

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

The theoretical model for this study was developed based on the resource mobilization and social psychological perspectives of social movements. I utilized the concept of collective identity as a way to reconcile the shortcomings of the resource mobilization and social psychological perspectives. Each concept was utilized as a means of connecting the structural and individual elements of social movement participation in a way that helps to address the questions of who participates in social movements and why. Resource mobilization theory focuses on the importance of networks for social movement recruitment and mobilization. Social Psychological theory focuses on an individual's sense of self-efficacy and the need for a consciousness-raising experience (seeing the personal as political). Collective identity melds the previous two concepts together in a way that allows for both. The findings from this study support these theoretical propositions.

At the onset of this study, five contributions to the sociological body of literature were mapped out (p.8). They were:

- 1) To clarify what encouraged or discouraged individuals to participate in social movements;
 - 2) To identify experiences that changed support for activism;
- And more specifically:
- 3) To see if, through interaction among its participants, alternative tourism could facilitate network ties among individuals involved in various social movements that would otherwise not occur;
 - 4) To explore the possibility that an alternative tourism experience could be an important component in the strengthening of self-efficacy;
 - 5) To examine the possible role of alternative tourism as impetus for consciousness-raising (seeing the personal as political).

From these contributions, ten hypotheses were developed. When the hypotheses were tested, the research strongly supported the predicting power of network ties established during an Earthwatch expedition on participants' post-trip social movement participation. The study also reinforced the argument that network ties established during an Earthwatch expedition could predict post-trip network ties, self-efficacy, and consciousness-raising (seeing the personal as political). People on Earthwatch trips met people with similar interests and values and discovered individuals who could provide resources that in turn strengthened their overall network ties, self-efficacy, consciousness-raising (seeing the personal as political), and planned participation in social movements.

Perceived self-efficacy gains from Earthwatch strongly predicted post-trip self-efficacy and consciousness-raising (seeing the personal as political), and to a lesser degree, network ties. People who experienced an increased sense of their ability to overcome obstacles or meet new challenges as a result of an Earthwatch expedition in turn reported an improvement in overall self-efficacy,

recognized the need to make the political personal, and felt more comfortable developing relationships and network ties.

The only area where the research findings did not support the literature was the area of activism support. Neither new network ties or perceived self-efficacy gains from an Earthwatch expedition affected support for activism. The respondent's ideas and values about support for social activism did not change as a result of an Earthwatch expedition. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this may be explained by the high levels of pre-existing support for activism among Earthwatch participants.

These contributions are unique to the literature on social movements primarily because the study's focus is not on a specific social movement organization, but rather on an element of everyday life – leisure. I set out to explore whether one's choices of how to spend discretionary time and income influence social movement participation. I wanted to show that the alternative tourism option of an Earthwatch expedition somehow encouraged or supported social movement participation and support for activism. In other words, we can understand more about recruitment to social movements organizations by considering an uninvestigated aspect of daily life – leisure.

The study also makes a contribution in that networks (a resource mobilization concept), self-efficacy and consciousness-raising (social psychological concepts), and collective identity were empirically examined together. Theoretical scholarship has pointed to the importance of combining the theoretical perspectives, but very little empirical work has been conducted.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

In this section I will address the limitations of this study and how I attempted to minimize them. Specifically, I will address survey research shortcomings, recall bias, panel attrition, and limitations of closed-ended questions.

It is important to recognize that while every effort was made to minimize errors in the design, there are some problems inherent to survey research. Issues of meaning and interpretation of survey questions are always a problem with survey research; its interpretation may vary from person to person, depending on her/his race/ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, or geographic location.

Recall bias is also a common problem in survey research. Respondents may have difficulty remembering their past behavior and/or attitudes and may fabricate them to impress the researcher. However, in this case, recall bias had a limited effect on the reliability of the study since *perceived* changes in attitudes and behavior are of primary interest. Bias may also have occurred as a result of the pre-trip survey - a common problem inherent to panel sampling and design (Markus 1979) . Merely by inquiring about social movement participation and activist support before an Earthwatch expedition, the respondent may have become sensitized to that possibility and exaggerated any changes in the post-

trip survey, known as “contamination through repeated measures” (Markus 1979).

As noted earlier in the text, social movement participation was measured in the pre-trip survey instrument as *past actual behavior*, but social movement participation was measured in the post-trip instrument as *future planned behavior*. In other words, pre-trip *behavior* was compared to post-trip *behavior intention*. It is important to recognize that planned activities may be over-estimated by respondents. While this method of measurement was less than ideal, it was necessary due to the time limitations of the research. Waiting a year after the Earthwatch expedition would result in high levels of respondent mortality. In addition, waiting a year would allow for more outside influences of social movement participation to contaminate the data than already occurring in a post-trip test distributed only two weeks after the Earthwatch expedition.

Markus (1979) stresses the problem of panel attrition; often respondents move, withdraw from the activity that constitutes the intervening variable(s), or die before successive surveys are conducted. This occurred with at least one of the Earthwatch expedition respondents in this study. How many others were lost is impossible to say, since non-respondents were not analyzed. It is safe to estimate that many more respondents would have been lost had I waited a year for the post-trip survey.

With the passing of time another phenomenon may occur: the changing meanings of instrument items. Culture and environments are constantly changing, altering the meaning of terms, phrases, and concepts. Current events may also alter meanings of instruments. Data collection for this study occurred during the height of media coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair, and given some of the marginal comments on the survey, it may have influenced the way respondents rated politically-related elements of social movement participation and support for activism.

The bulk of the survey instrument consisted of closed-ended questions. This format is criticized for limiting the respondent's options. This problem was limited in this study through the availability of an "other" or "does not apply" option, depending on the question. Additionally, the prudent application of open-ended questions was used as support and guidance in analyzing closed-ended questions. Finally, defenders of closed-ended questions argue that presenting the universe of possible responses clarifies the meaning of the question (Converse and Presser 1986).

A number of steps were taken to assure the integrity of the survey design. Experts in survey research design in the Department of Sociology were frequently consulted, including individuals with extensive experience in the areas of social movements, social psychology, and pre- and post-event methodology. Outside the department, experts in survey design in tourism were also consulted.

One of the most important steps in designing the survey instrument was the pretest. As mentioned previously, a sample of Alternative Spring Break volunteers from the local YMCA (a convenient sample participating in a trip very similar to an Earthwatch expedition) was used for pretesting. As a result, several items in the survey instrument were revised, and instructions were clarified.

Generalizability of the results applies only to Earthwatch participants for the period of June and July 1998, but it is reasonable to assume that similar results would be found in a sample of other alternative tourism organizations that appeal to a similar demographic and psychographic group. The population was one of convenience due to the ability to access the Earthwatch mailing list. The population was also highly homogeneous – overwhelmingly white, primarily female, with high levels of education. Statistical conclusion validity, or "the ability to reach conclusions about relationships that appear in the sample data" (Henry, 1990: 13) was aspired to by attempting to control for as many outside variables as possible.

6.3 Practical Applications of the Study

What are the practical applications of this research? For social movements, this research provides support for the idea that network ties outside the social movement organization need to be cultivated and maximized. Previously untapped resources can be explored that include the various activities of a social movement's constituents, including their leisure time. Perhaps some social movement organizations may want to sponsor various forms of alternative travel that might cultivate network ties between their membership and sources of support.

For Earthwatch, the data reinforce their claim that expeditions improve "global citizenship" – participants become more involved in changing the world. For an organization that is constantly seeking financial support through foundations and other philanthropic organizations, this provides empirical evidence of the effect of Earthwatch on social movement participation. For alternative tourism in general - a burgeoning form of tourism enterprise -- this research can make contributions. We can better understand the impact of alternative tourism on both the traveler and society as a whole.

6.4 Directions for Future Research

Future research on various forms of alternative tourism and their effects on social movement participation and support for activism can build upon this initial exploratory study and incorporate additional measures for more accurate assessment. The survey instrument can be improved in a number of ways. In addition, the network ties variables can be revisited and developed in a way that encourages more internal validity. Consciousness-raising was not measured as an Earthwatch expedition variable because no valid measures could be found. This may prove to be an important piece of the theoretical puzzle of why Earthwatch expeditions – and perhaps other forms of alternative tourism - seem to affect social movement participation and support for activism.

Collective identity is also a difficult concept to operationalize. Specifically, two areas that beg for additional exploration are Snow and McAdam's (1997) four processes of collective identity – identity amplification, identity consolidation, identity extension, and identity transformation - and identity interplay (Klandermans 1997), the fusion of prized roles (Friedman and McAdam 1992), and perceived interconnectedness of identities (Kiecolt 2000). More work could be done to utilize these concepts, especially when the focus of study is outside a specific social movement organization.

The method of participant-observation would provide helpful additional data about the Earthwatch expedition process. I believe it would be very helpful for the researcher to actually participate in an Earthwatch expedition in order to gain insights into the social structure of an expedition and the opportunities for interaction and exchange. Specifically, a better measure of the interaction with locals, researchers, and other Earthwatch participants on each trip would be extremely helpful as a control variable.

Future research should target populations in greater depth and breadth. For example, a longitudinal study of the effects of Earthwatch or other forms of alternative tourism on social movement participation and support for activism is vital to a better understanding of long-term or lag effects of a trip. A comparative approach of a greater variety of alternative tourism should be studied to look for consistencies and inconsistencies within and among types of trips. Does an eco-tour to Belize impact differently than a reality tour of Dominican sweat shops? I would also suggest comparing the effects of alternative tourism to those of mass tourism. How does a mainstream trip to Europe affect the traveler's ideas about social movement organization participation and support for activism? Does the classic American family vacation have an impact on network ties? Self-efficacy? Consciousness-raising? There are many questions left unanswered.

In conclusion, perhaps the greatest contribution of this work to the future work in social movements is the challenge of looking beyond traditional ways of examining social movement participation. Historically, researchers have focused the sociological gaze *within* an organization or movement. Perhaps there is a great deal to be learned if we include the various elements of everyday life *outside* that perimeter which exert a strong influence over an individuals' decision to participate in social movements.