Gender: does it really matter?

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Photo taken by Ceilie, Gonzales Videla Station, February 2020
Quotes as introduction

Rear Admiral James Reedy, commander of US Naval Support Force in Antarctica, refers to Antarctica in the 1960s:
“The womanless white continent of peace”

Vivian Fuchs, “firmly believed that the inclusion of women would disrupt the harmony and scientific productivity of Antarctic stations.”[ (F. Aston, 2005, p26)

Janet Thompson, first female scientist at BAS, 1970s:
“One thing that made my blood boil, was the letter that went out from personnel to female applicants informing them that there were no shops or hairdressers in the Antarctic”

Pat Langhorne: “Back in the 1970s, it was entirely possible for workers to be refused purely because of their gender.”
Early days until 1970s – the **myth** of the Antarctic as a **place of manhood**

1902 – first dash to the South Pole - unsuccessful

1969 – US female scientists at the South Pole

Women in the Antarctic – a very “short” history

Selected timeline:
- 1766-69 Jeanne Baret – Bougainville circumnavigation expedition
- 1773 Louise Seguin was with Yves Joseph de Kerguelen
- 1935 Caroline Mikkelsen – whaler’s wife
- 1947 Jackie Ronne and Jennie Darlington – overwintered with their husbands
- 1956 Maria Klenove – marine geologist
- 1959 first female Australian group on Macquarie Island
- 1969 first US female group – South Pole
- 1979 Margaret Bradshaw, first NZ female deep field party leader
- 1988 Elizabeth Morris, first UK female deep field scientist overwintered
- 1990/91 first German female overwinterer on Neumayer Station
- 2015 first Korean woman station leader at King Sejong Station
“When Shackleton advertised his second expedition to the South Pole in 1914, he received this letter that said, ‘We are three sporty girls and don’t see why men should get all of the glory and women none.’ They were denied.”

Karen Williams, historian
Women as wives accompanying their husbands

Ingrid Christensen, 1935

- Married to Lars Christensen (uniting Sandefjord’s most powerful ship owners)
- Had six children
- Four trips to the Antarctic
- Flew as first woman over parts of the Antarctic continent
- Probably first woman who set foot on Antarctic continent

Edith “Jackie” Ronne

- Overwintered with her husband 1947
- Confirmed one of the first two women (with Darlington) who set foot on the Antarctic continent
- She was the chronicler of the expedition
- Returned 15 times to the Continent
- Guest lecturer on cruise ship “Explorer”
- Fellow of the Explorer’s Club
- 1978-81 president of the Society of Woman Geographers
Women who live in the Antarctic

Esperanza Base - Built in 1953
1977 - Seven months pregnant woman was airlifted to the Argentina’s Esperanza Base and Emilio Palmas was born on 7 January 1978.

Villa las Estrellas, Chilean Base, families living at Base 1984 onward
Women: housewives and mothers confined to the traditional roles – revolt – changing circumstances
Women in science: one example
Margaret Bradshaw

Margaret applied in 1975, she was joined by British geologist Susan West. “She’d done a PhD on Antarctic rocks but she’d never been down. She only worked on the rocks that men brought back.”

- 1975 curator Canterbury Museum, NZ
- 1979 first female leader of a deep field party (1200 km from Scott Base)
- 1993 Polar Medal (second woman so far)
- Geologist – taught at UC
- Volunteer – over 20 years Vice president of Ant. Society NZ
- Still continues her research and lectures on ships
Women at home – when their husband/son/relative was on the ice

- Economic situation
- Support
- In the shadow
Kathleen Scott

- Accomplished artist – often overlooked
- Established in higher society
- Enough financial background after her husband’s death
- Devoted mother – often overlooked
- Later Lady Kennett

Emily Shackleton

- Great supporter of her husband even after his death (biography by Robert Mill 1905)
- Was left with great debt after her husband died (1922)
- Lived in very moderate, sometimes desperate, circumstances
- Devoted mother
- Her ambitions and achievements - often overlooked
Aboriginal Australians as Southern Ocean Mariners
Research by Lynette Russell

Indigenous people excluded from the work force in Australia: Harshest form of discrimination – colonialism

Until **1904** White Australia Policy = White Ocean Policy
The Advertiser, Hobart, 8 March 1905: “….. **designed to protect the employment of white-Australian sailors… the maintenance of the purity of the whole race on this continent (sic!)….. The coloured seamen did not settle on the land – they took the white man’s place at sea.”

After that policy, no Aboriginal people were allowed to work on sealing and whaling ships – **Women were also working on sealing and whaling ships** (knowledge of the sea, animals and much more).

Final thoughts

- Women as wives accompanying their husbands
- Women in traditional gender roles on Antarctic permanent stations/bases – changed over the time
- Women in science – changed massive
- Women today in the Antarctic: scientists, support staff, adventurers, lecturers – 50/50
- However, there is still a long way to go and the appearing issues women have to deal with are only a mirror of our societies – we are not there – yet.
Thank you for your attention!

Me, teaching Antarctic history in the Discovery Hut, 2014