5.7: Analyzing a Policy of Claim with Issues and Contentions

We can now apply these seven methods of analysis to an actual claim that was made a few years ago in a community in the San Fernando Valley. From these issues, we will then be able to create contentions.

In Studio City business owners were complaining that the presence of prostitutes was bringing down the area and keeping customers away. There was a motel in the area that these ladies used and the business people in the area felt that if that motel were closed, then the problem would disappear. The claim before the city council was:

Resolved: **The Flamingo Motel should be closed down.**

Before they could make their decision, the council members analyzed this claim of policy.

**Issue 1: Is prostitution a problem?**

**Contention:** Prostitution is a problem to the businesses in Studio City.

Your research shows that some store owners have been complaining that their business has been negatively affected.

**Issue 2: Is prostitution a significant problem?**

**Contention:** The problem of prostitution is significant to the businesses in Studio City.

Your research shows that this problem is not with just one or two owners, it is with several owners. And you find that the problem is growing to be an even more significant problem in the future.

**Issue 3: Is the prostitution problem structural or attitudinal?**

**Contention:** The problem appears to be attitudinal, but an informative campaign would...
not solve the problem.

Your research indicates that what is needed is a change in the structure, like shutting down the motel.

**Issue 4: Could the current structure solve the problem?** Here the question looks at the idea of increasing enforcement of current laws.

**Contention:** The current law was not written with the language needed to solve the problem.

Your research leads you to understand that current loitering or pandering laws are not effective in this situation.

**Issue 5: Is the plan of closing down the motel workable?**

**Contention:** The city has the legal authority to close down buildings and businesses.

Your research indicates that the city does have the legal authority to close down business that are creating problems for the community.

**Issue 6: Would closing down the motel solve the problem created by the women?** **Contention:** Without the motel, the prostitutes would have to go elsewhere.

Your research has shown that without a place to practice their trade, prostitutes would leave the area.

**Issue 7: Would any ramifications be created by the plan that might outweigh the solving of the problem?** Your issue here is asking, if the motel were closed, would that cause any problems.

**Contention:** If the motel closes homeless families will be evicted.

In this situation, there were several homeless families living in the motel. If the motel closed, they would have no place to live.

Now how would you have voted if you were on the city council?

The side advocating the claim to close down the motel had positive answers for the first six of the seven issues. The question that you must ask yourself is if the displacing of several families out-weighs the solving of the problem of the local business owners.

In this case, the families were successfully relocated making the final issue moot, or unnecessary.