

Blue Ribbon Initiative
An analysis of the causes of the initiative

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New York
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Date August 10, 2007

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Chapter I

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Memphis City School District's proposal and implementation of a behavior intervention and supportive program entitled the Blue Ribbon Initiative. This study will also seek to analyze the causes of the Blue Ribbon Initiative's failure to thrive.

Statement of Problem

The Memphis City School District is an urban school district located in the state of Tennessee, with a population of over 650,000 residents and 115,000 students. In 2004, the Superintendent of the Memphis City School District proposed the Blue Ribbon Initiative. The purpose of this program is to create a coherent system of discipline that will contribute toward a positive school culture and environment. In addition, the Blue Ribbon Initiative calls for the elimination of corporal punishment in schools. This initiative will increase student achievement by creating a safe learning environment, where students with behavioral problems are not given the opportunity to interrupt the educational process. Initially supported by members of the community and school district and implemented throughout the district, there now appears to be much political discourse regarding the elimination of corporal punishment in the schools.

Context of the study

Not long after the Blue Ribbon Initiative was instituted in the fall of 2004, there were reports of teacher complaints of the effectiveness of the program. These complaints included excessive paperwork and the pressure to under report fights and cases of serious infractions, such as possession of weapons (brought to school). A member of the school board also reported criticisms. With student violence mentioned as a primary concern of Memphis City schoolteachers, members of the Memphis City Schools and surrounding community discussed causes resulting in this behavior. This lack of unison and disagreement is a defining characteristic of the polis as expressed by Stone in her book, Policy Paradox (2002). Stone's focus is that real social problems are confronted and political life is lived between these tensions. Much of policy making involves people fighting over what the public interest is and trying to realize their own definitions of it.

Poverty is a common problem in this predominately African American community where 71 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced fee lunch. By using Stone's analysis of policymaking, we will establish that the issue in dispute goes beyond the Blue Ribbon Initiative. Policymaking encompasses many factors. They include those who are direct (teachers and students) and indirect members of the polis, those not involved in the school community. Policymaking is not a quick remedy for instant solutions, such as Stone's rational analytic model suggests. Stone describes politics well by quoting Plutarch: "They are wrong who think that politics is like an ocean voyage or military campaign, something to be done with some end in view or something which levels off as

soon as the end is researched. It is not a public chore, to be got over with; it is a way of life” (Stone, 2002, p.34). Stone describes the controversy and conflicting views in society by using the analogy of the market and the polis model. The market represents individual goals and behavior, while the polis in contrast is a community or multiple communities with ideas, images, values and public interests. These interests will be analyzed in light of the arguments to follow.

Significance of the Study

This study is of vital importance for all administrators. Determining both positive and negative reactions toward the Blue Ribbon Initiative plays a significant role in identifying who is on board and who is against the initiative. Ultimately, the students will be most affected by the outcome of this case. The administration is at the forefront in changing the lives of children, hopefully for the better. This study will also attempt to prove Deborah Stone’s work regarding problems, goals and solutions in the political arena. In Chapter II of this study, such sections of Stone’s Policy Paradox will be analyzed and later applied to the Blue Ribbon Initiative.

Research Questions

The researchers of this study will explore four question related to this issue:

1. Whose voice(s) do you hear and how does each voice present its case in making its value orientation or goal evident?

2. Whose voice(s) do you hear and how does each voice present its notion of the problem? Whose voice becomes predominant?
3. Whose voice(s) do you hear and how does each voice present its idea and how to solve the problem?
4. To what degree and in what ways do these voices change over time?

Definitions

GOALS

Policy initiative begins with focusing on goals in order to attain specific objectives. The notion of **equity** is who gets what, when and how. Stone uses the cake illustration as a metaphor to present various aspects of equity. An equal slice of cake may not necessarily mean equity for all. Likewise, the most efficient scenario may not necessarily include adding more librarians in a library setting.

Efficiency generally means the most output for a given input, also to be able to identify alternative courses of action for achieving objectives. Security is the argument within society that evaluates the essential needs of citizens and obligations and responsibilities of government. Liberty involves a person's freedom to act as long as their choices do not harm others (Stone, 2002).

Throughout this study, we will analyze how these four aspects of goals relate to the many conflicting issues within the Memphis City School's Blue Ribbon Initiative.

PROBLEMS

The Blue Ribbon Initiative controversy stems from the discrepancy between the goal and the status quo. Problems are a matter of representation because every

description of a situation is a portrayal from only one of many points of view.

Symbols, as well as words, are used as stories to dramatize a political point.

Numbers convey numerical language to communicate and define issues.

Causes reveal sources, consequences and potential accountability. **Interests** involve groups of multiple viewpoints that can be represented as distributive or non-distributive. **Decisions** direct the course of action necessary to attain given goals (Stone, 2002). These factors help identify the inconsistent discourse present in the Memphis City Schools.

SOLUTIONS

“The means of tackling policy problems are often called policy instruments or policy **solutions**. These terms give the misleading impression that public policies create permanent mechanical fixes” (Stone, p259). The solutions, or policy strategies, are ways of exerting power in the polis. **Inducements** employ rewards and punishment, as well as incentives and sanctions, to change people’s behavior. **Facts**, according to Stone, rely principally on persuasion as a way to influence others in the commons. **Rights**, particularly in government, allow individuals, groups or organizations to invoke power. In the polis, **powers** describe strategies “that seek to alter the content of decisions by shifting the power of decision making to different people” (Stone p. 262).

Limitations of the Research

This study is limited in its lack of reliability checks. The coding system was comprised under time constraints that allowed for minimal interaction between coding teams. Additionally, some aspects of the coding system were not checked for reliability. Hence, the final word rested within each specific team of researchers.

Chapter II

Literature Review/ Conceptual Framework

Chapter two will be comprised of three major components: 1) Deborah Stone's Policy Paradox and Political Discourse; 2) Clarence Stone's Civic Capacity; 3) Clarence Stone's Characteristics of Civic Capacity.

1. Deborah Stone's Policy Paradox and Political Discourse

The groundwork of our research is based on Deborah Stone's Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making (2002). Stone categorizes the theory of policy politics, concepts of society, the market model and the polis model. The market model foresees what is beneficial to an individual; in contrast, the polis focuses on the community. Stone declares in the polis, there is a concern with public interest and the process of government and control. Stone's concepts of society are listed below:

Stone's Concepts of Society

	Market Model	Polis Model
1. Unit of Analysis	individual	community
2. Motivations	self-interest	public interest (as well as self-interest)
3. Chief conflict	self-interest vs. self-interest	self-interest vs. public interest (common problem)
4. Source of peoples ideas and references	self-generation within the individual	influence from outside
5. Nature of collective activity	competition	cooperation and competition
6. Criteria for individual decision-making	maximizing self-interest minimizing cost	loyalty (to people, places, organizations, products) maximize self-interest, promote public interest
7. Building blocks of social action	individuals	groups and organizations
8. Nature of information	accurate, complete, fully available	ambiguous, interpretive, incomplete, strategically manipulated
9. How things work	laws of matter (eg., material resources are finite and diminish with use)	laws of passion (eg., human resources are renewable and expand with use)
10. Sources of change	material exchange quest to maximize own welfare	ideas, persuasion, alliances pursuit of power, pursuit of own welfare, pursuit of public interest

(p.33)

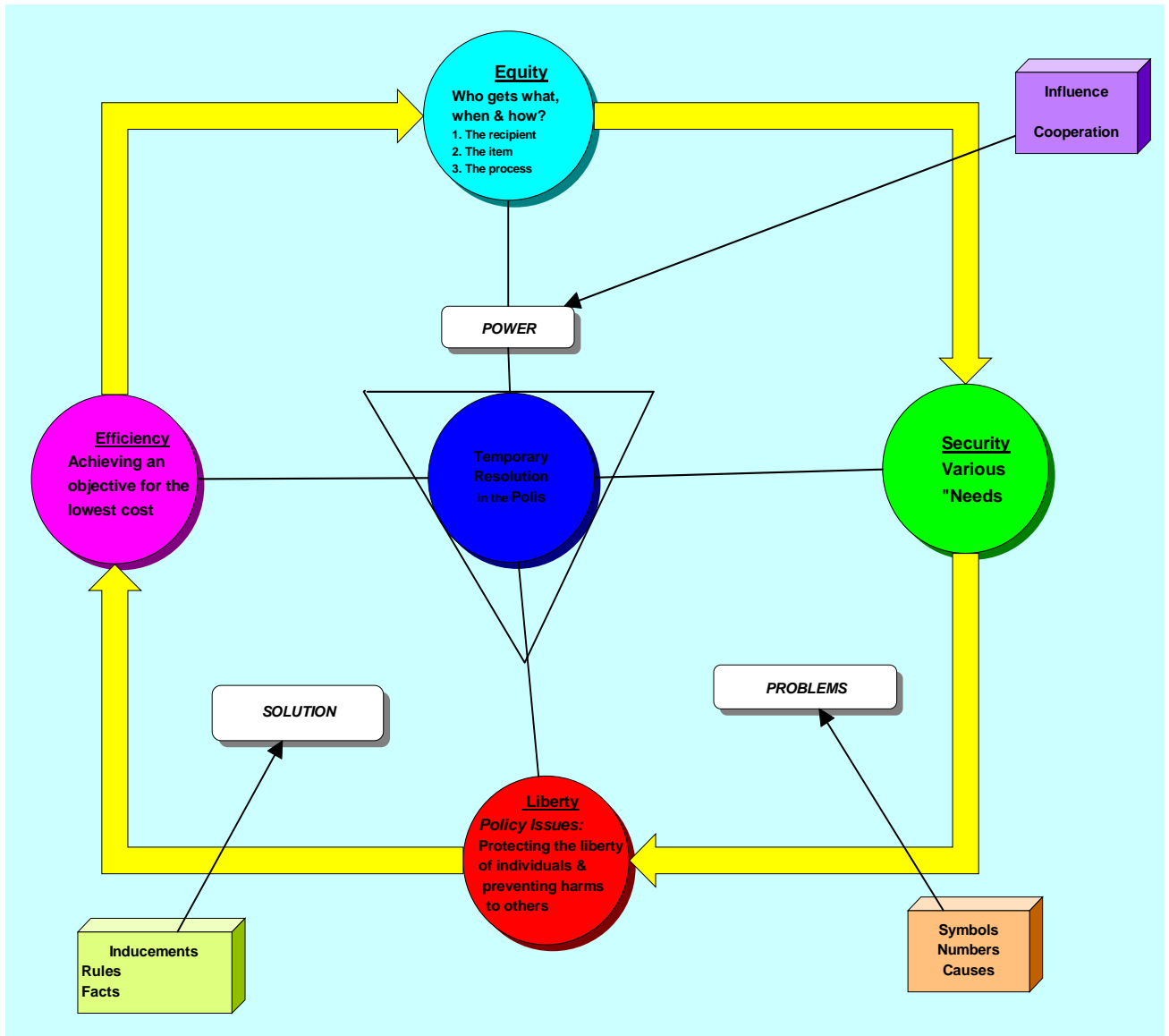
Figure 1

The community struggles to agree on what is the public's best interest. This is represented in the polis; politics involve people fighting over public interests, and trying to grasp their own definition. Stone says in the polis, what seems to tear communities apart actually brings them closer together. It is through this discourse where conflict attempts to be resolved. The concept of public interest and civic capacity are not restricted to Stone's model. There is a battle between the market and the polis in reference to public interest. The market indicates that individual desires are more influential than the community desires.

Stone's framework on security and/or safety is a goal that has been of public interest. Issues related to security continue to arise. The BRI represents much controversy. "Safety issues in the polis require a sense of community, solidarity, a sense of belonging; dignity, respect, self-esteem, and honor; friendship and love" (p.95).

The study of the BRI bridges all these emotions. Despite what side of the issue, people agree with the same feelings. The polis has no plan to promote self-interest, just like the market has no concept of public interest. Stone states: "The simplest, most common, in some way intuitively, most appealing definition of need is what is necessary for sheer survival" (p.87).

This study depicts that the need expressed is not necessarily that of comfort, but of survival. Communities lack a feeling of safety when their individual comfort zone is threatened. In today's world, safety and security play a vital role. The topic of safety and security can rouse a number of different emotions within a community. In the polis, the concept of equity in reference to safety is intangible. People want safe and secure schools. Policies have to reflect the values, needs, and wants of the community. Passion is what will bring a community together. The BRI represents complexities present in the cycle of policymaking illustrated in Stone's model:



“Membership in a community defines social and economic rights. What makes a collection of individuals a community is not only the definitional principles specifying who is in and who is out...sharing burdens and bounty is the glue that holds people together...sharing, caring, and maintaining relations is at least as strong a motivator of human behavior as competition, separation, and promotion of one separate self-interest” (Stone, p.20). Stone’s framework establishes a solid method for the analysis of this study.

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2. Clarence Stone’s Civic Capacity

Through his theory of Civic Capacity, Clarence Stone shares views similar to that of Deborah Stone’s beliefs. Clarence Stone believes that all stakeholders should be involved and accountable in the educational process. He also feels that an action plan is necessary in order to solve a problem. According to C. Stone, the school is a central pillar of institutional power in the community. This is similar to Deborah Stone’s Theory of public discourse, because the people in the polis make important decisions regarding their community and the efficiency of it.

Clarence Stone’s ideas also coincide with Deborah Stone’s notions when he writes about the well being of a community. He says that “civic” should foster the whole community not just the individual. Similarly, D. Stone believes in equity in the way that every person is entitled to a “piece of the cake.” When speaking of education, C. Stone paints the picture that children born into low socioeconomic status are somewhat doomed for failure. D. Stone would label C. Stone’s view as a cause. For example, the student’s lack of academic skills is one of the causes of living in poverty.

Despite the similar views that both writers share, C. Stone seems to differ when he speaks about the middle and wealthy class. He believes that because of their higher socio economic status, there is less tension, or discourse. This is unlike Stone's view because she believes that there will almost always be public discourse, regardless of the economic classes that are involved.

3. Clarence Stone's Characteristics of Civic Capacity

The following list identifies the framework of Clarence Stone's Civic Capacity:

- 1. Somebody with a vision of the bigger picture steps forward to say what have a problem (Human agency)**
- 2. Skillfully frame the problem with a sense of urgency**
- 3. Recognition that Inequalities represent more than individual effort**
- 4. Enlist star power or individual leaders to lead systematic reform**
- 5. Engaging the central pillars of institutional power (social capital)**
- 6. Carefully orchestrated implementation of detailed plan out-of-the-ordinary process**
- 7. Engage schools, parent, community in multi-sector coalition of collaborative uncommon efforts**
- 8. Uses of multiple indicators to track progress**
- 9. Decentralize control/distribute leadership with new people who are valuable team members**
- 10. Engage frontline educators, union and an ethos of professional pride**

- 11. Seek and apply special funds, extra resources in a focused manner**
- 12. Emphasize relationship building and shared understanding**
- 13. Maintain continuous engagement and sustained momentum**
- 14. Nurture parental engagement and citizen development**
- 15. You need to link in to the neighborhood centers**
- 16. Find a way to influence/shape that peer-group culture**
- 17. There needs to be a connection to everyday life**
- 18. Establish accountability through credibility**
- 19. Create an intermediary organization as an anchor**

Chapter III

Methodology

The literature review revealed that in the polis, problem definition is never simply a matter of defining goals and measuring our distance from them. “It is rather the strategic representation of situations. Problem definition is a matter of representation because every description of a situation is a portrayal from only one of many points of view” (Stone, p. 133). In the research, newspaper editorials, citizen letters, interviews, district data and Memphis City School websites were used to interpret the distinct representations in Memphis City Schools (Appendix A). The purpose of using the artifacts is to gather qualitative data that would serve as a foundation for identifying the main voices and exposing underlying conflicting issues of the Blue Ribbon Initiative.

Stone’s framework and the policy making concepts aid in creating a coding system (Appendix B). The coding system facilitates the analysis of the case study and its sources when recording central voices and the message each conveys. This data was then organized into three bins: goals, problems, solutions for further analysis.

In qualitative research, reliability is vital. However, in this study due to time constraint, reliability was compromised because the findings were simply exchanged for cross-referencing and minor checks. These findings will be described in detail through further analysis.

Chapter IV

Chapter IV Presentation of Data

Statement of Purpose

The data presentation in this case study seeks to provide a way of discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes. “Meaningfulness” in this study is determined by the research questions posed in Chapter One. The goal of this study is not to find a solution, or even a temporary resolution, to the Memphis City Schools issue. The goal here is to use Dr. Stone’s problem-solving framework to consider the paradoxical nature of the inherent political discourse. To that end, the researchers have designed a coding system under the direction of Dr. Frank Smith, presented below, that provide a means by which to explore the patterns and themes dominating the many voices present in the public discourse. In addition, Clarence Stone’s views on Civic Capacity play a significant role in analyzing the Blue Ribbon Initiative.

Summary of Responses to Research Questions

1. Whose voice(s) do you hear and how does each voice present its case in making its value orientation or goal evident?

The analysis of voices vs. goals indicates that Patrice Robinson (PR), Memphis City Schools Board of Education President, is a crucial individual voice representing goals orientation. Other dominant voices include the writers of the Commercial Appeal (CA), Board member Kenneth Whalum (KW), and letters (CL) written to the *Commercial Appeal*. With an exception of one statement

made by a teacher in the Memphis City School system, PR, CA, KW and CL produced all of the goal-oriented statements categorized.

In Article B, PR targets the expected outcomes of the Blue Ribbon Initiative and speaks optimistically of an upcoming status report by the Superintendent. Five out of seven goal oriented PR statements were categorized under security. She speaks of the security needs of both students and staff and the community as a whole. Her goal orientation is evident in her first sentence of Article B, “Academic achievement is our number one goal, and we realize that positive student behaviors are critical to reaching this goal.” KW also speaks of security. Two out of four of KW’s goal oriented statements are categorized as SEREL. A prototypical quote of this from Article A reveals the difference in the way PR and KW represent their views: “We’d have to admit that countless teachers in our schools are teaching in fear.” The two statements given above illustrate the two extremes in the political discourse and value orientations in this study.

As a whole, CA has the greatest number of categorized goal oriented statements. Of the eleven statements, seven of them are categorized under efficiency, with five of those subcategorized as EFOUT. Four out of the five EFOUT statements are contained in Article C written by Dakarai I. Aarons. Aarons presents his case by reporting on both sides of the issue. For example, he reports on teacher Nona Allen, who is critical of the plan because “Teachers have more paperwork to fill out, and there are more steps taken at the school level.”

Later, the author cites Allen as saying, “I don’t really know what the answer is. I do know that Blue Ribbon is not it in its current form.”

Table 1
An Analysis of Value (Goal) Oriented Statements, Sorted By Voice

Voices vs. Goals											
	CA	KW	PR	MCS	CJ	T	TG	BM	KP	CL	TOTAL
EQRECG	1										1
EQIT										1	1
EF	1									1	1
EFOUT	5	1	2								8
EFIN	1										1
SE										1	1
SEND	1		2			1					4
SEREL	1	2									3
SEFU			1								1
SEC			2								2
L	1										1
LHB										1	1
LHM										2	2
LHE		1									1
TOTAL	11	4	7	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	

2. Whose voice(s) do you hear and how does each voice present its notion of the problem? Whose voice becomes predominant?

The predominant voices of problem related statements in the Memphis City Schools case study are CA, KW and T. Of KW’s twenty-two problem oriented statements, seventeen of them are categorized as symbols and causes. Similarly, of the CA’s thirty-one problem oriented statements, twenty are categorized as symbols and causes. Within the categories of symbols and causes, each voice

presents its case differently. CA's authors use the full range of the subcategories within symbols with the most utilized being SC. The story of conspiracy (SC) is told by Aarons when he speaks of KW's position. KW's use of symbols is concentrated in stories of synecdoche, stories that blame the victim, and metaphors of war. He chooses to blame the victim, in this case the children, as if they are not doing enough to overcome their dire situation. Stone argues that using rhetoric that blames the victim insinuates that they have control of their fate. "Another variant of the control story is the *blame-the-victim* story. It too, moves us from the realm of fate to the realm of control" (Stone, pp. 143-144). KW's comments attempt to polarize the community over the Blue Ribbon Initiative. "Generational poverty robs its victims of the ability to behave in a controlled and calm way. How can I behave calmly if my very existence is the antithesis of calm?" (Whalum). KW also uses metaphors of war to clearly delineate the two sides of the battle. "The symbol of war is an obvious tactic used by leaders to create support for their policies" (Stone, p. 154). With respect to problem-oriented statements related to causes, both CA and KW primarily speak of intentional and inadvertent causes. "The story of inadvertent cause is a common interpretation of poverty, malnutrition and disease" (Stone, p. 192). This statement speaks to the complexity of the Memphis City Schools situation.

Table 2

An Analysis of Problem Oriented Statements, Sorted By Voice

Voices vs. Problems											
	CA	KW	PR	MCS	CJ	T	TG	BM	KP	CL	TOTAL
S	1	1									2
SD	1										1
SP	1	1				1					3
SCI	1										1
SHC	1	1				1				1	4
SC	3										3
SBV		2									2
SHN	1										1
SS	1	2									3
MW		3									3
SA						1					1
N	1					1					2
NN	1										1
NS		1									1
NF	1	1				1					3
N	1										1
NCR			1							1	2
NS	1			2							3
C	1	1				1					3
CINT	3	3									6
CINA	6	3		1						1	10
I	2	1									3
IOBJ			1								1
ISUB	1			1							2
IDIF		1									1
ICON	3										3
D	3	1								1	5
DG			1							1	2
DC						2				1	3
DB						1					1
Totals	34	22	3	4	0	9	0	0	0	6	

3. Whose voice(s) do you hear and how does each voice present its idea about how to solve the problem?

P**added										1	1
TOTALS	13	5	10	1	0	2	0	0	0	6	

4. To what degree and in what ways do these voices change over time? Referring to the policy making model (Rationalist and Stone's policy paradox), determine which model more accurately reflects what actually happened to the Blue Ribbon policy initiative. Explain your position.

Consistency of Voices

The researchers began the significant case study of Memphis City Schools' Blue Ribbon Initiative with the litany of frustrations bemoaned by Kenneth T. Whalum, dissenting MCS Board Commissioner. Whalum, who blames the district's children, among others, for its extreme discipline problems, signals poverty as its root cause. Whalum excuses black families from discipline, referring to discipline as a "foreign concept," yet contradicts himself when he states: "We're losing another generation because we don't have the courage to administer proper discipline" (Whalum, A-2).

Interestingly, while he augurs for reinstatement of corporal punishment, Whalum champions the Catholic Diocese of Memphis for its relationship building in that "teachers and staff openly display love for their students and their families. (Whalum, A-2) Whalum appears to miss the very essence that this comment serves to illuminate...that love begets love, and violence begets more

violence. Moreover, Whalum fails to recognize Martin Luther King's poignant words regarding peaceful conflict resolution, ultimately blaming King for the segregated condition of Memphis City Schools. Whalum has been Blue Ribbon Plan's biggest public detractor. Yet a *Commercial Appeal* Editorial on June 10, 2007, regarding the ban on corporal punishment suggests Whalum had expressed that "it would be a shame to restore this inheritance from plantation society to the hallways of the Memphis City Schools." Herein lies another paradox.

The timeline of events in this study encompasses less than three years (since Blue Ribbon's inception). In that time, Kenneth Whalum displays consistently paradoxical views aimed at accruing power. One blogger accuses Whalum of abusing his pulpit – a reminder that Whalum is a minister, and indeed, a lawyer, as well. Additional research portrays Whalum as an active politician in the community. It can then be expected, as in the polis, that the views he expresses may have more to do with the need or desire to align himself with a particular group – in this case, the teachers and parents in Memphis City Schools, for political gain.

Memphis Board President, Patrice Robinson, has remained firm in her support of the Blue Ribbon Plan, advising that the initiative needs time to build upon its success. In her guest column in *The Commercial Appeal*, June 10, 2007, Ms. Robinson reminds readers that most (95 per cent) of Memphis City Schools students "exhibit the kinds of attitudes and behaviors that are critical to academic achievement" (Robinson, B-1). She relies on the district's data to underscore the "great gains since the Blue Ribbon Plan went into effect." Robinson may be

writing poetry with numbers, since the data does not compare common categories. It is, therefore, impossible for the researchers to determine Blue Ribbon's efficacy. Nonetheless, Patrice Robinson has been a consistent supporter of Blue Ribbon since its inception, and she had been a proponent of the ban on corporal punishment prior to Carol Johnson's tenure.

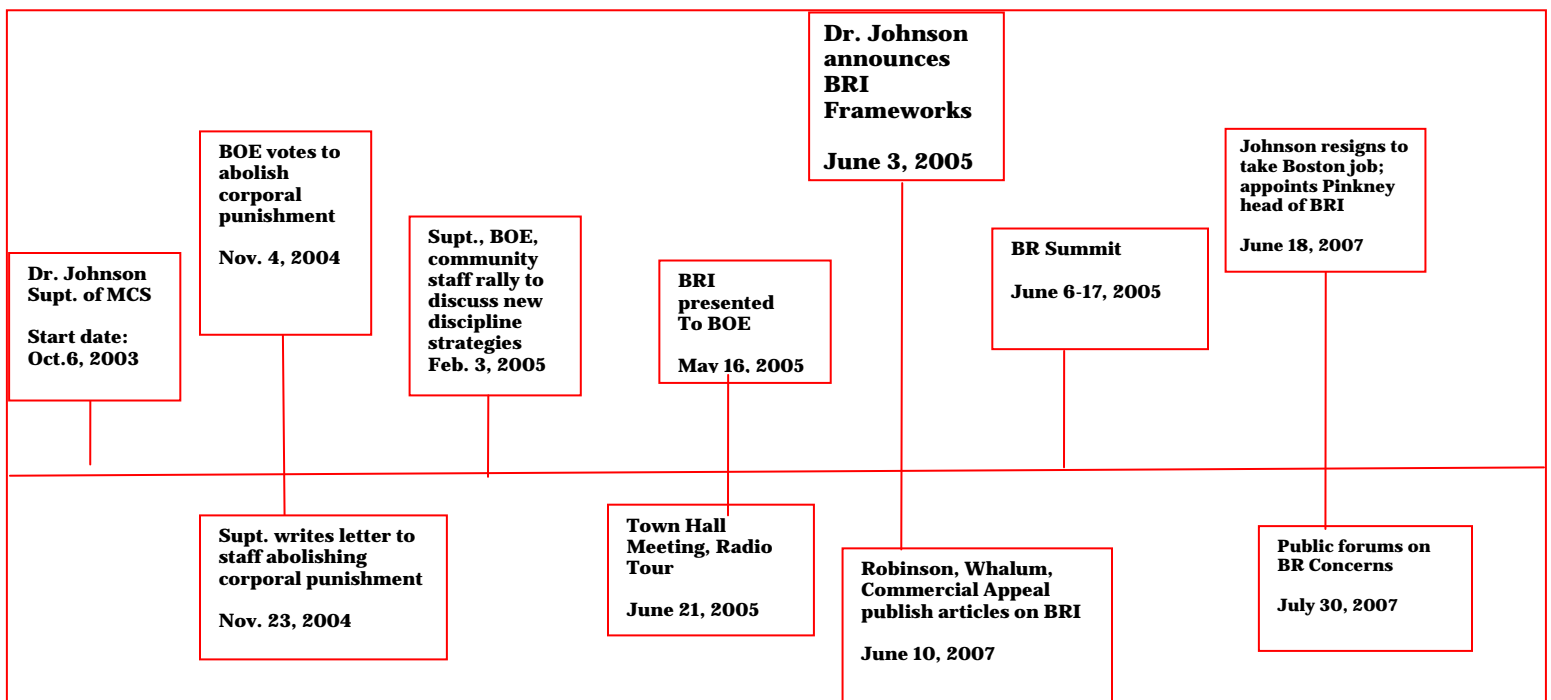
Dukarai I. Aarons, education reporter for *The Commercial Appeal*, gives the illusion of a fair and balanced report in his column, "Black eye for Blue Ribbon" (Aarons, C-1). Yet again, the numbers reported are not convincing. No data is presented for comparison of violence rates in preceding years. In this article, Aarons, and thus *Commercial Appeal*, offers input from Superintendent Carol Johnson, Commissioners Patrice Robinson and Kenneth Whalum, and teacher, Nona Allen. We do not hear the voices of students or parents. If Aarons had done a full investigation, he would have reported that *The Commercial Appeal* ran a story in 1998 that clearly demonstrated the community's support for corporal punishment. His article, in essence, appears to gather support for Whalum's position against the Plan. Consider again his title: "Black eye for Blue Ribbon."

Also on June 10, 2007, *Commercial Appeal's* editor presents a more balanced view of Blue Ribbon, while it is evident that the editor favors the ban on corporal punishment. As the editor reminds us, "...discipline is still a work in progress in the Memphis City Schools. Patience will be required to find the perfect formula in the country's 21st largest school system...Discipline is undeniably one of the most difficult issues to deal with in this environment. It has been for a long time, though." (*Commercial Appeal*, D) Herein, the

researchers contend that *Commercial Appeal* fairly portrays the dilemma of Blue Ribbon – to continue or discontinue the ban on corporal punishment. One voice from *Commercial Appeal* that was not represented in the literature (save for a reference in the letters to the editor) is that of Wendi C. Thomas, one of the paper’s reporters. She states, “The problem isn’t Blue Ribbon, it’s the parents...School administrators should not be the first line of discipline, even though it often seems that they are” (*Commercial Appeal*, 2006).

Memphis City teachers share a common voice against the Blue Ribbon Plan. It is noteworthy that no positive letters were represented in *Commercial Appeals* Letters to the Editor. The citizen letters praise Dr. Johnson and herald her efforts to move the schools forward. Unlike Whalum and the teachers, they acknowledge that physical punishment was not working. All of the sources were from the same time period, rendering the element of time a moot factor for the purposes of this research.

BLUE RIBBON TIMELINE



The sequence of events involved in the Blue Ribbon Initiative (BRI) demonstrates a shift in the desired outcomes:

- The community fails to embrace the BRI because they are in conflict over the practice of corporal punishment;
- MCS staff does not support BRI due to the extensive paperwork requirements;
- Superintendent Carol Johnson, as the key proponent for the BRI, resigns.
- Carol Johnson appoints James Pinkney as Blue Ribbon's third Blue Ribbon director in two years.

Prototypical Quotes

The goal of this segment is to provide insight into the political rhetoric being categorized and analyzed in this study.

Bin	Source	Claim #	Voice	Prototypical Quote
EQRECG	D	14	CA	And there was no escaping the fact that corporal punishment was being administered disproportionately to African-American students, sending a message to students that race matters on issues of discipline and punishment.
EQIT	G	7	CL	Kudos to Wendi C. Thomas for her willingness to say something about our education system and the attitude of all too many parents toward the education of our children (June 21 column).
EF	D	7	CA	Complaints that students are not being treated equally throughout the district under the Blue Ribbon plan should be starting to level off by now.
EFOUT	A	22	KW	There is much that is right about what Memphis City Schools are doing to produce productive citizens,...
EFIN	C	13	CA	Johnson is giving principals surveys this week to get their candid opinions on the plan and its effectiveness. She will use the responses to help formulate any changes.
SE	F	14	CL	Between classes, hallways in some of the MCS's best high schools are a free-for-all where teachers and students live with fear on a daily basis. What teacher would want to try to stop a fight and two 6-foot thugs, who - because of Blue Ribbon - will be back the next day?
SEND	B	2	PR	However, we recognize that there are students whose behaviors impact in a negative way their learning environment, and sometimes the learning environment for other students as well.
SEREL	A	20	KW	We'd have to admit that countless teachers in our schools are teaching in fear.
SEFU	B	1	PR	Academic achievement is our number one goal, and we realize that positive student behaviors are critical to reaching this goal. Most of our students in Memphis City Schools exhibit the kinds of attitudes and behaviors that are critical to academic achievement.
SEC	B	4	PR	Where do we focus our energy to ensure academic excellence in a safe learning environment?
L	A	11	KW	...was implemented two years ago over the strenuous objections of roughly 70 percent of parents surveyed.
LHB	F	15	CL	During classes, some teachers are afraid to turn their back on the class for fear of bodily injury.
LHM	F	18	CL	Teachers fear their cars will be vandalized or that they will be bodily harmed before or after school. It is time to take back control of the schools, let the students know that there are serious repercussions for misconduct, and let the teachers know that Supt. Carol Johnson's administration supports them over those who don't want to learn.
LHE	A	21	KW	We'd have to admit that we have failed to provide one of the most basic constitutional rights.
S	A	10	KW	Sadly, it appears that our schools Superintendent and - so far- a majority of the Memphis City Schools Board of Commissioners are reluctant to hear from teachers, principals, students and the general public about troubling trends that have developed since the so-called Blue Ribbon Behavior Initiative...
SD	C	24	CA	"Before Blue Ribbon, there was a sense of respect for the teacher," Allen said. "After Blue Ribbon, students have been known to say: 'You can't do anything to me.'"

SP	F	7	T	The problem to me is much more complex than just putting a paddle back in the school. We as a society must find a way to make parents accountable.
SCI	C	8	CA	District staffers have gone on the defensive, highlighting double-digit drops in fighting, office referrals, uniform violations and class cutting.
SHC	F	17	CL	Good students - even in honors classes - have to put up with unruly students who disrupt the classes on a regular basis, knowing that there are no repercussions for their actions.
SC	C	18	CA	"I know I am absolutely right on the issue." he said "I know the more they try to cover it up, the more the grassroots people will move to uncover it."
SBV	A	8	KW	And, of course, we can blame the children for being unable to overcome generations of communal dysfunction and suddenly become college material. Though they would never admit it, I suspect that the latter is the position of many educated black Memphians who hold great influence.
SHN	D	9	CA	But it would be a shame, as a school board member Kenneth Whalum Jr. has suggested, to restore this inheritance from plantation society to the hallways of the Memphis City Schools.
SS	D	19	CA	The problem did not originate with the ban on physical punishment. It won't magically go away if the whippings return.
MW	A	27	KW	I just hope more of my colleagues will begin to see the same crisis I see. If not, we'll have to begin to use the blue ribbon as a tourniquet to stop the flow of lifeblood (literal and figurative) from our communities.
SA	F	4	T	What are my well behaved students doing? Good question.
N	F	5	T	I am sure some study has been done that shows the statistics for the Blue Ribbon Plan and that they are great results. But in my classroom those students are people, not statistics, and for the most part they need help dealing with many issues.
NS	C	6	CA	The plan was instituted just as the 115,000-student urban school district began its first year without corporal punishment and is one of the signature initiatives of Supt. Carol Johnson's four-year tenure.
NF	A	28	KW	One final word about Dr. King: He is partly responsible for the fact that our school system is roughly 85 percent black and poor.
NCR	B	3	PR	Approximately 5 percent (or less) of our students exhibit chronic problems...Should our focus as a school board be on that 5 percent...should our teachers be focused on that group?
NS	A	11	KW	(BRI) was implemented) two years ago over the strenuous objections of roughly 70 percent of parents surveyed.
C	A	1	KW	The bad behavior we are witnessing in Memphis City Schools, especially among our elementary and middle level students...
CINT	A	2	KW	...is partially the strange fruit of years of insidious poverty, psychological hurt and benign community neglect...
CINA	A	7	KW	We can blame the faceless "system," which is a favorite whipping boy of many societal ne'er-do-wells whose own failures have made them bitter about life in general.
I	D	12	CA	On a 5-4 vote, the board took a brace stand against the practice, despite considerable opposition to the ban in the community.
IOBJ	B	10	PR	The board and Dr. Johnson have heard the teachers' concerns about the need for additional training for teachers and inconsistency or irregularities in enforcement across the district.
ISUB	C	7	CA	An increasing number of parents, community members and even teachers have come to vent their frustration about student behavior at the Memphis Board of Education meeting and have sent a flood of e-mails to board members and staff alike.
IDIF	A	5	KW	When it comes to discipline problems in those schools, there is plenty of blame to go around.

ICON	C-2	5	CA	A growing chorus of community members, concerned about the violent incidents that take place in and around schools, is demanding change more quickly.
D	A-2	19	KW	Because to do so would be to admit that not every child, every day, is college bound. We'd have to admit that countless children in our schools are fortunate just to live through a school week.
DG	B	11	CL	I am sure their recommendations and concerns will be addressed on June 25.
DC	F	2	T	I do not actually believe this is the fault of my administrators; it comes from higher than that... much of my time is spent creating an alternative plan for the disruptive students in my classroom.
DB	F	10	T	As a high school teacher in Memphis City Schools, I believe the Blue Ribbon Plan is not working.
I	D	12	CA	...despite considerable opposition to the ban in the community.
IUA	C-2	19	CA	I can't go a day without someone saying, "Rev. Whalum, please don't stop crying out about Blue Ribbon.
IFO	A-2	30	KW	If we don't restore discipline in our schools we may see worse unrest than we saw after April 4, 1968."
IA	C-3	47	CA	In order for the plan to work at our schools, the staff and community must embrace the shift in culture...
IP	G-1	6	CL	The Blue Ribbon Initiative may need minor or major change, but returning to a failed approach is certainly not the answer...those who wish simplistic solutions...for complex problems.
IN	B	8	PR	According to the data, we have made great gains since putting Blue Ribbon Initiative into effect.
IT	G	2	CL	Throughout history, people have achieved great things through vision, planning, determination and perseverance -- no matter what their personal circumstances may have been.
IIR	C	48	CA	Violence begets violence. We have to teach them conflict resolution skills that last a lifetime.
IS	C	14	CA	His campaign last fall called for immediate reinstatement of corporal punishment as a last resort measure under Blue Ribbon.
RP	F	20	CL	The Memphis City Schools should be ever more unwavering in teaching these kids the most valuable lesson they may ever learn -- that there are repercussions for bad behavior, and rewards for good behavior.
RF	F	12	T	The students do not receive severe enough consequences; therefore, they behave inappropriately more often because their punishments are not immediate enough or strident enough.
FP	C	5	CA	But even as district-provided data show that many categories of offenses covered by the behavior plan are decreasing.
FPR	D	13	CA	The evidence was overwhelming: More effective behavioral modification techniques were available to maintain order in the classroom.
P	G	8	CL	If we were willing to be proactive...maybe we wouldn't run off people like Dr. Carol Johnson.

Stone's Paradox As A Model for Memphis' Blue Ribbon Initiative

According to Stone, “the Rationality Project misses the point of politics. Political reasoning is instead reasoning by metaphor and analogy” (Stone, p. 7). Thus, the Rationality Project resembles the market model, where individual advancement and well-being is the *modus operandi*. The market model does not provide for a community's fight for the public interest or common good. For this reason, Stone's model of society as a political community best fits the Blue Ribbon Initiative:

Goals

The “common good” in this case study is positive discipline – the means by which to reach the Memphis City Schools' goal: Every child. Every day. College bound. This is the idea at the center of the Blue Ribbon Initiative. Ideas, in keeping with Stone, are at the center of all political conflicts. Stone presents policy making as a constant struggle over the criteria for classification; the boundaries of categories, and the definition of ideals that guide the way people behave.

In Memphis City Schools, the commons problems, or collective action problems, stem from the lack of discipline among elementary and middle school students, in particular, and from a lack of discipline in the home, in general. The long history of parent and teacher support for corporal punishment creates a strong body of influence that creates enemies and friends in Memphis. In the polis, as these researchers have learned, information is interpretive, incomplete and strategically withheld. This is seen throughout the articles referenced. Whalum places ultimate blame on poverty and violence and argues for the

reinstatement of corporal punishment; Robinson wears rose-colored glasses to portray all that is right with Blue Ribbon. Carol Johnson pleads for more time. Teachers detest the burden of paperwork. All are imperfect and incomplete representations of the polis problems in Memphis. All are strategic representations intended to assuage influence to achieve a goal.

Kenneth Whalum is perhaps the most passionate voice we observe. Indeed, his power is evidenced throughout the portrayal of Blue Ribbon. It is clear that Whalum has positioned himself as the voice for all who reject Blue Ribbon. Interestingly, as researchers, we are left to ponder whether Whalum is also the voice of the faith-based community, who otherwise remain silent.

The quest for security is a passionate call in the Memphis commons. Students require a safe learning environment. Teachers need to work in a place where they are free from fear. In Memphis, this quest for safety commands urgency. In examining the security/efficiency tradeoff in Memphis, it becomes evident that there is more to be gained from Blue Ribbon than a sense of safety. What if, more than gains or loss of instructional time, more students feel valued, and therefore, begin to succeed? In the polis, Stone teaches us that societal progress involves individual gains and losses.

Liberty is offered through new alternatives for Memphis students. According to Stone, “liberty is expanded whenever a person’s control over his or her life is increased” (Stone, p. 128). In the positive sense, students are being given access to college in their future – a goal that may or may not seem realistic to many poor black students. In the negative concept, liberty is the absence of

coercion – in this case, by teachers and administrators who no longer have access to the paddle to induce desired behavior.

Problems

The strategic representation of the Blue Ribbon Initiative revolves around the issue of corporal punishment, which has been banned in the schools. Dr. Johnson and Patrice Robinson offer one brand of strategic representation; Dr. Whalum offers another. *Commercial Appeal* portrays both sides with alternative support. Ultimately, Carol Johnson recognizes that her carefully planned initiative to provide dignity and hope to students whose lives are threatened by hopelessness may come undone.

Kenneth Whalum and Memphis teachers effectively employ stories of decline to attempt to force the superintendent and board to reinstate corporal punishment. By blaming the victims, they create policy stories to further their influence against Blue Ribbon. In this case study, corporal punishment becomes the plausible synecdoche for Blue Ribbon, even though it serves to replace corporal punishment with more humane and effective discipline measures. Indeed, Whalum employs metaphors of war to assuage influence in achieving his goals.

Ambiguity serves both sides of the Memphis polis. Johnson never asserts how every child will manage to achieve a college education without the benefit of funding or supportive parents. Whalum proselytizes that not every child is meant to attend college, but when it comes to improving discipline, he offers no real prescription for improvement.

Numbers are employed by both sides in Memphis to achieve their goals. As stated early in Chapter 4, there is more art (poetry) than science in the data that is offered. We do not really know whether and if so, to what degree, student behavior has improved as a result of the Blue Ribbon Plan. Numbers are metaphors for desired changes here; they are also metaphors for a system in chaos, depending on who is reporting the data. In Memphis, numbers are employed to create a desired change, and each side uses them to press their points, gather influence and affirm their positions.

Whalum ascribes poverty and violence as the “root cause” for the lack of discipline in the schools. He views poverty as an intentional cause generated as a result of segregation. Johnson, however, sees lack of hope as the inadvertent cause of black students’ plight. Each, nonetheless, is a historical model of causality in that the pattern repeats or reproduces itself. These causal stories invite passion. They provide victims and oppressors and portray innocence and guilt. Indeed, they compel us to choose a political side.

Solutions

With Blue Ribbon clearly meeting resistance, one considers whether Dr. Johnson might have offered direct inducements to principals and staff to participate. Dr. Johnson hesitates to impose “top-down” mandates. Does the lack of rewards and sanctions inhibit Blue Ribbon’s chance of success? Kenneth Whalum pushes his indoctrination in order to manipulate the community into demanding the reinstatement of corporal punishment “as a last resort.” He references support in numbers and withholds information to create his own

propaganda machine. Patrice Robinson employs facts and persuasion to buy more time for Blue Ribbon to work.

Size matters in the polis, as it does in Memphis. Tyranny of the majority presents itself in the case of Blue Ribbon. How can the reinstatement of corporal punishment serve the common good? Yet, if we are to believe Whalum and *Commercial Appeal*, there is a growing majority who reject Blue Ribbon.

Again, it is evident that Blue Ribbon represents politics, not policy. “Policy is potentially a sphere of rational analysis, objectivity, allegiance to truth and pursuit of the well being of society as a whole. Politics is the sphere of emotion and passion, irrationality, self interest, short sightedness and raw power” (Stone, p. 376). In this policy argument, the question of whether corporal punishment is included or excluded is essential to which political side of Blue Ribbon one belongs and how value is established. Blue Ribbon is a policy paradox in which intense passions have been evoked over the boundaries of corporal punishment. In the current chaos, the future of Blue Ribbon remains in question.

Clarence Stone’s Civic Capacity

Clarence Stone’s views on Civic Capacity play a vital role in interpreting the Blue Ribbon Initiative in Memphis. The Characteristics of Civic Capacity presented in Chapter two were used to analyze the BRI.

Patrice Robinson is a woman with a bigger vision. Her goals for Memphis include increased student achievement, student attendance, teacher satisfaction, positive school climates and student leadership/empowerment. Robinson has set forth adequate goals for the future with a need to pursue the resources which would better solve the problems in Memphis.

Throughout the Memphis City Schools case, there is a consistent sense of urgency regarding the problems and the need to reform the BRI. The voices present in Memphis pose several problems regarding the BRI. Throughout the discourse in these voices/articles a sense of urgency is evident when framing the problems in Memphis.

Kenneth Whalum displays a dominant voice concerning inequalities among students. Whalum states, “We in public education have to find a way to provide some of the intangible assets that are not available to most of our students in their own homes.” Due to the inequalities of student home life, academic achievement becomes increasingly difficult.

Throughout our research period of the BRI, there was no individual leader spearheading the initiative. Instead, there was a great deal of inconsistency in leadership, with administration constantly changing. The BRI failed to engage the central pillars of institutional power. Social capital could have enhanced the success of the Memphis City School District. Memphis administration failed to anticipate the outcome of the vote on corporal punishment, leaving the school system without a plan of action.

The implementation of the BRI displays a top down model of administrative decision, failing to engage schools, parents and community collaboration. Data indicates that Memphis City Schools used multiple variables to track the success of the BRI. PR acknowledges there is a lack of distributive leadership when stating, “I think we are at a place where we need to train each school individually so they can come together as a team.” Coinciding with the

lack of collaboration with the BRI is the fact that teacher's unions were also disengaged from the decision making process.

Memphis City Schools did not take advantage of possible opportunities to seek and apply special funds or extra resources. According to the articles presented, the Blue Ribbon Initiative failed to bridge the gap between school and community. The BRI started out with strong momentum, however due to lack of planning and shifts in administration, the initiative failed to sustain community, teacher and parental engagement. The Commercial Appeals states, "an increasing number of parents, community members and even teachers have come to vent their frustration about student behavior at the Member Board of Education's meetings and have sent a flood of e-mails to board members and staff alike." Instead of being positive, "district staffers have gone on the defensive."

Although Patrice Robinson recognizes "that there are students whose behaviors impact in a negative way their learning environment, and sometimes the learning environment for other students as well," there were no programs or evidence of a movement to change the peer culture in the Memphis City Schools. The credibility of the BRI is limited since there were facts backing the plan; however the district present in Memphis was not productive and was based on individual complaints. The administration behind the BRI has failed to create an adequate foundation for the success of the program. Multiple changes in administration have displayed inconsistency in leadership.

Clarence Stone's Characteristics of Civic Capacity

Characteristics	Memphis City Schools
1. Agency	sometimes
2. Urgency	Always
3. Inequalities	sometimes
4. Reform	No
5. social capital	No
6. Implementation & Planning	No
7. Collaboration	No
8. Indicators	sometimes
9. Distribute Leadership	No
10. Engage Stakeholders	No
11. Funds & Resources	No
12. Relationships & Understanding	No
13. Sustained momentum	somewhat
14. Parental Involvement	sometimes
15. Neighborhood Centers	No
16. Peer Culture	No
17. Connection	No
18. Accountability	Somewhat
19. Organization	No

Chapter V

Conclusion and Reflection

Upon conclusion of this research, Deborah Stone's theory of political discourse and Clarence Stone's Civic Capacity are present throughout the Memphis City Schools Case. The many voices of the Blue Ribbon Initiative prove that public discourse is an important necessity in dealing with the problems of a society, or in this case, a public school and community. In analyzing the case of the BRI, it can be stated that D. Stone's notion of Problems, Goals and Solutions are written throughout the case. Certain voices represented specific areas of Stone's theory. For example, Kenneth Whalum focused predominantly on the problem, without mention of possible solutions, or a light at the end of the tunnel. On the other hand, the voice of the Commercial Appeals was focused more on goals, rather than the isolation of problems and solutions.

It is difficult to speculate on the case of the BRI, since the issue remains open and presently in dispute among the Memphis City School's community. The voice of Patrice Robinson focuses on the goals and solutions, rather than the problems. Unlike Whalum, Robinson uses words of encouragement and positivism to persuade the community to have faith in the BRI and what it stands for. She recognizes that "academic achievement is (the) number one goal." After all, the students are the stakeholders who will be most effected by the outcome of this case. This in turn will affect the future of community lives in Memphis. Whalum's idea of community improvement coincides with C. Stone's view of community engagement and collaboration, as well as shaping the peer culture of

the population in Memphis. All who are involved deserve equity which will require collaboration. In this case the equity is distributive rather than non-distributive, which is unfortunate because the outcome depends on a system presently plagued with controversy.

Perhaps if those who are involved in the BRI would apply the works of specific theorists, their problems would be more likely to turn into solutions. Following Deborah Stone's model, creates a template for understanding how politics works. When delving further into theory, one can apply the work of Clarence Stone in order to better understand how education works best. The students involved in the BRI are already at a disadvantage by being a part of a school system and community plagued with controversy. It is the duty of the administration to ensure that the student's best interests are taken into consideration when making any decisions regarding the initiative. Those involved would benefit from examining the works of past and present theorists to provide a better future for the citizens and students of the Memphis City School District.

In this case, I recommend that the voices in the Memphis City Schools attempt to work together instead of in isolation. The goal must be a common one, which will engage the students, parents, teachers and community by creating a safe and healthy learning environment. There seems to be many voices in this case, with little consistency. The voices must come together in both compromise and in agreement if there is to be a positive outcome in this case.

In addition, there needs to be more consistency in leadership in the Memphis City School system. There is an excess of turnover in leadership, which

is not beneficial for the students. If a school or district is to be successful, the leaders must have a desire and willingness to work for that district. Each time a district is plagued by administrator turnover, the administrators who leave usually take their plans and ideas for the school with them. Thus leaving the position open to a new leader with new ideas and new initiatives, which are likely to falter without the time necessary for their goals and outcomes to be achieved.

Another recommendation that I would make regarding this case is that the leaders involved need to get the community on board, specifically the parents. According to Clarence Stone, all stakeholders need to be on board if a plan is to be effectively executed. "The mesh between school and community depends on both what the households of students bring to the engagement and what schools provide," states C. Stone. In the case of the BRI, there is much discourse among the community. This discourse needs to be transformed into support for the school and the leaders of the school. If the parents and community do not support the initiative, the leader's job becomes increasingly difficult, even impossible.

The intent of the BRI is to benefit the majority, not just the individual. Perhaps the Memphis City School Administrators need to sell this idea to their stakeholders. Clarence Stone supports this notion in his belief that the well being of a community should be enjoyed by the whole, instead of the individual. Perhaps if the administration does a better job at providing their stakeholders with evidence of the benefits to the majority, then their initiative will be more likely to be accepted.

Another major problem in this case is the fact that the many different voices each have their own ideas on how to deal with the same problem. Once again, consistency in this area is lacking. More coherence is needed if the initiative is to prove successful. In addition, some of the voices change over time, which causes the stakeholders to lose faith in a voice that is unsure and lacks confidence. C. Stone reiterates, the “turnover in administrative leadership can be devastating, and the struggle to combat low expectations is unending.” Hence, the administration would have more followers if they would gather their thoughts and stand by their word.

Deborah Stone and Clarence Stone’s theories overlap in several ways. Stone and Stone agree that the acknowledgement of the problem is essential to move forward. C. Stone stresses there must be a sense of urgency surrounding the problem. D. Stone views discourse as steps toward progress in problem solving. D. Stone promotes security and equity for all citizens. Similarly, Clarence Stone advocates for civic capacity, the “concerted effort to address a major community problem.” A unified plan of action needs to be in place for the better of the Memphis City School District.

The research recommends that the provisions of the BRI be examined and adjusted. Since the community was initially supportive of the plan, this proves that they had previous faith in the school system, which was then diminished by one or more factors. The administration behind the BRI should look toward the community, enlisting the engagement and support necessary to make the BRI plan a success. Based on this fact, the researcher does not believe that the BRI should continue to function in its present form. Instead, the plan needs to be

revamped to meet the needs and wishes of the parents, teachers, community, Board of Education, and most importantly but often forgotten, the students.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Articles

Appendix B

Source	# claim	Voice	GOAL	PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
A. Whalum		CA paper	EqRec	S Symbols	I Inducements
B Robinson		KW Whalen	EqRecM	SN Symb Narr	IUA Unitary Actors
C Aarons		PR prez	EqRecR	SD Decline	IFO FutureOriented
D Editorial		MCS	EqIt	SP Progress	IA Adaptable
E Numbers		CJ supt	EqPro	SCI Change Illus	IP Purposeful Cause
F Letters		T Tcher	EqProCom	SHC Helpless	
G postings		TG prof	EqProLot	SC Conspiracy	IN Numbers
H MCS web		BM mallott	Ef Efficency	SBV Blame Vict	IG Giver
		KP Pinkney	EfOut		IT Target
		CL letter	EfIn	SS Synecdoche	IIR Incentive/Rewrds
			Se Secrty	SH Horror Story	IS Sanctions
			SeNd Needs		ISYM Symbolism
			SePdx Paradox	M Metaphor	
			SeSym Symbolic	MNL Norm Leap	RU Rules
			SeRel Relative	MUR Unintend Rew	RP Precise
			SeInst Instrumen	MM Machine	RF Flexible
			SeFu Future	MWI Wedge/Incline	
			SeC Communal	MC Containers	RLC Custom/Tradtn
				MD Disease	RINF Informal norm
			L Liberty	MW War	RMOR Moral
			LH Harms		RPRI Private Assoc
			LHB Bodily Harm	SA Ambiguity	
			LHM Material		RNEU Neutral
			LHA Amenity	N NUMBERS	RPE Enforced
			LHS Structural	NM Metaphor	RPI Perverse Incent
			LHA Accumulat	NN Normative	RT Thumb
			LHE Emotional	NS Symbolic	
			LHM Moral/Sprt		FP Facts/persuasion
				Hidden Stories	FPR Rational
			Libty/Secur	NF Frequency	FPI Indoctrination
			Libty/Equity	NI Identifiable	
				N Boundaries	

				NCC Create Cmmnty	
				NCR Conflict Resol	
				NS Numeric Strateg	
				C CAUSES	
				Cac Accidnetal	
				Cint Intentional	
				Cina Inadvertent	
				CMc Mechanical	
				I INTEREST	
				Iobj Objective	
				Isub Subjective	
				Irep Representation	
				Idif Diffused	
				Icon Concentrated	
	# claim	Voice	GOAL	PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
				D DECISION	
				DG Goals	
				DC consequences	
				Dmax Max Tot Welf	
				DR Rational Choice	
				DCB Cost/Benefit	
				DR Risk Analysis	
				DW Weighting	
				DL Lateral Thinking	
				DB Brainstorming	
				DI Issue Framing	

