ABSTRACT

While there are obvious linkages – both positive and negative - between business decisions and genocides, there is very little coursework available to business students to help them navigate this complex subject. We reviewed all 719 universities worldwide that are accredited by AACSB-International and found no full-length, comprehensive courses on the economics of genocide aimed at business students. As businesses become increasingly globalized and interconnected, business students need to understand past and current genocides around the world. This paper provides suggestions on how to develop a course on genocide and business for MBA or undergraduate business students.

KEYWORDS: AACSB-International, business of genocide, curriculum, corporate social responsibility, MBA students

INTRODUCTION

Genocide has been well-researched in law and the social sciences, which delve into the political, social and historical causes of genocide as well as the legal implications of “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (as genocide has been defined in the United Nations Genocide Convention (UN Genocide Convention 1951, p. 280)). Those fields have also been active in educating their students about this difficult topic. Within the business disciplines, however, very little academic or curricular activity has been devoted to the equally important economic causes and consequences of genocide. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence to suggest that tension over economic resources has a strong role to play in the development of genocides. (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; Chalk & Jonassohn, 1990).

Deteriorating economic conditions certainly helped bring the Nazi Party to power in Germany following World War I, and the Third Reich accused the Jews of being responsible for the economic turmoil. The destructive wars that the Khmer Rouge fought with Vietnam, in the 1970s, were also partially aimed at maintaining control of the rubber resources in Cambodia’s eastern region. More recently, African countries have faced the dual problem of limited resources necessary for survival alongside the “resource curse” of an abundance of non-renewable natural resources. Extreme poverty has given rise to various conflicts in West Africa.
Including Genocide in Corporate Social Responsibility

(Liberia, Sierra Leone); Northeast Africa (Sudan, Ethiopia) and in the African Great Lakes region (Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo) over land and economically useful raw materials. The civil war in Sudan (and now South Sudan) was, in part, a fight to control natural resources, with 80% of the country’s oilfields located in the southern part of the country.

As countries recover from genocides, their progress may be hampered by decreased economic capacity caused by lack of investment, the destruction of physical capital and the loss of infrastructure, such as transportation and communications. In addition, the human costs of conflict – in terms of deaths, post-conflict/genocide trauma, deteriorating health conditions, “brain drain,” worsening hunger and poverty, and loss of education, among others – make recovery all the more difficult. Acmoglu et al. (2011) have shown that there are still lingering effects of the mass genocide of Jews in Russia during the Holocaust, with lower economic development in those regions that suffered the greatest losses in their Jewish populations. A study by Stewart et al (2000) examines 14 countries that suffered internal (civil) conflict at some point between 1965 and 1995. In Liberia, for example, they estimate the average annual loss in GDP at 4.2% during its civil war, while Sierra Leone’s output declined by over 6% per year. Even more dramatic is the estimated decrease in output in Rwanda, where the World Bank (1998) estimates GDP fell by 50% following the 1994 genocide.

IMPORTANCE

Understanding the links between genocides and economics, seen in modern genocides and even earlier history, is critical for today’s international business students and business leaders as well as policymakers. While business activity and economic conditions are not solely responsible for fomenting or ending a genocide, international business students still need to recognize these potential linkages in order to understand today’s global business environment. Businesses certainly want to predict the economic risks they may face by operating in or partnering with a country in conflict or one at risk of descending into conflict. Importantly, they need to understand that they may actually foster the conditions that produce genocides, inadvertently or otherwise. Prudent business decisions can also defuse ethnic tensions that have the potential to descend into a genocide if they can create economic opportunities to keep potential victims and perpetrators of genocide working together to produce their nation’s economic capital. Businesses also have an important role to play in post-conflict regions, by supporting private sector development that, in turn, supports sustainable economic development.

Slim classifies the diverse ways that businesses may be involved in armed conflict. Businesses often play an important role in encouraging or fomenting genocides, as a “perpetrator” or “supplier.” They may also be a victim during conflict. On the other hand, businesses can play a positive role in ameliorating the effects of genocide as a “humanitarian actor,” and assisting a country in rebuilding, as a “peacebuilder,” and helping to maintain peace, as a “conflict preventer.” (Slim, 2012)

Much has been written about genocide in the literature. However, our research shows that in business schools, there is little mention about genocide and the role of business organizations in support or prevention of genocide. Yet, there is a definite trend toward paying attention to corporate social responsibility and sustainability, particularly in business colleges around the world. Organizations such as the UN Global Compact and its Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME), AACSB-International’s 2013 Standards, and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) all emphasize the importance of teaching business students about social and environmental responsibility.
However, even when the broader topic of human rights is addressed in business schools, research by Hanlon and Frost (2013) concludes that business students still do not have a good grasp and knowledge of the topic. This finding, they argue, stems from the lack of clarity and consistency among business faculty. As a result, business students have difficulty understanding the impact of business decisions on human rights, which can negatively affect the communities in which businesses operate. The current study will further discuss the need for more emphasis on exposing students to the connection between international business decision-making and the potential impact of creating an environment conducive to starting, continuing, or preventing a genocide.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As noted by Wright and Bennett (2011), the course requirements for an MBA degree have changed over time, reflecting changes in business events, trends, and needs, both domestically and internationally. The corporate scandals since the 1990s may be a large cause of the rise in courses on ethics, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and sustainability during the last twenty years.

In their study of the top 50 global MBA programs worldwide (as rated by the Financial Times), Christensen et al. (2007) analyze the importance of three separate but inter-linked components in business school education: ethics, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and sustainability. They investigate these business schools to determine if the three topics are offered (separately or combined), in required or optional courses, and/or if the topics are integrated into the curriculum or are taught in stand-alone courses. In addition, the research gauges interest in ethics, CSR and sustainability by seeing which schools have dedicated centers and relevant student-led initiatives.

The definitions employed in the Christensen et al. research are useful in keeping clear the differences in these often intertwined topics and are as follows:

Business ethics: A form of applied ethics that examines ethical rules and principles within a commercial context; the various moral or ethical problems that can arise in a business setting; and any special duties or obligations that apply to persons who are engaged in commerce.

Corporate Social Responsibility: The voluntary actions taken by a company to address economic, social, and environmental impacts of its business operations and the concerns of its principal stakeholders.

Sustainable Business/Sustainability: Business that contributes to an equitable and ecologically sustainable economy. Sustainable businesses offer products and services that fulfill society’s needs while contributing to the well-being of the earth’s inhabitants.

(Christensen et al., 2007, p. 351)
The Christensen et al. study concludes that there is an upward trend in the number of MBA schools requiring course work and/or curriculum integration in ethics, CSR, and sustainability. However, among the specific courses, centers, and teaching techniques highlighted, none focuses on the role of business in conflict or genocide. This is not to say that these schools fully ignore the topics; indeed, many include coursework on features common to countries in conflict, such as corruption, challenging business environments, and sustainable development. However, it is notable that none of the “spotlights” or highlights reported directly concerns genocide.

Doh and Tashman (2014) sent a questionnaire to management scholars from the Academy of Management to delve more deeply into how faculty integrate CSR, sustainability, and sustainable development into their curriculum. Of the 103 business school faculty members and Ph.D. candidates who responded and had experience teaching a related course, just 26% said that CSR was well integrated across their departments, with much lower outcomes for sustainability and sustainable development. Overall, they conclude that even though business schools have CSR, sustainability, and sustainable development courses, there is not yet a “best practice” for adopting, let alone integrating, this curriculum.

Wright and Hadyn (2011) point out the major flaw in surveys that ask academicians to self-report on their coursework; namely, they may not be completely honest, given pressures from accreditation agencies or others. Wright and Hadyn’s approach is to instead search through school websites, assuming that administrators will want to include as much information as possible to attract potential students to their programs. They note, however, that websites are less able to convey the sense of integration of topics and the degree to which certain courses are offered cross-disciplinarily. They review the websites of the top 100 schools identified by the Financial Times Global MBA Rankings, as well as the 17 highest ranked Australian schools according to the AFR BOSS, and the 7 MBA schools in New Zealand. They reviewed course titles, looking for key words that would reflect that the course covered, either in part or in whole, ethics/CSR (combining the two) or sustainability. The authors found that 49% of the Financial Times top 100 MBA programs required a course in ethics/CSR, with more than half of those being stand-alone courses. Only 6% of schools required a course on sustainability. In their discussion, they note that including the “buzz words” such as “ethics” into a course title is, in part, a way that the institutionalization of a topic takes root. They conclude, however, that required course-work notwithstanding, the institutionalization in the area of teaching ethics/CSR has only progressed “to a certain extent.” (Wright and Bennett 2011, p. 649) The outcome for sustainability appears even worse.

Human rights violations is yet another component of CSR that deserves attention, particularly as it is often closely tied to corruption. Hanlon and Frost (2013) point to human rights as a newcomer to CSR practice, encouraged by the launch of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) in 2000. The UNGC’s purpose is to assist businesses that are “committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.” (UNGC, 2014, para. 1) Still, the UNGC itself remains somewhat ineffective, with low (voluntary) commitment from companies. Furthermore, many companies and legal scholars would argue that states, not businesses, should be responsible for protecting human rights. In any event, while businesses may make a financial case for protecting attention to human rights, Hanlon and Frost (2013) suggest that the real reason businesses are inconsistent in this practice is that business schools do not do a good job of educating students on human rights issues. They believe that business school faculty themselves do not have a clear enough understanding of human rights to teach it to their
students. They posit that “…business school ideology and the so-called profit-maximization principle could be shaping student knowledge to oppose concepts such as CSR…” (p. 14). In order to test their main hypothesis that “the business school environment is contributing to the private sector’s ignorance of human rights,” (p. 17) the authors sent a detailed survey to 2,852 faculty in the top twenty business schools in the world, as ranked by the Financial Times Global MBA Rankings 2008. They found that human rights knowledge was rarely incorporated in business curriculum and that faculty awareness of and ability to teach about human rights abuses is superficial at best.

A summary of the studies reviewed here is presented in Table 1, which helps put the current research into context. In as much as attention is being paid to the connections between and among ethics, CSR, sustainability, human rights, and business, the role of business in genocides, per se, is rarely addressed. And yet, genocide is often at the foundation of many of the controversies in which international businesses may participate, consciously or not. Business ethics applies when a business is deciding whether or not to engage in commerce with a genocidal regime (e.g., Ford in Nazi Germany, Talisman Oil in Sudan). CSR is relevant to businesses that potentially effect change in countries recovering from genocide; indeed anecdotal evidence from Rwanda suggests that new businesses include reconciliation as part of their business model. Given the role of resource extraction and other national resource issues in countries in conflict, it is difficult to ignore issues in sustainability. The complexities of global supply chains imply that a business may not even realize that it is party to the fomentation of, continuation of, or recovery from a genocide.

For these reasons, it is our belief that the topic of genocide deserves its own separate course in the business curriculum. Business courses, by their very nature, focus on micro-level behavior of the firm and its impacts. A complete view of the role of business in genocide requires a broader course objective that puts a business’s actions and reactions into the macro context of the country(ies) involved. Current business students, whether they are specifically in an international program or not, will likely one day participate in today’s global supply chains, with inevitable, if indirect, ties to countries in the midst of or recovering from genocide. And yet, as Wright and Bennett (2014) point out in their discussion of a targeted class on ethics/CSR, many students do not possess even the basic foundation necessary to comprehend how ethics/CSR apply to business. A similar argument can be made for teaching about genocide and business, particularly given the complexity and frankly difficulty of the topic.
Table 1. Summary of Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR(S) (DATE)</th>
<th>METHODOLOGY</th>
<th>TARGETED INSTITUTIONS</th>
<th>FOCUS AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christensen et al., 2007</td>
<td>Interview deans</td>
<td>Financial Times Top 50 Global Business Schools</td>
<td>ethics, corporate social responsibility, and sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doh and Tashman, 2014</td>
<td>Survey to faculty</td>
<td>Management faculty in Academy of Management</td>
<td>CSR, sustainability, and sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright and Hadyn, 2011</td>
<td>Review of Websites</td>
<td>Financial Times Global MBA Rankings top 100; Australian Financial Review BOSS top 17 ranked Australian MBA; and the seven MBA programs in New Zealand</td>
<td>ethics/CSR (combining the two) or sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanlon and Frost, 2013</td>
<td>Survey to faculty</td>
<td>Financial Times Global MBA Rankings top 20</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harris and Ebrahimpour, current</td>
<td>Review of Websites and Course Catalogs</td>
<td>719 universities worldwide with AACSB-International accredited business schools</td>
<td>Genocide</td>
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**FINDINGS**

In spite of the critical linkages between business and genocide, it is noteworthy that no AACSB-International (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accredited business school offers a graduate- or undergraduate-level curriculum in this area to its students. Among both undergraduate and graduate level courses, we found no courses specifically on the economics or business of genocide. Our findings are consistent with Ebrahimpour’s (2014) survey of deans of AACSB-International accredited schools, in which he found that only a small group of business schools (17%) offer a required course on Ethics (graduate or undergraduate). Another small group of schools (21%) offer elective courses in Ethics, but the majority (62%) do not offer any courses in Ethics.

**Methodology**

We performed a thorough review of the 719 universities worldwide with AACSB-International accredited business schools (as of January 2015) by searching their course catalogs and websites. The majority of these catalogs provide information about all the majors in the university (including majors offered by Business colleges/schools/departments). A search was performed on the catalogs – for both undergraduate and graduate courses - looking for “genocide” and “holocaust” to determine the nature of any courses devoted to the broader topic and to determine if any is related to genocide economics, genocide indicators, and related subjects.

Secondly, we reviewed each university’s website as a whole by performing Google searches on their full site. The Google searches consisted of keywords such as: “genocide”, “economics of genocide”, “economy of genocide”, “genocide economy”, “genocide economics”, “economics of
Results

During these searches, we found no courses solely devoted to the economics of genocide or related subjects (such as the economics of the Holocaust, economic indicators of genocide, the business of genocide, and so forth). We have noted occasional, one-off lectures devoted to the topic of the economics of genocide, but no full-length, comprehensive courses and none aimed at business students.

While many universities offer a course on Holocaust or genocide studies, these tend to take place in Anthropology, Political Science, History, Religion, or International Relations departments. The majority of courses about the Holocaust deal with the history of the Holocaust; post-Holocaust history; religion and the Holocaust; peace and the Holocaust; and the arts (literature, music, and film) and the Holocaust. Genocide-related courses tend to focus on the history of genocides in general; the history of genocide in a specific place (e.g., Armenia); politics and genocide; and comparative genocide.

We did find a few courses that were tangentially related to the business and economics components of genocide. For example, the University of Strathclyde Glasgow offers a B.A. in History and Human Resources Management. While its capstone year includes a module on the genocide in Rwanda, it is, in fact, a “history-based discourse” with no connection to business-related themes (University of Strathclyde Glasgow, 2015).

American University’s School of International Service offers an interdisciplinary course on “Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in a Comparative Perspective.” According to the course catalog, this course “…examines legal issues as well as social and economic dynamics, such as the connections between environment, resources, security, conflict, and peacemaking (American University, 2013, p. 472).” The Anthropology Department at Rutgers University offers “Culture, Political Violence, and Genocide,” which “Includes discussion of the cultural, socioeconomic, and historical origins of political violence in countries such as Cambodia, Rwanda, Nazi Germany, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, India, and the former Yugoslavia…” (Rutgers University, 2015).

We recognize that course titles cannot reflect all of the content of a course. However, where possible, we delved deeper by looking at course outlines and/or syllabi. For example, at California Polytechnic State University, a History course on “Modern Political Economy” contains an entire section, “The Economics of Genocide,” which looks specifically at the role of Jewish resources in terms of wealth and labor during the Holocaust, and the “economic irrationality” of the Nazis. Like many other History classes, it reviews the macroeconomic conditions that helped bring the Nazis to power as well as the Germany’s economic situation in the aftermath of World War II.

While whole courses directly related to the economics of genocide were non-existent, there are a limited number of events focused on the broad topic of genocide, such as seminars, conferences, and on-line discussion forums. Many of these focus on the political economy of genocide, while very few take place in business departments directly. In addition, we found two study tours to Rwanda. At the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business, a “global modular course” entitled “Conflict, Leadership and Change: Lessons from Rwanda,“
brings MBA students to Rwanda for five days, where they study post-conflict Rwanda to learn about leadership. MIT’s Sloan School of Management offered an 8 week course on “Sustainable Social Impact in East Africa” from 2012-2013, which included two weeks in Kenya and Rwanda, to observe how businesses can make a positive social impact on these economies.

**STRUCTURE OF COURSE ON THE BUSINESS OF GENOCIDE**

The intricacies of the causes and consequences of genocide and the complexities of global business suggest that there is no lack of material to fill a one semester course on business and genocide. Given the nature of business today, even “domestic” activities are connected to international events, including genocides and other atrocities, such that all business students would benefit from learning more about this topic. Thus, we propose a stand-alone course that could be taught at a graduate level, with some modification for undergraduate students. A suggested syllabus, which can be modified according to the needs and interests of the faculty and students, is available from the authors upon request.

We have identified 5 broad themes critical for a course on genocide, with their related business-level implications:

1. Economic causes of genocide, including allocation of, or competition over, natural resources; macroeconomic pressures; and international pressures. This includes an examination of the incentives for businesses to compete for natural resources and the extent to which businesses contribute to tensions over scarce resources. In addition, students will investigate how government policies affect business decisions, as well as noting situations in which the international financial institutions may also turn a blind eye to shady business dealings with genocidal regimes (Mullins & Rothe, 2008).

2. Economic consequences of genocide, including loss of labor (due to mass killings, slavery, adverse health factors, and emigration), capital flight, rebuilding costs, etc. This theme considers what the business environment is like during and after a genocide, including access to labor, capital, inputs to production, and infrastructure. In addition, it looks at the economic losses or gains of businesses that operate in countries with genocides.

3. Business ethics regarding genocide, including definition of “rules” of ethics, and ethical decision-making in countries in conflict. Students will research individual businesses ethics policies (should they exist) and note how their behavior reflects their business ethos. The role of businesses in furthering/fostering genocide or preventing genocide falls into this area as well.

4. Genocide prediction looks at what are the economic factors that signal that a country is in danger of devolving into a genocide. Students will study and evaluate economic early warning systems and test them.

5. Cost-benefit analyses for businesses involved in dealing with refugee, humanitarian, and other public health crises that develop in the aftermath of genocide.

This proposed course should be highly interactive and participatory, with a heavy emphasis on both written and oral assignments. Students would identify the meaning of genocide and bring examples from the “past” to the class and discuss why they believe their example fits their definition of Genocide. Students would also be expected to perform their own economic analyses of current “hot spots” to determine the probability for future genocide and would also
develop economic policies and plans to attempt to avoid genocide. They would also analyze post-genocide plans by governments, non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions for economic rehabilitation. Because of the business emphasis of the course, participants would also determine the necessary conditions for responsible private sector development and analyze the role that the private sector can play in ameliorating genocides and helping in a nation's recovery from the economic impact of genocide. Students would be asked to identify the potential role of specific companies/businesses in a genocide with regard to the categories provided by Slim (2012) (i.e., “perpetrator” or “supplier,” “victim, ameliorator, humanitarian actor,” “peacebuilder,” and “conflict preventer”).

Ideally, the coursework would also be supplemented by travel to one or more countries that has suffered from genocide, to gain first-hand knowledge of the business environment before and after the genocide. Other primary source educational materials would come from museum visits, guest lecturers and various videos.

**ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES**

The biggest challenge to developing a course on the connections between business decisions and genocide is ensuring that faculty are adequately prepared. Hanlon and Frost (2013) discovered that faculty hold a “narrow understanding of human rights” (p. 6) and that the topic is taught inconsistently even within a given business school. Thus faculty development will be an important condition prior to building a business course on genocide. The preparation for such a course will also be a challenging task, as the course relies on much multidisciplinary background on a multitude of countries that have experienced genocide. Since there is not yet a textbook available, faculty will have to develop their own course materials; we anticipate great potential for collecting primary resources through in-country interviews, discussions with businesses, visits to museums commemorating genocides, and so forth.

It is our belief, as stated earlier, that most business decisions can have some degree of impact on or be impacted by countries touched by genocide. Nevertheless, in an era of limited teaching resources, University administrators may shy away from devoting an entire semester’s course to this topic. We would hope that at a minimum, universities will consider adding components of our proposed course into already-existing international business courses on business ethics, corporate social responsibility, and sustainability.

Generating student interest may also be a challenge, given the traditional backgrounds, general interests, and goals MBA students. Faculty will have to ensure that students see why they should care about an issue that may seem very remote or abstract; like many topics in social responsibility, students will need to see both the ethical and the business case for learning about the role of business in genocide. This will obviously be easier at business schools that already have a strong program in CSR and/or ethics.

An additional challenge, which will vary by student backgrounds, relates to the suggested travel requirement for the course. Though a study trip could be just one week long, for some students, this may be difficult either financially, or because of work or family obligations. In addition, students may be afraid to travel to some post-genocide countries, either because of fears of political instability, or as is currently the case in Ebola-stricken countries in West Africa, for health concerns.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has provided evidence that to suggest that genocides can at least partially be explained by the struggle for limited – or abundant – economic resources. Thus today’s businesses can potentially impact the probability of a genocide occurring, for better or for worse. They can also be instrumental in helping a country recover from genocide. And yet, business students, our future business leaders, are rarely exposed to this topic in their curriculum, according to our review of the websites and catalogues of the 719 AACSB-accredited business schools.

This paper has provided the general outlines of a proposed course on the business of genocide. Providing the proposed curriculum will extend current international business courses by promoting thinking about new concepts of economic development and global peace and security with the following two principles at their core: (1) Good business practices can produce peaceful socio-economic environments, while the development of prosperous economies reduces the likelihood of war and genocide; and, (2) Ethical businesses can reduce the enormous cost involved in resettling refugees, undertaking armed humanitarian interventions, funding post-genocide justice and reconciliation, and rebuilding post-genocide societies.

The proposed course can help students to understand how genocide is related to a business and will help open their eyes to an aspect of business and economics that they likely had not considered before. As businesses become increasingly globalized and interconnected, it is all the more critical that business students have an understanding of the genocides that are taking place or have taken place around the world. The proposed course can put that understanding in the context of an international business education, teaching the students about the value of social corporate responsibility. Ultimately, the course can reinforce the idea that concern for human rights is directly compatible with, and imperative for, good business practices. When these students enter into business careers, they will be prepared to put these concepts into action, even if they are not directly involved in an “international” business. For those that follow a career in public policy, they will be prepared to influence state or national-level policies regarding doing business with countries in conflict or expanding economic opportunities in societies where the absence of such could intensify social and political tensions.

In addition to the traditional MBA or undergraduate student, we expect that this course could be attractive to others beyond the university walls, including local businesses who have interests overseas, policymakers, political and social activists, and adult learners. These members of the public will be similarly stimulated to understand how their own political and economic choices may impact, or be impacted by, countries in conflict. As course participants, they would also get a feel for how businesses in the US and abroad can help or hurt these countries and will be able to make informed decisions about interacting with those businesses. They will have the tools and language they need to influence policy and policymakers about early warning signals that may help prevent genocide in the first place and how to help countries make sustainable recoveries after conflict. It is our hope that all participants who take this course would have a better understanding of the impact of business decisions have not only on the “bottom line,” but also on the community and the country with whom a business partners.

As a next step, we would like to delve further in-depth by using a survey instrument to study the AACSB-accredited schools, to learn more about their views on incorporating curriculum related to the business of genocide. The survey will serve to validate our findings from our internet-based search, but will also provide an opportunity to tease out the challenges that are preventing business schools from offering genocide-related coursework.
REFERENCES


