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Motivations for Women's Activism in Hydraulic Fracking

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Introduction

Research Question: What motivates females to become anti-fracking activists?

Hydraulic fracturing is a way of obtaining natural gas and oil from deep within the earth by injecting high powered water and chemicals into shale rock to fracture it, and therefore release natural resources (Manfreda, 2015).

We have seen much activism surrounding the issue of fracking because of the environmental and health controversies associated with it. We have also noted an increasing number of female activists and hope to determine the cause. By understanding what motivates women to become anti-fracking activist we can further encourage female activism in many other spheres.

Source:
Manfred, J. *The origin of fracking actually dates back to the Civil War.*

Study conducted with support of Utah State University Undergraduate Research Fellowship under the direction of Dr. Mehmet Soyer.



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Literature Review

Health, economic, and political impacts concerning fracking:

- Higher instances of cancer, neurological symptoms, birth defects, and a myriad of other health issues (Wilson)
- Boosted economy, more jobs (Mehany)
- Political independence (Margonelli)

Women's activism:

- Females are more likely to support activists, more likely to volunteer and or donate to environmental causes, more likely to lead environmental movements when associated with local communities, and are more concerned than men when it comes to the health and safety of themselves and others regarding environmental hazards. (Caiazza)

Sources

Caiazza, A. and A. Barrett. *Engaging Women in Environmental Activism: Recommendations for Rachel's Network*

Margonelli, Lisa. *Oil on the Brain: Petroleum's Long, Strange Trip to Your Tank*

Mehany M, Guggemos A. *A Literature Survey of the Fracking Economic and Environmental Implications in the United States*

Wilson, S., Sumi, L., Walker, B., and Goldman, J. *Natural Gas Flowback: How the Texas Natural Gas Book Affects Health and Safety*

Methods

- Snowball sampling- using word of mouth and social media
- Semi-structured interviews with 8 women
- Qualitative exploratory analysis
- Links made between experiences and motivating factors of participants.
- Theories derived from patterns, themes, and common categories
- Hypothesis formed to conduct further research

Interview Quotes

"You can only live around something that's not right for so long before you feel the need to stand up and say- you can't complain about it if you don't do something about it so you got to do something about it."

- Research Participant

"I really felt like something has to be done. This is a human rights issue."

- Research Participant

**quotes taken from interviews conducted in Denton, Texas as part of study.*

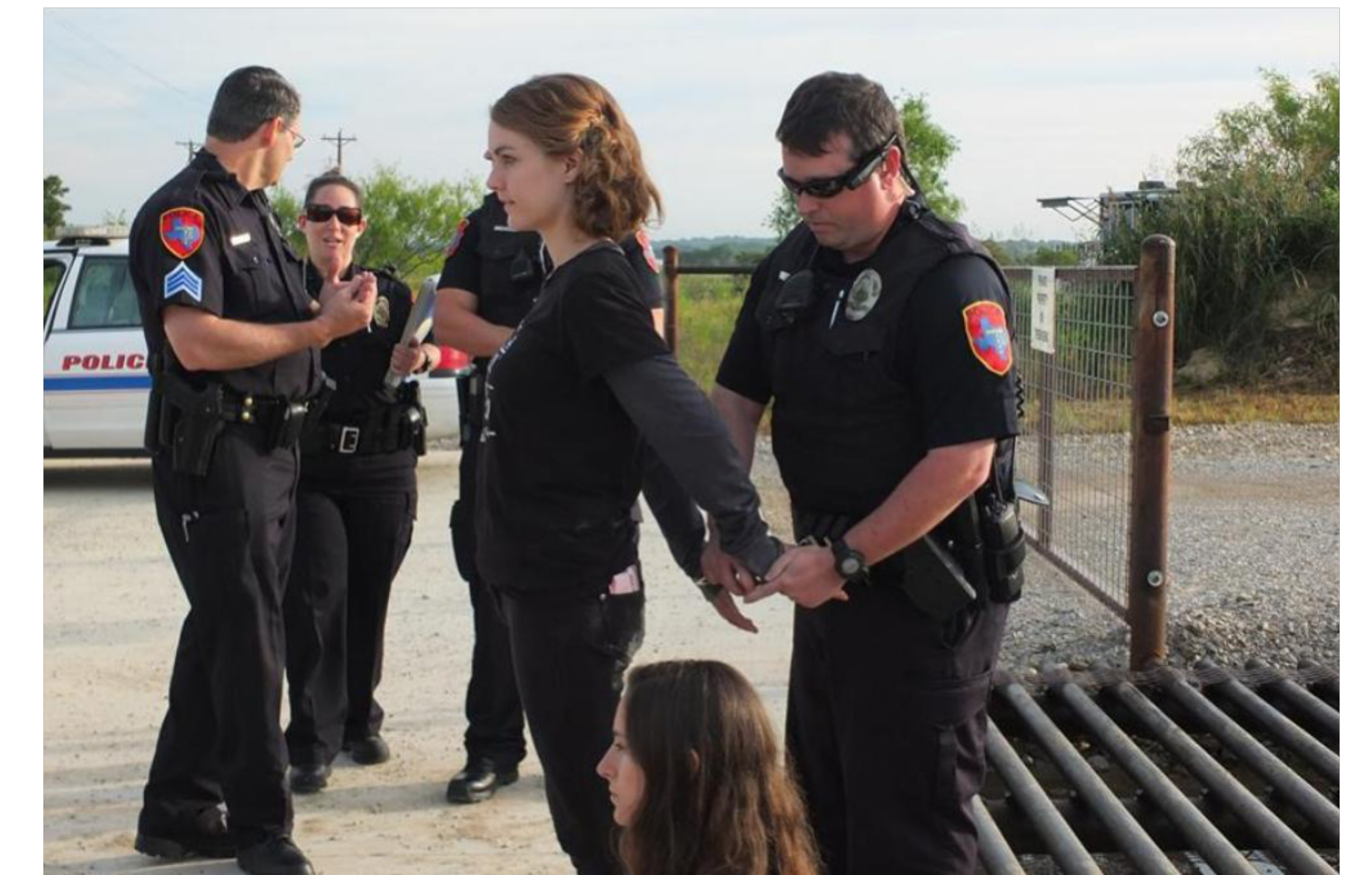


Figure 1- Photo taken during act of civil disobedience; photo subject is an interview participant and member of Frack Free Denton.

Source: Fort Worth Weekly News Roundup June 1, 2015. *Civil Disobedience as a demonstration of activism.*

Conclusions

Our initial findings indicate a pattern of women being motivated to participate in activism due to human related issues.

Knowing that women are more likely to become activists due to human related causes can help us use these motivating factors to persuade more women to advocate for change.

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