

Lesson #4: Common Good Five-Step Case Study Analysis Student Packet

Directions: Read through each case study carefully and complete the graphic organizer using what you understand about the common good.

Case Study #1: Paid Family Leave

Today, the vast majority of families have both parents in the workforce, not only for income but also because work is a meaningful, important part of both parents' identities. This creates challenges about how to “balance” work and family, but the most acute challenge is childbirth itself, especially for women. In light of this, many countries in the world have paid family leave laws, such that workers who are going to have or who have recently birthed or adopted a child continue to be paid, even though they are given a leave from work. Thus, in essence, their salary is paid by the work of others—more specifically, by a tax on everyone's earnings that is then distributed to individuals taking a leave for childbirth or adoption and to care for a child.

Step #1: Consider the issues

What are the central problems or issues involved? Where might there be tension between individuals or groups? Are some issues more or less important?

TEACHING HUMAN DIGNITY

Step #2: Consider the perspectives

Who are the groups of people involved in this case? What is important to each group or person involved? (i.e., what do they value?) Are there issues of inherent dignity involved? Is there a group whose basic needs for human flourishing are not being met?

Step #3: Consider what you know

Based on what you have learned about the common good, what details in the case are important? List the critical attributes and explain how each one relates to the scenario. What more would you want to know about the situation presented in the case to make the best decision?

Step #4: Reflect on the proposed actions(s)

Some people suggest that paid family leave policies are unfair and force other employees who might not have children to support those who do. Do you think the policy of paid family leave supports the common good? Why or why not?

Step #5: Consider the potential outcomes

What are some of the potential benefits of paid family leave? What might be some challenges?

Case Study #2: China's One-Child Policy

Can a country have too many people? In the 1970s, after experiencing rapid population growth, China became concerned about overpopulation depleting its resources. In 1979, and for many decades thereafter, China instituted a one-child policy under which couples were only allowed to have one child. This policy was instituted to limit the abuse of land, enable the existing population to develop, and preserve family resources for a single child for the next generation; some believe this policy helped to transform the country from a very poor country to a wealthier one. In many ways, China's policy seems to look like a success. But it also relied on extremely high fines for families who did not comply and encouraged large-scale abortion and sterilization.

Step #1: Consider the issues

What are the problems or issues involved in China's one-child policy? What is the tension between individuals and the government? Are some concerns more or less important? Are some more or less urgent? What issues would you prioritize based on your understanding of the common good?

Step #2: Consider the perspectives

Who is involved in this case? What is important to individuals and what is important to the government? (i.e., what do they value?) Are there issues of inherent dignity involved? Is there a group whose basic needs for human flourishing are not being met?

Step #3: Consider what you know

Based on what you have learned about the common good, what details in the case are important? List the critical attributes and explain how each one relates to the scenario. What more would you want to know about the situation presented in the case to make the best decision?

Step #4: Reflect on the proposed actions(s)

In your own words, describe the one-child policy. If children are a common good, does the government have the authority to limit family size? Is China's one-child policy (which was recently changed to a "two-child policy") consistent with the common good? How do you see decisions about family size and population interacting with the common good? What might you propose instead?

Step #5: Consider the potential outcomes

Given the proposal of China's one-child policy, what are the potential outcomes (economic, cultural, environmental, familial, etc.)? If you are familiar with the impact of China's one-child policy, what were some of its negative consequences? Did this policy achieve the common good?

Case Study #3: Abortion

There is widespread agreement on the importance of men and women being equal in society. But a key area of dispute has to do with women's reproductive rights. Can the common good be achieved, some ask, if women do not control their own bodies? On the other hand, others argue, if we mandate that parents protect children in many ways (e.g., through child safety seats, through mandatory schooling laws, through required vaccinations, etc.), should a pregnant woman be allowed to abort that child?

Step #1: Consider the issues

What are the challenges or issues? What is the tension between individuals or groups? Are some issues more or less important? Are some more or less urgent? What issues would you prioritize based on your understanding of the common good?

Step #2: Consider the perspectives

Who are the people or groups involved in this case? What is important to each group or person? (i.e., what do they value?) What do they consider most important? Are there issues of inherent dignity involved? Is there a group whose basic needs for human flourishing are not being met?

Step #3: Consider what you know

Based on what you have learned about the common good, what details in the case are important? List the critical attributes and explain how each one relates to the scenario. What more would you want to know about the issues involved in the case to make the best decision?

Step #4: Reflect on the proposed actions(s)

Propose a course of action in your own words. Explain how the proposed solution advances the common good (be sure to address all critical attributes)?

Step #5: Consider the potential outcomes

Given each of the proposed solutions, what are the potential outcomes? How does your proposal to reconcile the two goods achieve the common good? What might be some challenges?

Final Unit Assessment

Choose ONE case study from the following pages.

Complete the case study analysis.

Step #1: Consider the issues

What are the challenges or issues? Identify any possible tensions between individuals or groups. Are some issues more or less important? Are some more or less urgent? Are the issues acute or chronic? Are some root issues that cause others? What challenges or issues would you prioritize based on your understanding of the common good?

Step #2: Consider the perspectives

Who are the people or groups involved in this case? What is important to each person or group involved? (i.e., what do they value?) What do they consider most important? Are there issues of inherent dignity involved? Is there a group whose basic needs for human flourishing are not being met?

Step #3: Consider what you know

Based on what you have learned about the common good, what details in the case are important? List the critical attributes and explain how each one relates to the situation described. What more would you want to know about the situation presented in the case to make the best decision? Is there additional information from research or other sources that would equip you to propose more powerful actions for addressing the situation in the case? If so, what?

Read the article(s) for your case. What new information did you learn? How does this help you think about the challenges or issues involved? How can this help you propose a course of action that promotes the common good?

Step #4: Reflect on the proposed actions(s)

Given your analysis, what would you recommend be done to address this situation in a way that promotes the common good (you should consider each of the critical attributes of the common good in your recommendation)?

Step #5: Consider the potential outcomes

Based on your proposed course of action, reflect on the following questions: What are the potential outcomes? How does the proposed action achieve the common good? What might be some challenges?

Final Unit Assessment Case Study Options

1 The COVID Crisis and Homelessness

The recent COVID crisis has brought economic challenges, especially for people who have few resources and live paycheck-to-paycheck. In one city, a **homeless camp**⁴ sprang up in a park near the center of the city. The city was concerned about its impact on businesses, and “temporarily” moved the tent city to a small park in a residential neighborhood. Residents of the neighborhood understood the challenges but became concerned about unsafe conditions, fights, drug dealing, and other issues that arose around the camp. The residents were particularly concerned about the safety of their children, who were used to visiting one another’s houses, riding bikes to the park, and the like.

How should this situation be resolved to achieve the common good? To help you analyze this scenario, take some time to read the following articles. The first one describes the reality of homelessness, how it plays out for different individuals, and the various reasons people find themselves to be homeless. The second one describes resident concerns when a homeless camp moved to their neighborhood.

One Day, One City, No Relief: 24 hours inside San Francisco’s homelessness crisis⁵

Viewpoint: Looking for leadership on South Bend’s homelessness problem⁶

⁴ Parrott, Jeff. “South Bend homeless tent camp neighbors still frustrated with lack of action from city.” South Bend Tribune, July 9, 2020. <https://sbheritage.org/south-bend-homeless-tent-camp-neighbors-still-frustrated-with-lack-of-action-from-city/>

⁵ Fagan, Kevin. “One Day, One City, No Relief: 24 hours inside San Francisco’s homelessness crisis.” San Francisco Chronicle, July 31, 2019. <https://projects.sfchronicle.com/sf-homeless/24-hours-homelessness/>.

⁶ Wilson, Mary Ann and Ben. “Viewpoint: Looking for leadership on South Bend’s homeless problem.” South Bend Tribune, July 5, 2020. <https://www.southbendtribune.com/story/opinion/2020/07/05/viewpoint-looking-for-leadership-on-south-bends-homeless-problem/116068270/>

2 Highway Construction

The construction of the interstate highway system beginning in the 1950s was one of the largest social programs of the 20th century. Building large highways to move people and trucks (and, it was presumed, military vehicles) across open country was a big project, but fairly easy. However, when it came to constructing these massive highways in large cities, there were serious difficulties. Whose neighborhoods would be split up and even destroyed by superhighways? Whose neighborhoods would be left alone? The story of racial injustice is now written in our cities. In Washington, D.C., wealthy white neighborhoods kept highway construction out of their neighborhoods. In Baltimore and Philadelphia, poor, predominantly minority neighborhoods were leveled for the construction of highways. In St. Paul, Minnesota, the main highway was built right through Rondo, the only historically African-American neighborhood in the city. In Chicago, interstates were strategically coordinated with massive housing projects, so as to protect white neighborhoods (on one side of the Dan Ryan expressway) from the Black neighborhoods and miles of new high-rise slums (on the other side).

Even more, the interstate system encouraged workers to move out to far-flung suburbs and drive for work or entertainment using newly constructed highways—leaving behind city neighborhoods, made invisible by highway construction, to decline. This cycle helped create “white flight” from the cities into more economically prosperous, less diverse suburbs.

Should these interstate highways have been built? How did the building of the interstate highway system try to advance the common good? What common good? Could they have better served the common good? How? And what are ways we might address the effects of the system now to promote the common good of all?

Read the following articles that help you see the reality of highways in America, how their construction affected different communities, and one solution to the divides created by highways.

The Role of Highways in American Poverty⁷

Repairing a Severed Connection⁸

⁷ Semuels, Alana. “The Role of Highways in American Poverty.” *The Atlantic*, March 18, 2016.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/03/role-of-highways-in-american-poverty/474282/>

⁸ MKSK. “Repairing a severed connection to a historic neighborhood by celebrating its past, present, and future.” 2020.
<https://www.mkskstudios.com/projects/i70-i71-long-street-bridge>

3 Student Discipline

Schools must be places where students and teachers feel safe and secure to teach and learn. Every school must have measures in place to address students who threaten the safety of other students and teachers or otherwise disrupt class. But they must maintain a balance between ensuring a safe environment and addressing the needs of the offending student. A student is frequently late to class. He rarely has his homework completed and thus cannot contribute to class discussions. In addition, he is often disruptive and disrespectful to his peers and teacher. In the hallways and during recess, he is physically and verbally aggressive with other students. What many of his peers do not know is that he has had a very difficult childhood. He has been in the foster care system since the age of seven because his mom passed away and his father was physically and emotionally abusive.

How should the administration respond to this student's actions in a way that promotes the common good, allowing for students and teachers to learn safely while also upholding the dignity of the disruptive student and promoting the flourishing of all?

To help you analyze this scenario, take some time to read the following articles and watch the video.

[The Unintended Consequences of Taking a Hard Line on School Discipline](#)¹⁰

[Restorative Circles: Creating a Safe Environment for Students to Reflect](#)¹¹

[What the Heck is Restorative Justice?](#)¹²

¹⁰ Haberman, Clyde. "The Unintended Consequences of Taking a Hard Line on School Discipline." The New York Times, October 2, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/03/us/the-unintended-consequences-of-taking-a-hard-line-on-school-discipline.html>

¹¹ Edutopia. "Restorative Circles: Creating a Safe Environment for Students to Reflect." February 5, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-RZYSTJAAo>

¹² Wolpert-Gawron, Heather. "What the Heck is Restorative Justice?" Edutopia, October 17, 2016. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/what-heck-restorative-justice-heather-wolpert-gawron>.

4 Environmental Protection

Protecting the environment is critically important for our shared life together, but rules that protect the environment have costs. It costs money, for example, to manufacture goods in ways that are environmentally-sensitive, dispose of waste properly, and not pollute the air or water. Because of these costs, many companies have moved factories to other places in the world where there are fewer environmental protections. This means workers in countries with stronger environmental protections lose their jobs, while the pollution of the Earth continues—just in some other part of the world.

Should companies move their factories to other countries in the world with fewer environmental restrictions? Should the United States loosen its environmental regulations so that more workers can be employed here? How do lack of environmental regulations affect workers and communities? How should this situation be resolved to achieve the common good?

To help you analyze this scenario, take some time to read the following articles.

When Some US Firms Move Production Overseas, They also Offshore Their Pollution¹³

The Effects of Global Warming on Jobs: 80 Million Fewer Jobs¹⁴

What Impact is Climate Change Having on Jobs?¹⁵

¹³ Zhou, Yue Maggie. “When Some US Firms Move Production Overseas, They also Offshore Their Pollution.” 2017, The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/when-some-us-firms-move-production-overseas-they-also-offshore-their-pollution-75371>.

¹⁴ Morning Future. “The effects of global warming on jobs: 80 million fewer jobs.” September 23, 2019. <https://www.morningfuture.com/en/2019/09/23/warming-global-loss-job/>

¹⁵ Evans, John. “What impact is climate change having on jobs?” December 8, 2015, World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/12/what-impact-is-climate-change-having-on-jobs/>