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The Battle over Fracking: The Mobilization of Local Residents

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Abstract

In the last decade, the natural gas industry has grown rapidly, and North Texas has become a major shale gas-producing area. This paper studies the power struggle of two rival groups (Frack Free Denton and Denton Tax Payers for a Strong Economy) over fracking in Denton. How did each of these groups challenge the claims-making activities and goals of their adversaries? We conducted data from ten in-depth interviews from each side to compare concerns about fracking. This study focuses on the campaign of the two groups on each side of the debate. We developed the model of merging the theoretical frameworks of value-conflict and social construction of social problems by examining the stages of awareness, policy determination, and reform in the battle over fracking. This project finds that the new theoretical framework model is germane to many features of claims, "claims-makers," and "claims-making activities."

Keywords

Fracking, Grounded Theory, Policy Determination, Social Construction Theory, Stages of Awareness, The Art of Frackivism

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The Battle over Fracking: The Mobilization of Local Residents

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In the last decade, the natural gas industry has grown rapidly, and North Texas has become a major shale gas-producing area. This paper studies the power struggle of two rival groups (Frack Free Denton and Denton Tax Payers for a Strong Economy) over fracking in Denton. How did each of these groups challenge the claims-making activities and goals of their adversaries?" We conducted data from ten in-depth interviews from each side to compare concerns about fracking. This study focuses on the campaign of the two groups on each side of the debate. We developed the model of merging the theoretical frameworks of value-conflict and social construction of social problems by examining the stages of awareness, policy determination, and reform in the battle over fracking. This project finds that the new theoretical framework model is germane to many features of claims," "claims-makers," and "claims-making activities. Keywords: Fracking, Grounded Theory, Policy Determination, Social Construction Theory, Stages of Awareness, The Art of Fracktivism

Introduction

The Barnett Shale in North Texas is one of the largest natural gas fields in the United States. Since Denton County is one of the core counties with active natural gas drilling, the fracking industry has come under greater scrutiny by local activist groups, national environmental groups, oil and gas industry, and State lawmakers. Hydraulic fracturing (Fracking) is a method to extract natural gas in the rock formation. First, fracking wells are drilled vertically about hundreds to thousands of feet below. Then the drill continues horizontally about the feet. To be able to extract the natural gas, fracturing fluid, including water and other chemical additives, are pumped to open fractures in the rock formation. The injection fluid is stored in the tanks before recycling once the infection procedure is completed (EPA, 2018).

We have been lucky to find ourselves at ground-zero of the fracking debate in Denton. When we started this project, the subject matter was local. However, the subsequent power struggle attracted national, even global attention to this small town in north central Texas. The election on November 4th, 2014 made Denton the first city in Texas banning fracking. It became a common expression that the fracking controversy put the city of Denton on the map. The national and international press has also paid great attention to the issue.

Frack Free Denton (FFD)

The Denton Drilling Awareness Group (Denton DAG) is a non-profit organization of citizens who are dedicated to informing the community about the potential threats of fracking on public health, the environment, and real estate values in the city of Denton. Moreover, this

grassroots group introduced a residents' petition to ban hydraulic fracturing within the Denton city limits until the drilling has been proven harmless for environment and public health. The Denton Drilling Awareness Group (DAG) is incorporated as a non-profit educational group acknowledged by the State of Texas.

However, for FFD members, the feeling of accomplishment did not last long. The fracking ban was almost immediately overturned by the state legislature in Austin, Texas. The drilling companies resumed activity in the wells in Denton. Then the anti-fracking passion was reignited and the activists from the FFD group started their struggle once again. Some members even engaged in civil disobedience, blocking one of the well sites. We have seen that the stages of the natural history of social problems can be repeated. Denton residents are displeased with the state law and the reopening of drilling decision. In addition to that, due to health concerns, environmental groups such as FFD, advocates, and scientists disapproved hydraulic fracking. However, they started searching how to send a message to local citizens and how to educate them about the public health concerns pertaining to fracking to curb fracking operations. FFD's main emphasis is direct awareness on the potential negative effects of fracking. FFD arranged to express their voice around schools, public parks, and residential areas to get public support. The power struggle over fracking in Denton has the potential to trigger another phase of Awareness, Policy Determination, and Reform. As of 2018, the FFD activists have not given up. They came together to create the Texas Grassroots Network for the restoration of local control of natural resources.

Review of the Literature

Social Constructionism

The social construction of social problems is a complementary theoretical framework that explains how social phenomena are depicted as social problems through claims-making activities. Social problems are generated through claims-making activities (Best, 1995). The claims-makers construct the social problem (i.e., claim) through claims-making activities that aim at shaping the public perception.

Jones, Hillier, and Comfort (2013) examine about the public perception concerning fracking at United Kingdom. In this study, they argue that local opponent groups were well-mobilized and effectively utilized communication technologies and social media. Their findings demonstrate that the public relations and media outlets had a key role to play in achieving the contending groups (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort 2013).

Julios (2015) utilizes the notion of natural history of a social problem to examine the way in which "honor" killing has become the center of the UK government's policy agenda. In her study, the claims-making activities of the grassroots groups helped the government shape the policy about the "honor" violence. Linton (1991) applies the natural history of the social problems to examine the 1900s when young workers were considered as an official social problem in the Imperial Germany.

Best (1995) defines social problems as developing through the struggles of claims-makers who carry out concerns to public consideration. By characterizing a problem and portraying it as a specific category, claims-makers can form policymaking and civic reaction to the issue.

Theoretical Framework

Value-Conflict Framework: The Stages of Natural History of a Social Problem Awareness

The core of the awareness stage is problem-consciousness: the emergence of awareness of an unofficial and undefined social problem. The core of the awareness stage is problem-consciousness: the emergence of awareness of an unofficial and undefined social problem. The origin of every social problem dwells in the awakening of public in a given neighborhood to a recognition that assured cherished tenets are exposed by circumstances that have turned out to be severe (Fuller & Myers, 1941). The very first spark of awareness is hard to capture; however, as individuals come together for shared values and interests, awareness towards the condition arises. These members of society express their concerns in a measurable and observable form to inform others in the society. The message is that something should be done. However, there is no exact definition of the condition or a solution to the problem. Therefore, the individuals engage in unsynchronized random behaviors and are in a state of protest. The next move of these individuals or groups is to create common value or interest groups. These groups seek to raise consciousness about the potential threat to common values. Official complaints to press and civic authorities take place in order to gain attention to the social problem and move onto the next stage of social problem development (Fuller & Myers, 1941).

Policy Determination

The policy determination stage starts when the debate over policy implications causes a conflict of interest. At this stage, opposing grassroots groups are constructed and each one takes action to reach out and create broader awareness from institutions such as health organizations, police departments, universities, and media.

This stage consists of three interrelated levels (Fuller & Myers, 1941). The first level is discussion by neighbors and other concerned individuals but in unorganized groups. The second level is discussion by interest groups and grassroots groups such as environmental groups, taxpayers, parent-teacher associations, women's clubs, and men's clubs. Finally, there is discussion among specialists and administrators in government or quasi-governmental units: the police departments, health officials, city council, social workers, and school boards. Therefore, these three interrelated stages characterize the dynamics of policy determination (Fuller & Myers, 1941).

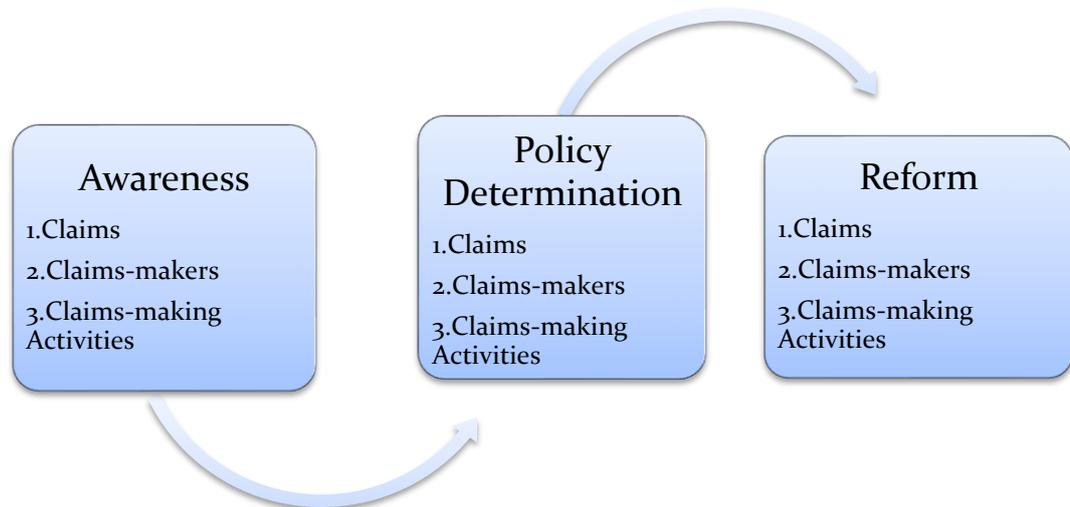
Reform

The last phase of the natural history of a social problem is reform. In the previous phase, the policy plan is developed and became the action plan. Now the action is under the administrators' responsibility. The action has two sides though; one is the public stage and the second one is the private stage. Since action is exercised to protect the shared values of one or more parties, general policies of the specific social problem have been discussed and described by interest groups and experts. In addition, there is still a probability of complicated legal issues to be cleared out before the action can be applied (Fuller & Myers, 1941).

In this phase, Fuller and Myers (1941) state that policy inquiries may be removed from the hands of the administrators whenever the general community cognizes its controls of censorship, rejection or vote. The emphasis is on the fact that this and that are being done. Institutionalization of the social problem makes this stage unique. Now that the policies are initiated by authorized policy enforcement agencies, the public agencies may prove to be

sufficient or new agencies can be necessary in the face of another social problem. Fuller and Myers (1941) point out that, theoretically speaking, each stage marks itself off of its predecessor. However, it doesn't mean that the stages cannot coexist. The stages are not mutually exclusive; therefore, the development of the social problem can contain characteristics of each stage at any specific time.

Figure 1: Soyer – Ziyanak's Stages of a Social Problem Model



In this theoretical framework, there are transitory stages in the natural history of a social problem. Transitory stages are not pre-determined. In other words, there are no guarantees that a social problem will move from the first to the second, or from the second to the third stage. It will continue if the parties can mobilize enough resources to push the process to the next stage. Therefore, the continuation of the process is contingent upon the longevity of the power of claims-makers.

Fracking

Brasier et al. (2011) found out that wealth creation, job creation, increased business activity, and tax revenue are the four positive local economic impacts of natural gas drilling. Yet they also underline that residents experience community dissatisfaction and feelings of alienation (Brasier et al., 2011). In the case of fracking in Denton, the issue is constructed as a community-level health threat. Gullion's (2015) study states the following:

There is a flurry of discursive practice after the identification of the object of harm. The response from governmental officials is either minimal or confusing. Perceptions of the event vary, and risky is disputed. Grassroots activity responds to the threat in some manner. Talismans are used to help mitigate the risk. (p. 175)

Some sources focus on the impacts of environmental health problems from fracking. As reported by a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in Colorado, there are eight environment-related health issues. These are air emissions, water contamination, truck traffic, noise and light pollution, accidents and malfunctions, strain on health care systems, psychosocial stress associated with community changes, and housing value depression (Witter et al., 2013). Moreover, some studies emphasized the possible air and water pollution impacts of gas drilling

(Gullion et al., 2011; Rabe & Borick, 2011). In this report, residents in Flower Mound, TX expressed their concerns that benzene contamination in the air as a result of fracking was causing cancer.

In the case of fracking in Denton, the first place to experience the controversy about fracking was Robson Ranch area, called an active adult luxury retirement community. Interestingly, gas companies built social facilities to attract people of the neighborhood. Most of the drilling was taking place in the western parts of the city of Denton that were still rural and sparsely populated. However, even here some residents from the neighborhood along with dozens of doctors from the hospital near the drilling sites signed a petition declaring their objection to the project (Briggle, 2015).

The first and second author were both enrolled in a doctoral course in Denton. The first author also lived in Denton for two years. The fracking issue was exceedingly affecting media, Denton citizens, and social researchers. We believe that this is one of the most interesting subjects to engage. However, we would attempt to offer boarder and more impartial view of this significant issue since many things about what has been purported against flacking we have had with the negative view. We would like to simply point that we personally see this study as an opportunity to demonstrate all the questions and concerns from the both sides. Thus, unlike previous studies, the researchers' emphasis is on the campaign of the two grassroots groups on each side of the debate. In this study, our goals are to explore the way in which campaign advocates from each contending groups constructed fracking for the public. Emerging from the actual experiences of the researchers and local people in Denton, the power struggle of two grassroots groups will maintain their conflict from each other. When we started this project, the subject matter was local. However, the subsequent power struggle attracted national, even global attention to this small town in North Central Texas.

Research Questions

1. How did campaign advocates from "Frack Free Denton" and "Denton Tax Payers for Strong Economy" construct fracking in general?
2. How did each of these groups challenge the claims-making activities and goals of their adversaries?

Methodology

Data

In this study, we selected grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) on the power struggle of two grassroots groups (Frack Free Denton and Denton Tax Payers for a Strong Economy) over fracking in Denton since it is a dominant methodological approach for this research. Our goal is to employ grounded theory to look for a theory that is methodically linked with the fracking as a social problem. To be able to explain this phenomenon, the researchers collected data from in-depth interviews, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and campaign advertisements. Since the election resulted in a fracking ban in Denton, we assume that anti-fracking grassroots group reached out to the citizens to generate local consciousness of constructing fracking as a social problem.

Participant Protection

We received IRB approval from Texas Woman's University and we followed IRB standards and ethics. We recruited interview participants through snowball sampling alongside

social media platforms (e.g., Facebook). If the interview was face-to-face, we provided an informational sheet to interviewee. If the participant agreed to the terms of the interview, we scheduled an interview, either at that time or at a later date, depending on the availability and convenience of the interviewee.

Participants felt more comfortable to meet in public spaces (e.g., local coffee shops) for an interview. In order to address participant's privacy, we surely selected a spot that was sufficiently far away from other individuals to ensure that interviews were not overheard. We asked each participants consent for the audio recording of the interview. We also informed them if they refuse to be recorded, we will take notes through interview. However, all participants consented for the audio recording. We recorded 20 interviews for this research. After the interviews, the researchers reiterated that both researchers and interviewees reviewed the consent form that he/she has agreed to be recorded. At the end of the interview, we asked the interviewees if they have any questions.

Participants

The researcher interviewed ten participants from DTPSE and ten participants from FFD. All participants (10) from DTPSE are male. These include three mineral owners (leaders at DTPSE), two previous mayor, one gas company owner, two retired residents, one lawyer, and one oil and gas attorney. Four participants from FFD group were female. The participants included four leaders from FFD group one professor at the one of the local University, one retired professor, one nurse, one working for Earthworks employer, one documentary director, two vocalists, one sculpture artist, one local business owner, and one student from Socialist Student Association.

Sampling

We interviewed with campaign supporters from Frack Free Denton (10) and Denton Tax Payers for a Strong Economy (10) Researchers conducted interviews in April 2015. The interviews are in-depth and semi-structured. Some of the questions are: When and how did you hear about fracking? What kind of venues do you/your movement use to reach out local citizens about Fracking? (Social media, newspapers, flyers, face-to-face meetings, TV, Radio, Letter Campaigns to Legislators, Door to Door, media, YouTube, Billboards) How do you frame fracking issue to persuade Denton citizens? How would you define your Volunteer activities, campaign responsibilities?

Data Analysis

Back in the office, the audio recordings were transferred into transcript and subsequently erased from the recorder, all the relevant date was deleted and purged from the computer. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. We were guided by the coding steps (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Jotted notes in the data sheet were organized as field notes. All collected data were coded into the three main categories. However, the constant comparison of data enlarged the focus of the analysis.

Coding started with open coding in order to code data according to preliminary characteristics. In this technique, we inspected our documentation created from interviews by concentrating on fracking, the claim making activities, and the goals of Frack Free Denton and Denton Tax Payers For Strong Economy. Axial coding followed the open coding by selecting key concepts leading to the research topic. Some of the initial codes that appeared from the open coding course were property rights or human rights, news advertisement, blog entries,

websites, puppet show, and kids in action, all these codes generated to the category claims making activity. In order to select the key concepts, we examined all the evidences carefully and we organized the codes based on frequent themes. These themes developed key candidates for common categories that is linked to number of associated codes. Selective coding completed the coding. Mapping, as a third stage of the analysis of the organized data, helped the researchers see all collected data in a logical order (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Findings and Discussion

A review concerning the fracking controversy will be helpful to understand how these grassroots groups (gas drilling companies, environmental entities, etc.) are grounded on their side of the controversy.

The claims-makers of this study are the interviewees of opposing groups, which are referred as the FFD and the DTPSE. The claims-making activities will be embedded in the aforementioned stages of development of a social problem. Due to the overlapping nature of the stages, they could not be specified individually in every case.

Research Question 1

The first question was “How did campaign advocates from ‘Frack Free Denton’ and ‘Denton Tax Payers for Strong Economy’ construct fracking in general?” The groups constructed their claims in the lens of human rights or property rights. The values of both groups are divergent since their interests are different. FFD’s drive has been the environmental causes, whereas DTPSE’s motivation is the economic advantages. Therefore, they discussed the environmental influence and whether fracking contributes to local economy in Denton. Unlike DTPSE, FFD states that fracking industry’s contribution to local economy is negligible. The contending groups construct their social realities from different angles. Therefore, both groups create their claims and claims-making activities accordingly. As a result, DTPSE group interviewees did not concentrate on public health concerns. They insisted that there are no harmful effects of fracking on public health since fracking companies apply advanced technology to frack. However, some companies may not play by the game rules. That’s why some explosions and other accidents occur.

In contrast to DTFSE, FFD group states fracking causes environmental harm. The claims from FFD group are grounded on the potential hazards of fracking process. However, DTPSE group claims that there is no scientific proof to demonstrate that environmental problems are because of fracking. Nonetheless, FFD asserts that water becomes contaminated because of fracking. Another claim that supports the environmental issues is air pollution. Climate change controversy is another issue indicated by the FFD participants. Each group engaged in claims-making activities to make their claims heard in public. Both groups choose the accusatory language as their claims as well.

One of the major claims is that DTPSE group indicates FFD activists engage in unlawful and immoral actions, such as stealing, painting or re-wording DTPSE’s signs. Next, some members of FFD depicted as radical left environmentalists.

PRO-FRACK CASE 1: They would call in, ask for a sign, we’d go take it and put it in. Now we had to do several of them a lot because they kept stealing them. Oh we got attacked by a few of them on Facebook. One guy that kept sending me personal messages. To tell you the truth I didn’t even reply to him. I’m not going to lower myself that low. If that gets you going. If that gets you

off to act that way, then so be it. Oh, we got some dirty ass mail, but we have thrown it away. Where we did our mail outs and the flyer would go out?

DTPSE perceives FFD group as against for all kinds of drilling and even for fossil fuel. There is also criticism among FFD members that FFD advisory board should embrace more diversity in their decision-making process. Corruption is another claim that has been pointed out several times in the interviews. DTPSE indicated that one of the reasons for passing the ban is the presence of university students in Denton.

Research Question 2

The second question was “How did each of these groups challenge the claims-making activities and goals of their adversaries?” Claims-making activities are drawn from the in-depth interviews as well. FFD group recruited volunteers from locals in Denton to accomplish their goals during the campaign. On the other hand, DTPSE worked with a private PR company in order to raise awareness during this stage. PR Company intern hired advocates for the DTPSE cause. The claims-making activities of FFD outnumbered the DTPSE’s activities. This may explain the victory of FFD in the campaign. DTPSE has more sources, has hired PR Company, yet they lose. This validates social construction of social problem in which preponderance of claims-making activities foreshadows the outcome of the campaign. The claims-makers as FFD and DTPSE participate in the claims-making activities to construct their claims about fracking.

In awareness stage, DTPSE also made activities to promote the awareness of pro-fracking atmosphere. In their campaign activities, they worked with the private PR Company. All the campaign work is done by the PR Company. We sent e-mails to request an interview from the PR Company concerning the campaign details. However, they did not grant an interview. Unlike the volunteers of FFD, the campaign workers of DTPSE are all paid. The claims-making activities in this stage are all reflected in the respective group’s website, billboards and newspaper ads, information booth, yard sign, TV ads, support letters from prominent locals, ads during games at Cowboy Stadium. In policy determination stage, DTPSE also engaged in claims-making activities to be part of the policy making stage. The claims-making activities in this stage are letters to the editor, panels, participating in city council meetings, petition booth. In reform stage, DTPSE didn’t engage in any claims-making activities as a group. Instead, the oil and gas corps engaged in claims-making activities such as lobbying at Austin to pass HB40 bill. Definition of HB40 bill is that particularly prevents the regulation of oil and gas operations by municipalities and other political subdivisions.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 1: Our city attorney went to Austin and spoke against a bill that was going to take away- she spoke against the bill that was going to say, “If any city wants to do a fracking ban, they have to get that approved by the Attorney General first.” So that means [inaudible]. She spoke on Monday and she was eloquent. She made me very proud, she said exactly “Democracy is not convenient, but you still have to allow it.

Claims-Making Activities

Claims-making activities are drawn from the interviews. The Frack Free Denton group outnumbered the Denton Taxpayers for a Strong Economy group’s activities. The FFD group recruited volunteers from local citizens to accomplish their goals during the campaign. On the other hand, the DTPSE worked with a private PR company in order to raise awareness during this stage.

Awareness Stage-Frack Free Denton

In awareness stage, FFD organized several activities to raise awareness. The claims-making activities in this stage are as follows: canvassing, demonstration, information booth, websites, blog entries, Facebook, puppet shows, flash mob dance shows, media outlets (e.g., concert, documentary, YouTube), kids in action, yard sign, and billboards. In the policy determination stage, FFD engaged in activities to construct the ordinance about fracking to make fracking safe to Denton. The claims-making activities in this stage include letters to the editor, panels, city council meetings, and mic checks in the city council meetings. In the reform stage, FFD participated in activities to make pressure on elected officials and to inform the locals about the current development about fracking. The claims-making activities in this stage are as follows: phone calling officials and bus trip to Austin.

To raise social problem awareness, the FFD group used various venues to reach out to local residents and explain their cause during the awareness stage. These venues are canvassing, demonstration, websites, block entries, Facebook, yard signs and billboards, puppet shows, flash mob dance shows, media outlets, and kids in action.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 4: One of our first venues, well we had the signing party at Sweetwater Grill which is a place that's very popular in Denton. Then we went to the Mardi Gras party. We went to Churches, we had Gas Land movie showings, we set-up on the Square, just set-up. Puppet shows, music events, all kinds of things like that.

Canvassing

The FFD group knocked on 90% of the doors in Denton with the help of volunteers. The leaders of FFD prepared literature to hand out. Volunteers were trained to use talking points during their canvassing. They also had maps with the exact location of houses they needed to visit. The volunteers were wearing "I live in Denton and We're not getting paid" stickers. In terms of awareness stage, one of the main approaches to convey their messages is canvassing. Canvassing is to inform neighbors concerning their claims and claims activities in local area by visiting each resident's house.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 6: ... They would knock every single door on that block, talk to their neighborhoods, say, "Hi, I'm your Frack Free Denton. This is what fracking is. Here's some materials.

Demonstration

The FFD group mobilized locals to protest HB40 rules restricting local control. In these demonstrations, volunteers carried posters and banners. Moreover, some volunteers presented their art works to show their stance against fracking.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 7: ...I tried running to bring that forward and that's just the way of doing it. My deal was my degree of activism would be I will walk. That's the key point. Everybody's got a place and they grab it and take it. As long as we diversify we have a better chance to conquer.

Websites

Frack Free Denton owns an operational website: www.frackfreedenton.com. The claims and counter-claims are presented in this website. The website is frequently updated. The local websites are also intensely used to disseminate the awareness of claims and claims activities by FFD activist and volunteers. This venue is another important way to communicate and recruit local residents into their community fracking concern.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 2: I'm on a web-based neighborhood communication site and during the campaign, it was very active site. A lot of people didn't want us talking about it, but we kept talking about it anyway, because that's part of the whole set-up and the communication site is that you're to discuss things that have an impact on your community.

It is noteworthy that one of the interviewees owns a website to inform people about fracking and the hits are around 2.5 million. The website address is www.texasharon.com.

Blog Entries

Some of the FFD volunteers engaged in writing their reflections regarding the fracking issue in their blogs, sharing the photos and videos, and posting their blog entries on their Facebook and Twitter account to spread the word. To raise awareness, volunteers and activists used social media including opening blogs to have a unified local voice against fracking.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 3: To me, social media is the big one. So I meant a blog. I used to have my own blog, Denton Drilling and then as the campaign heated up for the ban, I felt the need for us to speak more in unified voice and have sort of one platform so I switch my blogging over to Frack Free Denton and so I got lots of blogs automatically, yeah feel free to move stuff around.

Facebook

The FFD group actively used Facebook to share information. More than 9500 people followed their pages. The FFD group announces events and posts updates in this account. To raise awareness, volunteers and activists employed Facebook to distribute their communication via postings of activity fliers, poll watching, providing memes, and their every upcoming social activity.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 8: Did a lot of advance help with social media like sharing stories on Facebook and creating little memes and stuff and posting online Facebook. And then also just getting the word out by mouth and telling whoever would listen about the Frack Free Denton campaign. And then right-up at the election, we were doing a lot of the poll watching and I guess not really poll watching but you know, handing out fliers at the polls.

Yard Signs and Billboards

The FFD group distributed yard signs to whoever wanted to display them. Moreover, FFD volunteers asked locals in Denton if they would like to have yard sign to show their support while doing canvassing.

The Art of “Fracktivism”

Puppet show: The FFD group utilized the universal language of arts to reach out to the locals. The FFD group made their claims through puppet show to reach out kids and families to promote awareness in the city of Denton.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 5: ...includes the families and otherwise and it sucks when families have to get somebody to take care of their kids so that they can go participate in politics. She described music as a universal language that can appeal to all ages and that puppets can appeal to all ages. It’s good because they educate everyone, the opposite of that would be things that are locked in to really academic jargon, buried in the papers. You can’t expect everybody in Denton to read a dissertation, but you could get them all to watch a puppet show.

Flash mob dance show: To promote awareness and to facilitate a meaningful debate on the fracking issue, two dance professors from Texas Woman University coordinated a flash mob dance to demonstrate: banning fracking.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 8: Basically, like an improvisational dance routine that’s some of the TWU dance professors. They were the ones that coordinated that.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 6: We had on the Flash Mobs. For that, we had R. but we also had there is this other Lady who did the dance. Her name is SG. SG, she is also a professional TWU. She’s a dance professor.

Media outlets: *Music, documentary, YouTube.* FFD group actively utilized the media outlets. They organized a concert for fund raising and also to raise social problem consciousness. Brave Combo, a Grammy award winner and nationally recognized band that is located in Denton, composed a song about fracking called “No Fracking Way.”

ANTI-FRACK CASE 2: Brave Combo is a local band who had been together for 30 year and they started as a garage band, we call them. They’re just a bunch of kids playing together. And then, won two Grammy’s and they are like a V-band from Denton.

One of the volunteers of FFD group prepared the frackettes video, hits of 21,000, and a famous environmental activist, Erin Brockovich, shared it on her Facebook page. The video can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MD5r8WGYAug>

Kids in action: FFD organized family friendly events to reach out to children of the city to inform local families in the awareness stage of claims making activities. One of the activities was painting yard signs and drawing pictures about fracking.

ANTI-FRACK: CASE 6: A drawing made of one of the children from the neighborhood was one of the first thing we ever put on the Frack Free Denton website. And it said, on one side it was bright and cherry and it said, Denton without fracking, and the other side was dark, the home was cracked and it said, Denton with fracking. Those kind of ideas like that, I think, they do, they tell of it’s I don’t know and yet it is very important to see the way children see it.

Policy Determination-Frack Free Denton

During the policy determination stage, focusing on “what should be done” and proposing solutions to the social problem, the FFD group used several venues to reach out to the public figures, authorities, community leaders, and local politicians in order to shape the ordinance of the fracking regulation and to discuss the petition. A quote from one of the interviews summarizes the whole stage pretty well.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 3: They were planning in making a park there and somebody told us about the gas wells are going in and no idea what they are talking about so I went down to a protest at city hall because we had heard about it and it was mostly just the educate ourselves and talk to people. And they were protesting those wells and I started to learn about on my own a bit what fracking is this is before gas lane came out. All right so I think it was all there. It wasn't on the national consciousness here and so it was about a year later that KR who was newly like the city council member came here and approaches me and others at the former center for the studies and the disciplinary, which used to exist here and the UNT but they defunded it recently. And he said look, we are revising our ordinance. This is an interdisciplinary issue you know it's engineering, its science, its law, its ethics, it's all of the stuff mixed together. Would you like to form a grass roots shadow advisory commission, that's the way he put it, unofficial but the city had formed an official task force which they have majority industry members on it and Kevin said, we need more of a counter balance from citizen perspective. So that's how I got really officially involved. I mean our group was unofficial by grass root really involved was through him coming to me and that was a birth of what we called then the Denton's, they called Drilling Advisory Group DAG.

Protest During City Council Meeting

In the course of the policy determination stage, another emphasis is on “what should be done” to deliver the message to the authorities and local politicians in order to form the ordinance of the fracking regulation. During one of the city council meetings, the activists protested the current regulation of fracking. The protesters asserted that the fracking in Denton polluted our environment.

ANTI-FRACK CASE 5: ...Media is the one thing that I can really do but prior to that, my role was not very big but I would participate in the demonstrations, I would show up city council meetings, there was a YouTube video that I made a long time ago when Occupy Denton, mic checked the city council. I don't know if you are familiar with that strategy. You have to have permission to get the microphone but if you all work together, you can overpower that and you could get your message out so even though the city council has the microphone after they made their decision to drag their feet or whatever they do, somebody yells mic check and that means get ready we're about to do this, so mic check and then everybody else yells mic check and then one person shouts basically a message.

Social Media Campaign

The FFD group organized social media campaigns for local control. The volunteers created hash tags such as [#ProtectLocalControl](#). They encouraged their followers to tweet and share a photo of a sign stating why protecting local control is important. They urged their followers to reach out to the local representatives and the local media sources to help spread the word. They continued to create hash tags such as [#ProtectLocalControl](#), [#StandWithDenton](#), [#StopHB40](#), [#Stop1165](#), [#DefendDemocracy](#), [#frackfreedenton](#).

Raising Fracking Consciousness for Kids

One of the oil and gas companies made a coloring book about fracking for kids. They made claims about how fracking is safe for our environment. The oil company supported DTPSE. The sample screenshot of the paint book is below.

Mails

One of the campaign strategies was to send informative mail to local residents. The ads in the Denton Record Chronicle and the mailing materials were similar. Since the mailing brochures are expensive, FFD advocates did not use mailing as a strategy to reach out locals. Instead, they were knocking doors to hand their informational brochures to the locals. Table 1 illustrates the claiming activities in each state.

Table 1. Claims-making activities embedded in stages

<i>Claims-making Activities</i>		
<i>Stages</i>	<i>FFD</i>	<i>DTPSE</i>
<i>Awareness</i>	Canvassing Information Booth Websites Blog Entries Facebook Pages Puppet Shows Flash Mob Dance Show Letters to the Editor Concert Kids in Action Yard Signs Demonstration Mails Panels Billboards	Hiring a PR Company Billboards Yard Signs Information Booths Ads at YouTube TV ads Panel Presentation Mailings Raising Fracking Consciousness for Kids Letters to the Editor
<i>Policy Determination</i>	Attending City Council Meeting Petition Drive Letter to the Editor Protest at City Council News Ads	Attending City Council Meeting Petition Drive Letters to the Editor News Ads
<i>Reform</i>	Calling Politicians Social Media Campaign Bus Trip to Austin	No activity

Table 1 lists the claims-making activities that the two contending groups engaged in throughout the stages. In accordance with the claims, the claims-making activities were higher in numbers for the FFD. The table shows that the groups have both engaged in some activities; however, the quantities were different for each group. For example, both groups have attended city council meetings. However, DTPSE rarely attended the public hearings, while FFD has been present most of the time. FFD volunteers took the platform and mentioned their concerns repeatedly.

Conclusion

The emergence of each of the three stages in the natural history of social problems is dependent on the power, numbers, and longevity of claims-makers. Without sufficient and efficient claims-making, there is no assurance that a social problem will move from the first (awareness) stage to the second (policy determination) stage or from the second to the third (reform) stage.

The findings represent an exploration of how anti-fracking and pro-fracking groups engaged in a power struggle over fracking in Denton, TX. Lemert's findings show that public officials received complaints in Oakland against trailer camp problems from only individual awareness level (Lemert, 1951). However, in terms of an awareness of social problem, there was no organized public opinion neither generated nor channeled through the media (Lemert, 1951). Although Lemert studied the natural history concept from the viewpoint of its applicability to the trailer camp problem in California communities by following the theoretical scheme stated by Fuller and Myers, this research was the first to contribute to filling part of the gap in information on the propaganda activities of two rival groups as claims-makers. The major claims are identified with the analyses of the in-depth interviews, which explored the claims of each group in greater detail. The major claims are discussed through the stages of awareness, policy determination, and reform.

FFD made a greater number of claims. Second, FFD efficiently rebutted DTPSE's claims with its counter claims. Third, FFD did more numerous local volunteers than DTPSE, which mobilized paid volunteers for its cause. Fourth, FFD had a greater number of claims-making activities than DTPSE. Fifth, the FFD claims-making activities were enhanced by artistic and creative events such as a puppet show, concert, and sculpture. DTPSE used traditional venues of claims-making activities. Sixth, FFD's grassroots and local lobbying overshadowed the DTPSE's effort. Seventh, FFD utilized DRC more effectively than DTPSE. Despite the local newspaper's editorial support for fracking, FFD was able to capture the DRC's audience without advertising and through activities such as letters to the editor, press releases, guest columns and arranging newsworthy local events that were covered by DRC.

DTPSE has had 10 times more funding for the activities than FFD. Moreover, both groups have pronounced FFD as the successful ally in running the campaign. FFD has been successful in their claims and claims-making activities by winning the election with the help of campaign volunteers. This clarifies the victory of FFD.

In this research, we met several limitations associated to generalizability, data collection process, and potential bias. Due to the nature of qualitative research, the findings of this research in Denton cannot be readily generalized to other locations. Moreover, the results may be different in other cities. Also, the fracking issue may not be generalizable across other states or countries. We collected the data at one point in time during April 2015, and our findings in this study may not detect the changes over time. In addition, sample size and a possible selection bias constitute the other limitations. The researchers' cultural and ethnic differences can be another limitation. Due to lack of trust, participants may not reveal their answers with complete accuracy during the interviews. Finally, since one newspaper was the

only traditional media source in this study, it did not include other forms of media such as radio, magazines, television, or even other newspapers.

We contribute a more comprehensive understanding of value-conflict and social construction theories. We also believe that this study will guide community leaders over the fracking issue that will remain ongoing for many years.

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