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Motivation of Antarctic Adventurers: Knowledge Transfer to Motivational Interventions

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Table of Contents:

Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	2
Method.....	3
Findings.....	5
Knowledge Transference	6
Conclusion	8
References.....	9

Abstract

This paper investigates the motivation of Antarctic adventurers to uncover trigger points in their lives that set them on a life of adventure. It is proposed that the knowledge gained will be able to be transferred to motivational intervention programmes for the long term unemployed. A bibliographical technique was used by reading accounts of Antarctic adventurers' expeditions, which uncovered two trigger points: the ability of literature to inspire people to undertake their own adventures and the conditioning of people to seek out adventures. Methods to incorporate literature and conditioning within motivational interventions are put forward, with the intention of increasing the number of motivational opportunities for participants.

Introduction

This paper addresses the fundamental question: what can be learnt from super-motivated Antarctic adventurers to improve motivational interventions for the long term unemployed? The aim is to uncover trigger points in Antarctic adventurers' lives that can be adapted and used on motivational intervention programmes conducted in the outdoor environment. Transferring knowledge from a highly motivated population group will increase motivational opportunities for participants on motivational intervention programmes for the long term unemployed.

From human behaviour theory, we know that intrinsic motivation and internalisation are the foundations of self-determination and can be used to describe intentional behaviour and the need for individuals to initiate and regulate their actions (Chatzisarantis, 2003). Intrinsic motivation refers to "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequences" (Ryan, 2000, p. 56). Internalisation is the process through which individuals transform an externally prompted value, for example, a value prompted by a significant other who they are attached to, and form their own sense of worth (Ryan, 2000). Much effort has been invested in motivational research and has led to insights into various population groups, such as the unemployed (Feather, 1992).

Research on polar expedition members indicate that individuals on extreme Arctic and Antarctic adventures demonstrate high levels of achievement motivation (Leon, 1991; Mehta, 2011) and as such set challenging goals for themselves, assume personal responsibility for goal accomplishment and are highly persistent in the pursuit of these goals (McClelland, 1987). However no discussion was revealed on why polar explorers initially set forth to lead a life of adventure.

Linkages between the motivation of Antarctic adventurers and how to motivate long term unemployed people were made by the author on a trip to Antarctica through Gateway Antarctica in the summer of 2011–2012, recognising that travelling across Antarctica was something that very few people would consider due to the harsh environmental conditions. The author questioned why Antarctic adventurers were prepared to leave the comforts of home and venture out into a harsh unknown environment in search for adventure. This was linked to the high level of inertia among many long term unemployed people that are not willing to leave areas of high unemployment to areas of employment opportunities, often perceived as harsh and hostile environments in relation to the comforts of home. Is this because many long term unemployed are averse to taking on challenges, moving away from established support networks, friends and family? For some it may also be a lack of inspiration to try something new, move to a new place and re-establish themselves.

It is generally agreed that unemployment lowers an individual's self efficacy, confidence and motivation (Feather, 1992; MSD, 1984). To counter these effects the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development (MSD) contracts a variety of providers to deliver motivational intervention programmes with the aim of increasing the confidence, motivation and skills of job seekers to improve their chances of finding work (Anderson, 1998). Many of these programmes use outdoor adventure activities and physical exercise as an environment to challenge participants, promoting increases in self confidence, self efficacy and motivation.

Limited Service Volunteers (LSV) is the largest provider of motivational intervention in New Zealand, followed by Outward Bound; both are national providers. There are also many smaller regional providers including YMCA, Puawai Ltd and Specialist Education Services (Maxwell, 2008). The New Zealand Defence Force was the original provider of motivational intervention training through LSV, and began operations in 1993. LSV is located on a military base, but is largely independent of the other activities on the base. LSV delivers motivational interventions utilising both military and non military personnel; their programme is 6 weeks in duration. Outward Bound operates in 40 countries and is the leading organisation in the experiential education field, utilising outdoor and adventure education to deliver value-based programmes to a wide range of clients. Outward Bound New Zealand began providing motivational intervention programmes in 1997 in a three week programme. Both LSV and Outward Bound make use of experiential education theory and outdoor adventure activities conducted in environments that are unfamiliar to the course participants (Maxwell, 2011).

Method

The method adopted for this exploratory study is a review of non-fiction Antarctic biographical literature. The biographical method or narrative approach includes using data in the form of diaries, stories and personal experience stories among others (Denzin, 1989). The biographical approach is primarily qualitative, providing descriptions about certain characteristics of particular populations (King, 1994).

Eight books were selected based on four criteria: genre, location, duration and gender. The genre was polar exploration and adventure. Location and duration focused on

people who undertook overland trips on the Antarctic continent for more than 50 days. The Antarctic continent location was chosen as this was thought to place the adventurers into a very challenging environment. This challenging environment is relevant because they have to rely on themselves, having no buildings to shelter in if the conditions become extreme, little hope of help at hand and rescue costly. Duration of over 50 days was selected thus to ensure the adventures were of sufficient length so that the person would have to endure through a variety of harsh weather extremes that are present on the Antarctic continent. Antarctic and adventure literature in general is dominated by male authors; an ideal gender ratio of authors would be in line with the gender ratio of motivational intervention programmes of approximately 75 percent males. Only one of the eight books read was from a female expedition and by a female author. Table 1 is a list of the books that were read for this study including a summary of the adventure that they achieved (note that the term “walking” also includes skiing).

Author	Book Title	Date	Expedition Members	Adventure Summary	Adventure Duration
Roger Mear Robert Swan	In the Footsteps of Scott	1987	Roger Mear Robert Swan	Walked to the South Pole	70 days
Eric Philips	Ice Trek	2000	Peter Hilary Jon Muir Eric Philips	Walked to the South Pole	84 days
Catherine Hartley	To the Poles; Without a Beard	2002	Catherine Hartley Fiona Thornewill Michael Thornewill and others	Walked to the South Pole	61 days
Reinhold Messner	Antarctica: Both Heaven and Hell	1991	Reinhold Messner Arved Fuchs'	Walked across Antarctica	92 days
Will Steger	Crossing Antarctica	1992	Will Steger Jean-Louis Etienne Victor Boyarsky Qin Dahe Keizo Funatsu Geoff Somers	Walked across Antarctica using dogs	220 days
Patrick Woodhead	Misadventures in a White Desert	2005	Patrick Woodhead, Alistair Nicols David de Rothchilds Paul Landry	Walked across Antarctica, also using kites	74 days
Ranulph Fiennes	To the Ends of the Earth	1983	Ranulph Fiennes Oliver Shepard Charles Burton	Snow-mobile across Antarctica	93 days
Kevin Biggar	Escape to the Pole	2010	Kevin Biggar Jamie Fitzgerald	Walked to the South Pole	52 days

Table 1 Antarctic books.

Each book was read to ascertain the key themes that inspired the author or members of the expedition to leading an adventurous life style. This was done by firstly identifying paragraphs that revealed initial reasons why they are adventurers. Examples such as Robert Swan who skied unsupported to the South Pole was

inspired by “reading and re-reading the polar diaries of Scott and Shackleton” (Mear & Swan, 1987, p. 7). These paragraphs were then re-read and key themes were identified.

The goal was to uncover the perceived locus of causality in the contexts of people leading an adventurous life. Limitations of this method include having no communication with the authors to validate findings, and the limited number of books researched. Such limitations were due to restricted resources and limited time to undertake this study; however results are considered a sound starting point for a more detailed future research project.

Findings

Two major trigger points were revealed through the bibliographic search as the perceived locus of causality for the people in the books to lead a life of adventure. These trigger points are significant motivating drivers that set them on the road to going out and having adventures in the wilderness: literature and conditioning. The theme of literature relates to young people reading stories of other individuals going on travels or adventures, either fiction or non fiction. This acts on their imagination and facilitates the impulsion to have their own adventures. An example of this is Patrick Woodhead, who skied unsupported to the South Pole in 60 days. Woodhead states that “from a very young age, I had read stories about the early explorers of Antarctica” (Woodhead, 2005, p. 14). Evidence of literature having a profound effect on young explorers is also evident with the likes of Roald Amundsen, who read the works of Sir John Franklin at the age of 15, “the sufferings that Sir John and his men had to go through attracted me to polar exploration” (Woodhead, 2005).

The second theme, conditioning, relates to people being exposed to an adventurous life from their parents at an early age, thus planting the seed to take up challenges and explore the world around them. A classic example is Peter Hillary who grew up surrounded by explorers and their stories, experiences that penetrated deep into his consciousness (Philips, 2000). Peter Hillary later skied to the South Pole in 1999. Ranulph Fiennes describes his Transglobe expedition in which he crossed Antarctica, “to the ends of the earth” (Fiennes, 1983). In describing his journey, Fiennes states how he followed his father’s career by joining the army in which he spent his early working years in Europe; “all this gave me a taste for travel” (Fiennes, 1983, p. 16).

There was also a combination of the literature and conditioning trigger points for some authors, such as Catharine Hartley, who was the first English woman to walk to both the North and South Pole. Hartley says that her mother and her mother’s mother before her used to go on holidays to various places including Antarctica, and that she had always longed to travel, ever since she was a child, spending many hours poring over her mother’s Atlas of the World (Hartley, 2002).

Recognising the effects literature and conditioning had on Antarctic adventurers’ early development that led them to seek out challenges later in life, it is now suggested how these trigger points could be incorporated into motivational intervention programmes.

Knowledge Transference

The ability to replicate the effects of literature and conditioning within motivational intervention programmes is hoped to provide more motivational opportunities for participants. There are already similarities in terms of the use of the outdoor environment and experiential education methods by some providers of interventions. Motivational interventions aim to increase in participants self confidence and motivation that is thought to enable them to take on new challenges, such as finding employment. By using this reasoning it is put forward that some participants who live in areas of high unemployment may feel confident enough to seek out employment in new areas, overcoming the challenges of re-establishing themselves in a new environment, with new people and work opportunities. Transferring knowledge gained by the examination of Antarctic adventurers' stories focusing on the trigger points revealed is now presented.

Firstly, literature as a trigger point would seem to be relatively easy to introduce on motivational interventions by providing books for participants to read while on their courses. While this may seem on the surface a simple addition, further thought recognises that not only the physical availability of literature needs to be established but also the time for participants to read is needed. The type of literature needs to be thought about also, for instance would magazines be beneficial, as well as informing participants on how to get books from local libraries back at home that they were unable to finish while on course. Literacy abilities also need to be considered to enable as wide a reach as possible for the long term unemployed population group.

Other mediums of literature also need to be explored such as the use of movies; Youtube videos, maps placed on the walls, World Atlas, games and other types of narrative could also have a similar trigger effect on some participants. For example one of the stories read revealed that watching the movie *Scott of the Antarctic* was a "profoundly moving event in my life" (Mear & Swan, 1987, p. xii) for Robert Swan.

It is acknowledged that LSV Burnham has already started a library for participants in 2010. This was an initiative by a local community group that has proven popular for participants. To date there is only anecdotal evidence about benefits from the introduction and use of the library. LSV also incorporate a movie night into their programme; the selection of the movie is another area that could also be investigated with respect to its motivating effect on the participants.

The conditioning trigger point is much harder to incorporate into relatively short duration interventions. Previous research on motivational interventions indicate that a person's value system is hard to change over a short period of time (Maxwell, 2008). Conditioning in this context is not thought to inaugurate a new value upon a participant with respect to self determination theory, rather to increase their self efficacy or the belief that they can succeed in future endeavours and therefore be motivated to undertake new challenges. Conditioning could be incorporated in motivational interventions by processing during challenging experiences, rather than at the end of such experiences. To elaborate on this point, I will focus on the expedition component that most motivational interventions incorporate into their programme, such as the five day, 50 kilometre wilderness hiking expedition at LSV. This will be used as an example of how to incorporate the conditioning trigger point

that has been discovered for Antarctic adventurers, into a motivational intervention course in the outdoors.

Research completed at LSV on the expeditioning component revealed that there was little outcome effect on the participants from this part of the programme (Maxwell, 2010). This is thought to be because of the limited processing that occurs after the expeditioning activity, where it is left to participants to internalise and gain what they will from such an experience. At Outward Bound, the physical fitness side of hiking is often an outcome for participants, leading to increases in self confidence, but is also recognised that more beneficial outcomes from the hiking expedition could be achieved (Maxwell, 2010).

Hiking for many long term unemployed participants is a new experience and one that is very demanding while also rewarding for them. By processing this experience it is hoped to expand their boundaries, or highlight to participants the transference opportunities. An example of this could be during a hike at an opportunity to appreciate nature, to say to the participants *“look at this vista, wow, makes you want to experience more?”* Or upon achieving a mountain top saying *“did you ever think you would be capable of doing this? Well how did you get here? By taking small steps, first you enrolled on this course, you then learnt hiking skills, increased your fitness, helped each other out up the hill. Well you can do the same at home; small steps can lead to far bigger achievements.”* Discussions about pathways to employment that may seem at the outset daunting or beyond reach can be broken down into component parts so that each step is achievable. Discussing the challenges of moving away from high unemployment areas to areas of higher employment opportunities and how daunting it may seem to leave a safe, comfortable environment to a new place can be related to the experience they are having now at the mountain top.

It is proposed that this direct processing of experiences while the experience is underway would be more effective in taking up of the teachable moments during an activity, rather than at an activities end when participants’ memories of such events may have faded or the processing occurs at a time when participants are tired or focused on something else. This direct processing model would still be following the experiential educational model of: 1) participation on a tangible experience, 2) reflection of the experience, 3) abstraction to shape theories from the reflection, 4) utilising the theories in a new experience (Itin, 1999). But rather than wait until the experience has finished, process at points along the way, seeking out opportunities as they arise to focus on the specific programme outcomes i.e. gaining employment.

The direct processing of the experience by a staff member, someone the participant has accepted as a trusted facilitator of their programme, parallels the literature on self-determination theory. If the participant internalises an idea and transfers that idea from the programme back to their home environment, this would be similar to Ryan and Deci’s internalisation as part of self-determination theory of being prompted by a significant other who they are attached to, to form their own sense of worth (2000). Increases in participants’ self efficacy would cement the ideas that they have on the course such as new ways of gaining employment, more focused career goals, increased self confidence and belief in their employability, would mean that they would be more likely to go ahead with such ideas when they get back into their home environment, as they feel that they can succeed in such endeavours.

It is acknowledged that limitations exist and additional factors mean these trigger points are not a silver bullet for all participants. Limitations include the assumed low literacy ability of motivational intervention participants (OECD, 2000; Statistics New Zealand, 1995), and the varying abilities of staff to deliver experiential education. Both of these factors will have a limiting effect on the take up of each motivational opportunity. While not all participants will find trigger points in these two areas, through expanding the number of motivational opportunities provided on courses it is hoped that there will be a wider array of opportunities to capture as many of the participants as possible. It may be that marching, physical fitness, social interactions or rock climbing act as the motivator for some participants and for others it may just be something they read while on the course, or a role model, or reflecting on a new experience that inspires them to achieve.

Conclusion

Through reading accounts of Antarctic adventurers expeditions two trigger points were revealed: first, the ability of literature to foster in people the desire to imitate the adventures as in the stories that they read; second, the conditioning of young people to experience adventures. This knowledge is proposed to be of use on motivational interventions for the long term unemployed, by increasing their access to literature, and facilitating more direct processing of participants experiences, it is anticipated that increased motivational opportunities for participants will result.

This precursory study into what can be learnt from super-motivated Antarctic adventures and adapted to programmes with the aim of motivating the long term unemployed, reveals that much value can be gained by such investigation. This leads to a wider question of how do we expand our working knowledge of motivational interventions? Antarctic adventurers may at first seem to have little to offer with respect to the unemployment debate, but in this paper it is hoped in some small way to add to the discussion and planning of programmes for motivational interventions in New Zealand. There is much knowledge on how we motivate the long term unemployed, both from research and from experience of providers. What are practical ways to share this knowledge between providers and researchers is a question that must be asked. Future research opportunities may lie in many areas such as sporting success, educational achievement, and further Antarctic research (or exploration of similar harsh wilderness environments), if links and knowledge can be interpolated from such research this in turn can be used to improve the delivery of motivational intervention programmes for the long term unemployed.

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