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Issues Analysis

**Description of History in Florida**

Concern regarding single-use plastics has been on the rise since the 1990s, especially regarding plastics in the ocean. Ye and Andrary (1991) suggest that plastic waste in marine environments is a relatively recent phenomenon and is attributed to commercial fishing and gear. They also concluded that floating plastic debris are normally held in the water column where larger marine mammals and fish can be affected. Even though commercial fishing does produce plastics in the ocean, another major contributor to this plastic pollution are individual and household single use plastics. Some household single-use plastics that end up in the ocean regularly are plastic straws. Schnurr et al. 2018, mentions that both legislative and non-legislative interventions could help prevent single-use plastics, such as drinking straws, in the marine environment. Schnurr’s (2018) research was testing out non-legislative methods. The purpose of this analysis, however, will be to focus on legislative policies that impact single-use straws, which are still in due process. There is a large concern about the cleanliness of the Florida coastlines, as Florida’s economy relies heavily on beach tourism; as such, the straw ban has been a very popular topic. People are also concerned over single- use plastics affecting marine life and threatening their overall existence (Derraik 2002). Beck (1991) describes the growing interest on the impact of single-use plastic debris on Florida manatees, basically concluding that the debris are from local sources.

In 2008, the Legislature enacted a similar law requiring the Department of Environmental Protection to analyze “the need for new or different regulation of auxiliary containers, wrappings, or disposable plastic bags used by consumers to carry products from retail establishments (Gross, 2010).

The action to ban single-use plastic straws starting to make headlines in Gainesville, FL around early 2019. In March 2019, a bill was passed for Florida cities and local governments to decide if they wanted to ban the distribution and use of plastic straws. That was quickly overturned by the State of Florida government as of April 30th, 2019, where now the law states that local city and county governments are prohibited from regulating a ban on single-use plastic straws. The Florida Senate passed bill HB 771, which enforced regulations on cities and counties and removed their decision-making capability to put into law a plastic straw ban for their local government. Some cities, before this bill was passed, had already started to adopt a plastic straw ban before the State of Florida decided to allow for their own regulations. City and county officials will not be in a position to enforce a plastic straw ban on any restaurants according to the Florida Senate.

*The Passage of Time*

The concern of single-use plastics has been an ongoing issue, but the specificity of a law banning straws is relatively new. The passage of time for the City of Gainesville started around March 2019 (Eldwood 2019).

**Description of Current Status in Gainesville, FL**

On May 10, 2019 Governor Ron DeSantis used his veto power, for the first time since his appointment, declining to sign an environmental bill that would have prohibited local governments from banning plastic straws for the next five years. “The state should simply allow local communities to address this issue through the political process,” DeSantis wrote. “Citizens who oppose plastic straw ordinances can seek recourse by electing people who share their views, (Gross, 2010).”

There has been a flip-flop over this bill for the past several months. Due to Governor Ron DeSantis using his veto power, local governments can make their own decisions about the matter. Other cities have passed straw bans such as St. Petersburg, Miami Beach, and Ft. Myers. On May 17, 2019 Gainesville, FL began voting on the plastic straw ban, and there is expected to be a final result in sometime in June sometime. As of yet, there is no news on the final verdict. Even though the plastic straw ban has not been formally added as a policy, there have been many restaurants that have started to practice a single- use straw ban policy.

Depending on what the City of Gainesville decides, this choice could lead to a different conflict. The original conflict was that the local governments wanted to choose whether or not they wanted to implement their own straw ban. The conflict that could now arise is if the people are on board for the decisions made by the city officials.

*Incomplete Information*

The State of Florida is allowing for local governments to make their own decisions about the straw ban at this time. However, there is still a lengthy process to allow for each county or city to make the regulation stick. Many local governments will need to conduct surveys and investigations to see if the straw ban will be beneficial to their community before they can request a regulation be implemented.

“The study would focus on the “data and conclusions” used in adopting local ordinances instead of the environmental impacts, which had irked environmental groups that argue that there’s enough evidence of the effect of plastic pollution” (Gross, 2010).

There are no true scientific studies on the effects of only single- use plastic straws in Gainesville, FL. Since there is no published study, there is lack of information for both the city officials, the residents of Gainesville, and the State of Florida.

**Possible Solutions**

*The focus is on solving a problem*

It looks like there is a solution currently for the people that wanted the straw ban to be implement by local governments, because the bill was recently overturned. Other people that are concerned about the ban are the elderly and disabled not wanting their freedoms infringed upon, by having to ask or not being able to obtain a plastic straw. Some small restaurants are concerned about the straw ban because they have limited resources, and change can be difficult, i.e switching over to paper straws. Larger chain restaurants, like Starbucks, are onboard with the straw ban and are regulating some changes such as not providing a straw with every beverage automatically. The issue is ongoing, and the conflict may between stakeholders change in the near future.

*Parties meet face to face to work out differences*

Since the City of Gainesville is still waiting on the final vote to the single-use plastic straw ban, there is not a timeline yet on whether the city officials will meet face to face with the residents. However, it would be useful if they do meet with the residents and local business owners, after the verdict sometime this month, to go over concerns about the straw ban and how it will impact the community.

**Realms and Concepts of Value**

Realms of values are “categories or a classification of ways in which the environment or natural resources are valued” (Tainer 2006). Each realm of value has an equivalent concept of the value process. The different stakeholders will view the natural resource by the each of distinct realms.

The first realm of value that is identified is the **ecosystem value**. “Ecosystem values are assed in terms of ecological health or ecosystem integrity and reproduced within the scientific discipline of ecology (Tainer, 2006)”. The concept of the value resides with the residents of Gainesville wanting a straw ban to be enacted so that the ocean and beach environments can have health and ecosystem integrity. Many viral videos have surfaced showing marine animals impacted by single-use plastic straws. The residents that are for the straw ban value the ocean for its ecosystem services and its intrinsic values, meaning that they value a clean ocean just for the sake of having a clean ocean.

The second realm of value is the **recreational value**. “Recreational values are judged on the potential for a quality recreational experience and are also reproduced via cultural and social processes (Tainer, 2006)”. The State of Florida has shown that is does value clean beaches because it attracts tourism, and thus more revenue for the state. The original bill prohibition of a straw ban for cities and counties to make their own regulation decisions, seemed to oppose this notion of recreational value. Since the bill has been vetoed, this shows a strong interest in the State of Florida have a recreational value its people and tourists. If there is a potential for clean ocean and beaches, the State of Florida will mostly go on the side of that regulation. This is a political action, that considers the political and also cultural viewpoints of the State Senate.

The third realm that is observed in this conflict is the **social realm**. We attribute social value to entities that promote and strengthen social relationships or institutions (Tainer, 2006)”. The residents of Gainesville that are for the straw ban value a concept of being able to voice their opinions and use their numbers to strengthen their social stance on single-use plastic straws. The expression for the residents is to use their voting rights and social influence to display their passion on this conflict. What residents’ value is the ability to have their voices hear and for their to be a call to action that the City of Gainesville can address.

The last realm in this conflict is the **moral realm**. Residents of Gainesville that do now want the straw ban to be enforced are concerned that their rights are not being represented. They feel that their right to mobility to drinking and comfort dining out is not being represented with a straw ban. “Moral value taking the form of normative judgments and are reproduced via moral and cultural education (Tainer, 2006)”. Disabled and elderly people believe that people should have more moral standards and consider their needs as well before single-use plastic straws are banned. The overall feeling of this stakeholder group is that they should have the same rights as everyone else, and that with a straw ban their lives will be generally impacted in a negative way.

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| Realm of Value | Concept of Value | Stakeholder | Expression of Value | Mode of Value Reproduction | Entities that are valued |
| Ecosystem | Ecosystem health and integrity | Residents of Gainesville for the straw ban | Enacting the straw ban | Science of ecology and ecological processes | Oceans are cleaner because there is limited availability of single-use plastic straws |
| Recreational | Potential for cleaner quality of recreational experience in beaches | State of Florida | Political action | Cultural and political processes | Tourists and locals and enjoying cleaner beaches free from single- use plastic straws |
| Social | People unifying against a cause they will strongly about will strengthen the social political climate | Residents of Gainesville for the straw ban | Political action and voting | Cultural and social process | The ability for residents to voice their opinions governments take action actions happen |
| Moral | People who do not want their rights taken away | Residents of Gainesville opposed to the straw ban | Remove the straw ban | Moral education,  Cultural and social processes | All people should have the same rights for mobility and comfort |

Table 1- Realms of Value in the City of Gainesville Straw Ban Conflict with the State of Florida

**Stakeholder Analysis/ Issues Analysis**

Stakeholders are defined as “any group of people, organized or unorganized, who share a common interest or stake in a particular issue or system” (Grimble & Wellard 1997).

Primary Stakeholder- parties that have unharmonious goals and/or have a direct stake and reaching those goals

Secondary Stakeholders- indirect stake in the pursue of goals and are not directly involved

Peripheral Stakeholders- parties that are interested in the conflict, have an opinion about the issue, not directly involved or affected

Positions- what people want to happen

Interest- why they want this to happen

***Primary Stakeholders***

*A. State of Florida*

*Position:* Because of the veto, the State of Florida wants the cities and counties to provide evidence, to support a single-use plastic straw ban, when the local government is applying to regulate the ban to the state government.

*Interest:* The State of Florida wanted this new bill to happen so that they can have the ultimate decision on whether a city or county can enforce a plastic straw ban.

*Values:* Now believes that Florida’s cities and counties should have the power to make their own single-use plastic straw ban bill.

*B. City of Gainesville*

*Position:* The City of Gainesville is currently voting on their position. It is not certain, at this present time, if the city will be in support or not of the plastic straw ban.

*Interest:* The reason why the City of Gainesville is voting on enforcing a straw ban is because it is a very hot topic. Residents of Gainesville are adamant and passionate about this ban and have voiced their concerns to the City of Gainesville government, so the city feels like they must take action on this subject.

*Values:* This value is not yet determined. Voting still in process.

*C. Residents of Gainesville opposed to the straw ban*

*Position:* Many disabled people and elderly people do not want this straw ban to be enforced and for the City of Gainesville to vote no on the straw ban.

*Interest:* They do not want the straw ban to be enforced because they feel that their rights are being infringed upon and do not want to go through a hassle to obtain a straw. They also believe that a strong plastic straw ban will mean straws will not be guaranteed in every restaurant. Restaurants not having straws readily available will impact this stakeholder group directly, specifically their mobility to consume beverages and comfort while dining out.

*Values:* Believes that every resident should have the right to a plastic straw if they required it. This group believes that a straw ban bill should not be passed because it infringes on the rights of some minority groups. This group believes in the equality of all people’s group.

***Secondary Stakeholders/ Issues Analysis***

*D. Residents of Gainesville for the straw ban*

*Position:* Gainesville, Florida has a large population of conservationists. There are many state parks in Alachua County, which is the county of Gainesville, and the interest is there with many residents who are concerned about single-use plastic pollution.

*Interest:* The reason why the residents of Gainesville are passionate about the straw ban is because they are interested in protecting marine species, water ways, and overall be a more consciousness city. Whether or not the straw ban is enforced will not impact these residents directly.

*Values:* The values of this group are for the protecting and conservation of the environment for its intrinsic value. This group believes that the protection of the environment is above the rights of groups of people (i.e elderly and disabled).

**Primary Generating Factors**

Facts-based: disagreement over what is because of how parties perceive what is. Judgment and perception are the primary conflict generators here. disagreement over what the “facts” of the issue are; what is true or accurate; what is “reality”

* Between the stakeholders State of Florida and City of Gainesville, there is a fact-based disagreement. The State of Florida is requiring for all cities and counties to show proof that there is evidence that a single-use plastic straw ban will be a positive influence on the residents and the environment. The State of Florida has stated that there is no scientific or actual proof that a single-use plastic straw ban will cause a positive impact. Some of residents of the City of Gainesville believe that there is enough evidence through subjective experiences in beaches and bodies of water that are littered by single-use plastic straws. That evidence is subjective and not fact-based or scientific. The reality for the residents in Gainesville is that single-plastic straws are polluting the environment and there should be ban.

Values-based: disagreement over what should be the determinants (criteria, bases, priorities) of a policy decision, a relationship, or some other issue in conflict

* The value-based disagreement in this case could be between the residents of Gainesville that are for the single-use plastic straw ban and the City of Gainesville’s voting outcome. Currently, the City of Gainesville has not reported if they will proceed with a single-use plastic straw ban, but there are many residents of Gainesville that are conservationists and they are passionate about protecting and preserving the environment for the sake of simply keeping the environment pristine. If the City of Gainesville proceeds to not enact a single-use plastic straw ban, a conflict will be created and escalated since many residents are for the straw ban. The City of Gainesville should have a value system to represent the interest of its residents, which the majority do want a plastic straw ban, but sometimes that doesn’t show through in the policies and bills passed and the public is ignored.

Interests-based: disagreement over who will get what in the distribution of scarce resources, whether tangible or intangible (e.g., land, economic benefits, rights, privileges, control, respect).

* There could be interest-based disagreement between the residents that do not want the plastic straw ban passed and the City of Gainesville voting outcome. It the City of Gainesville chooses to pass the straw ban bill, the residents that do not want the bill to be passed will have a conflict. This group believes that a straw ban bill is overstepping their rights of comfort and mobility to drink a beverage.

Jurisdiction-based: disagreement over who has authority or jurisdiction over the problems and issues of the conflict

-Jurisdiction- based disagreements have been recently resolved. This issue was resolved between the cities and counties and the State of Florida. The State of Florida has give back the decision-making power back to the cities and counties.

Person-based: disagreement pertaining to personal factors, such as interaction styles, idiosyncratic actions, personality-related behaviors, effects of the physical setting, etc.

* In this case study there is no person-based conflict biased. No one person is disagreeing with another single one person.

History-based: disagreement related to the history of the issue(s), the conflict, and the conflict relationship, as perceived by the parties in conflict.

* In this case study there is not a history-based primary generating conflict factor because the conflict is relatively new.

Culture-based: disagreements emerge that pertain to cultural orientations, worldviews, and identities. Parties’ different cultural foundations, when not addressed, may contribute to misunderstanding.

* In this case study there is no culture-based disagreements that are identified. The residents of the Gainesville do have different cultures, but that doesn’t play into this case study.

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