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### **Abstract**

*Critical criminology will be applied to a discussion of environmental responsibility and the proposed controversial practice of 'fracking'. First, Green Criminology is discussed, as it seeks to re-direct the traditional focus of criminology onto patterns of crime and forms of criminality often marginalised by dominant research agendas and discourses. Green Criminology seeks to examine behaviours and actions that may not necessarily be deemed criminal, but can potentially or actually cause social and environmental harm. Links will be made throughout between environmental issues, economic development and social and environmental justice. Another key feature of Green Criminology is the way in which it seeks to align with environmental activism, and an account will be given here of ethnographic research into a contemporary environmental protest movement, the 'anti-fracking' movement. In relation to this movement and its potentiality, there will be a particular focus on what is known as active social learning and the ways in which community views can be formalised in order to facilitate a dialogical relationship with representative structures. In the context of environmental responsibility, the case for active social learning as a critical pedagogy is the need to find ways of interacting that bring about necessary changes in situations where there is much we don't know and need interactions with others to find out, with an emphasis on the co-creation of knowledge. This can be seen as vital for the development and success of social/environmental and political movements, as well as for creating and preserving the conditions for genuine participatory democracy.*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Active Social Learning and Social Justice**

The central argument presented here is for active social learning towards environmental and social justice, in the context of the drive and systemic imperatives of the present neo-liberal government, corporations, public institutions and other vested interests to embrace the practice of hydraulic

fracturing or 'fracking', with its potential for manufacturing environmental risks and harms. There are many different ways of conceptualising social learning, which is a key term used in this paper. Here the concept is operationalised in a similar way to that of Harold Glasser (2007) and refers to successful learning as an exploratory, interactive, collaborative, collective and deliberative process that is located in a social context. Glasser refers to both passive and active social learning: "Passive social learning, by individuals and collectives, rests on the prior learning of others", whereas active social learning requires "inputs in the form of communication or interaction – direct feedback – from other living beings" (Glasser, 2007, p.49). In this sense, active social learning can potentially involve the co-creation and development of counter-hegemonic narratives that challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and values, though of course it can also generate actions and behaviour that are socially and environmentally harmful or ineffective. With this in mind, it is important to take a critical approach to active social learning and this paper is critical, as well as supportive, of the anti-fracking movement in terms of its prospects, potentiality and effectiveness. The paper seeks to theorize and rethink the political, as the plural space in which active social learning can take place, by drawing upon the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt (1968). The anti-fracking movement can be situated in the rich tradition of environmental protest and activism that has significantly, though not exclusively, involved women, and can be seen to be informed by eco-feminist concerns (Dietz, 1985); without its members necessarily self-identifying as eco-feminists. It is argued here that Arendt's political thought offers a useful resource for critiquing the focus of eco-feminism on maternal care as the basis for a more ethical polity, while at the same time neglecting its useful contribution to environmental justice and responsibility. The paper concludes that the radical discourse of feminist ecological citizenship offers perhaps the best approach to understanding and challenging environmental and social injustice, as it combines an emphasis on the 'political' as the open, plural space in which the actions of citizens and multiple-stakeholders intersect, with an appreciation of the contribution of ecofeminism, thereby bringing together a 'politics of care' with a politics based upon mutual support and the kind of democratic, egalitarian relationships championed by Arendt.

## **1.2 Active social learning and environmental responsibility**

There can be seen to be a link between environmental responsibility and active social learning. The argument of active social learning is that people learn in a social context and through interacting with others. In the context of environmental responsibility, the case for social learning is the need to find ways of interacting that bring about necessary changes in situations where there is much we do not know and need interactions with others to find out – this is a highly dynamic process involving different stakeholders at different levels, and the research sought to gain, through situational analysis, a spatial-temporal snapshot of the anti-fracking movement as an organic political movement at a particular, transient moment and juncture. Social learning can work alongside legislative, educational and market-based instruments of policy. The 'social' in interactive learning refers to the collective and collaborative process that can take place between interdependent stakeholders, given proper facilitation, institutional support and a conducive policy environment. The processes, which also act as ways of observing and evaluating social learning, would involve mutual respect between stakeholders, agreement on concerted action, the co-creation of knowledge needed to understand issues and practices (activists becoming 'experts'), and changes in behaviours, norms and procedures as a result of joint fact-finding and participatory interpretation of the situation. The social interactions, inherent in the research, can be seen as framing and re-framing knowledge in an open society, and can be seen as reflecting the pedagogies of, amongst others: Paulo Friere (1970), who explored learning through dialogue and informal interaction'; Donald Schon (1995), who discussed 'the learning society'; and finally Ivan Illich

in his book “De-schooling Society” (1972), which argued for the need to de-institutionalise society and democratise learning.

It may at this juncture be worth providing examples of the two research traditions of first-order and second-order change in the context of environmental responsibility. In the case of first-order change, there can be seen to be little attention given to wider issues and social learning, instead an instrumentalist approach to social and environmental development is adopted, often based upon economic rationality, corporate and business interests, and involving limited stakeholders and the top-down imposition of policies and practices. To illustrate this by example, a first order approach would seek to build a new power plant that uses fossil fuels more efficiently than an old power station in order to meet an increasing demand for electricity – here interactions can appear to be heavily constrained by their socio-economic and political context. On the other hand, social learning theory, as a feature of a second-order approach, would seek to challenge the assumption that a new power plant should continue along the lines of the existing ones, or whether there is a need for the power plant at all – this could take place by using alternative, renewable energy sources. This second-order thinking examines wider issues, for example taking account of the possible effects of toxic waste in regional, national and international contexts.

This approach would involve a wide variety of stakeholders, with policies challenged and policy-making informed by local-level activities. It is likely to be a more dynamic process, aiming for concerted action amongst multiple-participants, and entailing inclusive practice and consultation with relevant stakeholders, including teachers/lecturers, students and the wider community. It is important to indicate that this is not an either-or situation, that it is not a question of using either a first order or a second order approach – both can be used, but arguably there is a gulf between the two. Increasingly, in the fracking issue and debate, there can be seen to be a distance between, on the one hand, first order institutions operating on a technical high ground and making unilateral decisions, and on the other, the subjects of this research, operating in a ‘swampy’, socially relevant lowland (Schon, 1995), research which did not take place 'on' others but rather 'with' others, in a relational context (Wadsworth, 1997). It was found that the anti-fracking movement, as an initially localised and perhaps parochial social movement, offers the promise of bridging the potential chasm between first- and second order approaches, the local and the global. The movement also presents the opportunity for grounding theory, policy and practice in experiential knowledge and moving towards a more caring, democratic, open society with genuine widening of participation. The anti-fracking movement arguably offers an opportunity for more active social learning and active citizenship in the fullest sense – whether this opportunity will be fully realised remains unanswered.

### **1.3 Green Criminology and Fracking**

A relevant feature of critical criminology and its subject matter is that it seeks to broaden the scope of analysis beyond the traditional, mainstream focus of criminology to a consideration of harm rather than crime, social justice rather than criminal justice. It endeavours to apply critical analysis to the 'discipline' of criminology, the study of crime, and the administration of criminal justice. The focus here is on a still largely emergent, evolving discipline and critical criminological discourse, namely Green Criminology. Firstly, it is perhaps important to define what Green Criminology is, as it seeks to move beyond and to re-direct the traditional focus

of criminology onto patterns of crime and forms of criminality not seen as problematic according to dominant definitions. Green criminology can be seen as a zemiological or harm perspective, examining behaviours and actions that may not necessarily be deemed criminal, but can potentially or actually cause social and environmental harm, with the belief that the social and natural world are inextricably linked (Ruggiero and South, 2010). In this sense, Green Criminology is a form of transgressive criminology that shifts the criminological gaze beyond legal and state definitions of injurious practices and behaviours. The whole debate around hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking”, has become a cause for public concern and a key electoral issue, with the Guardian Newspaper launching a campaign in 2015 to encourage corporations and public institutions to divest from fossil fuels and invest in the renewable sector in order to tackle climate change. The issue can be seen as connecting local and global concerns, with particular regional significance for the North West of England and Lancashire - the debate being focussed on the possible environmental, economic and social implications, should the practice be given the go-ahead.

Green Criminology involves interdisciplinary scholarship and contains various theories and perspectives on the nature and scope of environmental crimes and harms which can be applied to the substantive topic of fracking. These theories and perspectives, many coming from critical criminological traditions, include eco-feminism, social constructionism, feminist ecological citizenship, neo-Marxism and social ecology, which are all associated with addressing questions of environmental responsibility. It is argued that the fracking issue raises questions around citizenship and democracy, the right for local communities to self-determine, participate in the decision making process and develop active social learning. The practice and behaviour of fracking can also be seen to constitute a potential eco-crime, in that it could potentially lead to environmental harm and social and ecological degradation. There is a growing realisation that the State, private corporations and public institutions are decided upon pursuing a technology that presents a potential risk to health and water supply, and this is acting to make previously largely apolitical people aware of the effects of global capitalism. Beck (1999), in his 'Risk Society' thesis, stated that 'smog is democratic', meaning that environmental risks and harms are not stratified, but affect people equally, regardless of class, gender, ethnicity or geography. However, it can be argued that the potential risks and harms of fracking are unevenly distributed, both socially and geographically, and that it is often ethnic minorities, the poor and women who are victimised by corporate and state activities that damage the environment.

#### **1.4 Teaching, Research and Political Activism**

The BA Criminology and Criminology Justice programme at Blackpool and The Fylde College, an associate college of Lancaster University, includes two discrete core modules and streams which focus on Green Criminology and researching crimes of the powerful. The aim is to encourage students to make links between developments in criminological theory, empirical research and literature, criminal justice policy and practice, and wider society, in order to critically analyse structural/ institutional practices and processes. Arguably, critical research can act to inform critical pedagogical practice and activism, and that was the express aim and purpose of the study into the anti-fracking movement. This paper contests that the natural environment should be central to education and that academic activity can work towards social and environmental justice by exposing corporate crimes and harms. Following the work of Tombs and Whyte (2003) on the difficulties of researching what they term crimes of the

powerful, two tasks for the researcher/ teacher/ activist can be delineated. Firstly, research can act as form of immanent critique, which challenges and exposes the contradictions in the neo-liberal common sense and its institutional representatives, by formalising and articulating counter-hegemonic narratives and voices. Secondly, it is arguably essential for researchers to develop organic links, relationships and alliances with progressive, oppositional social groups and movements, such as the anti-fracking movement. Teaching itself can be viewed as a mechanism for disseminating information and 'conscientization' (Friere, 1970), and hopefully students would be motivated to take these issues into their own research, communities, workplaces and teaching activities. However, the possibility of pursuing critical research agendas and challenging dominant discourses is arguably increasingly restricted in the current neo-liberal climate of marketization and commodification of education and knowledge.

In addition, the present UK government's prevention of terrorism measures and citizenship initiatives, when applied to educational institutions, may work towards stifling and censoring political dissent and the expression of alternative ideologies, critical pedagogies and oppositional thought. The form of citizenship suggested by the UK Conservative government appears to be more concerned with governmentality, risk, surveillance, control and exclusion, as opposed to the active social learning and citizenship explored and advocated in this paper. Active social learning and active citizenship would involve meaningful democratic participation, empowerment of communities and the collective creation and preservation of a public space for dialogue and mutual respect.

## **2. The Research**

### **2.1 Towards a Political 'Reflexive' Ethnography**

In conducting the ethnographic research and participant observational fieldwork, an overt role was adopted. The researcher was a trusted and known outsider who gained initial entry/ access to the group via a friend/contact who had become a prominent and active member of the anti-fracking movement and gave informed consent to the conducting of the research, in the knowledge that the aim and purpose was to subsequently write a social scientific paper and to disseminate the findings. They were made aware of their entitlement to withdraw at any stage, for any reason, and to also have any data collected withdrawn. Information that could affect the subjects' consent to participate was not withheld, thereby retaining a means for them to protect their own interests. It is worth adding that the research questions and themes were emergent from the observational data, so it was arguably difficult to fully inform those observed about the nature of the research. A copy of the completed paper was sent to the friend/ contact, with the purpose of obtaining respondent validation and giving them the opportunity to express their views on the themes, issues and perspectives explored. The contact in question was able to provide initial valuable access to relevant primary and secondary sources, additional contacts and links, as well as facilitating and supporting access to a range of experiences and social situations, including formal and informal public meetings, a protest camp, and a number of rallies and petitioning campaigns. The researcher's role was made explicit, as was the nature of the researcher as overtly partisan in support of the anti-fracking movement, though the paper is by no means an uncritical account. It is also important to add that not all those encountered during the course of the research were identically or similarly informed about the nature of the research. The researcher came into contact with a wide range of people across different contexts and it was not always practicable or desirable to offer everyone the same opportunity for informed consent, not

least because it would be difficult and potentially disruptive of the process to provide a complete account to everyone encountered of the aims, purpose and process of the research. The names and personal information of those observed during the course of the fieldwork have been kept confidential and their anonymity and privacy respected and retained to ensure that individuals and places are not identified or identifiable, although there is awareness that these safeguards could be compromised upon secondary analysis of the data. During the course of the research, the researcher was not involved in any direct political action involving illegal activity. In terms of 'getting out' or leaving the group – relationships remained undamaged and the researcher has continued to be supportive of the movement and hopefully retained enough detachment to write an 'impartial' and accurate account. This research can be seen as an example of political, 'reflexive' ethnography and 'standpoint epistemology' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.13-15). The researcher/activist was writing about the anti-fracking movement as a political, cultural and social/environmental movement. The aim of the study was to investigate and attempt to map the informal processes, experiential knowledge, shared meanings and interactions that make up this emergent and growing movement. The observational fieldwork, conducted in and across a variety of settings or social situations, involved an iterative process, or dialectical interaction, of data collection and analysis; an open-ended, reflexive activity, where the focus was continually developed and refined. This data was sifted to identify patterns, dominant meanings, themes and associations. All the while, it was important, as much as possible, to avoid imposing any pre-existing interpretive framework or hermeneutic upon the data. It was important to try and capture the fr/activists own constructs, interpretations, dominant meanings, definitions, patterns, key themes, issues and concerns. It was hoped that the research could represent and articulate the 'voices' or narratives of local groups, voices that are too often marginalised in dominant discourses, whilst at the same time understanding that the process of construction of themes has a tendency to fragment the material, and can fail to capture the fluidity, contingency and complexity of a transforming movement. As both researcher and the researched, the researcher is necessarily engaged in a double hermeneutic, involving two levels of interpretation of reality as activist and researcher (Maturana and Bunnell, 1998).

The study can be viewed as a second-order approach to social change and research, with a particular focus on what is known as active social learning, as opposed to passive social learning (Meynell, 2005; Glasser, 2007). Passive social learning tends to be reliant on the pre-established social learning of others and does not require interaction or communicative action with others, whereas with active social learning, actions and behaviour that might contribute to environmental harm or good can be learned through participatory and collective processes. The concern was with the ways in which community views could be conceptualised and formalised in order to foster, promote and facilitate dialogue between the first order, top-down approach of government, corporations, public institutions and other representative structures, and the second order, bottom-up approach of local communities in a democratic and participatory decision-making process. The concern was that the positions and views of, on the one hand, corporations and public officials seeking to engage in the extraction of shale gas, and on the other, those opposed to these developments, were becoming increasingly polarised and entrenched. It became apparent during the course of the research that there was a tendency within the anti-fracking movement, perhaps unwittingly, to mirror the hierarchical thinking and structures, rationality and ideology of the neo-liberal corporations, society and institutions they were purportedly critically opposing. Rather than being engaged

in an ongoing internal and external dialectical process and interaction, there was often evidence of a very binary, dichotomous and Manichean approach, which uncritically viewed the anti-fracking movement as a force for pure good, confronting a purely evil force in the form of the shale gas industry and its representatives. A potential role for the social scientist and researcher could be as potential community facilitator, to help challenge and move away from hierarchical structures, be they political, economic, social or educational.

## **2.2 Emergent themes from the anti-fracking movement**

A recurrent theme which emerged from the research was the way in which members of the movement are connecting the issue of fracking to related struggles; public power, global capitalism, democratic citizenship and macro-theories. It would be fair to say that many people in the movement regard themselves as activists/theorists, but this theorising tends at times to be in the form of conspiracy theories used to explain macro-power. These conspiracy theories, focussed on, amongst other things, 9/11, the Illuminati, chemtrails, Zionism, and reptilian, shape-shifting politicians, often requiring a great deal of cognitive effort and energy which may well be better expended in rational, immanent critique of political economy and public power. Ultimately, the almost quasi-mystical and religious conviction in conspiracy theories can arguably lend itself to a dogmatic empiricism and 'authoritarian irrationalism' (Adorno, 1994) that is resistant to refutation, critical reflection and social change.

The research became particularly focused on the bridge and transition from micro-level, experiential knowledge to structural analysis, which tended not to be informed by a formal education in potentially relevant political ideologies, philosophies and traditions, such as feminism, Marxism and anarchism. For instance, the preference for decentralised and localised forms of social and political organisation evident in the anti-fracking movement can be seen to resemble the anarchist vision of community. A key question perhaps is whether the movement could usefully draw upon these traditions, or whether these are anachronistic and obsolete, with something new emerging and forming. There was a discernible 'anti-intellectual' tendency and stance in the movement, with a distrust of 'elitist' academia and 'armchair technicians' (Tombs and Whyte, 2003), all in favour of the existential superiority and moral authority of down to earth grass roots activism. This debate is of course mirrored in the history of the anarchist movement, where practical activity has often been elevated and sanctified over what is regarded as abstract theorising. As part of the researcher's contribution to the online dimension of the struggle, a Facebook page entitled 'Artists and Academics against Fracking' was set up, which sought to unify theory, environmental philosophy and practice, but this was met on occasion by criticism by some in the movement who regarded it as inherently elitist and inessential. The Facebook group was set up with the belief that there is a potential role for social science and political theory in the anti-fracking movement, and a possible role for the activist/ researcher as community facilitator. The movement is arguably in danger of becoming one-dimensional if it is not nourished by a variety of knowledge's, discourses and stakeholders. Often, natural science is drawn upon in support of arguments against fracking and in the face of the powerful 'greenwashing' public relations machine of the shale gas industry, but seldom, it seems, social scientific analysis. Many in the anti-fracking movement have become "Citizen Scientists", experts in understanding the science and technology behind fracking, often forming alliances with 'counter-experts' (Beck, 1999) in order to challenge and resist the dominant, government sponsored knowledge and expertise.

Arguably, however, the social science remains relatively underdeveloped. I argue that a variety of knowledges can be drawn upon relating to active social learning and there is a role for social science and political and social theory to play in developing 'citizen social scientists'.

A related issue would be how the movement, which began as a local concern, links to the geopolitical context and the global issue of climate change and ecological destruction. Increasingly, during the period of the participant observation, activists appeared to move from what might be described as parochial 'NIMBYism' to a more cosmopolitan position of Not In Anyone's Backyard (NIABY) (MacGregor, 2007) and a critique of globalising processes and their effects. This translocalism was characterised by a connection of the fracking issue to the passage of TTIP (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Practice) and its potential negative implications for local communities and democracies. In addition, many in the movement have become critical of neo-liberalism and the corporatisation and commodification of nature and natural resources, with a particular focus on water. A few prominent members of the anti-fracking movement have become involved in wider green politics and some have stood for election as members of the Green Party. Others have been attracted to the Green Left, eco-socialism and social ecology. This presents a more optimistic picture for the prospects and potentiality of the movement. However, it could be argued that, following Murray Bookchin's social ecology, links still need to be made between social and environmental degradation and that the two should be viewed as inextricably linked. Bookchin would argue that hierarchical thinking has to be addressed in the social world and economic world, at the same time as the natural world (Bookchin, 1980). The anti-fracking movement could learn from this social ecology and libertarian municipalism in the move to organise society differently. Social ecology has its philosophical origins in neo-Marxism, most notably the critique of instrumental reason and the link between the domination of man over man and man over nature made by the first generation critical theorists of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, 1969). It also has historical antecedents in anarchist traditions that address the ecological destruction in terms of different patterns of social domination, such as capitalism, patriarchy and racism. A notable event during the period of observational fieldwork was the conspicuous absence of members of the anti-fracking movement from the Jeremy Corbyn Labour leadership rally in Preston in 2015, where Corbyn, local councillors and trade unionists all expressed opposition to fracking. The fracking issue proved to be a key theme at the rally. Many on the Green Left have been attracted back to the Parliamentary Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn, frustrated and alienated in the past by the party's narrow, economic approach, and by its shift away from the principles of social democracy and social justice. The lack of an anti-fracking presence at the Corbyn rally is arguably indicative and revealing of a deficiency in the movement, in that it can sometimes be seen to fail to embrace and support a variety of mechanisms for facilitating and engendering change.

From the research, it was found that the women activists evinced an approach to experience and knowledge that may present the possibility of a new activism and a nascent new politics. As already stated, the study represented a spatial-temporal snapshot of an evolving movement and the complex, historically and synchronically contingent identity work and agentic processes of its members. What emerged was that the anti-fracking movement is not a homogenous, unified entity, but a diverse and transforming one, with possible evidence of class and gender divisions. Like other historical social and political movements, there is evidence of internal division and potential fracturing. An example of possible class division



could be seen at the 2014 'Reclaim the Power' action training camp at Little Plumpton, near Blackpool, and also the different modes and mechanisms of protest and their social composition. Reclaim the Power can be seen as middle class professional activists, equipped with experience, expertise, organisational skills and finance. However, there were occasions when there was a discernible strain between these professional activists and grassroots activists. Frack Free Lancashire tended to believe in the power and efficacy of petitioning, letters to local MPs, councillors and peaceful occupations of fracking associated businesses, with a certain level of belief in the mechanisms of the existing democratic process. This belief has perhaps been somewhat shattered by the announcement that the much celebrated decision by Lancashire County Council to reject fracking would effectively be rendered null and void by what David Cameron deemed the national interest, effectively running roughshod over local democracy. This all adds to a growing sense that traditional political institutions are broken and that petitioning alone will not stop fracking. Frack Free Lancashire's mode of political action can be seen as being in stark contrast to the self-styled 'protectors' of Barton Moss, where some female activists complained of sexism, aggressiveness and drinking on the camp, which was viewed as potentially damaging to the public image-making of the movement. These anxieties and concerns were subsequently expressed prior to the Little Plumpton 'Reclaim the Power' action training camp, and a quite heated online and offline debate ensued over its regulation and ethos.

Of course, there is a long history of factionalism and splintering in progressive social and political movements, but with many in the anti-fracking movement being new to formal politics these historical lessons may not be heeded. A key question is whether these internal divisions should be elided or seen as a source of strength. It is argued here that rather than striving to maintain a single voice, as some members of the movement seemed to be, plurality should be embraced. The anti-fracking movement can be seen as expressive of a community of interest and a community of practice, engaged in active social learning towards environmental responsibility and 'second-order' social change. Successful active social learning depends on the collective goals of those engaged in a collaborative process, which also depends on the plural space for possible conflicts, contradictions and oppositions. Differences arguably need to be discussed and deconstructed, not concealed or regarded as negative. This can arguably only make social and political movements more resilient and responsive to challenges from outside and within. Social learning, as an ongoing dialectical process, requires critical analysis of one's own norms and constructions (deconstruction), exposure and respectful and mindful openness to different views (confrontation) and constructions of new ones (reconstruction) – all as an ongoing process of unity-in-diversity that avoids reification. The political can be viewed as the site, plural space and intersubjective realm, where individuals as citizens can meet as equals, collectively self-determine, co-create knowledge and take concerted action in active citizenship and social learning (Glasser, 2007).

What appears to have taken precedence in the anti-fracking movement is a maternal politics of care, represented by, at first, 'Mothers Against Fracking' and later 'Nana's Against Fracking', which can also be seen as an attempt to soften the image away from the Barton Moss profile. Whether this image (Knitting and baking Nana's with feather dusters, tea dresses, head scarves and other domestic regalia) is counter-productive or positive is an issue worth exploring. Some might say that the largely female activists involved in this mode of protest will be viewed as women first and activists second, and also, as this paper goes on to explore,

there is the danger of sociological essentialism and a retreat from the hard-won gains of first and second wave feminism, to the detriment of sustained critical focus on the power structures that determine family life and reproduce capitalism. This emphasis on female environmental activism has a long, recent, global history, as can be seen from the example of the women of Love Canal (Krauss, 1997). In the case of the anti-fracking movement, Nana's were involved on the frontline at Little Plumpton and were responsible for the initial, vanguard occupation of the farmer's field, which remains a designated site for Caudrilla's operations. The site occupation was carried out in the middle of the night and the researcher was with some of the women before they embarked on their covert mission. It was seen as essential that it was an exclusively female action and one prominent activist withdrew from the action when she discovered that men/ 'honoury Nana's' had been included.

The politicisation of women, many of whom told me that they were previously largely apolitical and trusting of politicians, is a key theme to emerge from my ethnographic fieldwork and central to the discussion here. There can be seen to be two stages in this process of politicisation. Firstly, there is the awareness of environmental problems, and, in the case of the anti-fracking movement, this can be seen in the seismic tremors of 2011 in Blackpool, which was 'highly probably' caused by Cuadrilla test drilling in the area (Jowit and Gersmann, 2011). This can be seen as a seminal, founding and consciousness-raising event, and a political entry-point in the anti-fracking movement, along with immediate concerns about people's children's and grand-children's futures. What was commonly reported by members of the movement, and a point that echoes the work of MacGregor (2007), is a growing disillusionment with Government and a shift away from unquestioning acceptance of authority. Women in the movement seemed increasingly shocked and dismayed at the actions and behaviour of previously trusted public officials, authorities and experts. One leader of the movement described this as a growing up process, beyond a previous state of what might be described as 'infantile citizenship' (Berlant, 1997). This awakening extends to the view of the police and the policing of protest camps and demonstrations. The police can be seen as involved in the criminalisation of protest, the protection of corporate interests over those of the people, and accusations have been made regarding heavy-handed policing and privatised policing, including ongoing allegations of "sexualised violence" towards female activists at Barton Moss (Gilmore et al, 2016; Gayle, 2016).

### **2.3 A 'new' politics? Ecofeminism and feminist ecological citizenship.**

There can be no doubting the successes and achievements of the anti-fracking movement and its significance as a social and political movement. The issue has politicised and 'conscientized' (Friere, 1970) people and can be viewed as a potential catalyst for further active citizenship and social change. Women are arguably drawn to environmental activism because, as mothers and Nanas, they fear for their children's/ grandchildren's health and future. A key question is whether the issue of fracking will prove to be an effective gateway to other political issues and debates. Does the anti-fracking movement offer the promise of a new politics, a politics of care?

It often seems in the anti-fracking movement that motherhood and the family have taken on existential priority and moral superiority over the political and first-order change. While not self-identifying as being eco-feminist, the grassroots anti-fracking movement can arguably be

understood as an example of quality-of-life eco-feminist activism. However, the experiential knowledge and insights of these activists arguably remain theoretically underdeveloped. Eco-feminism is not a unified, homogenous entity and includes activities ranging from political action to a growing and varied body of theoretical and empirical research which aims to explore connections between the domination and exploitation of women and that of the natural world, and to challenge these structural practices and processes. Crucially, eco-feminists disagree about the nature of these connections and whether or not they have liberatory potential or are actually reproducing and reinforcing gender hierarchy, stereotypes and oppression. Eco-feminists often find themselves in the problematic situation of challenging not only mainstream ecological thought, but more importantly perhaps second-wave feminism.

One variant of eco-feminism, which may prove useful for understanding the anti-fracking movement, is that which has a celebratory and uncritical acceptance of women's heightened sense of environmental responsibility and the discourse of mothering practices and maternal care. Here the private virtues of family, the needs of children, love and care, a sense of rootedness to place are extolled and valorised, and given almost holy status, immune to rational critique and debate. However, as Dietz (1985) argues, these virtues may lend themselves to a deeply conservative, moralising, 'holier than thou' and reactionary outlook. The family, and the necessarily hierarchical mother-child relationship, is arguably not a good model and existential ground for a new politics, public consciousness and citizenship. Dietz questions whether care for one's own children can be generalised to care for others, as the former is necessarily exclusive and specific. I argue here, following Dietz (1985), that although it has proven a useful entry-point to politics, maternal care and mothering is not the best ground for continuing political action, active social learning and active citizenship, and that the mutual respect of an ideal friendship offers a better model, in that the latter, ideally at least, is egalitarian rather than hierarchical. There is no evidence that maternal thinking can be theoretically or causally connected to a more ethical political life, with responsibility to others, and in fact, maternal thinking may lend itself, at worst, to an 'amoral familism' (Banfield, 1958) that potentially excludes the Other. Being a good mother does not necessarily make someone a good citizen and vice-versa. A possible antidote is to develop the radical discourse of feminist ecological citizenship, which addresses gender inequality and environmental responsibility (MacGregor, 2007). Democratic citizenship and active social learning would involve citizens who are not intimate with each other, but politically involved with one another. In the anti-fracking movement, maternal care may be an entry-point into environmental politics, but it arguably should not take existential priority. Eco-feminism has a tendency to neglect a critical analysis of neo-liberal privatisation in an unequalitarian society and the increasing pressures and demands put on women exploited in unpaid caring practices during the current global economic crisis of capitalism. It also perhaps neglects the precarity of activists' existence and hence the often unsustainable nature of political and social/environmental movements in the face of increasing 'ontological insecurity' (Beck, 1999). This ontological insecurity also arguably extends to teachers working in neo-liberal institutions, who may be forced into conformity and lack of creative experimentation, desisting from immanent critique, critical research agendas and critical pedagogical practice in the face of the stranglehold of neo-liberal managerialist imperatives and basic economic necessity. In this sense, precariatization militates against the possibility of critical opposition and conscientisation, and can act as a means and instrument of social control (Tombs and Whyte,

2003).

Feminist ecological citizenship would seek to combine both public and private realms and emphasise their permeability in its approach to environmental responsibility, active social learning and political action. This is in marked contrast to Hannah Arendt's dichotomy of public and private, which, following Aristotle, dismisses the possibility of freedom exercised in private mundane acts of caretaking and the realm of necessity (Dietz, 1985). These mundane aspects of the social lifeworld are, however, being publically disclosed in the politics of being and care which is a central characteristic of the anti-fracking movement. Arendt gives existential priority to the public realm of the political over mothering practices, maternal thinking and care. However, Arendt's notion of freedom and political action remains an alternative to the dominant liberal-philosophical and instrumentalist notions and offers a useful model for active social learning, citizenship and concerted political action: "the appearance of freedom ... coincides with performing act. Men are free – as distinguished from the possessing of the gift of freedom – as long as they act, neither before nor after, for to be free and to act are the same thing" (Arendt, 1968, pp.152-153). In the dominant notion of political freedom in western liberal-democracies, freedom and sovereign control are viewed as identical and this can be seen to have consequences in terms of the continuing degradation and exploitation of the social and natural world. Sovereign freedom and possessive mastery, which may be identified with masculinist politics, entails sovereign control over the initiation and outcomes of action. This view of freedom, based on Cartesian dualism and sovereign self-constituting subjectivity, lends itself to an androcentric epistemology that promotes an instrumentalist world-view and technological attitude to nature. Feminist ecological citizenship seeks to redefine what we mean by the political and the meaning of citizenship and 'politics' (MacGregor, 2007). It challenges the philosophical bases and political assumptions of liberalism, with its public-private distinction, by including a variety of power relations and viewing the personal as political. Rather than the traditional, narrow focus on politics as empirical policy-making and the decision-making of political institutions, feminist ecological citizenship has ideas and principles which are compatible, if not identical with those of anarchism. Like anarchists they argue that state institutions should be more accountable to citizens and communities and they seek to replace 'politics' with 'the political' as the transforming, contingent, unpredictable, open, plural space in which the actions of citizens and multiple stakeholders intersect (Arendt, 1968).

For Arendt, the basis for freedom is the renunciation of the much cherished sovereignty and possessive mastery that remains the dominant source of human dignity and self-worth for individuals in contemporary liberal-democracies. This is not to say that these hard-won and still inadequately realised freedoms, that benefit both men and women without degrading the social and natural world, should be neglected, but that what might be called 'disclosive freedom' (Thiele, 1995) offers an existential grounding and spatial-temporal framework for the co-creation and preservation of the political realm and the promise of a qualitatively different relationship between self and other based upon mutual respect. Arendt tends to focus on the co-creation of political freedom through the performance of words and deeds, but arguably neglects the preservation and caretaking of this public realm and the natural world. Arendt dichotomises private and public realms and in doing so is arguably inadvertently reproducing a gender hierarchy, liberal and patriarchal formulations of political and social identities, and masculinist biases that privilege the public sphere and depreciate the political

significance of the private realm. Her view of the private realm neglects the predominately feminine concern with forming and maintaining relationships and community that informs environmental activism involving women, including the anti-fracking movement. A politics of being and care, and indeed ethnographic research itself, involves an understanding of identities being grounded in our relatedness to the world and others and the ongoing interpretive struggle of the situated self and other engaged in a co-creation and preservation of a shared social and natural world. Here the self who is engaged in this interpretive struggle for understanding recognises its relationship to others as being constitutive of its own being and freedom. This is very different to the restrictive sense of freedom and politics based on sovereign control, possessive mastery and a Hobbesian struggle for self-assertion (Thiele, 1995) and would involve a fundamental shift in human knowledge and values, as well as in social, political and economic institutions.

### 3. Conclusion

There is a need to critically analyse, engage with and work towards social, environmental, cultural and political transformation through active social learning, active citizenship and a caretaking of the public realm and political freedom. We can still arguably socially learn from Hannah Arendt, and other political philosophers who stand in the tradition of civic republicanism, as well as the history of other social and political movements and a variety of critical pedagogies, political ideologies and traditions (Dietz, 1985; MacGregor, 2007). Eco-feminism, by seeking to politicise maternal care as the existential ground for an alternative politics of care, offers a useful but one-sided account, as does Arendt in her over-emphasis on the public realm as the plural space for creation, a narrative which arguably neglects caretaking and safeguarding of the social and natural world. Of course, the dominant liberal stress on freedom as sovereign control and possessive mastery also gives a one-dimensional account, but this freedom is still important and in need of defending. I conclude that feminist ecological citizenship attempts to combine all these elements in a many-sided narrative that offers a useful theoretical and practical approach to understanding the limitations and potentiality of the anti-fracking movement. The enemies of the 'open society' may ultimately be neo-liberal institutions, but also social and political movements like the anti-fracking movement, unless the conditions for genuine, open dialogue and mutual respect are preserved and co-created, both within public institutions and progressive social movements, but also between the two.

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