

**Leadership, Organization, and Action:  
Understanding Public Recognition of Civic Associations**

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### **Abstract**

This paper proposes a new approach to understanding why some civic associations achieve greater public recognition than others. Previous research has focused primarily on variation in community context and resources as explanatory factors. In contrast, this paper focuses on the relationship of internal organizational practices to public recognition. We draw on a unique 2003 study of 182 local Groups of the Sierra Club, a national environmental organization, to explicate this approach. We show that Groups that deploy their resources through a broad program of activities have higher levels of perceived public recognition. The level of program activity is related to the size and skill development of the leadership team, the number of committed activists, and the extent of activities designed to enhance organizational capacity.

Civic associations have historically played a central role in American politics. Yet, although scholars have long sought to understand why some civic associations are more successful in the public arena than others (e.g. Truman 1951; Salisbury 1969; Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Walker 1991), research and theory in this area remains somewhat disjointed (Baumgartner and Leech 1998). Most existing research explains the public outcomes of civic associations primarily in terms of factors external to these organizations—namely, the access they have to resources and/or political opportunities. These explanations ignore the unique character of civic associations. Civic associations are distinguished from other types of organizations by three characteristics: they have a voluntary membership, the voluntary leadership is elected and acts without any coercive tools of authority (unlike employers who can threaten employees with pay cuts or job loss), and the goal of the organization is to provide its members with collective voice in the public arena (Wilson 1973).

Scholars often separate the study of the public outcomes of civic associations from the study of the role these organizations play in promoting civic engagement. Civic associations serve two critical purposes in American democracy: they both advocate for particular policy outcomes and engage people in civic activity. Some scholars have examined the critical role civic associations play in engaging people in collective activity and generating social capital (e.g. Skocpol 2003; Putnam 2000; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson 2000; Schier 2000). Other scholars have focused on how associations influence policy or electoral outcomes. Within political science, this study of public outcomes has focused largely on lobbying activities among professionalized interest groups (e.g. Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Grossman and Helpman 2001; Smith 1995). In separating these two strands of research, the potential relationship of civic engagement (the benefits of participation) to advocacy (the accomplishment of public recognition) has been largely ignored.

This paper brings these two research traditions together by focusing on the contribution of leadership, internal organization, and program activity to public recognition in civic associations. It is distinct from previous approaches to understanding public outcomes of civic associations in two important ways. First, it incorporates the role these associations play in generating civic engagement into

the study of public outcomes. In explaining public outcomes of civic associations, most studies focus primarily on the political environment, characteristics of inter-organizational networks, or resources as explanatory factors (e.g. Hansen 1991; Laumann and Knoke 1987; Hecllo 1978; Stigler 1971; Grossman and Helpman 2001; Bauer, Pool, and Dexter 1963; Kau and Rubin 1982; Heinz et al. 1997). These studies almost universally recognize the importance of resources (such as members and money) in generating more effectiveness in the public arena, but they provide no explanation for how these resources are translated into success. By considering the role civic associations play as Tocquevillian “schools of democracy,” we can develop a better understanding of how leaders strategically engage resources to affect public outcomes. Variations in how civic associations organize themselves internally, develop leadership, and focus on the development of organizational capacity affects their ability to deploy their resources effectively. We argue, thus, that internal organization and practices of civic associations affect how well they do in the public arena. In particular, we argue that several dimensions of organizational leadership and activity are related to public recognition: the size of the leadership team, the number of committed activists, the extent to which leaders learn civic skills, and the activities the leaders choose to undertake—in terms of the breadth and depth of programs they run and the kinds of activities they develop to enhance organizational capacity.

Second, instead of focusing on lobbying as a measure of success in public advocacy, this paper focuses on public recognition. Gamson (1990) argues that organizations seeking voice in the public arena can achieve two different forms of success: first, the distribution of new policy benefits to its members, or second, the recognition of the group as a “valid spokesman for a legitimate set of interests” (28). Most previous research has focused on the former dimension of success, by examining the ability of organized interests to win policy battles or pass legislation. This paper focuses more on the ability of the group to be recognized by people in positions of power as a spokesman for its constituency. Thus, this paper draws on a long tradition of scholarship that argues that a critical function of civic associations is to help citizens exercise voice in the political process. From de Tocqueville’s observations in 1835 to Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s seminal work in 1995, scholars have long recognized that a central goal of

political participation is to provide citizens with voice, or a chance to exert their opinions about political outcomes. Civic associations provide a venue through which citizens can strengthen their individual voices by combining with others in collective action. What does it mean for a civic association to have voice? In his classic work, Hirschman (1972) defines voice as the ability to express grievance and make claims on public leaders. Civic associations with voice, in other words, must be accorded public recognition when they make political claims.

To unpack the complicated relationships between internal organizational activities and the public recognition of civic associations, we draw on an original dataset studying the local entities of the Sierra Club, a major national environmental organization. This 2003 study, National Purpose, Local Action (NPLA), collected comprehensive information on the internal and external organizational practices and characteristics of 182 local groups of the Sierra Club.<sup>1</sup> Because the data characterize the local groups of one larger national organization, our analysis examines relative levels of public recognition among local Sierra Club Groups. Nonetheless, these local Groups are emblematic of other membership-based civic associations in ways discussed further in the paper. Thus, this study provides a unique opportunity to shed light on the relationship between public recognition and organizational leadership and activity in membership-based civic associations. By examining relative levels of public recognition among local Sierra Club groups, our goal is to demonstrate the importance of taking into account the dual functions civic associations play both as Tocquevillian schools of democracy and as advocacy organizations. Our central claim is that the work these associations perform as “schools of democracy” informs and supports the work they do in public advocacy—without considering both purposes, we cannot fully understand why some civic associations have higher levels of perceived public recognition than others.

### **Understanding Public Outcomes of Member-Based Civic Associations**

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<sup>1</sup> This paper draws only on part of the data from the NPLA study and describes only that part of the study. A description of the full study is available at [citation excluded to maintain anonymity during review].

Why are some civic associations more successful in the public arena than others? There are two main theories in existing literature on organized interests: opportunity structure theory and resource mobilization theory. Opportunity structure theory argues that the success of organized interests depends primarily on external, environmental factors. These scholars argue that favorable or unfavorable environmental conditions such as the availability of allies, the strength of opponents, the availability of resources, and opportunities that may exist explain patterns of organizational effectiveness (Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1998; Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McCarthy and Zald 1977). These studies have thus focused primarily on the context within which the group operates, and the relationships it has to key players. This includes studies of policy subsystems and iron triangles (Bernstein 1955; Hecl 1978; Lowi 1969), studies of direct congressional lobbying (Skocpol 1992; Kalt and Zupan 1984), and case studies of particular policy domains (Bauer, Pool, and Dexter 1963). Resource mobilization theory argues that success depends primarily on how many resources, in terms of money or people, an organized interest has. Perhaps the leading explanation for public success among interest groups focuses on the extent to which these groups can act as a source of information and money for legislators (Hansen 1991; Smith 1995; Grossman and Helpman 2001; Langbein 1993). Groups that can provide votes, money, and information about what voters want have the most influence over re-election minded legislators. As a result, studies of the power of PACs or the electoral activity of interest groups generally operationalize the strength of an interest group as the amount of money it is able to provide a legislator, or the number of members it claims in a particular geographic area (e.g. Jacobson 1999; Shipan and Lowry 2001). According to these theories of public success in civic associations, the most salient factors are the organization's political and civic context—whether it works in a politically supportive and civically active environment—and the amount of human and financial resources it can claim.

These theories have yielded rich insights, but they have two important limitations. First, although these theories recognize that an organization's resources can critically affect its public outcomes, they provide no explanation for how resources are translated into success in politics. How does an organization turn lots of money or many members into success in the public arena? Earlier scholarship

indicates that internal organizational practices and leadership can be key in answering this question (Wilson 1973; Key 1956; Moe 1980; Burns 1978). “To understand [how an organization behaves] it is necessary to examine the internal processes of organizations” (Wilson 1973, 9). Many organization theorists, in fact, have long recognized the importance of internal organizational factors in affecting the performance of different types of organizations (Selznick 1957; March and Simon 1958; Thompson 1959; Perrow 1986; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Weick 1969; Scott 1998). In relatively decentralized, representative, self-governing organizations like civic associations, leadership becomes especially important since leaders’ decision processes and the decisions they make have a larger impact on organizational effectiveness (Ganz 2000; Wilson 1973). In focusing primarily on resources and context, opportunity structure theories and resource mobilization theories have “black-boxed” the organization itself.<sup>2</sup> Without examining internal organizational practices, we have no sense of how civic associations translate their resources into success in the public arena. Examining internal organizational practices and the way civic associations operate as Tocquevillian schools of democracy can better inform our understanding of how they achieve public outcomes.

Second, existing theories are primarily applicable to legislative lobbying, particularly at the national level. This ignores other pathways for achieving public success. While winning policy battles is fundamental to achieving public success, securing ongoing recognition in the community and becoming a spokesperson for policy is also key (Gamson 1990). Similarly, public success is won not only in legislatures, but also in the courts, the media, and in setting the public agenda (Burstein, Einwohner, and Hollander 1995; Andrews 2001). A broader definition of public success may be particularly important for understanding local civic associations, which may not work in legislative arenas but often achieve

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<sup>2</sup> Although some studies (e.g. Kollman 1998) examine the relationship between public effectiveness and internal organization, most studies of the internal practices of interest groups focus on questions of how organizations mobilize and maintain members and finances (Olson 1965; Cigler 1991; Baumgartner and Leech 1998). Other studies have been primarily descriptive, focusing on the acquisition of financial resources, or the range of political tactics an organization might choose (Walker 1991; Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Rothenberg 1992).

success by becoming respected sources for information and analysis in public debate and being seen as authoritative advocates by political elites. Public recognition may be conferred by the news media, allies, opponents, elected officials, or government agencies. Civic associations that secure favorable public recognition from decision-makers and achieve standing may not prevail in every battle but their standing gives them much better chances than their peers who lack public recognition. Only by broadening our analysis of public outcomes beyond the national legislative arena, in other words, can we begin to truly understand the ways different groups achieve voice.

We thus propose an alternative approach to understanding the public outcomes of civic associations that focuses on public recognition and the importance of organizational leadership and activities. This approach recognizes the dual function civic associations play in advocating for public outcomes and simultaneously engaging citizens in political action. A simplified diagram of our approach appears in Figure 1.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Our basic argument is that public recognition is not only about what the organization has, but also about what the organization does with what it has. Previous theories have focused on the importance of a favorable political and civic context or abundant resources in achieving public success. A key element of these theories has been the idea that civic associations with more resources are more likely to achieve public success. Translating these resources into success depends on what the organization does internally. None of these theories, however, have examined internal organizational practices of civic associations to understand how organizations strategically deploy their resources. Our approach does. Public recognition depends not only on an organization's context and resources, but also on how organizational leaders engage those resources. Organizations that deploy their resources in a program of activities with greater breadth and depth should be more likely to achieve public recognition. The breadth and depth of an organization's program activities represents the extent to which it is effectively deploying its resources. Thus, while previous research has focused merely on having resources, we argue that how

those resources are deployed through program activities will also have a direct relationship to public recognition. In examining program activities, we examine the conservation, electoral, and recreation programs run by local Sierra Club organizations.

The question then arises of why some civic associations are able to deploy their resources and run program activities with greater breadth and depth than others. We thus examine the relationship between leadership and program activity. A key characteristic of member-based civic associations is that they have an elected leadership (who are themselves volunteers) that is formally accountable to the members of the association and informally accountable to each other—this is what defines them as a Tocquevillian school of democracy. As a self-governing entity with relatively high autonomy, the leadership team decides what the organization does and how to do it. Particularly because civic leaders lack any coercive authority to motivate volunteer members to participate in programs, the actions of the leadership team largely affect how successful the program activities are. In a civic association, the breadth and depth of program activity can therefore be largely dependent on the choices and actions of its leaders (Key 1956). In examining the relationship of leadership to programs, we focus on four dimensions of leadership: the size of the leadership team, the commitment of activists, the degree to which leaders are learning civic skills, and the extent to which leaders invest in capacity building activities (such as retreats, training, or community-building social events). Research on the relationship between teams and organizational effectiveness finds teams that are too small or too big are less effective than teams that are optimally sized to accomplish its goals without having too many coordination problems (Levine and Moreland 1998; Steiner 1972; Hackman 2002). In addition, teams with higher levels of commitment among its leaders are more likely to be effective (Hackman 2002; Wageman, Hackman, and Lehman 2005). Other research argues that an important role of civic associations is to develop civic skills among participants; members of civic associations who develop more skills are better equipped to participate in and carry out activities designed to achieve public recognition (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Finally, organizations that invest in capacity building activities (such as trainings, community-building social events, and fundraising) should have more participants and resources to carry out a broad program of activities.

One of the reasons why previous research on the public outcomes of civic associations may not have explored the relationship of internal organizational factors to public recognition is the difficulty of obtaining the necessary data. Understanding the effect of leadership and program activities necessitates an in-depth look at the internal operations of the organization that is often hard to obtain. Studies that have looked at the internal practices of an organization tend to be case studies, focusing only on one organization. To further explicate our approach to understanding public recognition in civic associations, we draw on a unique new study of multiple organizations within the Sierra Club. Before going into greater depth on our analyses, we describe the data and the study, National Purpose, Local Action (NPLA).

### **A Study of the Sierra Club: National Purpose, Local Action**

The National Purpose, Local Action study is a comparative case study of the Sierra Club, a leading national environmental organization. Some previous studies of interest groups have examined a sample of organizations working in a wide range of different contexts and issue areas (Walker 1991; Knoke 1990; Schlozman and Tierney 1986). These studies have been challenged by the question of how to compare organizational units working in such different areas. Because the Sierra Club is a federated organization, we can study local civic associations working within a common national framework. This allows us to hold organizational context and the broad purposes of the organization constant to assess the impact of internal organizational characteristics alongside rival explanations (Kalleberg et al. 1996). In addition, we are better able to develop common indicators of public recognition comparable across multiple organizations. As such, we follow a tradition of scholars who hold organizational context constant to conduct cross-sectional analysis of variation in units of the organization (McCarthy and Wolfson 1996; Edwards and McCarthy 2004). In conducting a comparative case study, we examine relative differences in public recognition among the local groups of the Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club is also an excellent organization to study because it is exemplary of contemporary civic associations in several ways.<sup>3</sup> First, it embodies all three characteristics that distinguish civic associations from other organizations: voluntary membership, governance by elected leaders, and the pursuit of voice in the public arena. The organization consists of 750,000 members divided into 343 local groups based on their area of residence. Each local group is affiliated with a Chapter, which roughly corresponds to a state-level organization. Each local group is governed by an Executive Committee (ExCom) composed of leaders elected by mail-in ballots sent to members residing in the group's jurisdiction. None of the local Groups in the Sierra Club have any any paid staff. Each local group is thus a distinct self-governing entity with its own set of elected leaders that conducts its own affairs. Second, as a federated organization, the Sierra Club is part of a tradition of multitiered organizations in America that have been of particular interest to scholars because of their potential to combine local action in a national framework (Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson 2000; Skocpol 2003). Third, as a major player in environmental politics, the Sierra Club is part of a movement that scholars often regard as an exemplar of contemporary social movements. Through its reliance on direct membership recruitment, the relative affluence of movement supporters, reliance on relatively routine or non-disruptive tactics, and the centrality of post-material values to their mission, environmentalism shares key characteristics with many modern social movements (Berry 1999; Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Putnam 2000).

In considering the generalizability of the study, there are a number of associations that share similar characteristics with the Sierra Club. In particular, our study examines locally based, self-governing (governed by elected leaders), membership-based organizations that seek voice in the political process. Organizations that share these characteristics face the same challenges of developing leadership

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<sup>3</sup> Although the Sierra Club has been studied extensively by historians, sociologists, and political scientists, this prior research focused on the national organization, leaders, and campaigns rather than on the local leadership and organization (Cohen 1988; Dunlap and Mertig 1992; Brulle 2000; Gottlieb 1993; Shaiko 1999).

teams and organizing themselves internally to be able to carry out program activities in their communities. As such, our findings about the importance of leadership, organization, and activity on public recognition can be extended to such organizations. Organizations that are run primarily by paid professional staff, or do not have elected leadership do not face the same leadership challenges as organizations that are self-governing and volunteer based. Examples of organizations similar to the Sierra Club may include the NRA, the League of Women Voters, MADD, the NAACP, NOW, and many trade unions. Naturally, each of these organizations is different from the Sierra Club in important ways and work in different issue areas, thus necessitating caution in making comparisons.

In extending our findings to other civic associations it is important to note that the Sierra Club is unique in particular ways among this class of organizations. First, the Sierra Club seeks not only to exercise voice in politics, but also to provide recreational opportunities for its members. Thus, one explicit goal of the organization is social. This provides Sierra Club organizations with important mechanisms that can be used to recruit and engage members in face-to-face activity. This is an important organizational resource, as this kind of activity can help generate commitment to the organization among members. Civic associations that lack this recreational goal may face other challenges in recruiting and engaging membership. In addition, the Sierra Club is a nationally federated organization. One question that arises is whether our findings apply to local organizations that are not connected to a national entity. Local Sierra Club groups get financial resources from the national organization (albeit only limited resources), and also benefit from the nationally-recognized Sierra Club brand-name. Local organizations that are not as high profile as the Sierra Club may face different challenges in their struggle for public recognition. It is important to note, however, that within the Sierra Club, most local groups operate with considerable autonomy from the national organization. In sum, although caution should be exercised in extending the findings, this comparative case study may be applicable to other civic associations that face similar challenges in gaining public recognition.

### *Data Collection*

The unit of analysis in this study is the local Sierra Club Group with a particular focus on the elected Executive Committee (ExCom). All of the Sierra Club's U.S. Groups were included in the study, except for those that were in reorganization in September 2003.<sup>4</sup> There were four main data sources, described below (See Appendix A for a discussion of response bias and data quality).

- (1) *Interviews with ExCom chairs focusing on organizational structure, activities, and efficacy.* From October 2003 to January 2004, we conducted 50-minute telephone interviews with 308 (89.9%) Executive Committee chairs focusing on questions of organizational structure, leader and member participation, activities, networks, practices, community assessments, and effectiveness. The University of California at Berkeley's Survey Research Center conducted these interviews.
- (2) *Written surveys with ExCom members on background, leadership, and organizational practices.* The 15-page ExCom Leader Survey (ELS) was completed by 1,624 (51%) ExCom members. The survey includes closed-ended and open-ended questions on the background, leadership experience, goals and motivations, and organizational practices of local leaders, as well as their evaluation of the practices and efficacy of their own ExCom. Because the ELS was administered to individual ExCom members, for Group level analysis in this study, we aggregated individual surveys to the Group level. In aggregating the surveys, we only included Groups where at least 50% of ExCom members participated. As a result, 182 Groups (53%) are included in the analysis.
- (3) *Secondary data available from the Sierra Club.* We were provided extensive data on Groups and members compiled by the Sierra Club for a variety of organizational purposes such as membership size, average tenure, leadership positions, financial resources and expenditures, and staff positions.

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<sup>1</sup> Reorganization status refers to organizations that do not meet minimal standards, such as an elected ExCom, and that are receiving assistance from the national organization to reestablish the organization in a community.

These indicators have allowed us to assess the validity of our survey measures with independent information thereby increasing our confidence in the survey data.

- (4) *Secondary data on community context.* We constructed measures of demographic, economic, political, civic, and environmental characteristics of the community in which Groups work. This data is derived from the U.S. Census and other relevant sources.

### **The Relationship of Program Activities to Public Recognition**

To further explicate our approach to understanding the public recognition of civic associations as a function of both their internal organizational practices and the external factors scholars have commonly examined, we draw on the National Purpose, Local Action study. Our analysis proceeds in two major steps (as depicted in Figure 1). First, we examine how an organization's program activities affect its perceived level of public recognition. This allows us to examine whether the way the organization deploys its resources through program activities relate to the organization's public recognition, above and beyond the resources the organization has. This establishes the relationship of program activity to perceptions of public recognition independent of the relationship of community context and resources. Second, we examine how leadership and internal organizational factors shape the breadth and depth of program activity in Sierra Club Groups. Putting these analyses together, we can paint a clearer picture of the way internal organizational factors are related to public recognition in member-based civic associations.

#### *Developing a Measure of Public Recognition*

The key dependent variable in this analysis is the public recognition of Sierra Club Groups. We develop a measure of public recognition that is based on the ExCom chair's perception of the Group's recognition in the community. The chair is uniquely positioned to evaluate the formal and informal mechanisms through which other actors seek out a group's participation and input. Do public leaders consult with the Group or its members on issues that affect its interests? Do political leaders seek its

endorsement? Does the local community view it as an authoritative voice on concerns of interest? Do the media turn to it as a trustworthy spokesperson? In other words, do key actors pay attention to the civic association, its leaders, and its claims? We measure public recognition based on responses to six questions from our interview with ExCom chairs. ExCom chairs evaluated how accurately a series of statements described their Group, where 1 indicated “not very accurate” and 5 is “very accurate.” The summary scale takes the mean of all six items (see Table 1 for summary statistics on this and all other variables, as well as Appendix B for a detailed list of scale items).

#### INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

We rely on self-reports of perceived public recognition because consistent objective indicators of public recognition are notoriously hard to find (Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Kalleberg and Moody 1996; Gormley 1982; Herman and Renz 2000). Some studies have examined the reputation organizations have among other actors in a policy domain (e.g. Laumann and Knoke 1987), or the number of media mentions groups received in major newspapers (Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005). Although these measures have the advantage of being indicators of public recognition that are external to the organization being evaluated, they are limited in different ways. Reliance on reputational measures raises questions about comparability across multiple organizations working in different communities, since the peer evaluators must be consistent in their knowledge of and proximity to the organization being evaluated, and their standard for evaluation. Studies of media mentions also vary across sources, as different newspapers have different political leanings, and the size of the media market varies considerably across areas. In addition, media mentions only examine recognition in one arena—the media—even though recognition can be conferred by multiple different actors, including elected officials, other civic organizations, and government bureaucrats. Both reputational measures and media reports may be biased based on the stage of the policy-making process or the institutional arena Groups seek to affect. The media, for example, may cover electoral activity more than advocacy work Groups can do within government bureaucracies. Similarly, peer evaluations may be more positive for Groups that achieve

very public victories, rather than Groups that affect public outcomes by working more quietly behind the scenes to help set the legislative agenda.

Our approach has the advantage of being comparable across all of the local Sierra Club Groups, regardless of the stage in the policy-making process or the institutional arena the Group seeks to affect. Because this is a self-report measure, however, questions arise about whether or not it is biased. Prior studies using self-report and independent measures suggest that some of the concern about self-report measures may be over-stated. Scholars have consistently found positive and significant correlations between informant reports and independent measures of organizational effectiveness in a variety of empirical settings including unions (Hammer and Wazeter 1993; Fiorito, Jarley, and Delaney 1995), public agencies (Gormley 1982), work organizations (Kalleberg and Moody 1996), nonprofit organizations (Herman and Renz 2000; 1998; 2004; Eisinger 2002), and civic associations (Knoke 1990; 1981). Nonetheless, it is worth considering if and how these measures may be biased. In considering potential sources of error in the measure, the major question to ask is how reliable the Chair is as an informant. How close are the Chair's reports to reality? If there is bias, then in what direction is the bias likely to occur and is it consistent across all respondents?

The most obvious problem in this kind of self-report is that respondents may overstate their level of public recognition. Because the Chairs have presumably expended precious time and effort in doing environmental advocacy, they have strong psychological reasons for thinking that their work is being recognized by people in positions of power. Thus, they may report more positive answers than is actually the case. If this were true, it should be true for all respondents, thus leading to truncated variance in the variable. An examination of the summary statistics in Table 1, however, shows that there is wide variance in the variable and that it is normally distributed. Other studies using self-report measures find similar patterns (Heinz et al. 1997, 346). In addition, if there were truncated variance, it would make it harder to find statistically significant effects, thus making the analysis a more conservative test of our hypotheses.

To assess the degree to which the Chair is a reliable informant, we also compared the Chair's report on other measures to external, objective indicators. This analysis presents another way to gauge the Chair's overall trustworthiness by comparing the Chair's self-report of the civic and political friendliness of the local community to two external indicators. We had two measures of community context that drew on external data. Our first measure of community context was a scale of objective social and political indicators. Specifically, this scale was based on the number of civic groups per capita, Republican presidential voters in 2000 as a proportion of all voters (reverse coded), the proportion of college graduates (25 and older), and the proportion college students.<sup>5</sup> The second measure was the member density (the per capita number of Sierra Club members in a group's territory) of each Group. Member density measures the concentration of Sierra Club members in the community, providing an indication of the community's receptivity to the work of the organization. Both of these measures used external data to gauge the community's friendliness to the work of the Sierra Club. We also developed a self-report measure of community context based on the chair's assessment of allies, opponents, and local government based on six specific questions with the chair of each group (see Appendix B for all scale items). This scale ranges from one to five and all of the items were coded such that higher values indicated a more favorable context. In comparing the self-report measure to the two measures based on external indicators, we found that the chair's assessment was highly correlated with two other objective measures of context: the density of Sierra Club membership (Pearson's  $r=.460$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and the scale of objective social and political indicators (Pearson's  $r=.53$ ,  $p<.05$ ). These results demonstrate that the Chairs provided reliable assessments of the civic and political characteristics of their community. As a result, it gave us greater confidence in the Chair's overall reliability as an informant and the reports the Chairs provided about public recognition.

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<sup>5</sup> This data came from the 2000 US Census, Polidata Demographic and Political Guides ([www.polidata.org](http://www.polidata.org)), and the National Center for Charitable Statistics.

Finally, we also examined the degree to which the Chair's assessment matched the views of other leaders in the Group. To do this, we identified questions on the Chair's phone survey that had comparable counterparts on the ExCom Leader Survey. The question is how consistent the Chair's individual response is with the ExCom's general assessment. The results are encouraging (details available in Appendix 1). First, on both the Chair survey and the survey of all ExCom members, we asked respondents about their perception of whether or not the ExCom was improving. As the Chair is increasingly positive about how much the ExCom has improved over the past 3 years, ExCom members are also more likely to say their ExCom has been improving. Similarly, as the Chair is increasingly positive about the Group's expected change in the next three years, ExCom members are increasingly likely to say their ExCom has been improving. Second, we can also compare ExCom and Chair Survey responses on the question of how important political influence is to the ExCom. On the ExCom Survey, we ask respondents how important political influence is as a priority in the ExCom's goal-setting. On the phone survey, we ask the Chair to tell us how often the Group uses political force as part of their public arguments. Both are indications of the focus of the ExCom on political influence. In general, an ExCom that is more likely to use political force in their public argument is also more likely to consider political influence as a priority in goal-setting. Again, these comparisons give us greater confidence that the Chair is a reliable informant.

In sum, our measure captures the Chair's perception of the Group's level of public recognition. Because it is a self-report measure, we tried to assess how closely it corresponds to the Group's actual level of public recognition. Lacking objective indicators of public recognition, we assessed the quality of our measure against the best available indicators. We found that the scale has enough variance that respondents do not appear to all be positively biased, and that the Chair appears to be a trustworthy informant when we assess the Chair's response on other measures to external indicators. This gives us greater confidence that our measure is an appropriate evaluation of the Group's public recognition.

The key independent variables in our analysis of public recognition are measures of community context, financial and human resources, and program activity. Given our analysis of alternative measures of community context noted above, we use the chair's assessment of the civic and political context because it is the best assessment of the multiple elements that determine a Group's political context (see Table 1 for details on the summary scale of community context and all other predictor variables). We find, however, that alternative measures produce similar results and do not alter our substantive conclusions. Consistent with previous research, we hypothesize that organizations in communities that are more politically friendly will be more likely to achieve higher levels of public recognition (Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1998; Jenkins and Perrow 1977).

We measure resources with the number of members in a Group, and its financial revenue. Members are assigned to Groups and Chapters based on an individual's zip code, and our estimate of membership size is based on data provided by the Sierra Club in August 2003. Our measure of financial revenue distinguishes between money the Group raises itself and money the Group receives from the larger organization. Both numbers are calculated from annual reports submitted by Sierra Club Groups to the national organization for the 2003 fiscal year. Within the Sierra Club, membership dues flow directly from individuals to the national organization, and a portion of the dues from members go to Chapters, based on a subvention formula. Chapters may choose how to distribute funds to their local Groups. Thus, while some Groups receive all of their funds from the Chapter and do not have to do any work on their own, others have to raise their entire budgets themselves. Local fundraising is thus a measure of the effort the Group puts in to enhance its own organizational capacity. For all three measures—membership size, total receipts from Chapter/National, and the total amount of money raised locally—we used the logged measure in the analysis because of the heavy skew in the data (see Table 1). Given previous research on the impact of money and people on public outcomes (e.g. Hansen 1991), we hypothesize that organizations with more money and more members should achieve greater recognition. In particular, we hypothesize that Groups that put more effort into enhancing their own capacity through local fundraising will have more public recognition than Groups that rely solely on money transferred from Chapters.

Finally, we assess the extent to which these Groups deploy their resources through active programs. The Sierra Club conceptualizes its own work in terms of conservation work (campaigns, lobbying, advocacy to protect habitat, passing legislation, public education, etc.), outings (hiking, camping, trail maintenance, etc.), and electoral activities (endorsing candidates). Thus, we assess the relationship these three different kinds of activities have to public recognition. Items measuring program activity were taken from our phone interview; our question asked the chair to indicate “how often your group or volunteers acting on behalf of your groups” have done an activity during the past 12 months. Response categories were regularly, sometimes, rarely, or never. Activity measures are reverse coded such that higher values indicate more frequent activity. We expect that Groups that effectively deploy their resources to engage actively with their communities and develop activities that build internal capacity will achieve higher levels of public recognition.

### *Analysis and Results*

To examine the relative effect of context and resources on public recognition against the effect of program activities, we run two separate models. The first model examines the effect of context and resources on public recognition. The second model adds measures of program activity to the model. Our results are displayed in Table 2.<sup>6</sup>

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

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<sup>6</sup> Although only the analysis in Table 3 draws on data from the ExCom Leader Survey (ELS), we ran all of our analyses only on the Groups for which we had ELS data. This ensures that we are conducting the analysis on a constant set of Groups and that differences between the models do not result from looking at a different set of cases. We also ran the analyses in Tables 2 and 3 excluding the one variable from the ELS (leadership skill development) and using all 308 Groups who participated in the phone survey. Even in these alternative analyses, we replicated the key findings from the paper.

With both models, we find strong support for our hypothesis that program activity has a statistically significant, independent relationship to perceptions of public recognition. The model fit with the full model ( $F_{7,167}=21.11, p<.001$ ) is much better than with the baseline model ( $F_{4,175}=9.31, p<.001$ ). How an organization deploys its resources through program activities, in other words, explains significantly more of the variation in perceptions of public recognition than simply the amount of resources and context alone. In particular, relative to public recognition, we find that conservation and electoral activities have the strongest relationship. This is not surprising since they have a more direct relationship to achieving public recognition than outings. The magnitude of the effect of conservation programs on public recognition is particularly striking. Figure 2 graphs the effect of conservation and electoral programs on public recognition relative to the effect of community context.

#### INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Although community context has a significant relationship to public recognition, Figure 2 shows that the magnitude of the effect is much less than that of conservation programs. Groups located in communities that are politically more liberal and more civically active are more likely to have higher levels of perceived public recognition. If we could compare a Group in the most politically hostile community to a Group that was similar in all regards except for being located in the most politically favorable community, the model predicts a difference in perceived public recognition equivalent to about 1.75 standardized units (z-scores). Suppose we compare two Groups in the same community, however. One Group hardly takes any action its community, exhibiting the lowest level of program activity. The other Group is extremely active, with the highest level of program activity. The model predicts a difference in perceived public recognition greater than 2.5 standardized units. In addition, a comparable comparison with respect to the level of electoral program activity is associated with a difference in public recognition of slightly more than one standardized unit. A Group's program activities, or how the Group engages with its community how it deploys its resources to take action, is more strongly related to perceived levels of public recognition than the characteristics of the community itself.

In addition, it appears that the effects of resources on public recognition may be mediated through program activity. Although membership size has no statistically significant relationship to perceived public recognition in both models, the amount of money a Group has does. Surprisingly, the amount of revenue that Groups receive in transfers from the Chapter has a negative and significant (in a one-tailed test) effect on public recognition. Further analyses and investigation of case level patterns suggests that this modest relationship reflects Chapter level differences in patterns of allocation of funding to Groups (certain Chapters transfer large amounts of funding to Groups, regardless of the effectiveness of Group performance).<sup>7</sup> Money has a stronger effect on public recognition through the amount of money the Group raises locally. In the first model in Table 2, the amount of money raised locally has a strong and statistically significant relationship to public recognition. This effect disappears, however, in Model 2 when we add program activities into the model. Thus, it could be mediated through program activities. When the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable is carried through another variable, that variable is considered a mediator. Baron and Kenny (1986) delineate four conditions that must be true for a variable to be a mediator: (1) the initial independent variable (money raised locally) must be correlated with the outcome (public recognition); (2) the initial variables must be correlated with the mediator (conservation programs); (3) the mediator must affect the outcome variable; and (4) the effect of the independent variables on the outcome while controlling for the mediator should be statistically smaller than in a model without the mediator. Models 1 and 2 demonstrate that we meet the first and third conditions for mediation, respectively. A simple correlation of conservation programs with the amount of money raised locally (Pearson's  $r=.26$ ,  $p<.001$ ) demonstrates that the second condition is met. To test the fourth condition, we ran Sobel (1982) tests for indirect effects (see Baron and Kenny 1986) and found that conservation programs strongly mediate the effect of money raised locally ( $p<.01$ ) on public recognition. This indicates that part of the effect of money on public recognition operates through program activities.

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<sup>7</sup> Supplementary analyses in which we specify the “svy” command in Stata to assess clustering finds that transfer funds do not attain statistical significance in the first model for public recognition.

In other words, perceived public recognition depends not only the level of resources a Group has, but also how it deploys its resources through program activities.

The strength of the relationship between program activity and public recognition raises questions about causality. There are two key questions here. First, do Groups that engage in more activities think they achieve greater recognition because they do more work? Second, does engaging in more activity lead to more recognition, or does having more recognition lead to higher levels of activity? The first question is a question about the validity of our measure of public recognition. Because we use a self-report measure that examines perceptions of public recognition, it is possible that we are examining the Group's biased perception of how much work they are doing instead of capturing how much recognition the Group actually achieves. The work discussed earlier to assess the validity of our measure mitigates the possibility that the measure is merely an assessment of the Group's sense of how much work it is doing. The second question is harder to untangle. It is quite possible that there is a feedback loop in which Groups that have greater recognition have a greater sense of group efficacy and thereby engage in more activity—given a heightened sense that their activity matters (Bandura 1997). The question is where does that recognition originate? It is difficult to imagine a Group that generates public recognition without engaging with its community through programmatic activity (Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Walker 1991). In other words, some programmatic activity precedes the achievement of public recognition—although there may be a feedback loop that follows, the feedback loop does not exist in the absence of program activities preceding public recognition.

In sum, program activity, particularly conservation and electoral programs, are by far the strongest predictors of a Group's perceived public recognition. This analysis thus lays the groundwork for asking what explains a Group's level of program activity. If the extent to which a Group runs an extensive program of regular activity determines how much perceived public recognition it has, what determines how much activity a Group does?

### ***The Relationship of Leadership to Program Activity***

The second part of our analysis examines the extent to which leadership is related to the breadth and depth of program activity. For this analysis, we create one summary scale for all of the program activities a Group does, combining the three sub-scales for conservation, electoral, and outings activity used in the previous analysis. This allows us to have one measure of the breadth and depth of a Group's activity. We also include membership size, the amount of money received in transfers from the Chapter, and measures of community context in this model as control variables, since prevailing theories of the activity of organized interests would predict that context and resources are the principal determinants (e.g. Schlozman and Tierney 1986). To assess the effect of leadership on program activity, we examine four different dimensions of leadership: the size of the leadership team, the number of committed activists, the extent to which leaders are learning skills for democratic governance, and activities that enhance organizational capacity.

The size of the leadership team is simply the number of members on the elected ExCom. We also include this variable as a squared term since previous research on leadership teams indicate that a curvilinear relationship exists. The team needs to be large enough to have enough people to conduct its work, but when it gets too large, its effectiveness decreases as coordination problems increase (Levine and Moreland 1998; Steiner 1972; Hackman 2002). Thus, we expect that leadership teams that are too small or too large will be less effective than those that reach an optimum size in the middle.

We also assess the number of core activists. Highly committed activists often play a critical role in volunteer-led organizations (McCarthy and Wolfson 1996; Ganz 2000). They conduct much of the strategic and administrative work that is necessary for an organization to be operational. Core activists are measured as the individuals who are willing to devote five or more hours per week to Sierra Club activity. While our measure of ExCom size simply measures how many formal leaders there are, our measure of core activists measures how many committed individuals are actually devoting substantial time to the Sierra Club (the two measures are only correlated at 0.14). Thus, we are asking if having more individuals committed to devoting more time to the Sierra Club has an additional effect on program activity, above and beyond the sheer number of leaders that exist. We measure core activists based on a

question from our phone interview with the ExCom chair in which we asked “How many volunteers spend at least 5 hours per week on Sierra Club work?” As with membership size, we tested two different models of the relationship between core activists and program activity and found that the log-linear model ( $F_{1,174}=46.62$ ) better fit the data than the linear model ( $F_{1,174}=30.78$ ). We hypothesize that organizations with more committed leaders will be better able to plan and carry out a broader program of activity (Wageman, Hackman, and Lehman 2005).

The third dimension of leadership measures the extent to which leaders are learning civic skills through their work in the Sierra Club. Leaders who are developing better skills should be better able to develop and carry out a broader program of activity (Wageman, Hackman, and Lehman 2005; Hackman 2002). This scale is based on individual responses to questions on the ExCom Leader Survey asking “whether your leadership skills have improved through your service as a volunteer leader in the Sierra Club.” The skills included things like “accepting responsibility,” “holding others accountable,” “organizing and running a meeting,” and “managing my time.” Respondents were given a five point scale with the two endpoints defined (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Individual responses were aggregated to the Group level.

Finally, we examine the degree to which Groups undertake capacity building activities. First, we examine the amount of money raised locally, since it indicates the efforts leaders make to raise additional funds beyond the amount of money they are given. Second, we examine support activities, or activities that enhance organizational capacity. Support activities include engaging new members, building leadership through training and retreats, and organizing events to build community solidarity. Organizations that invest in enhancing organizational capacity should be more effective. Items measuring support activity are based on questions from the phone interview asking “how often your group or volunteers acting on behalf of your groups” have done an activity during the past 12 months. Response categories were regularly, sometimes, rarely, or never. We expect that Groups that effectively build internal capacity will be able to conduct more programs.

Our analysis of the effect of leadership and internal organizational practice on the breadth and depth of a Group's program activity is shown in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The key finding from this analysis is that while resources and context do affect an organization's ability to conduct a broad program of activity, the size of the leadership team, the number of core activists, the degree to which leaders are developing skills, and the choices leaders make to invest in capacity building have stronger relationships to its breadth and depth of program activity. The relationship of leadership team size to program activity is interesting. As predicted by previous studies of leadership teams, teams that are too small or too big can be stymied in their ability to produce program activities (Levine and Moreland 1998; Steiner 1972). The optimal size of an ExCom is about nine members. ExComs with fewer members experience almost half of a standard deviation drop in the level of program activity. ExComs with more members, however, can similarly experience a drop in their level of program activity. Importantly, this finding is an indication that leadership does, in fact, matter. If it did not, then the size of the leadership team would be unrelated to the level of program activity.

While the size of the leadership team has a parabolic relationship to program activity, the number of core activists does not. In other words, simply having more ExCom members can be more detrimental than helpful to a Sierra Club Group. Holding the size of the leadership team constant, however, having more committed activists is only beneficial. Moving from zero to five core activists is associated with an increase in an organization's level of program activity of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a standardized unit. Moving from five to twenty core activists increases the level of program activity by about half of a standardized unit, indicating that the marginal effect of each additional core activist begins to diminish. Nonetheless, the relationship continues to be positive.

The model also examines the relationship of leadership skill development to the level of program activity. As predicted, we find that leadership teams with leaders who are developing more skills are more likely to conduct a broader program of activity. Although the effects are relatively modest—an

increase across the entire range of leadership skill development is associated with slightly less than one standardized unit increase in program activity—the positive effect of skills on activity is still clear.

Finally, we examine activities designed to enhance organizational capacity. In general, we find that Groups with leaders committed to enhancing organizational capacity by raising more money and running more support activities are more likely to have greater breadth and depth to their program activity. The relationship of support activities to program activity is especially strong. Groups that regularly run new member meetings, trainings, retreats, and social events are likely to have a level of program activity that is more than 1.5 standardized units greater than Groups who do not. Interestingly, this is stronger even than the effect of money raised locally. Because the variable is logged, it has a curvilinear relationship to program activities. Even so, the difference in program activity between a Group that raises no money locally and \$60,000 locally (95% of all Groups raise \$60,000 or less) is less than one standardized unit. Each additional dollar raised does not have a strong relationship to the level of program activity. Instead, the degree to which the fundraising activity—in conjunction with other support activities—enhances the overall capacity of the organization affects the breadth and depth of program activity.

In sum, the relationship of internal organizational factors to perceptions of public recognition is clear. Nothing appears to have a stronger relationship to a Group's perceived level of public recognition than the breadth and depth of its program activity. The key factors related to program activity include the size of the leadership team, the number of committed activists, the extent to which its leaders are learning civic skills, and the degree to which its leaders undertake activities designed to increase organizational capacity. Theories of public recognition that focus solely on the relationship of external factors like context and resources thus miss an important source of variation in the public recognition of civic associations.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Civic associations play a unique role in American democracy by serving as a conduit between citizens and policymakers. On the one hand, they play an important role in engaging citizens in political action. On the other hand, they play a crucial role in advocating for public outcomes. Thus far, the study of these two dimensions of civic associations has been divorced. This paper delineated an approach to understanding the public recognition of civic associations that took into consideration both purposes.

The public recognition of a civic association is critically related to the programs it runs, which in turn is related to the size of its leadership team, the number of core activists, the level of skill development among leaders, and the extent to which internal capacity is built. In self-governing associations, leadership determines if and how the organization will deploy its resources and engage with its community to take action. As such, the leaders are responsible for producing program activities for the organization. These programs, in turn, affect how much perceived public recognition an organization will have. Despite the clear importance of these internal organizational factors on organizational effectiveness, previous research has focused almost entirely on the level of resources and the kind of community context. We found that while money, members, and politically favorable conditions can enhance the influence of a Sierra Club Group, how leaders deploy resources through organizational activities is far more potent.

This approach to understanding the public recognition of member-based civic associations thus brings together the study of civic engagement and advocacy in civic associations. Many of the features that make civic associations central to American democracy center on the role they play as Tocquevillian “schools of democracy.” Ignoring those functions causes scholars to miss important sources of variation in the power these organizations can exert over public outcomes. Understanding the relationship between the internal operations of a civic association and its external influence is challenging, however, because the data is often hard to find. We thus drew on a unique new study of the local organizations of the Sierra Club. This study’s comprehensive data on organizational characteristics and practices allowed us to assess the effect of leadership and other internal organizational factors on public recognition.

Despite the many advantages the data provides in conducting this kind of analysis, there are some important limitations to the study. First, it studies multiple subunits of one larger organization, the Sierra Club. Thus, generalizing these findings to other organizations should be done with caution, although our theory is applicable to other membership-based civic associations. Second, because our measure of public recognition is based on self-report data, our findings focus particularly on the perceptions of public recognition. Our analysis of the quality of this measure, however, demonstrates that it could be an appropriate proxy for public recognition, but future research should strive to develop better objective indicators. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the study is an important limitation. Without longitudinal data on organizational change, it is difficult to make strong causal claims about the relationships between organizational practices and organizational outcomes, particularly given the potentially recursive relationships between some of the variables. We tried to be careful about this throughout the analysis by clearly assessing what constructs the data measured and how those were related to each other. Nonetheless, without comparative statics to examine changing relationships, we must remain cautious about the causal direction of our findings.

The paper does demonstrate, however, the important associations between organizational leadership and activities and external organizational outcomes. What an organization does with the resources it has critically affects how successful it will be in the public arena. In particular, the characteristics of the leadership team, having a committed core of activists, and the choices the leaders make fundamentally affect how much public recognition the association will have.

As such, this paper lays the foundation for a fruitful research agenda examining the participatory and advocacy purposes of civic associations in conjunction with each other. This includes questions about the effect different kinds of advocacy activities can have in generating participation, and the precise relationship between civic participation and organizational effectiveness. In addition, the importance of leadership to public recognition leads to questions about how civic associations can best develop leaders, committed activists, and thereby enrich the fabric of civic and political life in America.

## **APPENDIX A: DATA QUALITY**

### *An Assessment of Response Bias:*

Overall, the response to our phone survey and ExCom leader survey were remarkably high, minimizing the likelihood of significant nonresponse bias. However, we undertook a comprehensive analysis to assess possible bias in our datasets. To assess response bias, we drew on the secondary Sierra Club data. Since this data included information on all the groups, we could assess the extent to which participating groups differed from those that did not participate on key organizational characteristics: (1) the number of individuals holding leader positions in the group, (2) the number of ExCom members, (3) the percentage of ballots returned in the 2003 National Board election, (4) the number of members in the group, (5) the average leadership tenure, (6) the average number of leadership positions held by each individual leader.

In evaluating our phone interviews with group chairs, we compared the means of participating groups to non-participating groups and found no statistical difference between them on any of the six indicators. We evaluated the ExCom Leader Survey (ELS) in the same way. We compared ExComs for which we had ELS data to ExComs for which we did not on the same six dimensions. We found that non-participating group ExComs had slightly smaller leadership cores than those that participated. Thus, our ELS data is slightly biased because the group ExComs that participated tended to be the ones with larger leadership cores. (Results of these analyses are available from the authors.) In sum, our response bias analysis gives us confidence in the data. While some parts of the data are biased against smaller ExComs, on the whole our data is representative.

Another challenge we faced in using ELS data grew out of the fact that although individual leaders completed the survey, we are primarily interested in the collective assessment by ExCom members of their group. Therefore, we had to avoid the situation in which the opinion of a single ExCom member—if he or she were the only one to fill out the survey—could be taken as the collective judgment of the whole group. To determine whether groups with high rates of participation differed from those with

low rates of participation, we conducted a response bias analysis using several measures of demography and leadership commitment. We found that ExComs with 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, and 90% response rates were statistically indistinguishable from ExComs with 100% response rate on these dimensions. We thus included data from any ExCom with at least a 50% response rate from its ExCom members. Further, to ensure that we do not draw conclusions about the ExCom from too few surveys, we included in our analysis only ExCom with three or more respondents. We thus had sufficiently complete data on 182 (53%) ExComs to include them in our analysis of questions relying on aggregation of assessments of individual ExCom members as reported in the ELS.

#### Assessing the Validity of the Public Recognition Measure

The paper discusses several different steps we took to assess the validity of our measure of public recognition and the reliability of the chair as an informant. One of those steps involved determining how consistent the Chair's perceptions were with other leaders. This entailed identifying comparable questions in the Chair's phone survey and the ExCom Leader Survey. The tables below details those comparisons, discussed further in the text of the paper. In each table below, the question from the ELS is shown on top in bold. The related phone survey question and response categories are shown on the left.

<b>Our ExCom has been improving. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>
<i>Change in Group effectiveness from 3 years ago</i>		
Much less effective	2.83	4
Somewhat less effective	2.98	12
About the same	3.22	69
Somewhat more effective	3.47	76
Much more effective	3.69	44
<i>Expected change in Group effectiveness in 3 years</i>		
Much less effective	2.80	1
Somewhat less effective	3.02	4
About the same	3.28	52
Somewhat more effective	3.37	96
Much more effective	3.61	54

**How important Political Influence is to Goal-Setting**  
**(1=Not Important, 5=Very Important)**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>
<i>How often use the argument that you are political force to be reckoned with</i>		
Often	4.15	53
Sometimes	4.05	76
Rarely	3.88	59
Never	3.94	25

## APPENDIX B: SCALE ITEMS

### Public Recognition: Scale Items

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State government leaders consult with us on environmental issues.  
 Local government leaders consult with us on environmental issues  
 Officials at public agencies consult with us on environmental issues  
 The local media turns to us as an important spokesperson on environmental issues  
 Our Group's activities and positions are covered regularly in the local media  
 Candidates for local office place a high value on our endorsement.

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### Political and Civic Community Context: Scale Items

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Government in this area is generally favorable to our goals.  
 Most elected officials hold positions that conflict with ours.  
 Government in this area has committed substantial resources and effort toward improving environmental quality  
 Progressive groups and movements are very strong in this area.  
 The environmental movement is very strong in this area  
 Conservative groups are very strong in this area.

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### Leadership Skill Development: Scale Items

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listening to other people	challenging others to be more effective
accepting responsibility	holding others accountable
thinking creatively	organizing and running a meeting
accepting criticism	working effectively with public officials
managing my time	working effectively in coalition
asking for help	speaking in public
asking people to volunteer	planning and carrying out a campaign
delegating responsibility	working with the media
coaching and mentoring others	managing internal conflict
providing others with support to do their work well	

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**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Cronbach's Alpha	Data Source
<b>Public Recognition</b>							
Public Recognition Scale	2.7	0.78	1.0	4.5	2.7	0.79	A
<b>Community Context</b>							
Political and Civic Context Scale	2.5	0.80	1.0	4.7	2.4	0.81	A/D
<b>Resources</b>							
Membership Size	1,962	2,333	110	14,060	1,091	n/a	C
Total Receipts from Chapter/National	\$1,568	\$2,075	\$0	\$11,492	\$924	n/a	C
Total Amount of Money Raised Locally	\$6,119	\$18,208	\$0	\$224,547	\$1,629	n/a	C
<b>Program Activities</b>							
Conservation Advocacy Program Scale	2.7	0.48	1.0	3.6	2.8	0.90	A
Electoral Program Scale	2.5	0.76	1.0	4.0	2.5	0.82	A
Outdoor/Recreation Program Scale	2.5	0.72	1.0	4.0	2.6	0.72	A
All Program Activities Scale	2.6	0.44	1.0	3.6	2.7	0.90	A
<b>Organization</b>							
Leadership Team Size	7.8	2.14	4.0	18.0	7.0	n/a	C
# of Core Activists	5.1	5.69	0.0	50.0	4.0	n/a	A
Leadership Skill Development Scale	3.1	0.33	2.0	4.0	3.1	0.93	B
Support Activities Scale	2.4	0.58	1.0	3.9	2.3	0.66	A

For data sources, A=Interviews with ExCom chairs; B=Written surveys with ExCom members; C=Secondary Sierra Club data; D=Secondary data on community context. See text for more detail on each data source.

**Table 2: The Relationship of Context, Resources, and Program Activities to Public Recognition (OLS Regression Analysis)**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	1.779	(0.39) *	-0.044	(0.43)
Membership Size (logged)	-0.018	(0.06)	-0.067	(0.06)
Total Receipts from Chapter/National (logged)	-0.038	(0.02) *	-0.035	(0.02) *
Political and Civic Context	0.351	(0.07) *	0.323	(0.06) *
Total Amount of Money Raised Locally (logged)	0.056	(0.02) *	0.005	(0.02)
Conservation Advocacy Programs			0.710	(0.11) *
Electoral Programs			0.216	(0.08) *
Outdoor/Recreation Programs			0.057	(0.07)
	<i>N</i>	172	167	
	<i>Adjusted R-Squared</i>	0.16	0.45	
	<i>F</i>	9.27 *	19.98 *	
	<i>df</i>	4/167	7/159	

Dependent Variable: Public Recognition; Data: National Purpose, Local Action Study of Sierra Club Groups 2003

\*p < 0.1

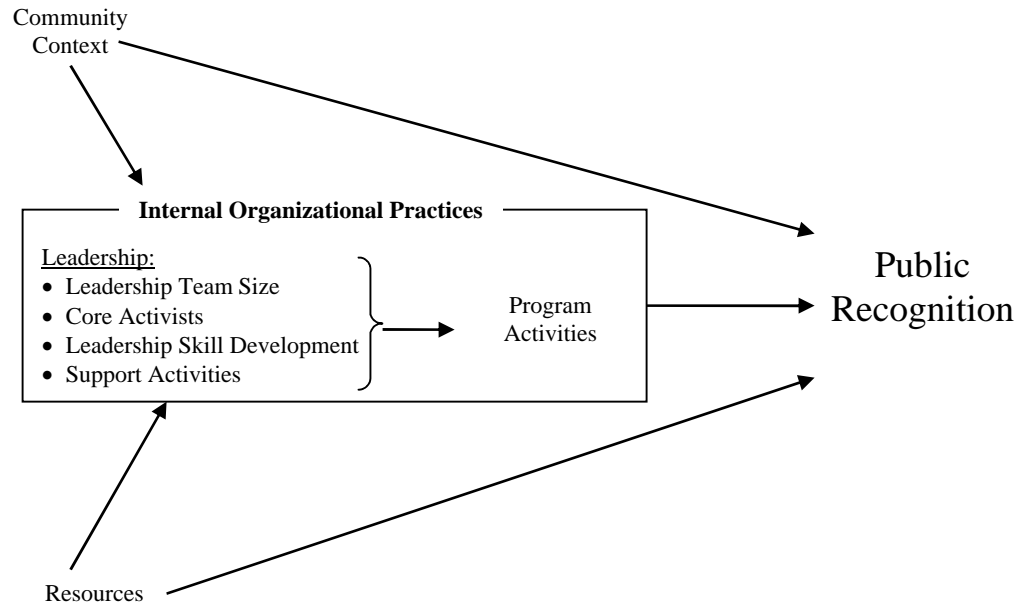
**Table 3: The Relationship of Context, Resources, and Leadership to the Breadth and Depth of Program Activity (OLS Regression Analysis)**

	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
(Constant)	0.168	(0.40)
Membership Size (logged)	0.023	(0.04)
Total Receipts from Chapter/National (logged)	-0.004	(0.01)
Political and Civic Context	0.061	(0.04)
Leadership Team Size	0.111	(0.06) *
Leadership Team Size, Squared	-0.006	(0.00) *
# of Core Activists (logged)	0.163	(0.06) *
Leadership Skill Development	0.220	(0.09) *
Total Amount of Money Raised Locally (logged)	0.025	(0.01) *
Support Activities	0.236	(0.06) *
<i>N</i>	165	
<i>Adjusted R-Squared</i>	0.35	

Dependent Variable: Number of Conservation, Electoral and Outings Programs Done Regularly; Data: National Purpose, Local Action Study of Sierra Club Groups 2003

\*p < 0.1

**Figure 1: The Relationship of Leadership and Program Activities to Public Recognition in Civic Associations**



**Figure 2: The Relationship of Community Context and Program Activities to Public Recognition**