

Genocide Prediction

How Do We Predict Genocide?

Overview

This lesson plan teaches students about how genocide is predicted. Starting in the 1990s, researchers began to identify the risk factors of genocide. This led to researchers using a type of math called statistics to predict genocide, and a large body of research now exists that researchers and policymakers use to predict genocide worldwide. In this lesson, students will learn about the main factors they track, as well as apply what they learned to real-life case studies.

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand risk factors and triggers as concepts.
- Students will evaluate possible risk factors and triggers of genocide.
- Students will apply what they learned to real-life scenarios.

Content Standards

HSS-10.10.1, 2, and 3 HSS-10.4.1 HSS-10.4.3 Acc.MA:Cn11 HSS-11.9.1 HSS-PoAD.12.9.5 HSS-PoAD.12.9.8

Lesson Plan

Teachers should lead students through the following activities.

1. Guide students through a warmup (think, pair, share). Ask students to write their answer to the following question: “What do you think is important for predicting genocide?” Provide a few minutes for them to free write, then have them pair up to discuss the question, and then ask the whole class what they think could be important to predicting genocide.
2. Guide students through the essential questions in the [PowerPoint](#).



Lecture

- **Introduce students to the PREVENT Model**, developed by Dr. Hollie Nyseth Nzitatira and Dr. Kerry Whigham. Each of the letters in the word PREVENT refers to one of seven categories of risk. With each of these categories, there are some specific risk indicators that researchers look at to help assess the situation within a country. These can be found below.

Prior atrocities and human rights abuses

Regime upheaval

Executive overreach and non-democratic governance

Volatility in the economy and environment

Exclusion and social fragmentation

Neighboring instability and other international factors

Triggers and threats to those in power

Student-Teacher Collaborative Work

- After you walk through the PREVENT model, students will have five minutes to access and assess the potential risk of genocide in Chad, per the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Early Warning Project: <https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/countries/chad>. Encourage students to utilize the content from class lecture and discussion to guide their interpretation.
 - After five minutes, call students back to discuss.
 - What kinds of risk factors and triggers did students pull out as important to predicting genocide?
 - How concerned are students about genocide in Chad?

Student Engagement

- Students should be placed in groups of 3-5. Provide students with various short write-ups on current crises around the world (one country per group). The USHMM's Early Warning Project publishes write-ups about high risk countries that can be easily downloaded. Have students label and annotate risk factors and triggers. What events illustrate a type of long-term risk factor? How about a potential trigger? Students should provide a rank (from 1 to 10, 1 being not concerned, 10 being very predictive) of the risk of genocide in each country. They should be ready to explain why as well.
 - Students will have fifteen minutes to familiarize themselves with the case study. Here are some suggestions, though these can vary from year to year.
 - Sudan
 - India
 - Colombia
 - Nicaragua
 - Myanmar
 - DRC
 - Northern Ireland
- Encourage them to collaborate with their peers to discuss how genocide prediction tools could be utilized to forewarn a potential genocide.
- If time allows, have each group present 1 risk factor, depending on the reading presented. This will allow students to see similarities and unique contextualization for various regions around the world.

Exit Ticket

On the way out...

- **Exit Ticket!** Now that students have learned about relevant risk factors and triggers of genocide prevention, they should write out an answer to the following question:
 - Which factors do you find are most important for predicting genocide? Why?
- Encourage them to utilize specific evidence from case studies presented in class.

Glossary

Genocide Prediction: The use of research, data, and patterns to identify when and where genocide is more likely to occur.

Genocide: Acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. These acts can include killing members of the group, causing serious harm, or preventing births, among other types of violence.

Genocide Prevention: Efforts taken to reduce the risk of genocide, often by addressing the risk factors.

Risk Factors: Long-term conditions or patterns within a country that increase the likelihood of genocide over time.

Triggers: Short-term events or sudden changes that can spark or accelerate violence in a high-risk situation.

PREVENT Model: A framework used to assess the risk of genocide by analyzing seven key categories of risk factors.

Prior Atrocities and Human Rights Abuses: A history of violence or repression against groups, which increases the likelihood of future atrocities.

Regime Upheaval: Major political instability, such as coups, revolutions, or sudden changes in leadership.

Executive Overreach and Non-Democratic Governance: When leaders concentrate power, weaken democratic institutions, or limit political freedoms.

Volatility in the Economy and Environment: Economic crises, resource scarcity, or environmental stress (such as droughts or disasters) that create instability, tensions, or perceptions of scarcity.

Exclusion and Social Fragmentation: Deep divisions within society, where certain groups are marginalized, discriminated against, or excluded.

Neighboring Instability and Internal Factors: Conflicts or crises in nearby countries, refugee flows, or international influences that increase instability.

Triggers and Threats to Those in Power: Events that leaders may perceive as threats (such as protests, elections, or rebellions) which can lead to violent responses.