

Using Case Studies Based on Your Research to Teach Conflict Theory

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HD 220 Introduction to HD Theories

- Introductory level course
- Required for the major
- Offered every semester
- Class format
- Reasons for using your own research



In Class Activity

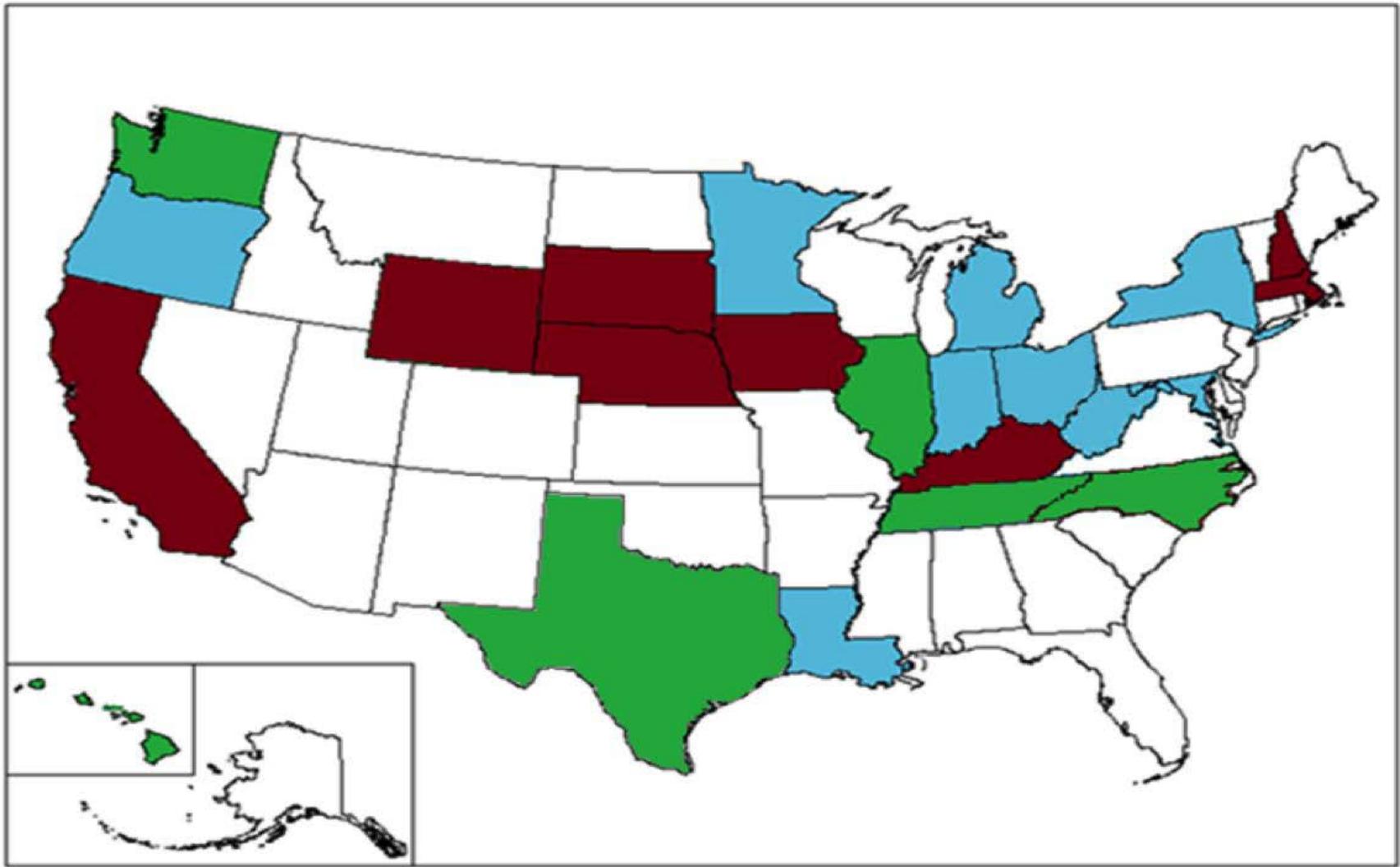
- Provide some background for the study
- Have students get into groups to review case studies
- Answer a series of questions pertaining to conflict theory
- Come back together as a class
- Review each case study
- General findings across studies
- Application to conflict theory
- Compare general findings from the study
- Review ways to become more involved in research as an undergraduate



History of the Project

- Rural Low-Income Families: Tracking Their Well-Being and Functioning in the Context of Welfare Reform
 - NC223 (1998-2003)
 - NC1011 (2003-2008)
 - Rural Families Speak
 - 18 states participated
- Interactions of Individual, Family, Community and Policy Contexts on the Mental and Physical health of Diverse Rural Low-Income Families
 - NC1171 (2008-2013)
 - Rural Families Speak About Health
 - 13 states participated





Overall Objectives

- To determine the interactions of individual, family, community, and policy contexts on physical and mental health in diverse rural low-income families.
- To examine individual and family level characteristics which impact physical and mental health in diverse rural low-income families.
- To examine community contexts that impact family mental and physical health in diverse rural low-income families.
- To examine policies that impact family mental and physical health in diverse rural low-income families.
- To examine the interactions of individual, family, community, and policy on mental



Sample/Methodology

- Inclusion criteria
 - Adult female caregivers of at least one child age <13
 - Household income \leq 185% federal poverty level
 - Living in small rural counties (UIC \geq 6)
- Mixed purposive sampling
 - Some states intentionally over-sampled racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities
- 2 waves of data collection completed
 - Wave 1 (quantitative): N=444
 - Wave 2 (qualitative sub-sample): n= 88



Data Collected

- Wave 1 (computer assisted survey)
 - Mother's mental and physical health
 - Target child's mental and physical health
 - Access to health care and other support resources
 - Food security
 - Employment/financial
 - Family routines
 - Co-parenting relationships
 - Home environment related to nutrition and physical activity
 - Demographics
- Wave 2 (interview)
 - Any changes since wave 1
 - What does health mean to mother?
 - What actions does mother take to promote the health of family members?
 - What resources does mother use to promote the health of family members?



Joanne Speaking...

- I'm Joanne and here I am, 25 years old, inches from livin' on the street. I've got diabetes and heart complications so bad I can't work and am on disability assistance. I need some kinda treatment but can't until I get a medical card or money. (pause) Doc M's been telling me I might not have long to live and now he tells me I'm bi-polar like my mother and my oldest son. I've got three other children; one in diapers. You know, I might die before they are grown. It breaks my hear. Who will take care of them and Jeff when I'm gone? Mentally my mom could, but not physically after that bad car accident. And I don't have nothing' to leave them. I'd like to leave a home to the kids. My life wish is for them to grow up happy and better off than me and Jeff. But if I die, will they remember me? I don't even have a picture of myself to leave them.
- My husband is the best. He don't beat me or nothing like my first husband. I hadda get divorced. We've shore been through touch times- but we're still together. This past year Jeff was in jail for drivin' under the influence too many times. But he's back, got sober and is stayin' sober and I'm not drinkin neither. While he was gone, I didn't know if I could hold this family together... or if he'd come home to us...but we're close together than ever.

- He's a good mechanic. Folks like him and his work. His boss is good and let him have his job back after he got out. But he only works 3 days a week. That's all the work Mac's got for him. Around here jobs are scarce.
- Jeff makes a hundred forty-two a week. We got Food Stamps. But we gotta pay the rent and I'm still buyin' diapers and payin' child support to my mom for my oldest. It's not easy but I'm not complain'. I live with it.
- We gotta get a better place to live. I barely hung onto our second place while Jeff was in jail. Our first house burned 'cause of faulty wiring. This one is so bad I got my children tested for lead poisoning and sure enough, there's a problem. We're tryin' to find somethin' else. I went to get energy assistance to pay for my air conditioning bill. The lady there said I should just not use the AC but the doctor said t would help my son's asthma. So whatcha gonna do when you live in a tuna can in the middle of a field? Well, I just pray...I'm praying. He'll help us find another place of our own.
- With school starting I'll need school supplies. Why, when we were in school, our folks didn't hafta provide nothing'. If I could, I would run for the school board and change things. Oh well, who would listen to me?

Application Questions

- Describe a major crisis using terms/concepts from Conflict Theory
- What are the strengths of using Conflict Theory to analyze this family? The weaknesses?
- Provide examples from your case study of at least two of the assumptions of Conflict Theory
- Is conflict shown from a microsocial or macrosocial perspective?
- Does the participant talk about the role of group dynamics?



General Findings Across Case Studies

- Lack of jobs that pay a living wage
- Lack of good quality and affordable child care
- Lack of father involvement and child support enforcement
- Inadequate transportation
- Broader problems in our social structure such as racism or sexism or classism
- Problems accessing, or even knowing about, social services that are in place



Rural Families Speak

- Tend to be employed, but underemployed
- Challenging to find affordable, safe housing
- Gender discrimination is common
- Marriage is discouraged by “the system”
- The role of illness or injury
- Child support issues
- Food insecurity
- See public assistance as a last resort



