

IMMIGRATION AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

The Sierra Club and Immigration Policy: A Critique

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Abstract. In 1998, the Sierra Club membership voted in a contentious referendum to refrain from including restriction of U.S. immigration as part of its official club population policy. Club proponents of immigration reduction had declared the problem was simply the environmental impact of greater numbers of people; however, they failed to distinguish themselves from groups with much broader immigration-reduction agendas, leaving themselves open to charges of racism. The club faction calling for the exclusion of immigration issues from the policy, on the other hand, failed to acknowledge the demographic reality of the contribution of immigration (30%) to the growth of the U.S. population. As a result, current club policy is not credible, as it calls for a reduction in the U.S. population but ignores immigration. The Sierra Club's complex organizational structure and open, democratic political process make it particularly vulnerable to internal conflict during periods of changing perspectives within the organization.

The Sierra Club is one of the oldest environmental organizations in the United States (U.S.) and, with over 700,000 members, one of the largest. The club was founded in 1892 by John Muir, shortly after his success in gaining federal protection for the lands surrounding the Yosemite Valley of California (Meine, 1995). Muir became the pre-eminent voice in the U.S. for wilderness preservation and, though the Sierra Club has evolved into an organization with a broad conservation and environmental agenda, wilderness protection issues remain a core concern of the club (www.sierraclub.org). With an organizational budget of over \$43 million, this nonprofit, 501(c)(4) organization attempts to influence policy directly through advocacy in the legislative, executive, and judicial arenas, and indirectly through the electoral process (Shaiko, 1999). The Sierra Club has a relatively complex organizational structure linking members with national leaders in Washington, D.C. through local, state, and regional offices (Shaiko, 1999).

In 1998, the Sierra Club held a contentious and controversial membership ballot initiative to amend the club's population policy as it relates to U. S. immigration issues. This initiative drew attention and ire from both inside and outside the organization, and came at a time when a number of environmental groups had just begun to address more actively the human dimensions of conservation efforts. Internal discord over immigration issues was not resolved with the referendum, and disagreement continues over the urgency to stabilize the U.S. population and the degree of emphasis that this issue should be given within specific club programs, such as those dealing with urban sprawl and growth management.

In this article, I review the history of the Sierra Club's population policy and describe the 1998 ballot initiative on immigration. My goal is to examine the logic of the club's evolving population policy from both a demographic and an organizational perspective. To provide context for my analysis, I briefly review current estimates of the demographic contribution of immigration to U.S. population growth. I then discuss problems associated with the approach taken by each of the two competing Sierra Club

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Table 1. Partial Chronology of Sierra Club Population Policy

Population Policy	
Adopted by the Board of Directors, March 13, 1965; amended July 8, 1995	The “population explosion” has severely disturbed the ecological relationships between human beings and the environment. It has caused an increasing scarcity of wilderness and wildlife and has impaired the beauty of whole regions, as well as reducing the standards and the quality of living. In recognition of the growing magnitude of this conservation issue, the Sierra Club supports a greatly increased program of education on the need for population control.
Adopted by the Board of Directors, May 3-4, 1969	The Sierra Club urges the people of the United States to abandon population growth as a pattern and goal; to commit themselves to limit the total population of the United States in order to achieve balance between population and resources; and to achieve a stable population no later than the year 1990.
Population Stabilization	
Adopted by the Board of Directors, May 6-7, 1978	<p>The Sierra Club reaffirms its dedication and its conviction that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All nations of the world, including developed nations, should formulate and participate in programs designed to curb their own population growth, and • All developed nations, including the United States, being the countries with impact on the world environment disproportionate to their population sizes, have an obligation both to end their population growth as soon as feasible and to substantially reduce their consumption of this planet’s non-renewable resources.
U.S. Population Policy	
Adopted by the Board of Directors, May 6-7, 1978	The Sierra Club supports the development by the federal government of a population policy for the United States, as a means of articulating national goals and coordinating federal efforts to achieve those goals.
U.S. Immigration Laws, Policies, and Practices	
Adopted by the Board of Directors, May 6-7, 1978	<p>The Sierra Club urges Congress to conduct a thorough examination of U.S. immigration laws, policies, and practices. This analysis should include discussion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of immigration of different levels on population trends in the United States, • The disproportionate burden on certain states, and • The effect of immigration to the U.S. on population growth and environmental quality in this country. <p>Substantial international migration, whether legal or illegal, arises to a great extent from the growing desperation in many societies of the world. With world population increasing at more than 70 million per year, it is clear that international migration can make only an insignificant contribution to easing world population pressures. Currently, only the U.S., Canada, and Australia among all countries accept more than a handful of permanent immigrants. All regions of the world must reach a balance between their populations and resources. Developing countries need to enlarge opportunities for their own residents, thus increasing well-being, eventually lessening population growth rates, and reducing the pressures to emigrate....</p>
Immigration Policy	
Adopted by the Board of Directors, February 24-25, 1996	The Sierra Club, its entities, and those speaking in its name will take no position on immigration levels or on policies governing immigration into the United States. The Club remains committed to environmental rights and protections for all within our borders, without discrimination based on immigration status.
Adopted by the Board of Directors, September 20-21, 1997; amended January 13, 1998; adopted by the membership in an election April 25, 1998	<p>The Sierra Club affirms the decision of the Board of Directors to take NO position on U. S. immigration levels and policies.</p> <p>The Sierra Club can more effectively address the root causes of global population problems through its existing comprehensive approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sierra Club will build upon its effective efforts to champion the right of all families to maternal and reproductive health care, and the empowerment and equity of women. • The Sierra Club will continue to address the root causes of migration by encouraging sustainability, economic security, health and nutrition, human rights and environmentally responsible consumption.

Source: Sierra Club website (www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/population.asp): May 2000.

immigration policy factions and the failure of the club's leadership to anticipate internal conflict. In conclusion, I suggest ways in which the Sierra Club might play a more constructive role in the evolution of U.S. population policy, including immigration policy.

The Sierra Club 1998 Ballot Question

The Sierra Club has long been concerned about the effect of a rapidly increasing human population on the environment and on the quality of human life. This concern has been codified into population policy statements officially adopted by its Board of Directors. This national board consists of fifteen club members elected by the membership at large. An executive director is appointed by the board. The current Executive Director, Carl Pope, was appointed in 1992. A summary of the board's statements is provided in Table 1, which is derived from information on the club's website (www.sierraclub.org).

By the 1960s, the Sierra Club had established a strong stand in favor of limiting population growth. The club's statements called on all nations to formulate and participate in programs that would serve to curb population growth through voluntary and humane means consistent with human rights accords. In particular, they identified the need for the population of the U.S. to be stabilized first, given its disproportionate consumption of nonrenewable resources. On balance, the majority of the club's body of official population policy addresses U.S. population issues.

In 1969, the club called on citizens to commit themselves to stabilize the population of the U.S. by 1990. In subsequent years, they called for the establishment of an explicit federal population policy to articulate goals and coordinate national efforts. By the late 1970s, Sierra Club policy explicitly addressed U.S. immigration issues, calling for Congress to review U.S. immigration policy in relation to the impact of immigration on U.S. population growth and environmental quality. Social and environmental pressures in developing countries resulting from rapid

population expansion could not, they argued, be effectively resolved through international migration.

In 1996, the Board of Directors changed its position on immigration issues, declaring the Sierra Club would officially take no position on immigration levels or immigration policies. Some board members and non-board members, concerned with what they saw as an abrupt change in club policy, initiated a petition campaign to reverse the board's decision. The board crafted contrasting language and the two positions took the form of Alternatives A and B on a membership-wide referendum held in 1998. Alternative A called for a return to a comprehensive population policy for the U.S., including a reduction in net immigration. Alternative B called for the retention of the decision to take no position on U.S. immigration levels. The exact wording of the alternatives is presented in Table 2.

Arguments for each of the alternatives were presented in the club's magazine (Kostmayer and Kalla, 1998; Schneider and Kuper, 1998), on the club's website, and in supporting material distributed with the national election ballot. A selection of these arguments is provided in Table 3. Many of the 22 candidates for the Board of Directors, vying for election on the same national ballot, framed their candidacy statements in terms of the immigration policy debate.

While discussion of the Sierra Club's immigration policy began within the organization, it quickly spread to newspaper editorial columns and e-mail discussion lists. It is estimated that more than 300 newspaper articles related to the issue appeared nationwide (e.g., McClure, 1997; Harrop, 1998; Yveld, 1998). The comments were, perhaps predictably, split between those against restrictions on immigration and those supporting restrictions. Arguments were most frequently framed in terms of accusations of anti-immigrant racism on one side and a failure of leadership or giving in to "political correctness" on the other. Beyond a clearly emotional tone to many of the articles, some of the editorial pieces were inaccurate in their portrayal of one or the other of the ballot initiatives.

Table 2. Text of the Sierra Club 1998 Immigration Policy Ballot Initiative

Alternative A	Shall the Sierra Club reverse its decision adopted February 24, 1996, to "take no position on immigration levels or on policies governing immigration into the United States" and adopt a comprehensive population policy for the United States that continues to advocate an end to U.S. population growth at the earliest possible time through reduction in natural increase (births minus deaths), but now also through reduction in net immigration (immigration minus emigration).
Alternative B	<p>The Sierra Club affirms the decision of the Board of Directors to take NO position on U.S. immigration levels and policies.</p> <p>The Sierra Club can more effectively address the root causes of global population problems through its existing comprehensive approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sierra Club will build on its effective efforts to champion the right of all families to maternal and reproductive health care, and the empowerment and equity of women; • The Sierra Club will continue to address the root causes of migration by encouraging sustainability, economic security, health and nutrition, human rights and environmentally responsible consumption.

Table 3. Arguments in Support of Alternative A and Alternative B as Provided in Sierra Club Literature Accompanying the 1998 Ballot

In Support of Alternative A:

- The current population of the United States is 270 million. This is a near-doubling from 1950, when the population was 150 million.
- The Census Bureau projects that the U.S. population will be 394 million by the year 2050 if birth and immigration rates are not changed. Growth will continue indefinitely thereafter.
- Immigration will account for 2/3 of future U.S. population growth according to the National Academy of Sciences.
- Current immigration rates are triple the levels of the last 50 years, because of repeated relaxations of U.S. laws.

In Support of Alternative B:

- Taking on immigration policy will divide the club, tarnish its credibility, and undermine its efforts to deal with the roots of environmental destruction and overpopulation.
- New restriction on immigration won't stop the logging, mining, and oil companies from destroying the environment.
- Promoting new immigration restrictions creates the perception that immigrants are the cause of environmental problems. To many, "Alternative A" is discriminatory, and Latinos and African-Americans are key allies in our battle to protect the environment.
- New immigration restrictions won't stop global overpopulation; restrictions only shift the symptoms from place to place.
- Club leaders have spent years debating immigration. Migration is part of an extremely complex global equation that includes consumption, population growth, and technology. In 1996, the board realized that club population experts could not agree on any immigration policy as being environmentally preferable.
- The Sierra Club is unlikely to effect actual immigration into the United States. The immigration policy is a highly polarized controversy about economics, ethnicity, and race. It is not a debate about the environment. The club has relatively little expertise on immigration, and a divided club cannot effectively influence policy.

Ballot Results

Alternative B, supporting the decision to take no stand on immigration levels, was the clear winner in the 1998 referendum, receiving 60% of the votes (Table 4). Only 14% of the Sierra Club membership voted on the measure. Though the controversial nature of the ballot question may have discouraged some members from voting, this response rate was actually slightly higher than that typically received for Sierra Club annual elections. Only 10% of Sierra Club members report being active in the organization, higher than four other mainstream U.S. environmental organizations studied by Shaiko (1999).

Carl Pope, Executive Director of the Sierra Club, responded to the results by saying that Sierra Club members "refused to blame newcomers to our country for our own overconsumption" (Pope, 1998). However, he also conceded that immigration is an important issue, one that "even has local environmental impacts." Club members, he wrote, decided that restricting immigration "is not the best way for us to protect the environment." Adam Werbach, Sierra Club President, was quoted as saying in response to the results that there "is no place for the Sierra Club to be involved in blaming immigrants for environmental problems" and that the "Sierra Club is frankly coming out of this stronger than before" (Associated Press, 1998).

In contrast, Alan Kuper, a long-time Sierra Club activist and strong supporter of Alternative A, was disappointed with the results and called population growth "the most fundamental one for the environmental movement" and

further stated that "anything done to reduce consumption is temporary if population continues to rise" (Associated Press, 1998).

Role of Immigration in U.S. Population Growth

The Sierra Club debate must be considered within the context of the demographic profile of the U.S. population. The level of immigration into the U.S. has fluctuated substantially over time in response to economic conditions in the U.S. and abroad, as well as with changes in U.S. immigration policy. Currently, about 2,200 immigrants or refugees, who have the right to become permanent residents, arrive daily in the U.S. An estimated 5,000 unauthorized entries into the U.S. occur daily, with approximately 4,000 of these individuals being quickly returned to their countries (Martin and Midgley, 1999). Approximately 800 people emi-

Table 4. Results of the Sierra Club 1998 Immigration Ballot Question

Ballot Question	Votes	Percent
Alternative A	31,134	40
Alternative B	46,935	60

Note: 14% of ballots were returned.

Sources: Sierra (July/August 1998) and the website of Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization (www.susps.org; 2000).

grate from the U.S. each day, with approximately 83% of these emigrants being legal, foreign-born residents (Hollmann, Mulder, and Kallan, 2000). U.S. net annual migration, the difference between immigration and emigration, was estimated at 956,000 in 1998 (Hollmann, Mulder, and Kallan, 2000).

Population change over a given time period is computed as the sum of births plus immigration minus deaths and emigration. Because fertility and mortality have reached relatively low levels in the U.S., the effect of immigration has increased. Immigration accounted for about 30% of the total population increase between 1990 and 1998 (Martin and Midgley, 1999). The demographic effect of immigration, however, also includes the U.S.-born children of immigrants (Martin and Midgley, 1999). Immigrants tend to be young people and, on average, they have higher fertility than U.S.-born Americans. In 1995, first- and second-generation Americans represented about 20% of the U.S. population. If current net immigration levels continue, first- and second-generation Americans are projected to account for 33% of the population in 2025 (Martin and Midgley, 1999).

In January 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau released its U.S. population projections to the year 2100 (Hollmann, Mulder, and Kallan, 2000; www.census.gov). International migration levels—being influenced more directly by both domestic and international policy—are far more difficult to project with accuracy than fertility and mortality rates. For this reason, past assumptions that recent immigration levels will hold constant for decades into the future were not realistic. The new projection series is dynamic, assuming immigration levels will change over time.

The results project a slight increase in immigration until 2003, as a result of family reunification policies, followed by a decline due to reductions in refugees from the republics of the former Yugoslavia, and then by a 40% increase between 2010 and 2030. This increase, based on assumptions of labor migration to fill jobs left vacant by the ag-

ing U.S. population, is projected to raise annual immigration from 1.2 million in 1999 to 1.4 million by 2050, where it is expected to remain until the end of the century. Despite this projected increase in immigration numbers, annual U.S. net migration is expected to decrease to 926,000 by the end of the century, because the number of emigrants is also expected to rise as the foreign-born population increases.

Recently, U.S. fertility rates have begun to increase. A 2% increase in U.S. births occurred between 1997 and 1998. This is the first absolute increase since 1990, and is attributed to rising birth rates for women in their 20s and 30s (Ventura et al., 2000). The recent U.S. Census Bureau fertility projections portray an overall increase in the total fertility rate from a current level just below replacement rate, to a high of 2.2 and an eventual decline to 2.18 by 2100 (Table 5). Previous U.S. Census Bureau projections assumed constant fertility throughout the period by race and Hispanic origin. In the current projections, fertility was allowed to vary over the long term, with the assumption that all races and Hispanic origin categories will move toward replacement level, reaching 2.1 in 2150.

The overall result, according to the recent U.S. Census Bureau projections, is that the U.S. population will continue to grow over the next century. The middle series projection, believed to represent the most likely scenario of population change, forecasts that the U.S. population will increase from 281 million in 2000 to 338 million by 2025, to 404 million by 2050, and to 571 million by 2100—more than double the current population. These results are in sharp contrast to the projections made in 1972 by the President's Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. The Commission's report (1972) projected that the U.S. population would stabilize at 278 million within 50 years. With the 2000 projections in mind, I next address the competing approaches to U.S. immigration policy within the Sierra Club.

Table 5. Projected Total Fertility Rates for the Middle Series by Race and Hispanic Origins, 1999 to 2100

Total Fertility Rate	Middle Series			
	1999	2025	2050	2100
Total	2,047.5	2,206.8	2,219.0	2,182.9
White, Non-Hispanic	1,833.0	2,030.0	2,043.3	2,070.0
Black, Non-Hispanic	2,078.4	2,120.0	2,113.3	2,100.0
American Indian, Non-Hispanic	2,420.6	2,270.0	2,233.3	2,160.0
Asian, Non-Hispanic	2,229.0	2,717.2	2,154.5	2,121.2
Hispanic Origin	2,920.5	2,677.3	2,562.8	2,333.8
White	2,009.5	2,210.2	2,230.1	2,198.0
Black	2,121.9	2,164.1	2,159.1	2,131.0
American Indian	2,506.6	2,366.3	2,329.4	2,224.3
Asian	2,277.4	2,205.8	2,180.8	2,134.7

Note: As modified from Hollmann, Mulder, and Kallan (2000), Table B. Rates per 1,000 women. As of July 1. Resident population.

Was Either Sierra Club Faction Successful?

I argue that both the Sierra Club faction favoring immigration restriction and the faction favoring a hands-off approach to immigration issues failed in the 1998 policy exercise, regardless of the outcome of the ballot initiative. They failed to produce a reasoned and convincing population policy, however, for quite different reasons.

Proponents of Alternative A

Those in favor of immigration restriction, Alternative A, stated that their arguments were based simply on the demographic contribution of immigration to U.S. population growth. They argued that, in terms of environmental consequences, what counts is numbers of people, not the country of origin. The primary failure of this faction was that they did not convincingly distinguish themselves and their motives from groups interested in immigration reduction for reasons other than, or in addition to, environmental degradation, leaving themselves open to charges of discrimination and racism. Whether the failure to recognize the consequences of these associations was a result of the political naiveté of a well-intentioned group or due to pre-existing alliances of the proponents is difficult to ascertain since, while key endorsers of the alternative are listed in Sierra Club literature, the initiators of the referendum are not so readily identifiable. Rank-and-file Sierra Club members would have found it difficult to assess the situation accurately.

The need for the proponents of Alternative A to proactively and clearly define their specific motivation for immigration reduction can be appreciated by even a quick look at the websites and literature of groups such as the Carrying Capacity Network (www.carryingcapacity.org), Population-Environment Balance (www.balance.org), the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) (www.fairus.org), and Numbers USA (www.numbersusa.com). These groups prominently feature negative environmental consequences of high levels of immigration; however, they also cite higher taxes, loss of jobs, reduced wages, crime, homelessness, racial tensions, and the national debt as reasons to restrict immigration. These latter issues differ from environmental and quality-of-life issues, such as air pollution, traffic congestion, and school overcrowding, in that they are not tied simply to increasing numbers of people but specifically to perceptions of immigrants. Legitimate research on, and open discussion of, a wide variety of socioeconomic consequences of immigration policy should be engaged in and encouraged, and it would be a mistake to automatically label the above groups as racist or xenophobic (Hardin, 1974; 1993; Abernethy, 2000; Macunovich, 2000). Nonetheless, it is also true that there is a history of discrimination and racism inflicted against immigrants in the United States, particu-

larly those who differ in appearance from residents of European ethnicity. The onus was, therefore, on the proponents of Alternative A to leave no doubt as to their motives.

Sierra Club proponents of immigration restriction were in a poor position, however, to argue that their only concern was the environment, since they did seem to be working in unison with groups supporting much broader immigration-reduction agendas. Opponents of Alternative A were quick to suggest that these connections existed (e.g., McClure, 1997).

An example of how proponents of Alternative A failed to separate themselves from other immigration-reduction groups is their inclusion of a graph produced by Roy Beck, an avid proponent of immigration restriction and director of Numbers USA, in their own campaign material accompanying the election ballot. This graph, designed dramatically to illustrate projected U.S. population growth and the portion attributable to immigrants and their descendants, is featured on numerous immigration-reduction websites and in a poster and videotape produced by Beck. While the graphic is based on U.S. Census data and appears technically accurate, the use of Beck's easily recognizable graphic was, at best, poor political strategy, because it strongly suggested a link to and acceptance of Roy Beck's broad immigration-reduction agenda.

Proponents of Alternative B

Proponents of Alternative B argued that the Sierra Club membership should affirm the board's 1996 decision to take no stand on U.S. immigration levels or policy. Instead, they supported a focus on the root causes of migration by encouraging sustainability, economic security, health and nutrition, human rights, and environmentally responsible consumption throughout the world.

Arguments in support of Alternative B, as presented by Kostmayer and Kalla (1998) and in material distributed with the national election ballot, are most notable for their lack of refutation of the demographic contribution of immigration to continued growth of the U.S. population. Instead, the supporters of Alternative B focused on the potential political repercussions of involvement with immigration issues, the role of consumption levels in the U.S., and the larger global issues that drive migration. The Sierra Club leadership's support of Alternative B cannot be seen as credible, given that it (1) called for stabilization of the U.S. population in the near term, (2) while taking no position on U.S. immigration levels and policies. The U.S. has already exceeded by a decade the stated Sierra Club goal of population stabilization by 1990, and the U.S. Census Bureau projections now reveal that stabilization is not likely until well after 2150. Sierra Club leadership has failed completely to address this internal contradiction in Sierra Club population policy. Garrett Hardin's assessment of the

growth of the U.S. population in the early 1970s remains just as true today, “It can not be that immigration is numerically of no consequence” (1974).

A key concern of the proponents of Alternative B was the potential political repercussions of involvement with the controversial immigration issue. They expressed fear that supporting immigration reduction would be internally divisive and tarnish their credibility. Yet the Sierra Club has been willing in the past to adopt other controversial stands related to population policy. In 1969, the club called “for each of the individual states of the United States to legalize abortion.” In 1995, the club endorsed a Zero Population Growth resolution that called for, among other things, repeal of laws restricting abortion. Abortion is unarguably the most controversial population and family planning issue in the U.S. (Adamson et al., 2000). While Alternative B proponents argued that they should not enter the immigration fray because they are not likely to effect change within such a polarized controversy (Table 3), the club has not hesitated to take a stand on an issue as controversial as abortion.

It seems, then, that the club leadership’s concern was not so much with the inherent controversy of the issue in general, but with the likelihood of that topic being seen as controversial to the club’s membership in particular. Proponents of Alternative B indicated that they feared the perception that immigrants are the “cause of our environmental problems” and that Alternative A might be seen as discriminatory at a time when Hispanics, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans had become “key-allies” in the battle to protect the environment. Whether or not these ethnic groups are as homogeneous in their opinions on immigration as the Sierra Club leadership assumes remains uncertain. However, environmental organizations are very vulnerable to shifts in their membership funding-base (Shaiko, 1999), and thus can be expected to be concerned from a financial perspective whenever organizational policy may be construed as offensive to a constituency. The perceived need to maintain the resource base can become an irrational end in itself for some nonprofit environmental organizations

(Shaiko, 1999) and public agencies (Kellert, 1994), even at the expense of policy agendas.

The Sierra Club continues to examine its population policy. On September 26, 1999, the Board of Directors passed a resolution meant to clarify its existing population policy by stating that the U.S. and the world should not only stabilize their populations, but also strive to reduce them in order to attain environmental sustainability. Carl Pope, in a press release issued October 21, 1999, indicated that this clarification was not to be interpreted as the Sierra Club retreating from its neutrality on immigration to the United States. The text of this resolution is provided in Table 6. However, instead of providing clarification, the resolution simply increased the internal inconsistency identified above. The club now actually has a goal of reducing U.S. population, and yet retains a commitment to ignore a primary component of growth in the U.S. population, immigration.

Furthermore, there are only two acceptable factors upon which to operate in bringing down U.S. population growth: fertility and migration. The club has opted to remain neutral on immigration and to focus instead on bringing down fertility through the empowerment of women and reproductive health improvements. Fertility levels, however, are not independent of race, Hispanic origin, and country of birth. The highest U.S. fertility levels, on average, are found in ethnic populations and among recent immigrants (Tables 5 and 7). The club’s option—to encourage fertility reduction in the U.S. population—would seem to be vulnerable to the very same charges of discrimination that they fear they would encounter by discussing immigration issues. The Sierra Club leadership does not appear to have thought through the realities and political consequences of calling for fertility reduction within the U.S. population.

Organizational Strengths and Weaknesses

Public interest groups in the U.S. have grown in number and size since the 1960s, and, among these, no other public interest sector has undergone as dramatic a shift from social

Table 6. Population Reduction Resolution Passed by the Sierra Club Board of Directors, September 26, 1999

The Board of Directors finds that under existing Sierra Club population policies:

The Sierra Club advocates reductions in the population of the United States and the world.

The Sierra Club will pursue this objective by vigorous implementation of the membership vote in the spring of 1998, which stated that:

The Sierra Club reaffirms its commitment to addressing the root causes of global population problems and offers the following comprehensive approach:

- The Sierra Club will build upon its effective efforts to champion the right of all families to maternal and reproductive health care, and the empowerment and equity of women.
- The Sierra Club will continue to address the root causes of migration by encouraging sustainability, economic security, human rights and environmentally responsible consumption.

The Sierra Club supports the decision of the Board of Directors to take no position on U.S. immigration levels and policies.

Table 7. U.S. Fertility Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 1998

Race/Ethnic Group	Total Fertility Rate
Total U.S.	2.06
American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut	2.09
Asian and Pacific Islander	1.87
Hispanic	2.95
Mexican American	3.20
Puerto Rican	2.27
Cuban	1.56
Central and South American	2.72
Black	2.17
Non-Hispanic White	2.04

Source: Ventura et al., 2000.

activist movement to professional national organization as has the environmental sector (Berry, 1999; Shaiko, 1999). In the 1960s, the environmental movement in the U.S. was comprised of about 150,000 citizens, with a collective wealth of less than \$20 million annually. Today, more than 8 million U.S. citizens are affiliated with national environmental organizations, and the collective wealth is estimated to be close to \$1 billion (Shaiko, 1999).

As the sophistication of the lobbying efforts of environmental organizations grew, so did their power to influence public policy (Cutler, 1995; Berry, 1997; 1999; Shaiko, 1999). And, as it became clear that these organizations spoke for a large segment of the U.S. population, the federal government began to respond (Berry, 1999). For example, public pressure has been identified as a critical element in changing U.S. Forest Service policy over the last two decades (Kessler et al., 1992).

In large part, the success of environmental organizations has stemmed from their growing familiarity with, and expertise in, complex ecological relationships and related management and regulatory issues (Kessler et al., 1992). Environmentalists are no longer satisfied with simplistic environmental and resource management approaches. They now come to the bargaining table demanding proof of overall ecosystem function and sustainable ecosystem management. Their scale of focus varies from small ponds to the entire globe. They expect proof of resource policy to be explicit, down to particular life histories of the organisms involved. Their expertise goes head-to-head against state, federal, and private industry scientists in court. This expertise has taken decades to build within the environmental community, and along with this expertise has grown their power to influence U.S. environmental policies.

The Sierra Club has a long and successful history of advocating for environmental and conservation issues. Its members are generally familiar with, and committed to, environmental preservation and conservation. When formulating environmental policy, the Sierra Club has a reputable network of ecological and environmental experts upon whom they may call, both from within the organization and from the many other environmental organizations to which they

are linked. Accessing this expertise is especially critical for advocacy-based organizations, such as the Sierra Club, that do not maintain their own research staffs.

By comparison, and not surprisingly, the Sierra Club has not developed the same level of demographic and human population policy expertise within its staff and networks, though there are a number of well-respected demographers and human population policy experts within the leadership of the club. In addition, the club's general membership is likely to have far less detailed understanding of human population and demographic issues than they have of environmental issues.

Adamson et al. (2000) found the American public to have strong opinions about, but very limited knowledge of, global population issues. For example, while a majority of their survey respondents believed the world to be overpopulated, only 14% knew the size of the world population to be approximately 6 billion, and another 14% thought it to be five times that amount. Most showed little understanding of growth rates. My experience in teaching environmental studies majors supports these findings. While many students have a good grasp of the world population size and a general understanding of threats of rapid population growth, few enter my classes with an understanding of growth rates and other basics needed to discuss effectively specific population policies and their consequences. Even fewer are knowledgeable of current immigration rates, changes in U.S. immigration policy over time, or the degree of contribution of immigration to U.S. population growth. It is unlikely that the memberships of most environmental organizations are adequately prepared to assess immigration policy rationally and, therefore, these groups are likely to be vulnerable to conflict, both internal and external, when they do.

With the recent changes to Sierra Club population policy, the Wilderness Society (www.wildernessociety.org) is now the only mainstream U.S. environmental organization to address immigration explicitly in its official policy. Unlike the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society has not become embroiled in an immigration controversy. The difference may stem from the organizational structures of the two groups and the relationship of the leadership to the membership base.

The Sierra Club is the most organizationally complex of modern U.S. environmental groups. National-level staff and leadership are linked to state and local chapters through regional offices. According to Shaiko (1999), the Sierra Club's structure is the most conducive to connecting leadership "voices" with local grassroots activists to produce effective "echoes" of national policy campaign positions. The Wilderness Society, in contrast, offers few programs to link members with policy leadership and national level staff. Regional offices work to carry out policy initiatives rather than to serve members (Shaiko, 1999). The consensus orientation of the Sierra Club's decision-making process is most evident in its referendum provisions. Though

the democratic nature of the Sierra Club may be well suited to the philosophy of a public interest group, it can also complicate decision-making on such controversial issues as immigration policy. By comparison, most Wilderness Society members, relatively isolated from such decision-making, are probably unaware of the society's stand on immigration.

In recent years, U.S. environmental organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, and the Sierra Club, have begun to broaden their view of the issues and the disciplines that are needed to help capture the human dimensions of environmental problems and ecological change. While an interdisciplinary approach is essential to solving today's environmental problems, incorporating it into traditional environmental organizations may not be easy. As diversity (e.g., disciplinary training, ethnic, generational, and gender) within the leadership and staff increases, so does the potential for new, and potentially conflicting, values and perspectives (Shaiko, 1999). Environmental organizations, traditionally dominated by natural scientists, have long held environmental conservation as an unquestioned priority. In contrast, representatives from other disciplines, especially the social sciences, may be likely to argue that under some conditions this priority must give way to pressing human needs. Integrating two such different worldviews will sometimes engender conflict.

Maintaining a clear and articulated vision for the organization in the midst of changing priorities is a challenge for which the leadership of these organizations must be prepared. In this regard, the Sierra Club now shares a problem with federal and state resource management agencies—agencies often criticized by environmentalists for being mired in tradition and dysfunctional in the face of shifting priorities (Clark, Reading, and Clarke, 1994; Kellert, 1994; Cortner and Moote, 1999). These challenges are greatest when traditional organizations, such as the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—staffed by relatively narrowly trained personnel—are confronted with conflicting institutional goals and objectives (Clark and Reading, 1994; Kellert, 1994). Changing priorities are sometimes imposed on an organization from the action of outside agents (Kessler et al., 1992), but can also arise from discontent within an organization (Debonis, 1995; Kessler and Salwasser, 1995). While a broad interdisciplinary approach may be required to solve complex real-world problems, succeeding in this transition may not be an easy process (Kessler et al., 1992; Smith 1997), even for non-governmental environmental organizations.

Failure to acknowledge and adapt to changing organizational composition and values can lead to the alienation of both traditionalists and those with new perspectives. The resignation of a prominent environmentalist, David Brower, from the Sierra Club may provide one such example. A member of the Sierra Club since 1933, and its first execu-

tive director, Brower is said to have resigned over the club's immigration policy (Higgins, 2000). He wanted the Sierra Club to advocate restrictions on immigration because of his concerns about population pressures in the United States. Resignations occurring within the context of the immigration debate suggest that the club's leadership has not paid sufficient attention to the potential for conflicting priorities across groups within the organization. The club has not functioned successfully to produce collaboration, instead of conflict, among the growing diversity of interests represented in its leadership and, at least perceived to exist, in its membership. The Sierra Club appears to have been ill prepared both in terms of technical expertise and in terms of organizational responsiveness to tackle complex population policy issues.

A Role for the Sierra Club in Population Policy

Few reasonable players operating to influence immigration policy promote either extreme position of completely closed or completely open U.S. borders. Difficult decisions must, therefore, continue to be made as to where along this spectrum actual immigration levels will be set. The factors determining how many people, for what reasons, and from what origins are allowed to immigrate have changed significantly over the history of the United States (Martin and Midgley, 1999). A wide variety of interest groups will continue to argue for changes in immigration policy, sometimes bringing together groups with very different motives (Greenhouse, 2000).

If the Sierra Club leadership and membership believes that continuing population growth in the U.S. is detrimental, then the club should be engaged in the ongoing immigration policy discussion. They should do so by analyzing and clarifying explicitly the environmental consequences of a growing U.S. population, separate from issues that other groups raise in support of or in opposition to immigration. Martin and Midgley (1999), of the Population Reference Bureau, state that those favoring U.S. immigration restriction justify their positions with arguments related to depressed wages and working conditions in labor markets, to effects of large numbers of immigrants on the American culture, and to environmental problems related to population growth. Within their report, they describe in detail the economic effects (labor markets, fiscal effects, entrepreneurship) and societal effects (language, public education); however, they provide no further description of possible environmental effects. This omission suggests that environmentalists have not effectively articulated and communicated their specific arguments regarding the impact of growing population on the natural environment to demographers and population policy specialists. Bridging the disciplinary communication divide is critical to establishing meaningful integration of environmental perspectives into a serious U.S. population policy debate.

Perhaps most importantly, the Sierra Club should rectify the logical inconsistencies in its own population policy. The club should either agree to engage in discussion of immigration policy or eliminate its stated goal of reducing the U.S. population in the near term. The current policy may mislead the membership into believing the club has an effective strategy for addressing U.S. population growth. More significantly, the club leadership may be ignoring the real challenges that lie ahead in finding ways to stabilize and reduce the U.S. population in a manner that is fair and equitable within a population of growing ethnic diversity. The true outcome of the 1998 Sierra Club immigration referendum will be measured by the ability of the proponents of Alternative A and Alternative B to recognize the complexity of U.S. population issues and to come to terms with the diversity of perspectives within their own organization. Only then can the Sierra Club begin to work collaboratively toward a stabilized and sustainable U.S. population.

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