

## CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes and interprets the findings described in Chapter Four. The chapter contains two sections: a summary of the findings and implications of the study. The summary section begins with a review of the research question, the theoretical perspectives from which the variables were established, and the study's support for the variables established as predictors of planned social movement participation and support for activism. The section on implications provides interpretation and attaches theoretical meaning to the results.

In an open-ended question respondents were asked to comment about how an Earthwatch expedition changed their participation in and/or ideas about social movements. I use these quotations throughout the chapter as illustrations for the statistical findings reported in chapter four. Note that some of the quotations are repeated if they are seen as relevant to more than one finding. For a complete listing of all of the quotations, see Appendix C.

### 5.2 Summary of the Findings

After reviewing the findings of this study, I developed a theoretical model of social movement participation and support for activism based on the resource-mobilization and social psychological perspectives of social movement theory. My research question asked: how and in what ways does an Earthwatch expedition affect social movement participation and support for activism? To answer my research question I drew one major concept from the resource mobilization perspective: the idea that networks are predictors of social movement participation and support for activism.

New network ties from Earthwatch – if mentor relationships were developed, or if sources of support for social movement activities were established -- were measured to operationalize the concept of networks. I also drew two major concepts from the social psychology perspective: self-efficacy and consciousness-raising as predictors of social movement participation and support for activism. Perceived Self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch – whether participants gained confidence in their abilities to control life outcomes – were measured to operationalize the concept of self-efficacy. Seeing the personal as political – choosing to incorporate views about social issues into spending habits and travel plans – was measured to operationalize the concept of consciousness-raising.

I developed ten hypotheses. Two were supported using the more stringent “level one” criterion: at least two of the independent variables regression coefficients created with each of the dependent variables in models 1-4 must be significant to a level of  $p < .05$ . Five additional hypotheses were supported at “level two” criterion: one of the regression coefficients created with each of the dependent variables in models 1-4 must be significant to a level of  $p < .05$ .<sup>1</sup> While level two support may seem less stringent, it acts as a corrective measure to account for

---

<sup>1</sup> For a complete list of hypotheses that were supported or refuted, refer to Table 4.8 on p.101.

the large number of variables that may dilute a relatively small sample. My principal findings were:

- The only Earthwatch predictor of planned social movement participation was new network ties from Earthwatch.

- Neither of the Earthwatch variables predicted support for activism.

- At level two, network ties was predicted by both new ties from Earthwatch and perceived self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch, but neither variable predicted network ties at level one.

- Self-efficacy was predicted by both Earthwatch variables at level two.

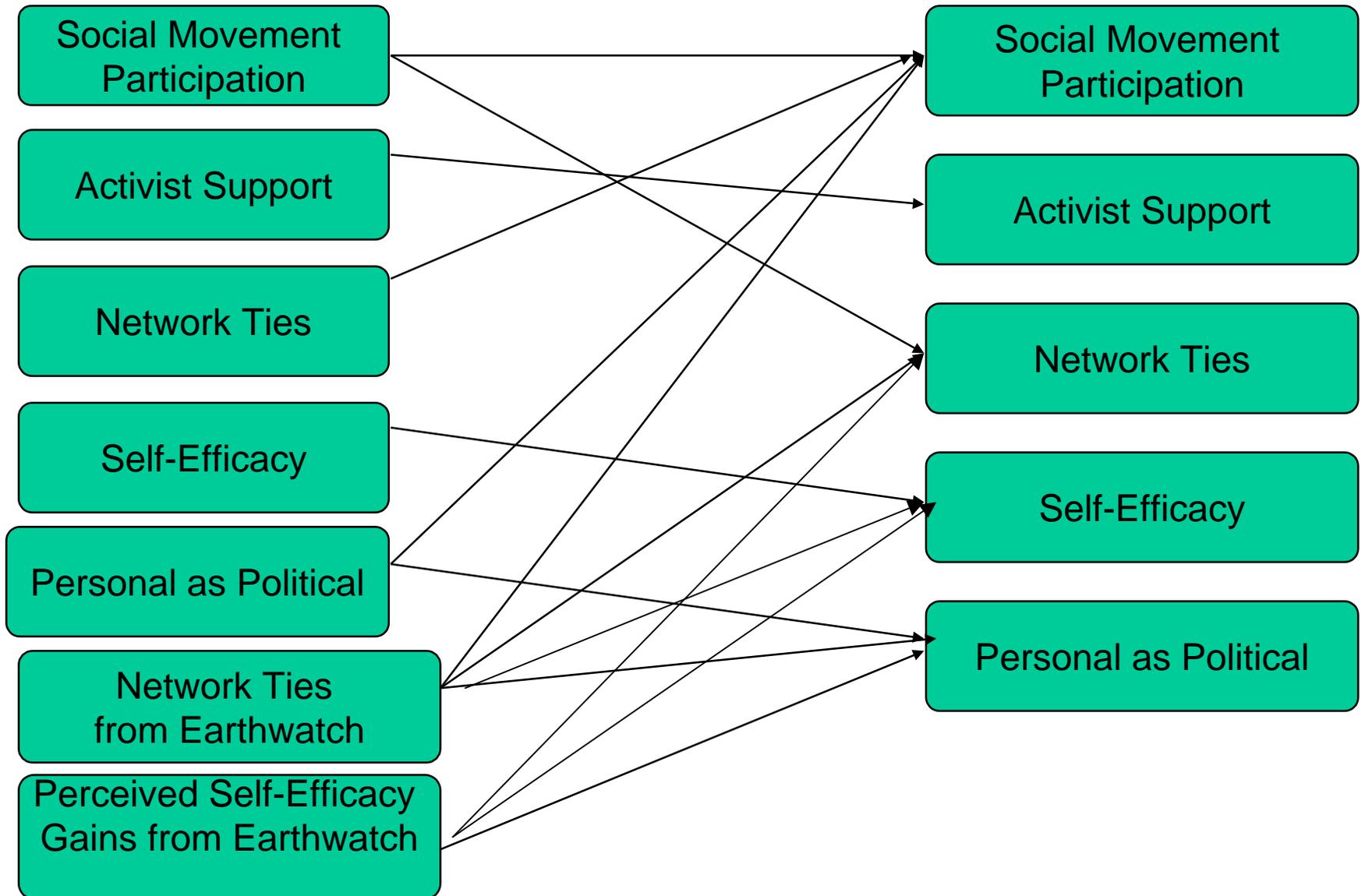
- Seeing the personal as political was predicted by both Earthwatch variables at level two, but only by perceived self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch at level one.

As a result of the findings, I developed a new model (Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1:**  
**The New Earthwatch Model**

**Pre-Trip\Earthwatch Trip**

**Post-Trip**



Historically, research using resource mobilization theory has focused on recruitment to specific social movements such as the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-nuclear or peace movement. This research was unique in that rather than targeting a specific social movement, data were collected from a sample population that participated in a wide variety of nearly 300 different social movement organizations (Appendix D). I measured the resource mobilization concept of networks and the social psychology concept of self-efficacy and their effects on planned social movement participation outside the boundaries of a single social movement organization. As a result, I found evidence that participation in social movement organizations occurred not only because of networks established *within* a specific SMO, but *outside* the SMO among people who were networked and perceived themselves as efficacious as a result of an Earthwatch expedition. As related to social movement participation, the findings support the resource-mobilization perspective which argues that participation in social movements is developed and nurtured through systems of network and resource support – friends, family, and sources of assistance for social movement organization development. Networks of friends and family provide ideological and emotional support for participation, while organizational networks and group ties provide financial and informational support.

### **5.3 Implications of the Findings**

#### Theoretical Implications for Social Movement Participation

Two of the major questions asked by social movement scholars are: Who are the people who participate in social movements? Why do they participate? This study addressed that question. By following the work of Barkan et al. (1995) and developing measures for social movement participation that included not only a yes/no participation variable but also questions about types of participation, this research found changes in planned social movement participation as a result of new network ties from an Earthwatch expedition. Level one findings reinforced the arguments made by resource mobilization theorists that support the importance of networks for the success of social movement organizations. Earthwatch volunteers who met mentors, became mentors, met people with similar values and goals, met other volunteers who could help them in their social movement efforts, and planned to keep in touch with other volunteers were more likely to increase their social movement participation plans over the next year than those who did not establish any of the above relationships. A respondent illustrated the importance of networks, writing that she/he “met wonderful volunteers who shared my views.” Several other respondents commented positively about the network ties they established during the trip. One wrote, “it was a good feeling to discuss issues with formerly (sic) strangers.” Another wrote, “without these expeditions, I probably would not have an adequate forum for which to discuss my values with others.”

Several respondents indicated plans to become involved in specific social movements for the first time, an illustration of the trip's effect on social movement participation. Respondents wrote:

“I plan to become active in the protection of the common loon by participation in NALA and by other means in which I am exploring.”

“My Earthwatch expedition helped me see that I should and want to be involved in different movements going on around me.”

“I plan to be more involved in my teaching and to show young people how they may be more involved in their communities.”

Another was less confident, but did say: “I think that now I will try to take a more active part in protecting the environment.”

Unlike new network ties from Earthwatch, no relationship was found between perceived self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch and planned social movement participation. Respondents were asked to state how they felt about three items on a Likert scale that referred to their level of self-efficacy as a result of the Earthwatch expedition. The statements were:

- I learned that I am able to overcome challenges I once found impossible
- I look forward to future challenges
- I feel more competent in everyday life

Results from the Earthwatch self-efficacy gains scale support Wollman and Strouder’s (1991) findings that measures of self-efficacy specific to individual social movements are better predictors of planned social movement participation. Some respondents indicated difficulty in responding to broad questions about topics that varied depending on specific situations. For example, one respondent indicated that some of the terms used were too “sweeping and sloppy.” Perhaps this is one area of study best examined within a specific social movement organization rather than outside it.

Following the recommendations of Knoke (1988), both internal and external types of participation were included, covering a broad range of types of participation. Internal types of social movement participation that were measured included holding an organizational office, donating money to a social movement organization, and donating nonmonetary resources to a social movement organization. External types of social movement participation that were measured included writing congresspersons or other politicians, voting in government elections according to the organization’s priorities, and marching or protesting.

In this study, the most frequent types of social movement participation did not change between the pre- and post-trip measures. Out of seventeen possible types of participation, the five most frequently noted types of participation were the same both before and after an Earthwatch expedition. Interestingly, all five were internal types of participation. They were:

- belonging to an organization
- receiving newsletters and other publications
- donating money
- paying dues
- attending the organization’s meetings and/or special events

This finding is also interesting because the pre-trip questions asked about social movement participation within the last year, while the post-trip questions asked about planned social movement participation within the next year. Although the measures compared actual behavior with intended behavior, the results were very similar.

**TABLE 5.1: MEAN, MEDIAN, AND RANGE OF THE PRE-TRIP INDEPENDENT AND POST-TRIP DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

<b>Variable</b>	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Pre Med.	Post Med.	Possible Range	Actual Range
Social Movement Participation	6.96	7.63	4	4	0-51	0-30
Support for Activism	33.37	33.59	33	33	11-44	19-44
Networks	.96	.95	.00	.00	0-21	0-9
Self-efficacy	16.72	16.79	17	17	5-20	11-20
Seeing Personal as Political	8.77	8.80	9	9	3-12	4-12

#### Theoretical Implications for Support for Activism

According to the findings, none of the independent variables had an effect on support for activism. There were no significant changes in respondent's opinions and ideas about the types of activism with which they agree, ranging from voting, to volunteering for political campaigns, to breaking the law as a form of protest. Perhaps this is because pre-trip measures of support for activism were already high. While there was no control group for comparison, examination of the possible versus actual range of responses as well as the mean and median responses revealed a high level of support for activism among pre-trip measures relative to the range (Table 5.1). The pre-trip mean for support for activism was 33.37 within a range of 11-44. Some of the open-ended responses of survey participants exemplify this finding:

“This was a great trip, but it had nothing to do with my attitude about social change.”

“I do not think the experience changed that way I participate and think about social change at home.”

“This trip was chosen based on my existing social values and did nothing to change them.”

“I feel as strongly as ever about protecting the non-human majority on earth from our horrendous monopolization of earth, resources.”

#### Theoretical Implications for Networks

Many resource mobilization scholars support the examination of network development as part of any thorough study of social movement participation and support for activism (Hannon 1990; McAdam and Rucht 1993; Klandermans 1987). At level two, my study has reinforced that idea. New network ties from an Earthwatch expedition had a significant effect on overall networks. If Earthwatch participants ranked high on the scale of new network ties from Earthwatch (became a mentor, found a mentor, met people with similar goals, met people who could support their social movement activities, and/or planned to keep in touch with other expedition participants), then they were more likely to increase their networks of support for social movement participation than those who did not experience any of the above relationships.

In order to measure overall networks, respondents were asked to indicate which of eight different groups or types of people encouraged or helped them to get involved in social movement organizations. These groups were:

- spouse or partner
- friends
- relatives
- co-workers
- fellow students
- church
- Earthwatch
- another organization

Identification of a significant relationship between new network ties from an Earthwatch expedition and overall networks reinforces the work of Pfaff (1995), who argues that informal networks outside the realm of a specific social movement organization encourage participation. In addition, the findings also supported Tilly (1978), who stressed the influence of networks as interwoven into “everyday life.” An Earthwatch expedition is one form of leisure, and leisure activities are a component of everyday life. Perhaps because planning for, anticipating, participating in, and reflecting upon an Earthwatch expedition is a part of everyday life, participants are more comfortable exploring their ideas and developing relationships with other participants than in a more formal, structured setting such as a social movement organization. Earthwatch members may attend various events year ‘round, such as conferences, researchers’ speaking engagements, and fund-raisers. One respondent illustrated this idea: “To be on an Earthwatch trip was like being totally at home and comfortable. It reminded me I am not alone in my efforts to build a better society and preserve what is really of value. I feel refreshed and reinvigorated.”

At level two, perceived self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch was also a predictor of post-trip networks. An efficacious person will be more confident, and hence more comfortable developing relationships and network ties with others on an Earthwatch expedition. This idea supports the work of Bandura (1989), who found self-efficacy to be a critical antecedent of agentic behavior. Developing

network ties is definitely a form of agentic behavior. The work of Andrain and Apter (1995) has also been supported in that Earthwatch has acted as a socializing agent, imparting a sense of self-efficacy, facilitating participation in networking activities.

It is important to note, however, that at level one network ties were not predicted by either of the Earthwatch variables. In addition, the average overall network ties decreased slightly between pre- and post-trip measures (Table 5.1). There is no theoretical or statistical explanation for this other than the fact that perhaps some unmeasured outside variable influenced the results. One respondent may provide insight to why this happened through her/his illustration of an incident that occurred during her/his expedition: "While we were there, four lobbyists 'dropped in' to see the mist net operation. Defender of Wildlife, Audubon, NRA (!) and Wilderness Society. The Fish and Wildlife guy from Anchorage with them had them take a boat ride on the lake rather than talk about the issue of MAPS stations, funding, bird habitat issues, etc.. We have LOTS of work to do." In other words, rather than taking the opportunity of the lobbyists' visit to discuss wildlife issues and develop relationships between volunteers, researchers and lobbyists, the lobbyists were removed from any possible controversy and taken on a boat ride. Perhaps more situations like this occurred and were unreported. This could possibly reduce the number of opportunities for network development. Trip environment might have influenced the response as well. For example, some respondents were uncertain about how the work environment of their expedition could encourage new network ties: "Since we mainly spent 14 days with 5 people on a small sailboat out at sea, I think it had little effect."

#### Theoretical Implications for Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy has been examined as a link between attitudes and behavior. According to some social psychological theorists (Kelly and Brienlinger, 1996; Gamson 1988), there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and planned social movement participation. In order to become involved and committed to social movement activism, one must possess an optimistic view of what her/his participation in social movements can do to re-create society. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree (on a four point scale) with five statements about their overall self-efficacy both before and after the Earthwatch expedition. These statements were:

- there isn't much I can do to make a difference in the world
- there are things I can do to help solve social problems
- when I'm learning something new, I give up if I'm not initially successful
- I feel insecure about my ability to do things
- I am capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life

There is a relationship between self-efficacy and the successful completion of arduous or challenging activities (Gecas and Mortimer 1987). One of the goals of this study was to examine whether changes in perceived self-efficacy gains as a result of participating in a possibly challenging and/or arduous Earthwatch expedition had an influence on overall self-efficacy. At level two, it did. This

finding is impressive given that respondents indicated high levels of self-efficacy even before traveling on an Earthwatch expedition (Table 5.1). With a mean pre-trip self-efficacy score of 16.72, respondents scored an initially high rating in self-efficacy relative to the possible range of 5-20. While there was no control group for comparison, examination of the possible versus actual range of responses as well as the mean and median responses revealed a relatively high level of self-efficacy of participants before their Earthwatch trip. Additional support for the assumption that respondents had high pre-trip levels of self-efficacy was provided by some informal, marginal comments that were made on the survey instrument near the Earthwatch perceived self-efficacy scale. Several respondents wrote that they already felt able to overcome obstacles or contribute to social change before taking this Earthwatch expedition.

New network ties established from an Earthwatch expedition significantly affected overall self-efficacy only at level two. Once again the ideas of resource mobilization theorists were reinforced in that the connection was established between developing networks, i.e., meeting others with similar values and goals, and self-efficacy, i.e., a heightened sense of the ability to overcome obstacles (Klandermans 1992; McAdam 1989). Respondents provided illustrations of this finding with their open-ended comments. One wrote “the people were mostly what made me realize a lot. They made me realize what quality can be achieved. The whole thing was very inspiring. I became more aware of myself and more confident.” Another gave credit to one of the secondary researchers: “when I went on the expedition I did not think anything would change my way of thinking (which wasn’t a lot), but an assistant researcher, Greg Jodie, really made me stop and think about what people are doing to this Earth and how I am a part of it and what I can do to change it.”

#### Theoretical Implications for Seeing the Personal as Political (Consciousness-raising)

Although the seeing the personal as political (consciousness-raising) could not be operationalized as a variable for the Earthwatch expedition, it was measured as a pre- and post-trip variable. The concept of seeing the personal as political was taken from the social psychology perspective of social movement theory, which argues that a consciousness-raising experience results in changes in one’s everyday life activities. Respondents were asked to respond to three statements:

- if I find out a business is doing things that contradict my ethics/values, I stop patronizing it
- I buy and read magazines, books and newspapers whose views on social issues align with mine
- when I travel, I take trips that reflect my views about social issues (ex: boycott countries that commit human rights violations)

At level one, only Earthwatch self-efficacy gains served as a predictor of seeing the personal as political. Perhaps this occurred because both concepts – self-efficacy and seeing the personal as political – are highly individualized rather

than structural concepts. Given that we live in a society that values individual choice, we may be more likely to give credit for any changes in behavior to individual, internal changes, rather than to external, socially-influenced changes. For example, as a result of an expedition, an Earthwatch participant may become inspired to change her/his “seeing the personal as political” behavior upon returning home. This may be due to discussions, debates, and relationships developed through network ties with other participants, researchers, or local residents, but the change will be ascribed to the more individualized internal idea of self-efficacy.

This argument is depicted somewhat through the marginal comments of respondents who, when asked about groups or individuals that support or influence them in their social movement participation, often answered “I do it on my own,” “I’ve always been interested in [a specific social movement],” or “I got the idea on my own – no one talked me in to it.” There seemed to be some resistance to the idea that respondents’ could be influenced by outside forces – people and/or groups – and that their ideas about social movement participation somehow originated internally. This could explain the preference for perceived self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch as an explanation for any changes in seeing the personal as political over new network ties from Earthwatch.

At level two, seeing the personal as political was significantly affected by both new network ties from Earthwatch and perceived self-efficacy gains from an Earthwatch expedition. Participants in the Earthwatch expedition who reported increases in new network ties and perceived self-efficacy gains also reported increases in seeing the personal as political. A host of open-ended comments illustrate this finding:

“First, I would like to say that it was the most awesome experience of my life – I’ve never missed anything so bad in my life. The experience had made me more aware of global issues, and I’ve become more involved at home. “

“After seeing the extreme poverty in China I believe we should stop complaining about ‘our’ problems and start helping others more.”

“More aware of global problems.”

“ I am far more aware of the need in the world and in my neighborhood. This was a wonderful experience.”

“The way of life in rural Argentina was so different from the United States, it gave/opened whole new perspectives on social issues that I hadn’t even considered.”

The findings and the comments of respondents are not surprising, given the inter-relatedness of consciousness-raising, network ties, and self-efficacy. This finding aligns with research that argues that increased networks of support encourage collective identity, which in turn reinforces self-efficacy. In other words, if an individual meets many others who have the same interests and concerns, a sense of “us versus them” (Gamson 1988) may develop, and the

perceived ability to successfully overcome whatever social problem with which they may be concerned increases (Klandermans 1992). The statistical findings of the respondents mentioned above indicate recognition of “us versus them” as a by-product of an Earthwatch expedition (Discussion of this topic continues in the section on collective identity).

An additional significant element of this finding is noted in Table 5.1. With a mean score of 8.77 with a possible range of 3-12, respondents had high ratings in seeing the personal as political relative to the possible range even before going on an Earthwatch expedition. While there was no control group for comparison, examination of the possible versus actual range of responses as well as the mean and median responses revealed a high level of pre-existing seeing the personal as political among pre-trip measures. In spite of that, the Earthwatch expedition still had a significant effect on seeing the personal as political: Perceived self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch was significant at level one and new network ties from Earthwatch was significant at level two.

#### Theoretical Implications of the Control Variables

Several control variables were utilized during the research. Social characteristics control variables included gender, age, education, and marital status. Only one control variable was a significant predictor of one post-trip dependent variable: age predicted post-trip seeing the personal as political. Younger respondents were more likely to report that they went on trips, bought books and magazines, and patronized businesses that aligned with their social values than older respondents.

The remaining variables were not significant for a number of reasons. Differences in outcomes based on gender probably did not exist because Earthwatch, for the most part, does not have gender-related expeditions. That is, the expeditions do not focus on gender issues. In addition, most Earthwatch participants are female, suggesting that the expeditions may provide an encouraging, “safe” environment for women, affording an opportunity to participate in all activities on an equal basis with men.

Education was also not a significant control variable. Perhaps this was due to the majority of respondents having at least a college degree (67%). Marital status was also not a significant control variable. This may be due to the fact that there is no way to determine whether married or cohabiting individuals traveled together or without their partners, which could in turn affect new network ties perceived self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch.

Three additional Earthwatch-related control variables were included in each regression equation: first-time versus veteran participation, international versus domestic destination, and environmental versus socio-cultural trip type. Only first-time versus veteran participation predicted post-trip network ties. First-time participants were more likely than veteran participants to report increases in support from friends, family, and social groups.

No differences were found between domestic and international trip destination or environmental versus socio-cultural trip type. Perhaps this is the case because regardless of trip destination or type, the same basic elements exist: participants are involved in research activities with other relatively novice volunteers, most of whom have similar socio-economic backgrounds, and live a rather intense experience away from their regular day-to-day experiences for a brief period of time.

#### Collective Identity – Can it Resolve the Issue?

In the review of the literature, I introduced the concept of collective identity as a possible tool for resolving the fissure between the resource mobilization and social psychology perspectives of social movement participation and support for activism. Collective identity is defined by Friedman and McAdam (1992:157) as “a designation announcing a status – a set of attitudes, commitments, and rules for behavior – that those who assume the identity can be expected to subscribe to.” Collective identity is influenced by individual values and attitudes as well as by structural forces (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996). The findings from this study reinforce McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald’s ideas about the importance of both structural and individual forces, since variables created from both resource mobilization (a structural perspective) and social psychological (an individual perspective) theoretical perspectives were significant predictors of post-trip elements of social movement activities.

Taylor and Whittier (1992) and others (Gamson 1988) explain that collective identity has to do with the development of an “us versus them” attitude. This consists of the recognition of social boundaries between those similar to you and other, oppositional groups and the importance of organizing as a group in order to implement change. Based on responses from the Earthwatch participants surveyed, a slightly different form of “us versus them” developed: recognizing that, as American citizens, they were “them.” In other words, some Earthwatch expedition participants commented that the socio-economic groups they identified with were responsible for many of the world’s social ills. For example, one respondent stated “experiencing life in a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country changed my perception of 1<sup>st</sup> world lifestyles; made me realize how wasteful we can be; how much we take for granted.” Another wrote “Americans need to understand the extreme privileges they enjoy, even under the locally worst conditions. We are gluttonous consumers of resources and information.” The theme continued with this quote: “After seeing the extreme poverty in China I believe we should stop complaining about our ‘problems’ and start helping others more.”

Activist identity helps to explain the reflexive relationship between individual participation, individual support (support for activism) and surrounding social structures, providing a primary theoretical bridge between individual activist identity and collective identity. This is important because this study does not focus on one social movement organization but rather individuals outside the realm of a specific organization. Some respondents claim to have developed an

activist identity as a result of their participation in an Earthwatch expedition. TO illustrate, one wrote “by participating in my Earthwatch expedition in the Bahamas, which just gained independence about 25 years ago, it really showed me how important it is for people to be active in their government and stand up for what they believe in.”

Others wrote:

“It changed the way I look at the world. I feel more competent and excited about getting involved,”

“I think that now I will try to take a more active part in protecting the environment.”

“My Earthwatch expedition helped me see that I should and want to be involved in the different movements going on around me.”

However, not all participants in an Earthwatch expedition connected their experiences to an activist identity. One wrote that it “did not change the way I participate or think about social change,” and another expressed confusion as to how their trip might encourage activism: “so far as I could tell, Rocky Mountain wildflowers had no immediate concern with social change.”

Another theoretical focus of collective identity involves the relationship between one’s collective identity and other roles and identities. Klandermans (1997) refers to it as identity interplay, Friedman and McAdam use the phrase fusion of prized roles and Kiecolt (1997) discusses perceived interconnectedness of identities. In this study I set out to examine whether Earthwatch participants felt their participation in expeditions had any connection with their identities as activists, primarily by examining predictors of network ties. Did the new network ties established from an Earthwatch expedition merge with overall network ties? This occurred only at the level two standard of hypothesis support, so the connection seems weak. Lack of support for the relationship between new network ties from Earthwatch and overall networks is illustrated by some of the open-ended responses of the study sample among those who did not see an internconnectedness between their Earthwatch identity and their activist identity:

“Maybe I missed something, but what does the toxicity of a caterpillars host plant affecting predation (which was the study in Costa Rica) have to do with social issues?”

“This was a great trip, but it had nothing to do with social change or my attitude about social change.”

“I do not correlate the Earthwatch experience with social change at home. Bad idea. Could undermine Earthwatch while doing little for social change. The social change field seems to be amply represented already.”

“I do not think the experience changed the way I feel about social change at home”

“No. I think curious people interested in helping with research, equal typical volunteer. Not people interested necessarily in ‘social action’ (a sweeping, sloppy term!). And we assess worth project by project. Not all make sense to all of us! Scientific research = the broad interest!”

A few respondents did express how the Earthwatch expedition affected their activist identities and discussed how it was going to change their work roles:

“I became more aware of how others think and feel. In some ways I am disappointed, and in some ways encouraged; this should affect my behavior at faculty meetings and my overall view of humanity.”

“Certainly, the expedition has mostly expanded my life experience and knowledge in subtle ways which will affect how I live my life in a wealthy country. I do hope to write articles and publish photographs about the experience.”

Respondents did not seem to express support for the concept of interconnectedness of collective identity with their identities as Earthwatch volunteers.

Snow and McAdam couch their ideas about collective identity firmly in the social psychological perspective. They identify four processes of collective identity construction: identity amplification, identity consolidation, identity extension, and identity transformation. Statistically, it is difficult to support or refute the existence of these identity construction processes in an Earthwatch expedition, but respondents' comments illustrate support for three of four. Identity amplification implies support or “the embellishment and strengthening” (Snow and McAdam 1997:90) of identity. Respondents illustrated this idea with some of their comments. A veteran Earthwatch participant wrote that “with every overseas Earthwatch trip I've participated in (10 of 13), I've come to appreciate the USA more and more and renew my increased value to voice my opinion. I voice my opinion more now.” Another stated that “participating in an Earthwatch expedition reinforces my ethics and provides me with additional materials in which to teach others. “

Some did not explicitly state that their identities were strengthened, but rather reinforced:

“I do feel as strongly as ever about protecting the non-human majority on earth from our horrendous monopolization of earth, resources.”

“I was already aware of human population and development and its affect (*sic*) on the environment, yet it was good that a lot of our field work emphasized it all!”

“It didn't necessarily change something, just reinforced existing beliefs.”

Identity consolidation occurs when seemingly disparate identities are combined. There is no evidence in this study of this occurring during an Earthwatch expedition. However, there is evidence of identity extension, or the inclusion of everyday life into one's collective identity. Statistical support exists for the role of the Earthwatch expedition in predicting one's tendency to “see the personal as political.” One's collective identity spills into other aspects of life – how money is

spent, how a person earns a living, or to what activities leisure time is devoted. Some respondents' comments illustrate their heightened awareness of social and/or environmental problems that not only changed their plans for participation in social movements, but in their everyday lives as well:

"I will never feed fish again! I am much more aware of commercial and tourist trades affecting ecosystems."

"I plan to be more involved in my teaching and show young people how they may be more involved in their communities."

Finally, Snow and McAdam (1997) discuss identity transformation: the deep, epiphany-like change of one's self-concept. Again, this is difficult to identify in the context of this study, but there are illustrations of major change among a few respondents:

"It opened my eyes to grassroots environmental groups."

"First, I would like to say that it was the most awesome experience of my life- I've never missed anything so bad in my life. The experience has made me more aware of global issues, and I've become more involved at home. Thanks!"

"Oh my gosh! It was just AMAZING! The people were mostly what made me realize a lot. They made me realize what quality can be achieved. The whole thing was very inspiring. Thanks You. I have become more aware of myself and more confident."

"When I went on the expedition, I did not think anything would change my way of thinking (which wasn't a lot), but an assistant researcher, Greg Jodie, really made me stop and think about what people are doing to this Earth and how I am a part of it and what I can do to change it."

Obviously, there were Earthwatch some expedition participants who experienced deep changes in their identities as activists.

Collective identity was presented at the onset of this study as a possible theoretical solution for the shortcomings of resource mobilization and social psychological perspectives of the study of social movements. The findings from this research support that idea.

#### Practical Implications for the Earthwatch Institute

While not all the hypotheses were supported, enough evidence existed to support Earthwatch's claim that its expeditions affect volunteers' ideas about doing things to improve the state of the world. The Earthwatch Institute promotes the idea that participation in an expedition changes volunteer's perspectives on their role as caretakers of the environment and the people in it – what they refer to as Global Citizenship. The evidence suggests that the Earthwatch expedition participants sampled felt the experience helped them develop friendships and alliances and changed the way they thought about their social movement activities. Earthwatch volunteers planned to increase their participation in social movement organizations. As a result of their trip, they became or found mentors and made friendships that they plan to continue to cultivate after their

Earthwatch expeditions are over. These relationships also altered the way they felt about their ability to implement social change by giving them an increased sense of competence and security in their abilities. Finally, those surveyed recognized the need to “make the personal political” – to support the issues they care about through their everyday living, either by supporting businesses that share their views on social issues, or by avoiding travel to places that have policies they feel contradict their beliefs and values.

#### **5.4 Conclusions**

This chapter focused on the explanation and interpretation of the findings discussed in the previous chapter. This included a review of the research question and evidence of its statistical and theoretical support. The next chapter will conclude the study.