Stasis Theory

Have you ever been in a situation where you and your friends are arguing about a topic and you can't come to an agreement, so you finally agree to disagree? That is stasis. Although stasis theory won't help you determine how to solve the problem, it will help you identify why you and your friends are unable to come to an agreement. Stasis theory is the first step in helping you pinpoint the reasons for disagreement. This is important to know because in academic writing you must balance the needs of different stakeholders to convince them you understand their needs.

To do this, apply the four levels of stasis.

What are the four levels of stasis?

- **Fact:** What happened? Did it happen?
- **Definition:** What type of issue is it (e.g., monetary, healthcare, location, equal access)? Do different groups have different understanding of words or resources?
- **Quality:** Also known as value. How important is the issue? Who is it important for?
- **Policy:** What steps should be taken to deal with the issue?

Identifying the stakeholders' answers to these questions will help you determine where they disagree on an issue.

How do you apply stasis theory?
Background: Texas Tech University has a policy that most incoming first-year students should live on campus for that first year. As the number of first years increase, more upper-level students lose their space in the dorms.

- Fact: How many dorms/beds are available on the TTU campus? How many first years are there? How many upper-level students want to live on campus?
- Definition: Is one group of students being mistreated? What problems are there for first years? For upper levels? Why is this an issue (nature of the problem)? Is it connected to any other problems (cost of living off campus, access to meal plans, personal safety)?
- Quality: Is it good or bad to prioritize first years? Is it good or bad to move upper levels off campus? Who is being affected (students, parents paying housing, Lubbock residents looking for rentals around campus)?
- Policy: Should anything be done? If so, who should be involved in deciding what should be done (students, parents, Tech administration, permanent Lubbock residents)? What steps need to be taken to address this issue (community meeting, surveys and polls, examine current policy)?

Example

There are many stakeholders in this example. Let's look more closely at two stakeholders: first-year and upper-level students.

- Both groups agree on the **facts**. There is limited housing on campus, and Tech has requirements they must abide by.
- Both groups agree on the **definitions** of on-campus and off-campus housing and what it means to be a first-year or upper-level student.
- Both groups agree the **quality** of the situation is serious and affects their group greatly.
- The stakeholder groups reach stasis at the **policy** level, as they cannot agree how to move forward to solve the problem.
  - Upper-level students feel it is unfair that they have to find new housing after showing dedication to Tech and responsibility as good dorm tenants. They do not think first-year students should be given priority in the dorms.
  - First years think it is unfair upper-level students want to keep their spots in the dorms, which theoretically contributed to the upper levels' early academic success through close proximity to university resources and no need to find parking before class.

A key takeaway is this: Stasis theory is not about right or wrong but about examining what each group/person thinks about a topic.