ANTARCTIC ADVENTURES

A preliminary investigation into the personal implications of trips by adventurous New Zealanders to Antarctica, between the years 1956 and 2001.

An individual research project undertaken as part of a University of Canterbury Graduate Certificate in Antarctic Studies 2000-2001.

CONTENTS

Executive summary 3

Introduction 4

Significance of the report 5

Methods 5
   The make-up of the groups 7
   The nature of the adventures 8

1 Interpretation of the different impacts the Antarctic adventure had on the adventurers, and their partners. 10
   1.1 Impacts on employment 10
   1.2 Impacts on children 11
   1.3 Relationship issues 11
      Views of the adventurers 12
      Views of the women left behind 12
   1.4 Friendship issues 13
   1.5 Perceived risks 14
   1.6 Impacts of publicity 14
   1.7 Weighing up the benefits 15
   1.8 Conclusion 16

2. Comparisons of the impacts and personal costs of the adventures undertaken in Antarctica, between two different time periods, 1955-71 and 1982-2001. 16
   2.1 Changes in social attitudes 17
   2.2 Re-integration issues 18
   2.3 Improved transport 18
   2.4 Effects of changes in communication systems 19
   2.5 Women’s knowledge about the adventure 19
   2.6 Conclusion 19

Overall conclusion 20

Limitations of the report 21

Recommendations for further study 22

Appendices 23

References 26
ANTARCTIC ADVENTURES
A preliminary investigation into the personal implications of trips by adventurous New Zealanders to Antarctica, between the years 1956 and 2001.

Executive summary.

This report undertakes a preliminary investigation into the personal implications of Antarctic adventures. It attempts to identify the factors that attract adventurers to Antarctica, and the implications or personal 'costs' and impacts of their trip, on such things as their families, partners and employment. It also inquires into whether changes in societal attitudes have impacted on the perception of personal 'cost', by comparing the experiences of an earlier group of adventurers and their partners, with a more recent group.

Face-to-face and telephone interviewing of the adventurers and their partners was the method chosen to collect the required information for the study. Interviewees were selected to represent adventures occurring in two different time periods: 1950s/60s and 1980s/90s

The study found that there were differences between the men and their partners in how they perceived the impacts of the Antarctic adventures. The men, in most cases, had decided that it was appropriate for them to participate in the adventure at that time in their lives, and accepted that the trip away would mean that their partners would have increased responsibilities. The women supported their partner's decisions to be involved in the adventure, and they felt that it was in their best interests, to have their adventurous partners fulfil their dream of a lifetime. They realised that this would mean increased responsibilities for them, but they were confident that they would manage and survive and develop a life for themselves.

The premise that there would be some change in the implications of the adventure, over time, was found to be true in some situations, but not in others. The changes that occurred in the role of women in the 1960s and 1970s, had an influence on those women whose partners went to Antarctica in the 1980s and 1990s. These women were more proactive in decision making and often had their own careers, whereas the women from the earlier group were more prepared to accept the family situation they found themselves in. The attitudes towards raising children also changed, but the impacts of single parenting were just as great over both time periods. Other factors that were thought to cause change, such as improved transport and faster communications between Scott Base and New Zealand, were found to have little significance in this study.

The study found that not only were there differences between the views of the adventurers who spent time in Antarctica, and their partners, but that these differences also changed over time.
Introduction

Much has been written about adventurous trips to Antarctica (Hillary, 1975; Mahoney, 1982). Numerous accounts of these exploits describe the events as they unfolded, often in minute detail, as well as the hazards and threats and successes and failures. These accounts tend to describe the adventure from the participant’s point of view, with their expectations, achievements and feelings being predominant. Little mention is made of the impacts and implications of these trips on the partners who remain behind and hold the normal life together for the adventurers to return to afterwards. It is suggested that without this ‘silent’ support, the adventure would not have been as successful and meaningful: that in fact the support positively enhanced the experience.

This report undertakes a preliminary investigation into the personal implications of such adventures. It will attempt to identify the factors that attract adventurers to Antarctica, and the implications or personal ‘costs’ and impacts of their trip on such things as their families, partners and employment. The report also examines and compares the views of the adventurers with those of their partners to determine whether the personal ‘costs’ are perceived to be the same or different between them. The positive and negative impacts of the trip on partners will be analysed in relation to the views on impacts put forward by the adventurers.

Another aspect of the report is to inquire into whether changes in societal attitudes have impacted on the perception of personal ‘cost’, by comparing the experiences of an earlier group of adventurers and their partners with a more recent group. From these investigations some conclusions will be drawn as to whether expectations have changed and impacts lessened over time and possible reasons for these changes.

The two main premises developed for the project are:

2 That there is a difference in what is considered to be a personal sacrifice/cost/implication between those who participate in the adventure and partners who stay behind.

The report will look at likely implications for adventurers and partners such as relationship and family issues, lost opportunities and anxiety about the risks involved, as well as inquiring into other factors the participants consider to be of importance.

3 That the personal costs/implications will be less of an issue for adventurers and their partners from the 1980s and 1990s compared to the couples involved in adventures in the 1950s and 1960s.
Any differences between the two groups will be identified and the reasons for these differences will be explored. Possible factors responsible for the change in perception over time will be discussed, as well as other reasons for change put forward by the participants in the study. Factors such as the increased independence of women, the acceptance of raising children alone, a better knowledge of what the adventure involves and the effect of improved travel and communication technology on feelings of isolation will be considered.

Significance of the report.

The impacts and implications of adventurous Antarctic trips for both the adventurer and their partners have not been frequently studied (Wratt, G. pers.comm. 2001; Bradshaw, M. pers.comm.2001). The importance of the role played by partners in the adventures undertaken by men in Antarctica has not been clearly recognised in the past (Fuchs, V & Hillary, E. 1958; Braxton, D. 1969; Mahoney, M. 1982; Wheeler, S. 1992). This study intends to begin to explore these factors and draw some conclusions.

As a preliminary inquiry this report introduces the possibility of a more comprehensive and extensive study being undertaken in the future, involving a bigger sample of adventurers and different groups of visitors to Antarctica.

There is also a sense of urgency surrounding the collection and recording of the personal stories from older adventurers and their partners in particular. The adventures are mostly well recorded but the impacts felt by partners and the sacrifices made by them remain largely untold. These stories are important as they complete the whole picture. Fading memories, ill health and old age will hinder the recovery of these life histories in the future.

The results may also have a practical application for institutions with staff employed for several weeks in Antarctica. By identifying likely impacts of the time away and the responses to issues of separation, the report could provide information aiding the re-entry of employees into mainstream life.

Methods

This study is a preliminary investigation only and does not attempt to give a full and extensive coverage of all groups who have visited Antarctica. Limitations and boundaries for the investigation were set up to make it manageable within the 14 week time frame available for the development of the report and the collection and interpretation of the information.

Consequently a relatively small and accessible group of adventurers was selected as participants. The group was confined to New Zealand males undertaking adventurous recreational trips, often as part of their work in Antarctica, and their partners left behind
in New Zealand at the time. The adventure had to involve at least four weeks away from their home and partner, as it was assumed that issues concerning separation would not be as important for a shorter time period. Confining the group size to 20 interviewees, and the type of visitor to Antarctica to male adventurers, made it possible to interview the group in the given time. This also provided enough information about one particular group of Antarctic adventurers, and meant that conclusions could be drawn from the data collected. No attempt to attribute statistical validity to the findings will be attempted in this preliminary study.

Interviewees were also selected to represent two different time periods: 1950s/60s and 1980s/90s. This was important for the analysis of the concept of change occurring in the perception of the impacts of the trips undertaken. The earlier period, 1950s and 1960s, was chosen, as it was the beginning of an active period of involvement for New Zealanders in Antarctica with the setting up of Scott Base, and resulted in many science-adventure expeditions. The latter time period gave a reasonable time lapse for comparisons to be made with the earlier period, and would also reflect the huge changes in society that began in the 1960s and continued into the 1990s and beyond e.g. the attitudes to marriage and the role of women. Improvements in communication technology providing a faster and cheaper link between Scott Base and New Zealand were also considered to be significant factors influencing the perception of isolation between the earlier and later adventures.

Interviewing adventurers and their partners was the method chosen to collect the required information for the study (Nachmias, C & Nachmias, D. 1996). Face-to-face interviews provide the best opportunity to obtain in-depth information and telephone interviews were a cost effective method of collecting information from those living some distance away. The opportunity for participants to add extra information at a later date was also seen as an advantage and informing the people well in advance about the aims and objectives of the study gave them time to gather their thoughts before the interview took place.

Ethics approval was applied for and granted from the Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury before the interviews could proceed (see appendix 1). The interview questions, and an information sheet for the participants in the study, were forwarded to this committee, before approval was granted.

The potential participants were first approached and the project explained to them. If they and their partners wished to be involved in the study, an interview time was agreed to. Interviews were conducted by telephone or as face-to-face interviews in the participant’s home and an information sheet that reinforced the aims and objectives of the study, and the protection and rights of the participants, was provided for them before the interviews took place (see appendix 2).

Participants were interviewed separately to allow for personal views to be put forward freely. Most of the participants responded openly and were willing to divulge personal feelings and interpretations well beyond those expected. On only one or two occasions
was it necessary to encourage a response. On the completion of the interview, participants were encouraged to make contact if they wanted to change or add information to their account. Two candidates did this. No one withdrew from the study.

Interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method to collect personal information (The Research Bulletin No 9, 1998). A confidential relationship could be established and participants led gently into the investigation, starting with straightforward, factual questions then moving on to those requiring more personal and introspective responses. Interviews also allowed flexibility as the order of questions could be changed to suit the pace and direction the interview took. A more relaxed atmosphere could be established by allowing the participants to tell their story and the interviewer write the responses down. When asked about their preferred approach to questioning, the idea of talking through their responses and having someone else take notes was the preferred option.

Interview questions were developed to encourage responses as well as extract information relevant to the aims of the report. Parallel questions were included for both parties so that differences in perception could be noted. Questions were devised that directed participants to the premises being investigated (see appendix 3). Opportunities were available for the inclusion of ideas not anticipated by the interviewer, by having open-ended questions at the end of the interview.

Participants attempted to answer all the questions in the interview, although some of the older participants found it difficult to remember all the details. The responses were collated and recorded in a large matrix. In this way it was possible to find patterns and trends in the responses provided, as well as identifying exceptions to the predicted outcomes.

**The make-up of the groups**

It was found that there were some differences in the make-up of the two groups of adventurers and also in the make-up of two groups of partners who remained in New Zealand while the adventure took place.

**The male adventurers**

At the time of their Antarctic adventures the two groups of male adventurers had a slightly different makeup. The earlier group was comprised mostly of young men 20 to 30 years old, married for 2 to 6 years with young families of one or two children up to 7 years old. They were either students or in the early stages of careers (1 to 5 years) as professionals or with family businesses. Most of these men participated in at least two adventures in Antarctica.

The later group was from an older age group and ranged from 30 to 49 years. They had been married longer (5 to 17 years), and were predominantly self-employed mountain
guides or other professionals e.g. geologists, computer programmer. Two of the five men interviewed in this group did not have children. Most of these men had at least two trips to Antarctica, and two of them had returned at least 11 times!

The women remaining behind in New Zealand.

All of the women, whose partners were in Antarctica in the 1950s and 1960s, were quite young at the time, aged between 24 and 36 years old. One was engaged to be married and others had been married relatively recently i.e. in the previous six years. Most had young children aged between one and five years old, and two were pregnant at the time of their husband’s adventure away from home. Most of the women had previously worked as nurses or teachers, but at the time of their partner’s trip away they were mostly working in the home raising children.

The partners, of the men who were in Antarctica in the 1980s and 1990s, were from an older age group, ranging from 30 to 45 years old at the time. Most had been married or in a relationship with their partner for five to seventeen years, and only two had children, ranging in age from 30 months to 7 years. One was pregnant with her second child, while the others were all employed in careers ranging from outdoor pursuits instructor, to developing and running a small family business.

The nature of the adventures

The nature of the adventures also changed somewhat over time. The adventures undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s, all involved elements of exploration and the surveying of previously unmapped areas around the Ross Ice Shelf and Victoria Land regions of Antarctica. Within each of the trips there was also an element of science, usually in the form of a geological survey. At this time there was particular interest in the theory of continental drift and these trips provided opportunities for geologists, with the support of experienced mountaineers, to collect rock samples and survey new territory. The adventurers involved were selected for their experience and skills as mountaineers and guides, and in addition mechanical engineering and surveying expertise were important assets that two of the adventurers had to offer.

The adventurers who were involved in the 1956-58 Trans Antarctic Expedition (T.A.E.), used their practical and professional skills as mechanical engineers to set up and build Scott Base in the summer of 1956-57. They were also involved in forays into the Trans-Antarctic Mountains, with dog teams and sledges, reconnoitring a feasible route down off the Polar Plateau to Scott Base, for Sir Vivian Fuchs’ T.A.E. team. They were the first to winter over at Scott Base and helped to build a garage, maintain equipment and support a team of scientists. During the summer of 1957-8, the main adventure involved the setting out of supply depots using tractors, dogs and sledges, for the impending crossing of Antarctica by Fuchs and his party, as well as making it to the South Pole with Sir Edmund Hillary. The work involved keeping the tractors and other equipment running,
as well as applying snow and ice skills to help select a safe route through severely glaciated terrain. These adventurers were away from their families and homes for a period of 15 months (Gunn, Miller & Hillary, 1958).

Many of the Geological Survey Expeditions of the late 1950s and 1960s were involved with mapping, surveying and photographing under-explored areas in the mountainous regions of New Zealand’s Ross Dependency, as well as in North Victoria Land. For each of these expeditions, young climbers were selected as “hand picked field assistants, all with mountaineering experience” (Quatermain, 1971), to support the survey parties. Many of the geologists e.g. H.J. Harrington, 1957-58, B. Gunn, 1962, were mountaineers as well. The opportunity to climb peaks such as Mt Terror 1958, Mt Discovery and Black Island, 1957, in these areas, were often taken up as part of the adventure, as well as forays into exciting areas such as the Taylor and Wright valleys. There was “an unwritten policy of encouraging the ‘occasional’ peak to be climbed as the integral part of some science activities” (Monteath, 1983 pp107).

The Hillary led Mt Herschel Expedition of 1967, involved mountaineers, surveyors and geologists and its main goal was to climb the virgin peak “which surely must be one of the most beautiful peaks in the world” (Hillary, 1967). Following the successful ascent, the party went on to survey an area north of Hallett Station in an attempt to find evidence of continental drift, but were lashed by severe storms which prevented them reaching their goal. The threat of the break-up of the 32 miles of sea ice between them and their base, created a sense of urgency to return to “solid land again and the warmth and comfort of Hallett Station” (Hillary, 1967).

There was more variety in the nature of the adventures that took place in the 1980s and 90s. It became more difficult to mount trips involving exploration and mountain climbing under the guise of science. The adventurers now were working as field assistants and guides to scientists, with set goals and often restricted time schedules (Marcussen, 1998). They did get the chance to visit some spectacular places, such as the Pensacola Mountains, but there were fewer opportunities to climb peaks of their choice (Monteath, 1981, 1983). The trips had become serious work.

Some scientists still managed to undertake some adventures in remote areas after they had completed their fieldwork, but it became increasingly difficult for these trips to take place purely for the sake of exploration and adventure (Cox, 1994).

With the tendency for visits to Antarctica to become more work oriented, adventurers were attracted to employment at Scott Base, as field trainers. Less time was spent in the field and only occasional trips as part of their own leisure time or training, were possible e.g. to climb Mt Lister or Mt Discovery. One adventurer was involved in guiding tourists from vessels visiting Antarctica. This involved driving inflatable Zodias amongst the sea ice and icebergs, as well as guiding tourists up near-by peaks as day trips. The nature of adventures has changed and in the 21st century most big adventures to Antarctica are privately funded and often heavily sponsored, and come with a great deal of associated publicity (Philips, E 2000).
1. Interpretation of the different impacts the Antarctic adventure had on the adventurers and their partners.

Different aspects of the lives of the adventurers and their partners were impacted on, and a variety of factors were mentioned as being responsible for this.

1.1 Impacts on employment.

The Antarctic adventures had both positive and negative impacts on employment situations and were different for the adventurers and their partners left behind in New Zealand.

There were implications for the men who were professional employees. Most had to apply and take leave without pay from their companies and usually accepted a lower salary as part of their employment in Antarctica. Some employers in professional firms saw the adventure as a serious disruption and distraction to the work the men were involved in e.g. engineering and surveying, and a hindrance to their career development. Two of the adventurers felt that the trip hindered their promotion in the firm. Shorter trips to Antarctica were often seen as an extended holiday of little consequence.

One man gave up a more lucrative work opportunity with the film industry in order to take up the special opportunity to work and play in Antarctica. Another adventurer, working in the tourist industry in Antarctica, found the added income from this well paid work a real bonus as he was in the early stages of setting up a family business in New Zealand. Other adventurers saw the experience as enhancing their careers especially those self-employed mountain guides and a research scientist. All of the adventurers were involved in safety and survival training work to some degree and the work experience in Antarctic conditions was felt to be a bonus for their career development. It often led to return trips to Antarctica and new adventures in other remote and demanding environments. Overall the adventurers all felt that the personal experience and skills gained from the trip enhanced their self-image and gave them more confidence, making them more interesting and better employees.

Some of the women did not have employment outside the home. However, others who were involved with the development of small family businesses felt that they had added responsibilities as a result of their partner's trip to Antarctica. They were left to hold the business together, keep up contracts and complete tax returns which they had to juggle with the demands of their own separate careers. Mostly these extra responsibilities were not resented but it was acknowledged that it did increase stress levels at times. Other than this their own work was not affected by their partner's trip away.
1.2 Impacts on children

Leaving children was an issue for all the men with families. Balancing the family responsibilities with the opportunity value of the adventure created a huge dilemma for them. They were aware of missing out on seeing their children change and develop, being home for Christmas and being involved in child raising.

The risk of an accident or death occurring as a result of the adventure being undertaken in a hazardous environment, was a concern for some of the men involved. The possibility of leaving a fatherless family behind led them to increase their insurance, often to cover the repayment of the house mortgage.

One man’s young children failed to recognise him when he returned home from Antarctica, after spending 15 months working there. This concerned him and it took several months for him to re-establish himself as their father.

Although these issues were acknowledged, most of the men said they would go on the trip regardless, as the opportunity to work and play in Antarctica was not be missed. Three of the men left pregnant wives behind. The men believed they had dealt with these issues at the time and trusted that their wives’ good management skills would allow them to cope with the situation they had been left in. Interestingly, three of the men later reluctantly turned down adventurous trips to Antarctica and other adventurous destinations, as their family situations had changed and they were needed to support their wives at home.

The women generally accepted the responsibility of raising the children alone and this was considered to be one of the greatest implications of the adventure for them. There were some advantages in this as the children provided a distraction for them, kept them busy and meant there was less time to dwell on the separation. They all made the necessary arrangements and got on with what had to be done. The single parenting became more of an issue when children were sick and there was no one to share the caring. With pre school children, the wives found that they had no let up or space for themselves … ‘no-one to pass a child to’. In families where the men had played a very active role in raising the children, the women noticed the effect of having to move from the shared role to a single role. It reinforced for them that they would ‘hate to be solo parents’.

1.3 Relationship issues

There were some differences in how the couples perceived the implications of separation on their relationships.
Views of the adventurers.

All the men were aware that their trip away would create a major disruption in the lives of their partners and the impact of the separation was something they had thought about. For some it was their first long trip away from their wives but the adventurers believed the unique opportunity available to them was not to be missed and worth the inconveniences it created. Some of the couples who had previously experienced long periods of separation, had made agreements about how much time apart they felt their relationship could stand before being damaged, and made this a criterion in their decision making. Overall, the men felt that their partners supported their trip. They had involved their partners in the decision making process, discussed the implications it would have on their lives and they felt their partners understood the importance of the trip to them. This made the leaving much easier and most did not perceive the separation to be a big issue. Their partners, they believed, were practical, adaptable and capable managers and many had family support available to help out if necessary.

All the adventurers felt an element of sadness at the departure, but this was soon over ridden by the excitement of the trip. One partner did feel that he had to be careful not show his enthusiasm for the trip too much, as this made it more difficult for his partner to adjust to the impending separation.

The problems of reintegration into the relationship after returning home were an issue for all couples. On returning, the men were reassured that their partners had coped well and initially the reunions were happy occasions. A flat and sometimes stressful period often followed for at least two weeks where readjustments by both partners had to be made. Re-establishing roles, sharing responsibilities and decision-making were common issues and many took a holiday away to rediscover their partnership. Some men who had spent the winter in Antarctica found that initially their children did not know them and this was frightening and challenging for them. They did not, however, consider it to have had any long-term effects. A few men felt that the separation had strengthened their partnership by making them more appreciative of each other, and more inclined to value their times together.

Views of the women left behind

The women, who remained behind in New Zealand, supported their partner's adventures. They believed they would cope and get on with life in their partner's absence. They were very positive about the trip, proud of their partners and happy and excited for them. They were philosophical about the separation; they didn't enjoy being left but knew the men would be easier to live with by having had the experience. Consequently, they planned how they would cope alone and set about getting on with their own lives. For some women it was a relief to see their partners finally depart so they could escape into their own world for a change.
Although most of the women confessed to not having much knowledge or interest in Antarctica they did feel they knew what compelled or attracted their partners to go and this helped them rationalise the situation. Even though they were involved in the decision-making, they believed the men would have gone anyway. They viewed their partners as explorer types who had a desire for adventure and a curiosity to experience exciting new frontiers. The men were all mountaineers, and the partners knew about the call of the mountains and had previously coped with many two and three week trips away from them.

The women dealt with the separation by keeping themselves active. Those with children were busy raising them alone and some moved to be with family at this time. Others developed strong links with mother’s groups and friends. Only one woman felt abandoned and with little support in an era when solo parenting was less acceptable. Women without children made a conscious effort to fill the gaps in their lives with more activities so they didn’t dwell on being alone. They socialised with friends, organised more trips away and took up new hobbies. They all found Christmas to be a lonely time.

Loneliness was an increasingly difficult issue for some, especially towards the end of a three-month separation. By this time there was a craving for intimacy and the close friendship that they were missing during their partner’s absence, and this need could have made the relationship vulnerable. Other women grew tired of having the burden of added responsibilities for family and having to be emotionally strong all the time. They missed the shared parenting. The lack of freedom and space for themselves because of this responsibility was an issue for them.

Readjustment issues were also present for the women left behind and took some time to sort out. Most felt they had to adapt to having their decisions challenged and to relinquish some of their newly found independence. Routines had changed and had to be re-established, resulting in an often stressful and anxious time where marriages were re-evaluated. The separation had enriched some marriages but had also created stresses on others as threads were lost and needs not met. All of the couples, who were married when the partners went to Antarctica, remain married today.

1.4 Friendship issues

Some reports of Antarctic adventures suggest that friendships can be put under a great deal of stress because of the severe nature of the environment. This was not borne out by the interviews. Most of the adventurers were working with men they had previously climbed with in New Zealand and knew well. The Antarctic experience had further developed comradeship, close bonding and trust in each other’s skills and decision making in risky situations and had strengthened these friendships. Most of the friendships have remained strong since the adventure.

Few long-term friendships were made with members of the teams who were not mountaineers although some business connections were made.
Some of the women whose partners were involved in major expeditions felt that they too
gained from the friendships made at that time. Links with people overseas have led to
some good holidays as well as fun social times at reunions. Many couples still visit and
share holidays in New Zealand with friends from their Antarctic days.

1.5 Perceived Risks

Both the men and women were aware of the high risks involved in working and playing
in Antarctica. The men were acutely aware as most of them were working as safety
personnel responsible for others, or in teams who depended on members being highly
skilled, focussed and careful in their climbing. Although some took out extra insurance
to cover possible disasters, most felt that the risks were no greater than those experienced
in New Zealand high climbing and guiding situations, such as the danger of crevasses,
ice-falls and storms.

The vagaries of the sea ice and the isolation of many of the Antarctic adventures were
considered to be risks, but the focus for the men involved was kept on the activity rather
than on the possibility of a disaster occurring.

Guiding tourists from ships presented different risks and these were felt to be a concern
to those involved. The flipping of inflatable Zodias in icy-cold waters had occurred and
was a major worry for these adventurers and made life quite stressful for them.

All the women were of the possible risks involved in their partner’s work and play, but
felt it unwise to dwell on this while their partner was away. They believed their partners
to be qualified and skilled in mountaineering and that their judgement in risky situations
would be wise and safe. No accidents were reported from any of the interviewees.

1.6 Impacts of Publicity

The premise that publicity could impact seriously on an adventure was investigated but
found to be of little significance in this investigation. None of the adventures involved
the presence of film crews, which had created issues for others (Hall & Chester, 1989).
Some expeditions outside this study, found that direct telecommunication links to radio
stations, had impacted seriously on their trips, adding stress, testing friendships and
increasing risks for the adventurers (Philips, 2000). Although books were written about
some of the earlier adventures (Hillary, 1975), most of the trips mentioned in this report
were written up in magazines (The Daily Telegraph Magazine, February, 1968), and in
climbing journals e.g. New Zealand Alpine Club Journal, by the members of the team.
They felt it had no impact on the group’s activities.
1.7 Weighing up the benefits.

The adventurers saw the experience as one where the benefits overwhelmingly outweighed the negative aspects. Most felt that there were wonderful outcomes for them and that the ‘costs’ and lost opportunities were worth giving up.

The trips proved to be exciting adventures, fulfilling their needs to explore different and little visited regions and were often said to be ‘a dream come true’. The urge of the mountaineer to take on the challenges and risks in a stimulating and demanding environment was satisfied, and most felt very privileged to be in Antarctica. The time available for reflection was spiritually uplifting for many, and the opportunities to work with dog teams in remote areas was considered to be a very special experience. Those working as field trainers and as geologists felt that the benefits of their Antarctic experiences were very useful in developing their skills and furthering their careers.

Other benefits noted were the useful links and contacts that were developed during their trips. These contacts often led to expeditions to other remote places in the world and repeat trips to Antarctica, including, in one case, a promotion to Base Commander, as well as business connections. Having the opportunity to collect resources for businesses involving the development of photo libraries, postcards and calendars, was seen to be a great advantage of the adventure e.g. photos for a photo library.

Another important result of the adventure for many men, was the comradeship that developed from the special experiences they had shared together in Antarctica.

The greatest advantage seen by the women whose partners spent time adventuring in the Antarctic, was the personal space they now had available. This gave them the opportunities to develop their own individuality and self worth again. Getting out of the dependency mode and being recognised as an individual rather than someone’s partner was important to them. The freedom and independence to make decisions without having to make compromises with their partners, to take up opportunities socially, and have the flexibility to change jobs and take up new hobbies, were all considered significant benefits for them.

A great deal of pleasure for the women was also gained from seeing their partners living out their dream and having their lives enriched from the exciting and challenging experiences. They felt happy for their partners successes and excitement and pride in their achievements such as making first ascents of peaks, to writing successful books. Many felt the men were easier to live with as a result of the satisfying and fulfilling adventure they undertook.

Most women agreed that the experience enhanced their marriage. The separation re-enforced the value they placed on their friendship, each other’s company and the relationship they had together.
The women, for whom this was their first long separation from their partners, gained great satisfaction from the realisation that they had the personal resources to cope and manage on their own. To some this was proof of their worth, and evidence that they were self-reliant, competent survivors.

Other benefits, seen by the women after the return of their partners, were the increased contacts they now had with interesting people, the pleasure gained from hearing the stories told, and the good friends made as a result of the adventure.

1.8 Conclusion

The report found that rather than there being major differences in what is thought to be an impact or implication of an Antarctic adventure, there was more likely to be a difference between the men and women in their perception and interpretation of the impact. The men had basically made the decision to go on the trip, and knew their partners supported them and would manage while they were away. The women felt that it was in their best interests to support the trip, and that although they would have to take on extra responsibilities and find it difficult at times, they would cope and get on with life.

The women’s acceptance of the adventure and its consequences, can possibly be explained by looking at the type of women involved. Most were relatively young (under 30 years) and adaptable, practical types who had been involved in outdoor pursuits themselves to varying degrees, from tramping, skiing and rock climbing to serious mountaineering. They had some knowledge of the attraction the trip held for their partners, and knew what it would involve for themselves personally, as they had all experienced the effect of partners going away on shorter mountaineering trips in the New Zealand Alps. Consequently, they could understand and manage the situation they found themselves in, without being devastated.


The study aimed to find out if there were changes in the impact of adventurous trips on people’s lives, over time. It was thought that changes in society may have led people to view the effects of separation differently in more recent times, than previously. It was also suggested that the impacts of the Antarctic adventure could have lessened over time because women left at home in more recent years have a better knowledge of what the adventure involved. Improvements in telecommunication technology and travel were also thought to be possible reasons for this change.
From the investigation undertaken, changes in the perception of the impact of the adventures were identified, but it was difficult to say if they had in fact lessened over time. However, changes in attitudes towards separation of partners, family life and roles in relationships, were suggested as being factors contributing towards the change.

2.1 Changes in social attitudes

The make-up of the two groups of women were slightly different and influenced how they viewed and responded to their partners adventure in Antarctica. There was a noticeable increase in the number of childless women, with independent incomes and careers of their own in the later group. These women had quite different approaches to the separation than those with children. They had to some extent established lives of their own and kept themselves active and busy in their careers and recreation. They were generally older at the time of the adventure (average 37 years), and had experienced separation from their partners many times. They had developed strategies to cope with the separation by making sure any spare time, especially in the evenings, was filled with activities so that they did not dwell on their aloneness. Some had also established ground rules with their partners about the duration of trips away, so that the relationship was not stressed by long periods of separation. They were less dependent on their partners and gained pleasure and enjoyment from their own successes rather than those of their partners. Their partners viewed this as a benefit and allowed them to proceed with their adventure confidently.

Two of the women with children in this later group had taken time out from their careers to be mothers and had made a conscious decision about their change of role during this time i.e. to be mothers and give up some of their freedom. They both went back to their careers after this period of child raising. One of the women who was used to an equal sharing of the child raising with her husband, felt the impact of the increased burden on her to be stressful and tiring. The involvement of husbands in child raising was not mentioned by any of the men from the earlier group of adventurers.

The women, whose partners were adventuring in the 1950s and 60s, were younger and had been married for a relatively short time (average of 3 years). They had less experience of separation from their partners but adapted quickly to their situation and often found that support from family and friends helped them through these times. Because they had children, they were kept busy and distracted from feeling alone, and felt it was their duty to hold the family together. They were used to handling most of the child raising and did not find it very different when their partners departed for Antarctica. The men from this earlier time period accepted that their wives would continue to deal with the children while they were away as it was their normal role.

One woman from this period who did not have family support, felt abandoned and unhappy. She managed, but felt that coping as a solo parent in the 1960s, was not considered desirable by the people around her. Fewer of the women from this time
period later returned to full time careers. Generally all the women coped by keeping busy in one way or another. The difference was more to do with whether they had children or not.

2.2 Re-integration issues

A small difference was noted in how the two groups accepted the re-integration of their partners into the relationship on their return. All needed time to adjust but the more recent group suggested they discussed the issue openly, evaluated their situation and decided how to proceed together. Most of the earlier group had difficulty remembering the details of the process they went through but most believed they to let time sort out this uncomfortable time of re-adjustment and didn’t discuss a plan of action to deal with it. The men reflected the attitudes of their partners on this point.

2.3 Improved transport

The development of faster transport to Antarctica has reduced the time spent there for many people today, as they can now fly there in less than nine hours. This has shortened the length of many of the trips away in recent years. Most science visits are specialised and of limited duration, often only two to three weeks, which has reduced the impact on their families. Two adventurers working as safety guides for scientists were away for less than six weeks in 1982 and in 1995, whereas most trips in the 1950s and 60s were from six weeks to three months. Some of the adventures in 1956-59 took two weeks to get started as the adventurers arrived by ship, which extended the time away from families.

An exception to this trend are those adventurers working out of Scott Base as Field Training instructors today. They do have to cope with longer periods of separation, often three months or more, which impacts heavily on their relationships. One couple decided that being apart for this length of time was too damaging and have agreed that future trips will be no longer than six weeks long.

Overall, the longer trips away have had a big impact on those left behind whenever they occurred. Shorter trips, of which there are more today, have just as much impact as they did in earlier times. There are fewer opportunities available for adventures associated with science in Antarctica nowadays, and outdoor enthusiasts have to mount independent, self funded expeditions if they are to have extended adventures in the region. (Not part of this project). This suggests that fewer families overall are being affected by long periods of separation.
2.4 Effects of changes in communication systems.

Recent improvements in telecommunication technology were put forward as possible factors reducing the impact of separation over time. However this change has had most effect on those working for long periods at Scott Base and has had little effect on those involved in adventures out in the field. These trips into isolated regions do have radio contact just as they did in earlier years, but the adventurers away from base still depend on letters and diaries to communicate with their families. Even when at the Base they still prefer to wait until they return home to make contact. The effects of isolation experienced in most adventures are still present, and are accepted as being part of the adventure just as they were in earlier times.

The development of direct telephone and e-mail links with New Zealand from Scott Base in 1991, have reduced the sense of isolation for those adventurers living at the Base. However it can also create some issues for couples. One couple felt that the ability to cope with isolation was affected by frequent contact with their partners through phone calls. They felt that this only reinforced the fact that the couple are apart and made the separation stressful to deal with. Some adventurers believed it would be easier to block out the emotional issues of their separation by reducing the telephone contact they had with their partners.

2.4 Women's knowledge about the adventure.

There was no real difference between the responses the women from the two different time periods gave. Almost all the women had only a passing interest or knowledge about Antarctica. Most had been taught about the heroic age in passing at school and otherwise had read articles in magazines and perhaps seen a film. One woman developed a greater knowledge of the place and later visited it on two occasions as part of a tourist operation. None of the other partners left behind had any desire to visit.

All of the women knew to some degree, what their partners were involved in while on their adventure. They knew why their partners were selected, had a good understanding of what compelled them to go, and the basic aims of the work and play activities being undertaken. They were aware of some of the risks involved but protected themselves from worrying about them by blocking out these thoughts from their mind. The increased information now available to the women involved, had little impact on what they knew about the adventures undertaken in Antarctica.

2.6 Conclusions

Changes in society were reflected in the changing attitudes towards partnerships, the roles of the partners, and approaches to child raising, amongst the participants in the study. These changes affected how the participants from the earlier and later groups
perceived the resulting impacts on their lives. The fact that many of the women from the later group were independent, had their own careers and were more willing to challenge and negotiate some of the terms of their partners trip away, influenced how they felt about the adventure. For most of the women with children, the impacts remained the same.

The effects of faster methods of travel and improved telecommunications did not have a great effect on the study group. Longer trips away continued to have just as many impacts on the people involved, whether they were trips from earlier years or recent adventures. The fact that there are now fewer opportunities than there were previously, was more of a concern to the adventurers than other factors.

**Overall conclusions**

The study found that there were differences between the men and their partners in how they perceived the impacts of the Antarctic adventures. The men in most cases had decided that it was appropriate for them to participate in the adventure at that time in their lives. They accepted that the trip away would mean that their partners would have increased responsibilities but felt confident that they had planned and organised the situation at home so that it was manageable for their capable, understanding and adaptable partners to cope with in their absence.

The women supported their partner’s decisions to be involved in the adventure, and felt it was in their best interests to have their adventurous partners fulfil their dream of a lifetime and be happy and contented as a result. They realised that this would mean increased responsibilities for them as they ran households and raised children on their own. They were confident that they would manage and survive and develop a life for themselves.

Both parties felt that the benefits gained from the undertaking of such an adventure far outweighed the costs and disadvantages of it.

The premise that the implications of the adventure in Antarctica would change over time was found to be true in some situations, but not in others. The changes in society that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s encouraged women to be more independent and to challenge the decisions and roles of their partners. This change had an influence on the women whose partners went to Antarctica in the 1980s and 1990s, whereas the women from the earlier group were more prepared to accept the situation they found themselves in and adapt to it. The attitudes towards raising children also changed but the impacts of single parenting were just as great over both time periods.

The length of trips to Antarctica were still found to be variable and the impacts of longer trips away from families had just as much impact in 1956 as it had in 2001. Other factors that were thought to cause change, such as improved transport and faster communications
between Scott Base and New Zealand, were found to have little effect on how the adventure impacted on those involved.

The study found that not only were there differences between the views of the adventurers who spent time in Antarctica, and their partners, but that these differences also changed over time.

**Limitations of the report**

As a preliminary study into the personal implications of adventurous pursuits on adventurers and partners, some limitations and boundaries were placed on the aims and methods selected for the investigation.

The group of adventurers selected were all males who had previously been involved in adventurous activities in New Zealand and later in Antarctica. The Antarctic adventures needed to have been at least four weeks in duration. This was necessary so that enough information about one group in particular could be collected to see if the premises suggested for the report could be accepted for them.

The group of adventurers was limited to ten so that the interviews could be conducted in the timeframe available for the study. By choosing only ten male adventurers the report would have more validity than one in which involved ten from a wider variety of visitors to Antarctica, but less than for one involving a bigger sample.

Personal interviews were selected as the method that would provide “the best opportunity to obtain in-depth, ‘real-life’ information” (Research Unit Team, 1998). Although this technique did produce a large amount of information, it was categorised into themes relation to the investigation. Telephone interviews had to be used instead of face-to-face interviews for the participants who lived some distance away. This did not limit the amount of information collected but it took longer to establish a confidential report with the interviewees.

The report did not attempt to attribute statistical validity to the findings. It was essentially testing the ideas proposed to see if these would be worthy of a more in-depth study at a later date.

The report was limited by the total time frame of 14 weeks. Much of this time was also shared with other assignments undertaken as part of the requirements of Graduate Certificate in Antarctic Studies, that this report was also part of).
Recommendations for further study

This report could be extended and developed into a more comprehensive investigation into the personal implications of visits by people to Antarctica. Some suggested avenues for further study are:

2 Developing a collection of life stories from the adventurers and their partners from the earlier periods of New Zealand contact with Antarctica. This study has a sense of urgency surrounding it as these people are ageing and their memories fading. Many of them mentioned that the personal implications of these journeys had not been recorded before. These stories could be easily lost.

3 A greater variety of Antarctic visitors could be studied and the results compared to see if there were any noticeable differences. Groups could include scientists, short-term visitors, those wintering over at two different bases and those employees of Antarctica New Zealand and its predecessor who work out of Scott Base.

4 A more comprehensive study, involving a much larger sample of all types of adventurers and visitors to Antarctica, could be undertaken to give the findings more validity.

5 Studies of adventurers and other visitors to Antarctica from countries other than New Zealand could be made. Data could be collected from surveys of people from a variety of bases such as those of the U.S, Italy, Australia, U.K. and France etc and compared to see if there were similarities and differences.
Appendix 1

University of Canterbury Ethics Committee approval.

University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch
New Zealand

Telephone: +64-3-366 7001
Facsimile: +64-3-364 2999

1 February 2001

Tui Elliot
C/o Professor Bryan Storey
Gateway Antarctica
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Tui

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal "Antarctic adventures – the personal implications for the adventurer and those they leave behind" has been considered and approved.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Isobel S Phillips
Secretary
Appendix 2

Information sheet for interviewees.


Antarctic Adventures – the personal implications for the adventurers and the partners they leave behind.

Information sheet for interviewees.

An individual research project is required as part of the Graduate Certificate in Antarctic Studies that I am studying for at present.

I have chosen to investigate the personal implications that an Antarctic adventure may have on those who have been adventuring e.g. the personal sacrifices and choices that have had to be made and the opportunity costs of the trip. The effects the adventure had on the partners left behind will also be investigated.

The aim of the investigation is to see if there are differences in what is seen as a sacrifice between the adventurers and their partners. I will also investigate the premise that the personal sacrifices made for this type of adventure have become less of an issue today than they were in the past.

As a participant you will be interviewed by phone or directly. This should take no longer than 30 minutes. You will be asked prescribed questions about your experiences. You may refuse to answer any question at any time.

All data will be as confidential and anonymous. No individual will be able to be identified from any of the final results. Also you have the right to withdraw any information you have provided and withdraw from the project at any time.

The project is being co-supervised by Ms Gillian Wratt, CEO, Antarctica New Zealand and Professor John Hay, co-ordinator of the Certificate course. If you have any questions regarding this project, please feel free to contact either of the supervisors.

Gillian Wratt
g.wratt@antarcticanz.govt.nz
Phone 03 358 0200

Professor John Hay
Johnhay@ihug.co.nz
Phone 09 478 9797
Appendix 3

Interview questions.

ANTARCTIC ADVENTURES - the personal implications for the adventurers and those they leave behind.

Interview Questions.

The Adventurer.
General Information.
Name

Date of trip to the Ice.
Length of trip from leaving home until return home
Age at the time
Marital status
Length of marriage
Other family responsibilities eg elderly parents

Employment at the time

Length of time with employer

Deciding to go
What was the purpose of the trip to the Ice?
What compelled you to go?
How important was it for you to go?

How did you get selected (or the opportunity) to go?

Did you feel there were any family commitments to consider?
Children?
Wife?
House?
Other?

At what stage did you involve your partner in your decision making?
How did your partner respond?

Did your partner’s response cause you some concern or was it encouraging?

Have you ever turned down an Antarctic adventure because of family responsibilities or other reasons?

Leaving
How did you feel about leaving? As you left?
Did it seem as though it was going to be a long time apart?

Getting there
What transport was used to get to Antarctica?
How long did it take to get there?

On the Ice
Were you mainly: - at Scott Base? How long?
- in the field? How long?

How did you communicate with friends and family?

How often were you able to communicate with them?

How often did you receive news from home?

Can you remember receiving news from family and friends?
Did receiving news make you apprehensive about being away?
Was it reassuring?

Were there any increased pressures/responsibilities on you while working/adventuring on the Ice that you hadn't experienced much before?
- increased responsibilities for others, risk to life, pressure of deadlines....?

Did you consider there to be any risks associated with the trip? What?

Did these concern you much?

Did any accidents actually happen?

**Friendships**
Did you travel to Antarctica with close friends?

If yes, what sort of activities had you previously done together?

Did you make new friends while adventuring? Are they still friends?

During your Antarctic adventure do you feel your friendships strengthened or weakened? How? Stresses on the friendships?

**Returning**
How did your partner respond to your return?

Were there any concerns about the time you had spent apart?
Did you have to make any adjustments on your return?

Publicity
Was your adventure published - articles, books, film, video...?
Did you know this at the time?
Do you think this impacted on what you did during the time on the Ice?
How?

Conclusion
Overall what do you consider to have been the greatest "price" you paid for your time in Antarctica?

What do you see as being the greatest benefits?

Was it a life changing experience?
ANTARCTIC ADVENTURES - the personal implications for the adventurers and those they leave behind.

Interview Questions

Those left behind.

General information
Name
Relationship to the adventurer

Age at the time of the adventure.

Length of the relationship

Children and ages

Were you employed at the time?

Had you been involved in outdoor pursuits to any degree?

What were your other main interests and hobbies?

Did you know much about Antarctica?

When did your partner go to Antarctica?

What was the purpose of the trip?

How were they selected?

How important was it to him?

What compelled him to go?
Was it his first big adventure away from you?

Deciding to go
At what stage did you hear about the trip?

How did you respond? Why?

Were you involved in the decision making? When and how?

The leaving
How did you feel about them going?

Did you feel that the time away was to be a long time?

How did you feel as they left?

What were some of the implications for you:
- increased responsibilities?
  - child raising

- running the home
- work
- loneliness

-independence

Communication
What form of communication was available for you to use?

How often were you able to have contact with them?

Did you feel comforted by the news you heard or did it make you more apprehensive?

Other implications
What risks did you think were involved in the adventure?

Were you concerned or worried about these risks? Why?

Did any accidents or injuries actually occur?
The return
What was your reaction to the homecoming of your partner?

Did you have any concerns about the amount of time you had been separated from each other?

Did life continue in the same way as it had before the time away? Any adjustments?

Were there any other implications for you arising from this adventure?

Were there any benefits for you out of this adventure?
References


Personal communications.

Margaret Bradshaw, Lecturer in Geology, University of Canterbury
Gillian Wratt, C.E.O., Antarctica New Zealand.