Learning Civic Leadership: Leader Skill Development in the Sierra Club[*]

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In the 2009 Seattle mayoral race, political novice Michael McGinn upset internationally renowned incumbent mayor Greg Nickles.[1] Although Nickles had become an international eco-star in 2005 by leading a campaign to make municipal carbon reduction commitments in the face of the George W. Bush administration's recalcitrance, McGinn "out-greened" America's greenest mayor in America's greenest city in this election. How did McGinn, who had previously never held public office, know how to design and run a successful grassroots organizing campaign that could unseat such a prominent political figure? Both Nickles and McGinn shared a great deal of political notability and credibility on environmental issues, a necessary feature for local political candidates in Seattle. Nickles, however, was known for a "machine-style" of insider campaigning and governing while McGinn's campaign reached out, showing a particular savvy for grassroots organizing.[2] The McGinn campaign included no paid staff and engaged a broad set of volunteers that included some people far younger than those typically involved in Seattle politics[3]. McGinn inspired local activists while also managing the media, especially on issues of "greenness" (he was regularly photographed biking to campaign events). As with any election, many factors played into the final outcome, but it's hard to ignore the grassroots organizing skill demonstrated by McGinn's campaign—skills developed by McGinn during his 14 year tenure as the chairperson of the Cascade Chapter of the Sierra Club.[4]

The path from association leader to mayor of a major city may be surprising for contemporary observers. Today's political figures are more likely to make a name for themselves in business or law (McGinn is a lawyer) or may simply pursue a public political career almost from the start (as Nickles did). In past eras, however, membership and leadership in national fraternal orders, service groups, and other major federations was certainly the norm and virtually a prerequisite for public leadership. For example, as sociologist and political scientist Theda Skocpol reports, in the

1950s and 1960s, roughly 90 percent of Massachusetts State Senators publicly listed multiple affiliations with popular cross-class membership associations. Nearly half of those Senators listed membership in the American Legion alone—far outpacing the membership rates for the rest of Massachusetts' male citizenry (about 5-6 percent) in that era.[5] In similar fashion, many African-American activists who had risen to leadership positions in the NAACP and other civil rights organizations won elected office following the 1965 Voting Rights Act.[6] Women leaders also have emerged from associations with varying goals and ideological perspectives, including the National Organization for Women, the League of Women Voters, and Concerned Women for America.[7] Michael McGinn's ascendance to Seattle's mayoralty is one of the latest examples of this long-standing (if currently less common) pattern. While his affiliation with the Sierra Club likely helped bolster his overall green image with Seattle's environmentally conscious voters, his years of formal and informal training as a Sierra Club leader may have laid the foundation for his success in the practice of political organizing. What would he have done and learned in that position that could have prepared him for his move to elected public office?

This question motivates the research presented in this chapter. The Sierra Club is an example of a civic association—a self-governing organization made up of individual members who joined voluntarily. These associations "depend upon voluntary efforts of their members, decentralize decision making across local units, govern themselves through elected volunteer leaders, and enable their members' collective voices to be heard."[8] Scholars from French observer Alexis de Tocqueville (in the 19th century) to political scientist Robert Putnam (in the 21st century) have been interested in the connection between joining voluntary groups and the development of civic skills, values, and beliefs. Despite longstanding scholarly interest in this relationship, however, we have surprisingly limited knowledge about it. A good deal is known about rates of associational joining[9] and the effects this can have on political participation.[10] The specific mechanisms connecting associational

participation to political engagement are less clear, especially regarding leaders. In particular, what activities do local leaders in civic associations like the National Rifle Association or the Knights of Columbus or the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the U.S. Bowling Congress engage in, and what skills do they develop through those actions? Do all leaders develop the same skills? And are some skills more likely to be improved than others?

In this chapter, we look inside associations to reveal how volunteer leaders spend their time within their organizations and to explore the skills they do, and do not, take away from those experiences. We begin by briefly reviewing prior work on civic associations and leaders, uncovering some helpful guidance, but few empirical findings. We then introduce our case study (a case we share, not coincidentally, with Michael McGinn): the Sierra Club. We will highlight the structural features of the Sierra Club—a federated national association with self-governing state and local units—that makes it a relevant and important case for understanding the development of leaders' civic skills. We then turn to the particular relationship of leader activity to civic skill improvement. We detail the ways the Sierra Club's volunteer leaders invest time in a variety of organizational activities. We then identify dimensions of skills that leaders can develop. Finally, we investigate how investing time in different activities is related to improvement on different skill dimensions. In the end, we find that some associational leadership activities, especially the work of mobilizing people, are strongly related to skill improvement, but that not all skills are equally likely to be developed.

LEADERSHIP IN CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

Civic associations are self-governing organizations made up of individual members who joined voluntarily. To clarify the unique character of civic associations, it is helpful to note what they are *not*. Many contemporary interest groups and service providing nonprofits do not fit our definition of civic associations. Rather, they are centralized, professionalized, bureaucratic

organizations. While many groups have "members," a typical form of membership is paying an annual subscription fee and receiving a newsletter or magazine. These organizations generate revenue by recruiting "checkbook" members, raising other donations via professional marketing efforts (door-to-door, over the phone, or via the Internet), and winning grants from government or foundations. This revenue is used to support the work of professional, paid staff.[11] Executives in these groups (e.g. the American Automobile Association, the American Association of Retired Persons) engage with individual "members" as consumers or clients—relationships of economic exchange. In that context, core "leadership" tasks are managerial. As is the focus in for-profit corporations, managers must ensure efficient production of goods and the maintenance of a satisfied consumer base—and they are financially compensated for doing so. Even when paid canvassers and grassroots lobbying firms engage in face-to-face activities (e.g. street canvassing), they do so in a way that usually fails to produce meaningful civic learning, to generate enduring forms of social capital, or to inspire new leadership.[12]

Civic associations, on the other hand, offer unique opportunities for civic skill learning because they engage citizens in leadership activity. Civic associations are organizational vehicles for the expression of collective identities and the assertion of public voice and in which members participate as constituents rather than consumers.[13] In this context, leaders must "mobilize and direct the commitment, accountability, and cooperation, of voluntary participants" if the organization is to be successful.[14] The organization must recruit (and often hold elections for) volunteer leaders, develop their capacity for making decisions about organizational governance, and create organizational structures for engaging additional volunteers in the work of the group. Because ordinary citizens are drawn into these core leadership activities, strong potential exists for civic skill development.

America has a long-standing tradition of this kind of civic associationalism. Organizers throughout much of U.S. history formed large, nationally federated associations that drew strength from millions of members in thousands of local chapters.[15] These local chapters were grouped into regional and state level units which were unified into cohesive national associations. This structure, modeled on the federated structure of the U.S. government, provided stable sources of income for organizations (from member dues and materials purchases) and connected individuals into trans-local networks of political information and support that spanned the nation. This classic federated structure allowed organizations to maintain highly personal connections with members at the local level while still vying for serious national political clout.

In addition, America's civic associations created countless leadership positions for ordinary citizens.[16] Men and women from all walks of life had the opportunity to learn various organizational and leadership skills long-considered important for democratic citizens.[17] In 1910, for example, the Odd Fellows, a major fraternal order with 1.5 million members in 16,245 chapters, recruited members to serve in 276,813 leadership posts, 99.8 percent of which were at the local level. This means at any one time, one out of every five members of the Odd Fellows served in a formal leadership role. Similarly, the Grange, the oldest agricultural organization in the U.S., at one point had 450,000 members 77,775 of whom held leadership positions of which 99.3 percent were local.[18]

Despite the shift from this classic civic association form to more managerial styles of organization since the 1960's,[19] many prominent organizations like the National Rifle Association,[20] Common Cause,[21] the National Organization of Women,[22] and the Sierra Club[23] still rely on state and local units, and the members and leaders within them, to play important roles in governance and other organizational activities. Recent scholarship suggests that still today roughly a quarter of all local groups are affiliates of national associations.[24]

Many studies have examined who joins and actively participates in civic associations. We still, however, know much less about what people actually do as leaders in these organizations and what civic skills they develop as a result. The knowledge of how to be an effective association leader must be learned, and some leaders undoubtedly learn more than others. Which leads us to ask, what might association leaders actually be doing within their groups, and what skills might they actually be developing through those activities?

The scholarly literature currently offers little empirical data on this topic. In one notable study of anti-drunk-driving organizations, sociologists John McCarthy and Mark Wolfson provide evidence that certain leaders (chapter presidents and vice presidents) commit substantial amounts of time to their organizations, spending at least some of that time on many public appearances and attending a variety of membership and leadership meetings.[25] Their study, however, does not detail the *relative amount* of time committed by leaders to the various possible leadership activities they might undertake. In what areas do leaders invest the most (and least) time?

Beyond relative time commitment, we are also interested in how leaders' skills are developing as they engage in these activities. Alexis de Tocqueville, after touring America in the 1830s, argued that "in democratic countries knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge"[26] and that for the conditions of democracy to flourish, the "art of association must develop and improve"[27] among citizens.[28] The most prominent recent examination of improvement in the "art of associating" has been the work of political scientist Sidney Verba and his colleagues.[29] They asked survey respondents whether and where they practiced four particular actions—attending a meeting, organizing a meeting, writing a letter, and making a speech. They then connected the practice of these actions to subsequent political involvement. Others have followed up on this research by looking at organizational contexts that foster the opportunity for practicing similar actions, finding a variety of chances available in churches, political groups, service

organizations, and even arts groups.[30] Despite the cataloguing of opportunities, however, these studies say little about what skill sets leaders actually improve on through their participation. We are left, then, with two individual-level questions. What are the civic skill dimensions along which leaders might develop, and how much do leaders really develop along these dimensions through their experiences in civic associations?

These are the empirical questions we pursue in this remainder of this chapter. After briefly introducing the Sierra Club as an organization and the project used to collect data from Sierra Club leaders, we turn our attention to what these leaders do, focusing on how they spend their leadership time in the group. Next, we use a series of survey items on particular skills to identify three civic skill dimensions along which leaders might improve through their activity. We highlight the differing patterns of improvement along these three dimensions, and then connect those patterns to the relative time investments of leaders. We show that different patterns of time investment can have very different relationships to skill improvement.

THE SIERRA CLUB

The Sierra Club is one of the oldest, largest, and most influential environmental associations in the United States.[31] It is regularly involved in the environmental policy-making process at national, state, and local levels and is arguably the most well-known American environmental group. Sociologist Edwin Amenta and colleagues found that the Sierra Club was one of the ten most covered social movement organizations of any kind in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, ranking higher than any other conservation or environmental organization.[32] Despite its prominence in environmental politics, the Sierra Club maintains its commitment to outdoors activity, organizing and sponsoring everything from local day hikes to extensive high-peaks expeditions. The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 by John Muir and a set of

San Francisco Bay area notables with an affinity for the mountains of northern California.[33] From the start, the Sierra Club was both an alpine club for hikers and other outdoors enthusiasts to collectively pursue recreational pursuits in the mountains and a political advocacy group that lobbied for the preservation of natural spaces.[34] That dual purpose continues through to today, as individuals and organizational units at all levels of the Sierra Club pursue a mission to "explore, enjoy, and protect" the natural environment.[35] The Sierra Club continues to play a leading role in the environmental movement as the organization's breadth and openness allow it to engage new issues and ideas.

Over the course of its history, the Sierra Club has followed a trajectory common to classic American voluntary associations, beginning with a federated structure that became more complex and professionalized after the 1970s.[36] Membership in the club was modest for much of its early history, due in part to a local, California focus and to a sponsored membership system (potential members had to have a current member sponsor their application for membership). By 1940 the group included only about 3500 members. Following World War II, however, the Club changed strategies, rapidly expanding the organization to develop a true federated structure. The Club formed state level Chapters throughout the country and shifted to an open membership format, dramatically increasing the membership size. By the end of the 1960s, the club had 33 state and regional chapters and was approaching 100,000 members. In the 1970s, the Club, added new city-based sub-units of Chapters, creating a layer of local organizations, called Sierra Club Groups. By the time of our study in 2003, Club membership exceeded 750,000 in 62 Chapters—one in every state plus several regional Chapters in California—and more than 300 local groups.

As the organization became older and more complex, the Sierra Club developed some of the key characteristics common to many advocacy organizations founded since the 1970s.[37] For example, paid staff (at the national and state level) handle organizational maintenance tasks like

fundraising or publishing, and the organizations have professional lobbyists, lawyers, and field organizers. In 2003, when we conducted our research, the organization had 163 national staff members in the San Francisco headquarters, another 52 in the Washington, D.C. office, and 169 staffers working in 8 regions. An additional 124 employees were working in the Chapters that had staff at the time.[38] The Sierra Club also recruits members through direct-mail campaigns, and for a majority of members, writing checks and receiving a magazine is the only way they interface with the organization. Adopting these practices undoubtedly has contributed to the rapid growth of the organization and its success as one of the most prominent environmental groups in the U.S. These changes have also expanded the organizational focus from its early days as a small, almost exclusively face-to-face organization.

Nonetheless, many volunteer members play central leadership roles. Elected leaders at all levels of the Sierra Club—local (Groups), regional/state (Chapters), and national—commit substantial personal time to governance and activity. Beyond the elected leadership, thousands of volunteer activists contribute time and effort leading political campaigns, guiding outings and outdoors programs, coordinating public education activities, and conducting research. Political scientist Ronald Shaiko compared five national environmental organizations and found that the Sierra Club had the highest proportion of active members.[39] According to his survey, about 10% of the members consider themselves active in the organization and almost a quarter of members are on special mailing lists and respond to issue alerts by writing to their members of Congress. In 2003, an internal Sierra Club database indicated that more than 3000 volunteers directly participated in governance across all levels as members of "Executive Committees," senior decision-making bodies in every unit at each organizational level. These Executive Committee members are the leaders we focused on in our study.

STUDYING THE SIERRA CLUB

While several historical and social-scientific examinations of the Sierra Club have been conducted in the past,[40] none have delved deeply into the leadership of the club at its various levels. The 2003 National Purpose, Local Action study provided us with unprecedented access into the inner workings of this major national civic association.[41] To understand what the associational lives of the Club's leaders really looked like, we needed extensive data from thousands of Sierra Club leaders scattered across the country, as well as information about the ways these leaders interacted in their particular Chapters and Groups. The core of this data collection effort focused on bringing together the leadership teams from each Group and Chapter for a facilitated, data-based, self-assessment discussion about what they were doing and how they were doing it. To conduct this operation, in the fall of 2003, more than 200 Sierra Club leaders came together in San Francisco and were trained to conduct these Executive Committee self-assessment sessions. In advance of each session, facilitators would distribute 15-page paper surveys to members of the Executive Committee of the Group or Chapter. Executive Committee members would fill out the survey, bring it to the session as a basis for discussion, then return it to the facilitator who would submit all of them for systematic coding and analysis.[42]

The data we use in this chapter were collected through these written surveys of Executive Committee members. Our 15-page questionnaire was completed by 1,624 Executive Committee members (51% of all Executive Committee members in the Club) between October 2003 and February 2004. We worked closely with the volunteer facilitators throughout the process to maximize the response rate and improve the quality of responses. Executive Committee members spent anywhere from 1 to 3 hours completing the detailed questionnaire that asked about their personal characteristics and experiences and about the way their particular Executive Committee functioned. Executive Committee members not only are in charge of major decision-making in their

Chapters and Groups, but often serve as core activists in most major Club activities.[43] We use this data to examine how these volunteer leaders allocate their time in the Club and what skills they develop through their service.

WHAT DO LEADERS DO?

To begin, we examine the total number of hours respondents committed to Sierra Club activity. Although all the people included in our survey are elected leaders of the Sierra Club, we expect that they will vary a great deal in how much time they commit to the organization. Overall, how many hours do leaders actually spend on Sierra Club activity?

The median Executive Committee member spends about 15 hours per month on Club activity (see Figure 1). Separating Chapter (regional/state level) leaders from Group (local level) leaders, we find that the former typically devote more time (20 hours per month) than the latter (12 hours per month). These "typical" figures, however, disguise the substantial variation in time commitment from leader to leader. Roughly 6 percent of the leaders reported that they spent five hours or less a month on Sierra Club activity, while on the other end of the continuum, some 20 percent of the leaders said that they spent 40 hours or more per month—an average of 10 hours per week.

[Figure 1 about here]

These numbers reveal that the volunteer leaders in the Sierra Club belong to the most civically active segment of the American population. To put these numbers into perspective, about 26 percent of American adults volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2007 and September 2008.[44] The median volunteer spent about 52 hours during that one year period—roughly 4.3 hours per month. A typical Sierra Club Group leader would spend 144 hours per year and a Chapter leader about 240 hours. According to our estimates from the 2008

Current Population Survey, only about a quarter of all volunteers committed 144 hours a year and less than 15 percent spent 240 hours or more. Further, at least two-thirds of our respondents reported that they also participate in at least one other civic association and 46 percent say that they hold at least one leadership position in another organization. For many of these leaders, their activism is an important part of their lives as they spend a significant proportion of their waking hours in the service of the Sierra Club and other civic organizations.[45]

Given the large number of hours leaders invest in the Sierra Club, the next question is what they do during the hours they devote to the organization. In our survey, we asked the leaders to break down the hours they spent for the Club into several categories. The categories were constructed in consultation with experienced Sierra Club leaders and staff members who had substantial insight into the range of possible activities that leaders might pursue.[46] Figure 2 shows the relative distribution of leader hours across different categories of activity sorted from most to least common. The activity that takes up the largest proportion of time for leaders in the Sierra Club is "administrative activities" which includes writing and editing newsletters, maintaining websites, keeping up with administrative email, and other organizational logistics. The average Club leader spends almost a quarter of her time on these administrative activities. This is followed closely by time invested in meetings. On average, 23 percent of the hours leaders invest in the organization are devoted to meetings. Together, almost half of the typical Sierra Club leader's time is spent doing administrative activities or in meetings.

[Figure 2 about here]

The other half of leaders' time is divided among a variety of other activities, the most common of which is attending planned activities, events, or celebrations (17%). This is followed by community outreach (which includes things like answering questions from community members,

lobbying decision-makers, testifying in hearings, hosting informational tables, and making public speeches), informal discussion with other leaders, and mobilizing (which includes encouraging basic members to become active participants and recruiting people to attend upcoming events or meetings). Fundraising, training, and "other" activities take up the least amount of a Sierra Club leader's time.

How should we think about this distribution of time use? Perhaps most striking is the fact that the vast majority of time is spent doing work with other leaders or by oneself. This "behind the scenes" work may go unnoticed by those who focus only on the public side of leadership. Without prior empirical studies to compare to, however, additional interpretation is challenging. Nevertheless, several theoretical traditions suggest ways we might begin thinking about the patterns we see here.

From the broadest perspective, Sierra Club Groups and Chapters are formal organizations. Organization scholars have suggested that creating and maintaining a formal organization for collective action requires substantial "overhead" for organizational maintenance and coordination.[47] Associations like the Sierra Club are no exception. Informally hiking with friends may not require extensive planning, coordination, or administration. A Sierra Club hike, however, needs to be announced in the newsletter, have a list of individuals signed up to participate, have a trained leader assigned to the outing, and, if it is a particularly challenging outing, perhaps even legal release forms on hand. These kinds of tasks might fall within the administration or the informal communication with leaders categories. In addition, group leaders must create a plan for making the hike happen and must see the plan through to completion. The planning and implementation processes all require coordination, which may help explain the amount of time that leaders devote to meetings. Organization scholars, then, might not be surprised to see the relatively large amount of time Sierra Club leaders devote to administration and meetings.

Scholars studying the organized dimensions of social movements suggest similar insights. Sustained collective effort requires ongoing organization, typically carried out by leaders and other committed activists in formal organizations.[48] For example, a study of all public events (including cultural and sports events as well as protest events) that occurred in one year in Madison, Wisconsin found that the large majority of events were sponsored by formal organizations that transcended the events themselves.[49] Similarly, a study of public events in Chicago concluded that the most important factor in explaining rates of public events in neighborhoods was the density of formal organizations in the area.[50] Unless leaders in formal organizations carry out the necessary groundwork and take up a large share of the costs —including meetings to decide on a course of action and administration to keep the organization afloat while actions take place—these public events are unlikely to happen and even less likely to happen in a sustained fashion.[51] Again, the relative time emphasis on administrative activities and meetings makes sense from this perspective.

Scholars of civic associations similarly note the amount of attention leaders must pay to core activities that build and sustain organizations, but draw our attention even more specifically to the unique nature of leadership activity in this context. Rather than simply thinking about the "maintenance and coordination" required to keep the organization afloat, scholars in this tradition recognize that in civic associations these are volunteer leaders who are recruiting, training, and coordinating more volunteers—requiring a fundamentally different set of skills and approaches than managing paid employees in a bureaucracy. Leaders must find potential volunteers, motivate them to participate, facilitate the development of relationships with them and among them, secure their commitments for activity, identify those with leadership potential, and develop them into the next generation of leaders. For the association to endure, leaders must build organizational capacity— useful organizational structures and skilled people to fill those structures—that outlasts any particular activity or program. Leaders must engage in strategic work, deciding on various courses of

possible action, and interdependently, working with one another on complex tasks. [52] From this perspective, the administration and meetings taking place in civic associations may not simply be organizational maintenance activities. Rather, these are the sites where leaders' most creative and consequential activity may occur. Once again, given the centrality of these activities, we might expect substantial time investment in them.

Social movement theories and the civic association perspective also draw our attention to related (if less commonly reported) activities in Figure 2, in particular community outreach and mobilizing. These actions are closely related to the kinds of capacity-building leadership that associational leaders must undertake. Leaders doing community outreach are investing time in direct communication with decision-makers as well as testifying at hearings, making public speeches, staffing informational tables, and other efforts to directly reach out to the broader community. The average Sierra Club leader devotes about 13 percent of his or her time to this kind of work. Leaders also mobilize people for activity, ranging from protests and rallies seeking political influence, to river clean-ups and trail maintenance efforts to restore the natural environment, to hikes, trips, and outings to enjoy the outdoors. Leaders reported investing less than 5 percent of their time into mobilizing people to become active participants or to attend events and activities. [53] This relatively limited time investment is surprising in light of social movement scholarship that notes the significant importance of organizers' efforts in getting people to participate in movement activity. [54] If we assume that higher levels of mobilization are beneficial to the Sierra Club's efforts, we might expect more leader time to be devoted to mobilizing.

In sum, Sierra Club leaders are clearly contributing a substantial number of hours to the organization. These hours are divided across a range of activities. Sierra Club leaders are investing a great deal of their time in administrative activities and meetings, a substantial amount of time participating in activities, events, and celebrations, and relatively less time in outreach and

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mobilizing. Theories of formal organizations, social movements, and civic associations lead us to think the relative emphasis on administration and meetings is to be expected, although the relatively limited investment in outreach and mobilizing may be lower than expected.[55]

As a first look at time investments in civic associations, these patterns are intriguing on their own. But what are the implications for leader skill development? A critical task for any self-governing civic association is the development of leadership.[56] More skilled leaders should produce better outcomes today, and a steady development of leadership capacity helps ensure the continued success of the organization in the future. Toward these ends, in an effective association leaders' skills should be improving. What does this particular distribution of time investment mean for leader skill development? For example, we see that leaders are devoting substantial time to administrative activity. If doing administrative tasks leads to substantial civic skill improvement, the Sierra Club will reap the benefits of many more civically skilled leaders. If, however, mobilizing activity is more of a teacher of skills, Sierra Club leaders are improving less than they might because of the relatively little time investment in these activities. To explore these possibilities, we turn to now to leader skill development.

WHAT SKILLS DO LEADERS DEVELOP?

What framework can we use to structure our assessment of leadership skill development? While civic associations have long been described as "schools of democracy"[57] in which people can learn various civic and organizational skills, the kinds of skills they learn through associational experience is not widely understood. In most studies, this relationship has been studied indirectly by considering whether association members are engaged in other political or civic activities (e.g. voting, attending public meetings) more than non-members. If association members participate in

other activities more, it is assumed they must have learned some civic lessons through their participation and become more motivated to participate in political or community events.

In our study, we measured in close detail the civic skills leaders were developing. In the survey, we offered Sierra Club leaders a list of 19 specific skills that could be developed by playing a leadership role in a civic association. These included, for example, "accepting responsibility," "working with the media," and "challenging others to be more effective." For each item, we asked the leaders how strongly they agreed or disagreed that their skill had improved through service as a volunteer leader in the Sierra Club. In other words, the questions do not try to measure the absolute level (or stock) of skill the leaders possess, but rather the development of the skill through experience in the organization.[58]

Our goal in utilizing this set of skill items was not to come up with an exhaustive list of all possible civic skills that might be important for civic association members in general or environmental activists in particular.[59] Rather, we sought to identify sets of skill items that might indicate common dimensions of civic knowledge. Using a statistical technique called factor analysis, we examined whether the 19 specific skills could be grouped into a smaller number of meaningful categories. Factor analysis is a data reduction technique that searches for common dimensions underlying multiple survey questions.[60] Using factor analysis, we identified three major skill dimensions. Table 1 presents these three skill dimensions and the specific skills that fall within each. The numbers in each column are "factor loadings" which indicate how closely each specific skill is correlated with the underlying skill dimension (a zero would mean that specific skill had no correlation with that skill dimension; a one would be perfect correlation; higher values mean stronger correlations). Because all the specific skill items are relevant to civic learning, they all have some correlation with all three underlying skill dimensions, but it becomes clear that certain skills are more closely related to one of the three dimensions than the others. We examined which items

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loaded on each factor. Then we named the factors according to the kinds of skills most strongly related to each.[61]

[Table 1 about here]

We call the first skill dimension *managing self*. These skills make a leader someone with whom other people in an organization can effectively work. The most central items to this dimension (i.e. those with the highest "factor loadings") are about taking responsibility for one's own work like "accepting responsibility," "accepting criticism," and "managing my time." Leaders with these skills take responsibility for the things for which they are accountable. They listen to other people. They fulfill their own responsibilities effectively. "Managing self" does not require making changes in other people's attitudes or behaviors; developing these skills is about one leader changing herself. Skills for "managing self" enhance the internal capacity of the organization through the improvement of individual capabilities.

We call the second skill dimension *managing others*. These skills involve one leader getting other people to take some organizationally-relevant action or to change their behaviors. Core items here include things like "challenging others to be more effective," "holding others accountable," "delegating responsibility," and "asking people to volunteer." Leaders who develop these skills get members to donate money or volunteer time. They delegate tasks to other leaders and hold them accountable to their commitments. They motivate others to accept responsibility and challenge them to fulfill it. "Managing others" builds organizational capacity by getting others internal to the group to perform more effectively.

We call the third skill dimension *managing public work*. These skills involve working with institutions, organizations, and the public beyond the association. Core items on this dimension include "working with media," "planning and carrying out a campaign," and "organizing and running a meeting." Leaders developing these skills make efforts to influence the general public and

public officials and they can work with other organizations do to so. "Managing public work" builds external organizational capacity—the ability to "change the world."

Based on our construction of these three civic skill dimensions[62]—managing self, managing others, and managing public work—we then ask on which of these three skill sets do the leaders improve (or not improve) through their Sierra Club experience? Table 2 shows the percentage of Sierra Club leaders who "agree" or "strongly agree" that their specific skill has improved through their activity in the Club. Looking at the average reported improvement for each of the three dimensions, we see that Sierra Club leaders report highest rates of improvement on "managing self" (41 percent) followed closely by "managing public work" (40 percent). Within these two dimensions, particular skills especially stand out. Within "managing self," 62 percent of leaders report improving on "listening to other people" and just over half say they have improved at "accepting responsibility." "Managing my time," however, is a skill that only about a quarter think has improved through their service to the Sierra Club. Within the "managing public work" dimension, nearly half (48 percent) of leaders report improving on "organizing and running a meeting" and 45 percent say that their public speaking ability has improved. Less than a third of leaders, however, report improving on "working with media" or "managing internal conflicts."

In contrast to "managing self" and "managing public work," Sierra Club leaders report relatively less improvement in "managing others" with an average reported improvement rate of only 32 percent.[63] Within the dimension, certain specific skills are more common, like "providing others with support" on which 45% of leaders report improving. On the low end, however, less than a quarter of leaders report improving on "challenging others to be more effective" and only 18 percent report improving on "holding others accountable." While some leaders report improving their "managing others" skills through their service to the Club, overall it appears that substantially

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fewer skills in "managing others" are being developed than those surrounding "managing self" or "managing public work."[64]

In short, the experiences of volunteer leaders in the Sierra Club offer significant opportunities to improve on various skill dimensions. Some skills, however, appear to be more likely to be improved than others. "Managing self" seems to be what many leaders are most likely to improve on through their service in the Sierra Club, followed by some "managing public work" skills. "Managing others," however, which consists mostly of skills required for working collectively with other people in the organization, appears to have been improved on by only a minority of the leaders. In some ways this is surprising, as civic associations are dependent on collective action to succeed and, as we noted earlier, civic associations are one of the few (and, perhaps, best) contexts available for improving these kinds of skills. Skills for "managing others"—especially those involving challenging others to accept responsibility and be accountable—might also translate particularly well into additional civic and political success for individual leaders beyond their groups (as the Michael McGinn example we opened the chapter with suggests).

If an organization wanted to improve its leaders' rates of skill improvement—whether on the "managing others" dimension or the others—the first step would be better understanding why some leaders improve on these dimensions, while others do not. In particular, it would be important to know what experiences within the organization are most closely related to improvement on each skill dimension, allowing an organization, then, to either encourage more engagement with current "learning" activities or to reform currently "non-learning" activities to make them into a stronger learning context. We take that step next, investigating the relationship between the work leaders do in the Sierra Club and the skills on which they report improving.

LEADER TIME AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

How is leader time investment related to skill improvement in the Sierra Club? In our final set of analyses, we examine what factors are related to the development of skills in "managing self," "managing others," and "managing public work," focusing in particular on the relationship between how leaders invest their time in the organization and what types of skills they improve. Since there could be many other factors that also affect skill development, it is important to control for those factors to make a meaningful assessment of the effect of time use. For example, perhaps leaders who have been active in the organization longer are more likely to have improved more skills. In order to see the real relationship of time investment to skill learning, we need to take these potential confounding factors into account. We use multiple regression analysis to control for various factors including a variety of standard demographic characteristics (e.g. age, sex, education), leader's experience in the Club (e.g. activist tenure in the Club, the number of training programs attended), and features of particular organizations (e.g. Executive Committee size, membership size, whether a leader serves on a Group or Chapter Executive Committee). Regression analysis allows us to "hold constant" all of these background factors while we focus in on the relationship of time spent in particular activities to particular civic skills developed.[65]

The following figures (Figure 3 to Figure 6) summarize the key findings from the analyses. The patterns in these figures show how improving on different skill dimensions is related to leaders' activities in the Sierra Club controlling for other background factors.[66] Figure 3 shows how the total number of hours devoted to Sierra Club activities is related to the three different skill dimensions (regardless of the relative amount of time leaders invested in each). Each line in Figure 3 represents the probability that leaders who commit a certain number of hours agree that they have improved (on average) on the skills on that dimension.

[Figure 3 about here]

The first pattern to note is quite clear: leaders who invest more time in the Sierra Club are significantly more likely to agree that they have improved on all three types of skills. One must keep in mind that this is the relationship after controlling for many other factors that could influence skill development. For example, the length of time a person has been active in the Sierra Club plays a major role in explaining how many skills they have improved on. Similarly, as the number of leadership positions a person holds increases, the number of skills that person reports improving on also increases. The relationship between time investment and skill improvement appears even after we control for these important factors.

A second pattern in Figure 3 is also clear. In line with what we saw in Table 2, skills for "managing others" seem to be substantially less likely to be improved upon with increased time investment compared to the other two types of skills. This is even true for the leaders who spend very large numbers of hours each month with the Sierra Club. Leaders who spend 30 hours per month with the Sierra Club are significantly more likely to report that their "managing others" skills have improved than are leaders who spend just one hour per month. The rate of the improvement for "managing others," however, is much smaller than for "managing self" and "managing public work." An average leader who spends one hour per month with the Sierra Club has about a 5 percent chance of reporting that he is improving on "managing others," just less than 6 percent chance of reporting improvement on "managing public work," and roughly 8 percent chance of reporting improvement on "managing self." If that same leader began committing 30 hours per month to the club, his chances of reporting improvement on "managing public work" would increase to nearly 20 percent (a 14 percentage point increase), and nearly 19 percent with respect to "managing self" (an 11 point increase). In contrast, his chances of reporting improvement on "managing others" would increase by only 6.5 points to 11.6 percent.

[Figures 4, 5, and 6 about here]

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Simple time commitment, however, is only the beginning of the story. What may matter more is how that time is invested. Figures 4, 5, and 6, provide this more nuanced understanding. As in Figure 3, in these figures, we control for a large set of background factors that could explain reported skill improvement. Most importantly, we control for how long a leader has been active in the Sierra Club and the number of Sierra Club training programs the leader has gone through, both of which have strong, positive relationships to all three kinds of skill improvement. In addition we, also control for the total amount of time a leader commits to the Club (the pattern illustrated in Figure 3). In Figures 4, 5, and 6 we add to the mix four of the types of time use we discussed earlier: administrative activities, meetings, outreach, and mobilizing.[67] Controlling for other factors, what relationship does spending relatively more time on any one of these activities have to skill improvement?

The types of skills leaders improve on seem to be closely related to the kinds of activities to which they devote more of their time. Figure 4 shows the pattern for improvement in "managing self." Investing time in administrative activities and outreach shows a small, positive relationship to reported improvement in "managing self." Investing time in mobilizing activity shows a more pronounced, positive relationship to skill improvement. Variability in the data makes it difficult to establish the absolute certainty of these relationships.[68] They may reflect positive relationships to skill improvement, with mobilization activities having the strongest positive relationship, but they may also simply have no relationship to self-management skills. A clear, statistically significant, negative relationship, however, is found between meetings and "managing self." A greater percentage of leader time spent in meetings is related to lower reported levels of improvement in things like listening to other people, accepting responsibility, and creative thinking.

Figure 5 tells a similar story for the relationship of time commitment to reported improvement in "managing others." Investing time in administrative activities and meetings both

show negative relationships with the improvement of "managing others" skills. The pattern is especially clear for meetings;[69] leaders devoting greater proportions of their time to meetings are significantly less likely to report improving on skills like challenging others to be effective, holding others accountable, and delegating responsibility. Investing time in mobilizing, on the other hand, shows a strong positive relationship to reports of improvement in "managing others."[70] Leaders who devote a larger proportion of their time to getting basic Sierra Club members to become active participants and recruiting people to attend events and activities are much more likely to report improvement on "managing others" skills (e.g. holding others accountable).[71]

Finally, Figure 6 displays the results of the same analysis applied to the relationship of time investment and "managing public work" skill improvement. Here, administrative activities and meetings show weak negative relationships to reported improvement on "managing public work" skills like planning and carrying out a campaign and (ironically) organizing and running a meeting. The relationships are modest and, statistically speaking, it is unclear if they are actually negative or simply zero.[72] Outreach and mobilizing, however, are both clearly and strongly positively related to reports of "managing public work" skill improvement. Sierra Club leaders devoting more of their efforts to get members to participate actively or who work to communicate to the broader public are much more likely to report being better at working with the media, engaging with coalition partners, and giving speeches.

Before we continue, we should make a note about the causal direction of these relationships. There are two possibilities. First is a situation where participation in certain Sierra Club leadership activities facilitates learning. In this situation, devoting relatively more time to certain activities could lead to higher levels of reported improvement because each additional hour a leader spends on an activity produces more learning about the skills associated with that activity (in the same way that a student who chooses to focus more homework time on math than on English may develop more

quantitative skills). Second is a situation where learning facilitates participation in certain kinds of

Sierra Club activities. In this situation, learning particular skills encourages a leader to invest more of

her time in activities where those skills are useful (like a student who has successfully completed one

math course choosing to take more courses in math and fewer in English). We speculate that the

former process (participation facilitating learning) is more likely in the Sierra Club, in part because

our analyses have controlled for the number of formal trainings that a leader has engaged in and in

part because the research literature suggests such a learning process,[73] but the possibility for both

causal processes is present. While our speculations on causal direction inform some of our

subsequent discussion, we must withhold final judgment until more research is done on the topic.

     With that in mind, what might these patterns tell us? First, leaders are more likely to report

improving on all three types of skills as the proportion of time they devote to mobilizing increases.

The relationship is relatively large in all three contexts (and conventionally statistically significant in

two of three). If a "participation facilitates learning" process is at work here, then it would seem that

activities that get leaders reaching out in acts of recruitment and engagement are more likely to teach

skills ranging from thinking creatively (a component of "managing self") to delegating responsibility

("managing others") to working effectively with public officials ("managing public work").

Outreach also shows a positive relationship to improved skills, but in a more limited way. Again if

"participation facilitates learning," investing time in things like lobbying decision-makers and

communicating with the public appears to teach leadership lessons in "managing public work" like

organizing meetings or speaking in public. Of course, as we saw in Figure 2, outreach and mobilizing

do not appear to dominate the average Sierra Club leader's schedule. The time devoted to these

activities may be producing learning, but these leaders are devoting smaller proportions of their time

to these activities than to others.

What about administrative activities and meetings? The data often show no relationships, and at times even negative relationships, between increasing meeting and administrative time investment and reported skill improvement. From the perspective of organization scholars, this is perhaps unsurprising.[74] While things like newsletter production and regular email correspondence may be critical for keeping a complex organization up-and-running and able to support sustained collective action, something about the nature of those kinds of activities (perhaps in general; perhaps just as they are practiced in the Sierra Club) may not be providing many opportunities for learning how to better listen to others, delegate responsibility, or manage internal conflicts. From the civic association perspective, however, these patterns—especially the negative relationship between meetings and reported skill improvement—is more surprising. For a self-governing civic association, meetings may be the primary location for learning experiences to take place. These are the occasions when leaders must work together to do things like think creatively, hold each other accountable, and plan campaigns. How is it that Sierra Club meetings do not seem to produce any of these types of learning in leaders (and may even reduce the likelihood of learning them)?

Perhaps this is due to the nature of the meetings themselves as they are currently practiced in the Sierra Club (and likely in many other civic associations). In principle, meetings in these groups could be critical sites of learning in these voluntary "schools of democracy." While we do not have data on how meetings are run, we can speculate (given our other findings here), that the meetings in the Sierra Club currently do not offer opportunities to practice "managing others" skills such as "challenging other people to be effective" or "delegating responsibility." Instead, meetings may be sites where individual leaders offer committee reports and describe ongoing activities without evaluating those activities or deliberating about future directions for the organization. Some Executive Committees may even have meetings that are burdened by ongoing conflicts among leaders that undermine learning opportunities. In addition, the content of what is discussed (not only

how it is discussed) could also matter. Meetings might be more civically rewarding when leaders collectively discuss organizational goals and deliberate on how to mobilize people and resources to achieve the goal. Perhaps the Sierra Club's current meetings do not regularly address such topics. If this is the case, these groups are missing a significant opportunity to improve the skills of their leaders. Speculation aside, meetings can take many different forms and our results show that the particular type of meetings held in these Sierra Club Groups and Chapters are not positively related to skill improvement in leaders.[75]

Given these findings, we argue that looking deeper into what is really going on in particular meetings and administrative activities in the Sierra Club, and other groups like it, is a crucial task for researchers (and civic organizers) going forward. As we saw in Figure 2, a large proportion of Sierra Club leaders' time is devoted to these activities, while few civic learning returns are being realized on that time investment. Generating skill improvement in meetings and administrative contexts could be an important supplement to the skill development already taking place in mobilizing and outreach activities.

CONCLUSION

In the days following Michael McGinn's inauguration as mayor of Seattle, he quickly began falling under the scrutiny of a critical media and a restless public. It remains to be seen how he will fare off the campaign trail and in the mayor's office. We might have reason to believe that he will adapt quickly and find himself successful at the task.

Why? If his campaign efforts are any indication, it would appear that McGinn was, during his years at the helm of the Sierra Club's Cascade Chapter, quite likely one of those leaders who learned substantive lessons about managing himself, managing others, and managing public work. We have seen so far that Sierra Club leaders often commit serious amounts of time to their

leadership activity. They divide this time across a variety of tasks, some geared more towards the creation and sustenance of collective action, others geared more toward organizing and influence-seeking. Many leaders are developing skills, although some skill dimensions are more likely to be improved on than others. Devoting more time overall is related to skill improvement in general, but a closer look shows that, currently, leaders who focus a greater share of their attention on mobilizing and outreach report more skill improvement.

Given these patterns, what *should* civic association leaders be doing? A cursory answer might be "stop meeting and start doing," a recommendation to simply refocus leaders' time commitments away from meetings and administrative activities and towards mobilizing and outreach. Such an answer would miss much of the essence of civic associations. The Sierra Club is a complex formal organization and the effort required to direct that organization effectively in the generation and sustenance of collective action is substantial. As such, it is unlikely that a major re-allocation of time from meetings and administration to other activities is possible—or even desirable. Rather than simply refocusing time, a better approach might be to reform the activities leaders are already doing to take advantage of the potential skill development opportunities within them. Investing in systematic, ongoing, focused training for leaders on how to run better meetings, how to challenge their colleagues, or how to manage internal conflict could improve skills for particular leaders and help them to create more productive learning opportunities—from the meeting rooms to the streets to the trailheads—for others.

Stated more simply, perhaps the key lesson is to "be like Mike." Michael McGinn's mayoral campaign engaged lots of volunteers. Meetings happened in the course of recruiting, training, and deploying those activists—meetings undergirded with a serious imperative to effectively mobilize. Perhaps these meetings were run better than the typical Sierra Club Group or Chapter Executive Committee meeting. Clearly activity did not stop with the meetings. Once the initial round of

volunteers was in the mix, many hands reached out to the community, found interested individuals, and transformed them into active campaign participants. In so doing, the campaign could draw on the creative synergy of civically skilled leadership and the organizational capacity of engaged activists allowing them to deliver on clever, politically-savvy public events—like sending out Mike on his bike. McGinn's civic leadership training before the campaign helped prepare him to run successfully for public office. The way he then ran his campaign may well have prepared a new generation of potential Seattle politicians and community leaders to follow his example.

In an era of declining civic engagement and declining prevalence of the kinds of associations that provide opportunities for developing civic skills, organizations like the Sierra Club provide a critical civic resource for the nation. At the moment, they are partly succeeding in the task of providing civic skills to citizens and potential community leaders. But the data also show that at the moment, they may not be going far enough. In addition, they may be part of a dying breed of organizations that provide any opportunity for civic learning. If organizations like the Sierra Club fail to live up to their civic training potential, or if they end up closing their door altogether, where will the next Michael McGinn go to get trained? And where does a society in need of civically skilled leaders find its next set of rising stars?
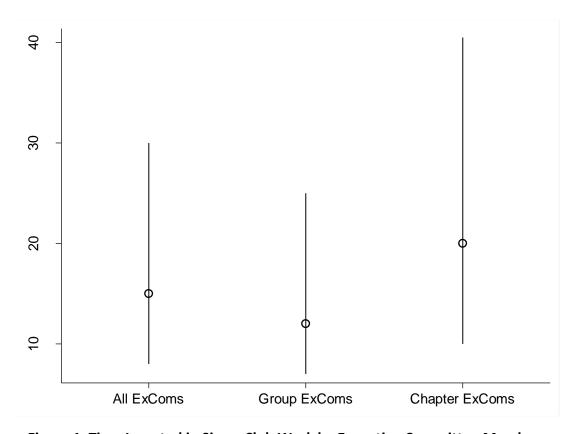
Figure 1. Time Invested in Sierra Club Work by Executive Committee Members
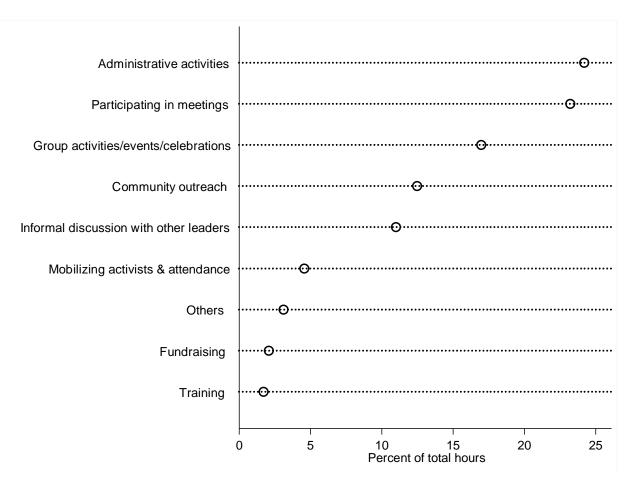
Figure 2. Percentage of Leader Time Spent in Various Activities

Table 1. Specific Skill Factor Loadings on Three Skill Dimensions

Type of skill	Managing Self	Managing Others	Managing Public Work
Accepting responsibility	**0.81**	0.18	0.22
Listening to other people	**0.77**	0.16	0.18
Accepting criticism	**0.68**	0.27	0.23
Thinking creatively	**0.67**	0.19	0.31
Managing my time	**0.48**	0.39	0.17
Challenging others to be more effective	0.18	**0.77**	0.28
Holding others accountable	0.26	**0.72**	0.20
Delegating responsibility	0.28	**0.73**	0.15
Asking people to volunteer	0.05	**0.75**	0.26
Coaching and mentoring others	0.29	**0.57**	0.49
Providing others with support	0.52	**0.53**	0.20
Asking for help	0.50	**0.54**	0.07
Working with media	0.11	0.15	**0.82**
Working effectively in coalition	0.12	0.20	**0.80**
Speaking in public	0.30	0.17	**0.70**
Planning and carryig out a campaign	0.24	0.28	**0.64**
Working effectively with public official	0.31	0.23	**0.63**
Organizing and running a meeting	0.33	0.37	**0.54**
Managing internal conflicts	0.30	0.37	**0.53**
% of Total Variance Explained by Factor	21	21	19

Table 2. Particular Skill Improvement by Skill Dimension

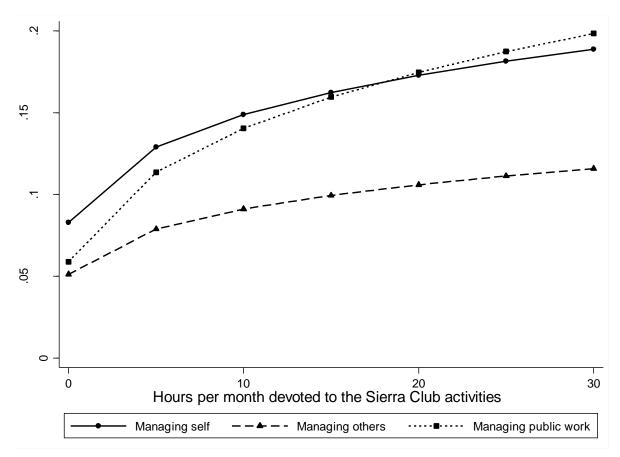| Type of Knowledge	% improved
Managing Self	
Listening to other people	62%
Accepting responsibility	51%
Thinking creatively	38%
Accepting criticism	29%
Managing my time	26%
Managing Self Average	41%
Managing Others	
Providing others with support	45%
Asking for help	41%
Asking people to volunteer	37%
Delegating responsibility	30%
Coaching and mentoring others	29%
Challenging others to be more effective	23%
Holding others accountable	18%
Managing Others Average	32%
Managing Public Work	
Organizing and running a meeting	48%
Speaking in public	45%
Working effectively with public official	42%
Working effectively in coalition	40%
Planning and carryig out a campaign	39%
Working with media	32%
Managing internal conflicts	31%
Managing Public Work Average	40%

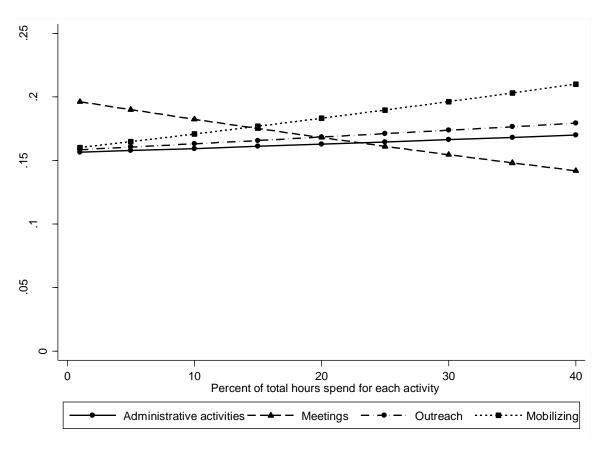**Figure 3. Total Time Investment and Skill Improvement**

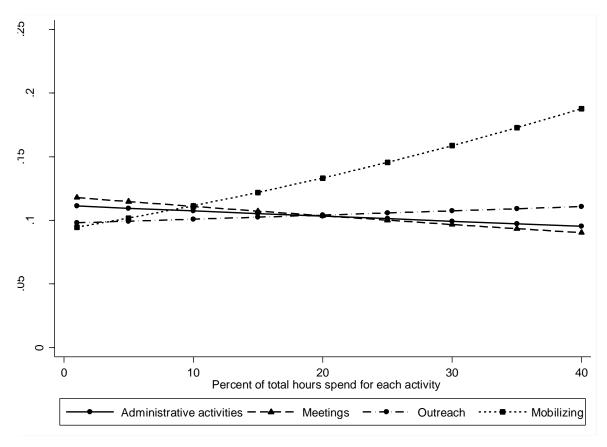**Figure 4. Relative Time Investment and "Managing Self"**

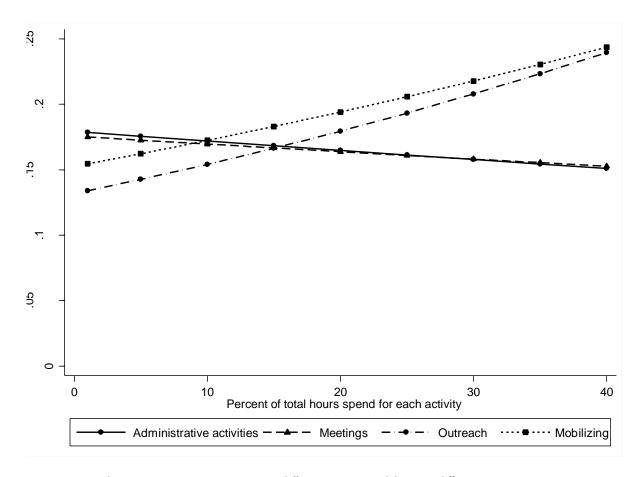**Figure 5. Relative Time Investment and "Managing Others"**

Figure 6. Relative Time Investment and "Managing Public Work"

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[4] Jonathan Martin, "For Mcginn, Activism Began as Law-Office Daydreaming," *Seattle Times*, Oct. 6 2009.

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[8] Kenneth T. Andrews et al., "Leadership, Membership, and Voice: Civic Associations That Work," *American Journal of Sociology* 115, no. 4 (2010). p. 1192.

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[12] Dana Fisher, *Activism, Inc.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Edward T. Walker, "Privatizing Participation: Civic Change and the Organizational Dynamics of Grassroots Lobbying Firms," *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 1 (2009).

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[14] Andrews et al., "Leadership, Membership, and Voice: Civic Associations That Work.":1192

[15] McCarthy, "Persistence and Change among Nationally Federated Social Movements."; Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz, and Ziad Munson, "A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (2000).

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[26] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper Perennial, 1969).:517

[27] Ibid.:517

[28] Previous scholarship suggests that participants learn civic values as well as skills. By working side by side with other fellow citizens for a common purpose, activists form bonds of trust that may cross the boundary of existing social cleavages, what Putnam calls "bridging social capital" and Tocqueville referred to as "self interest properly understood." This dimension of civic learning has stimulated a great deal of recent research and debate. While certainly interesting, these debates fall beyond the scope of this chapter. See, for example: Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*; Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Eric M. Uslaner and Paul Dekker, "The 'Social' in Social Capital," in *Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life*, ed. Paul Dekker and Eric M. Uslaner (New York: Routledge, 2001); Bob Edwards and Michael Foley, "Civil Society and Social Capital Beyond Putnam," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, no. 1 (1998); Elizabeth Theiss-Morse and John R. Hibbing, "Citizenship and Civic Engagement," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8, no. 1 (2005).

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[35] www.SierraClub.org

[36] Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson, "A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States."; Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy : From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*; Berry, *The New Liberalism*; Jack L. Walker, *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

[37] Rothenberg, *Linking Citizens to Government*; Andrew S. McFarland, *Common Cause: Lobbying in the Public Interest* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1984); Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy : From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*; Bosso, *Environment, Inc*; Berry, *The New Liberalism*; Walker, *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements*; Kay Lehman Schlozman and John T. Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).

[38] Staff numbers are tallied from Sierra Club employment records as of 12/31/2003.

[39] Shaiko, *Voices and Echoes for the Environment*.

[40] Cohen, *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892-1970*; Shaiko, *Voices and Echoes for the Environment*; Mundo, "The Sierra Club."; Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy*; William Devall, "The Governing of a Voluntary Association: Oligarchy and Democracy in the Sierra Club" (University of Oregon, 1970).

[41] The project was funded through a combination of resources from the Sierra Club Foundation and the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, the Center for Public Leadership, the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and the William F. Milton Fund (all at Harvard University).

[42] For more details on the study design and implementation see Andrews et al., "Leadership, Membership, and Voice: Civic Associations That Work."

[43] At various points in the literatures on associations, social movements, and political engagement, individuals contributing substantial amounts of time are referred to as "activists" or "leaders." Here we use "leaders" to distinguish these Sierra Club members with formal, organization-recognized leadership roles from a potentially broader set of time-committing "activists" who are not formally part of the entity-based decision-making structures.

[44] Based on authors' analysis of September 2008 U.S. Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement.

[45] Explaining why these leaders commit the hours they do is another interesting issue beyond the scope of this paper. See Matthew Baggetta, Hahrie Han, and Kenneth T. Andrews, "Explaining Volunteer Time Commitment: Civic Resources, Personal Motivations, and Organizational Characteristics," in *American Sociological Association Annual Meeting* (San Francisco, CA2008); Rothenberg, *Linking Citizens to Government.*.

[46] The survey included 15 time use categories: (1) informal discussions with other leaders, (2) responding to questions from members/community, (3) administrative/logistical work (including keeping up with communications, esp. email), (4) participating in Group or Chapter activities/events, (5) community outreach (including tabling, public speaking, etc.), (6) communicating with decision-makers (including lobbying, testifying, etc.), (7) mobilizing members to become activists, (8) mobilizing attendance for events/meetings, (9) training, (10) participating in meetings, (11) participating in celebrations, (12) working on the newsletter and/or website, (13) fundraising, (14) staff oversight (Chapters only), (15) other. We have combined several of these categories for theoretical relevance in analysis and to clarify presentation. In Figure 2 "Administrative activities" includes both (3) and (12), "Group activities/events/celebrations" includes (4) and (11), "Community Outreach" includes (2), (5), and (6), "and "Mobilizing activists & attendance" includes (7) and (8). Staff oversight (14) is not displayed in the figure, as it only applies to the small subset of Chapters (and no Groups) that have staff and represents only a tiny fraction of those Chapter leaders' time commitment. Respondents may not have considered some of these categories to be mutually exclusive. For example, one might work to mobilize members to participate in a political rally while at an outings event. Since there could be some overlap between the activity categories, the sum of the hours reported across categories might exceed an estimate of the total hours spent per month. We separately asked respondents for an overall estimate of their time commitment. The correlation between overall estimates and the sum of estimates in categories is quite high (Pearson's r = .9), suggesting that the detailed categorization is an accurate reflection of largely exclusive time-usage categories. The measures can give us a reasonable approximation of how the work of leaders in the Sierra Club is structured.

[47] Michael Hannan and John Freeman, "Structural Inertia and Organizational Change," *American Sociological Review* 49, no. 2 (1984).

[48] Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy, *Social Movements in an Organizational Society* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1987).

[49] Pamela Oliver and Daniel J. Myers, "How Events Enter the Public Sphere: Conflict, Location, and Sponsorship in Local Newspaper Coverage of Public Events," *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 38-87 (1999).

[50] Robert J. Sampson et al., "Civil Society Reconsidered: The Durable Nature and Community Structure of Collective Civic Action," *American Journal of Sociology* 111, no. 3 (2005).

[51] Pamela Oliver and Gerald Marwell, "Mobilizing Technologies for Collective Action," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992).

[52] Ganz, "Leading Change: Leadership, Organization, and Social Movements."

[53] Of course, efforts designed to mobilize participation may also be discussed in meetings or included in newsletters, meaning some mobilizing time is captured in those other categories.

[54] Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema, "Potentials, Networks, Motivations, and Barriers: Steps Towards Participation in Social Movements," *American Sociological Review* 52, no. 4 (1987); Dirk Oegema and Bert Klandermans, "Why Social Movement Sympathizers Don't Participate: Erosion and Nonconversion of Support," *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 5 (1994); Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[55] Comparative data on other organizations will be especially important to gather in the future to more thoroughly assess this point. It is possible that Sierra Club leaders' limited relative investment of time in mobilizing and outreach is not typical of civic associations in general. It may, instead, be a particular challenge for the Sierra Club, at least in 2003 when we conducted our study.

[56] Andrews et al., "Leadership, Membership, and Voice: Civic Associations That Work."

[57] Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Biography of a Nation of Joiners," *The American Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1944).

58 It should be noted that these measures are reports by individuals of their perceptions of self-improvement over time. As of this time, no standard measures exist for externally verifying these kinds of civic skill development perceptions—a clear area for additional research and measurement technique development. The highly self-reflective nature of the questionnaires, the serious time and care with which Sierra Club leaders filled them out, and the degree of meaningful variation across leaders observable within each measure, give us greater confidence that the indicators are capturing meaningful patterns of civic learning.

59 For a broader theoretical discussion of leadership capacities in social movements and civic associations see Ganz, "Leading Change: Leadership, Organization, and Social Movements." and Aldon D. Morris and Suzanne Staggenborg, "Leadership in Social Movements," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

60 For an introduction to factor analysis, see Jae-On Kim and Charles Mueller, *Factor Analysis: Statistical Methods and Practical Issues*, ed. Eric M. Uslaner, Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1978).

61 Our interpretations of the factors, and the names we assigned to each, are most heavily influenced by those items that are most strongly related to the factor.

62 We expect that, were we to include additional specific skill items in a larger bank of questions and conduct a similar analysis in other civic associations, similar underlying factors would emerge repeatedly.

63 There are two possible explanations for this low level of reported "managing others" skill development through Sierra Club experience. First is that leaders are coming into the Sierra Club with substantial collective action skills (learned elsewhere) and therefore have little room left to improve. Patterns of associational effectiveness in the Sierra Club (see Andrews et al., "Leadership, Membership, and Voice: Civic Associations That Work.") and patterns identified below regarding the kinds of leadership activities in the organization related to certain skill improvements suggest that this is not the case. Rather, the second possibility—that Sierra Club leaders start with low levels of "managing others" skills and, after participating, report relatively little improvement on this dimension, is the more likely scenario.

64 The pattern of variation within this dimension is interesting. It is possible that skills that do not involve conflict (e.g. listening, supporting others, running meetings) are more likely to be improved than skills which require challenging others (e.g. holding people accountable). While all of these skills related to "managing others," future research should more closely investigate this potentially important distinction.

65 The following figures and related discussion address only the key outcomes of interest. Complete regression results are available from the authors upon request.

66 The regression analyses behind figures 3 through 6 include controls for respondent age, gender, level of formal education, tenure as an active member in the Sierra Club, number of leadership positions held, number of training programs in which the leader has participated, whether the respondent is a Group or Chapter leader, the number of members in the Group or Chapter (logged), and the size of the Executive Committee for the entity (logged). Figures 4 through 6 also include a control for the number of hours (logged) spent on Sierra Club activity (the variable examined in Figure 3).

67 In this section we focus on the relationship between skill improvement and administrative activities, meetings, outreach, and mobilizing. Preliminary analyses (not shown) suggest that the other time use categories displayed in Figure 2 show little consistent relationship to skill improvement.

68 Uncertainty in the data leads to large standard errors for these three coefficients. They fail to reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

69 The negative coefficient is statistically significant for meetings. Large standard errors on the administration coefficient prevent attainment of conventional levels of statistical significance.

70 The relationship between outreach and collective action is small and positive, but does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

71 To ensure that these relationships are not entirely driven by similar items included on both sides of the equation (i.e., "mobilizing members to become active" as a type of activity and "asking people to volunteer" as a part of "managing others"), we dropped those items and reran the regression models. The results were very similar to the ones reported in this chapter.

72 Administration is significant at the p<.10 level; meetings fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

73 Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality : Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*; Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); James Max Fendrich, *Ideal Citizens: The Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993); Matthew Baggetta, "Civic Development in Apolitical Associations" (Harvard University, 2009).

74 Hannan and Freeman, "Structural Inertia and Organizational Change."

75 Meetings also have other potential outcomes for individuals. For example, while Sierra Club meetings may not currently be producing skill improvement, perhaps they are increasing leaders' sense of collective identity and

commitment to the organization and the causes the organization supports. See: Eric L. Hirsch, "Sacrifice for the Cause: Group Processes, Recruitment, and Commitment in a Student Social Movement," *American Sociological Review* 55, no. 2 (1990); James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997); J. M. Jasper, "The Social Psychology of Protest," *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 3 (1998); Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001).