

# Teaching Human Development and Family Studies Through Case Studies

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## Background

Instructors in the fields of family sciences are faced with the complex task of training students to develop awareness of cultural competence so that they may respond effectively to families from diverse backgrounds.

### In Context of Large Classes:

- Think-Pair-Share (Rotate through quadrants in the class to reduce noise level)
- Online Polls with guided questions
- Google slides to answer questions as a group
- Live quizzes (E.g., Kahoots)
- Smaller rooms/breakout rooms for discussion
- Color coded questions prompts

### Guiding Principles Adapted from Wright (2013):

1. How realistic is the case? Can students identify on a personal level with the scenarios or families in the cases? Can the case studies hold students' interest?
2. To what extent does the case resemble cases from students' future professional academic practices?
3. Do the cases promote critical thinking? Are the cases complex and nuanced enough to generate meaningful conversations?
4. Are there multiple issues, theories, and concepts that can be applied to the cases?
5. Is there a unique solution to the problem or are there various alternative solutions to consider?
6. Are the cases written in a manner that is sensitive to different cultural groups and identities?
7. Are students coached about the value of the cases and encouraged to avoid deficit language/conclusions and implicit biases in their deliberations?
8. Is sufficient time allowed for verbal and or written debriefing about the cases?
9. Are there summary points available to guide the discussion and share with students at the end of the lesson?

## Abbreviated Case and Discussion Questions

Parent loses job [in a school] due to district education cuts. Multiple stressors on family. Child in the household has a disability. Family is devout Jewish and identify as bi-racial (White and African American couple). Options for possible jobs include work on Saturdays. Two older children in the household are preparing for ACT exams and are thinking about college. A guidance counselor who hears about the family situation attempts to help. Family signed up for resources which includes meats, canned goods, and clothing. Family is reluctant to accept the food. The children clearly want to take the assistance but parents body language suggest otherwise. The child with the disability eats whatever is provided. Bill Johns, a local business man, offers the parent a job in a liquor store he owns and requires some weekend work.

1. What concepts from the readings can you apply to this case? Apply ecological systems theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Erickson's theory to this case.
2. Are there useful concepts, theories and methods available to support finding solutions or understanding individuals and families in the case study? (Wright, 2013)

3. To which extent does the case resemble cases from students' future professional practices? [Applications to social service, business, and health]. I expect students to consider things not explicitly stated: loss of insurance impact on family health; dietary restrictions consistent with Jewish culture, working on Sabbath is prohibited)
4. To what extent is the case in touch with your experiences and daily lives? What personal biases do you have? (Wright, 2013)
5. What are the diversity issues? How can the various agents working with this family show cultural sensitivity?
6. What ethical concerns arise? What are some solutions?
7. What are some solutions for an ideal outcome for this family. Provide suggestions for responding to obvious ethical or diversity related issue.

### ETHICAL CASE STUDIES ASSIGNMENT

For this assignment, you will analyze three cases of ethical dilemmas that highlight issues faced by human services professionals. You should use the codes of ethics from the following three professional organizations to analyze your cases: NCFR, NAEYC, and NOHS. You should use a **different code of ethics for each case**, based on the dilemma presented. All three codes of ethics should therefore be discussed in your paper.

National Council on Family Relations (NCFR)

[https://www.ncfr.org/sites/default/files/2017-01/cfle\\_code\\_of\\_ethics\\_2\\_1.pdf](https://www.ncfr.org/sites/default/files/2017-01/cfle_code_of_ethics_2_1.pdf)

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

<https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/Supplement%20PS2011.pdf>

National Organization for Human Services (NOHS)

<https://www.nationalhumanservices.org/ethical-standards-for-hs-professionals>

**Your analysis of each case should include the following information:**

1. Identify the dilemma
2. Identify who is affected by the dilemma—include all stakeholders.
3. Brainstorm possible courses of action and their consequences. Consider ethical finesse.
4. Make a decision about the course of action to take. Does this decision meet the needs of all involved? Explain.
5. Use information from the professional code of ethics to guide your analysis of each case. What codes apply, and how?

### Resources

Wright, A. C. (2013). Teaching about diverse families through case studies and authentic performance assessment. *Family Science Review*, 18(1), 134-150.