahue John D. (Eds.) (2000). *Governance in a Globalizing World*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D. C.

Ott J. S. (1989). *The Organizational Cultural Perspective*, Belmont, California: Dorsey Press.

Ready C. Richard, Janis Malzubris and Siva Senkane (2002). "The relationship between environmental values and income in transition economy, surface water quality in Latvia", *Environment and Development Economics*, Vol. 7, pp. 147-156.

Rhodes R. A. W. (1996). *The New Governance: Governing without Government*, Political Studies Association, Blackwell Publishers.

Rosenau James N. (1997). *The Complexities and Contradictions of Globalization*, in: Annual Editions: Global Issues 05/06, Robert M. Jackson (Ed.), California State University.

Rydin and Pennington (2000). "Public participation and local environmental planning: The collective action problem and the potential of social capital", *Local Environment*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 153-169.

Saxton Gregory D. (2005). "Participatory revolution in nonprofit management", *The Public Manager*, Spring 2005.

Savan B. (2004). "Community-university partnerships: Linking research and action for sustainable community development", *Community Development Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 372-384.

Schein E. H. (2004). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, California: Jossey-Bass.

Snyder David Pearce. (2004). "5 meta-trends changing the world", in: *Annual Editions: Global Issues* 06/07, Robert M. Jackson (Ed.), California State University.

Stiglits J. E. (2002). *Globalization and Its Discontents*, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.

Tuskegee University (2003). *Persistent Poverty in the South A community-Based Perspective*, Tuskegee, AL.

Wheatley M. (1994). *Leadership and the New Science*, Berret-Koehler Publications, San Francisco.

Wimberley Ronald and Morris Libby V. (1997). *The Southern Black Belt: A National Perspective*, Lexington, KY: TVA Rural Studies.

Wooley Robert N. and Pidd Michael (1981). "Problem structuring: A literature review", *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 197-206.

Zdenek R. (1998). "Organizational culture and nonprofits", *Public Administration and Management*, Vol. 3, No. 3.