



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

## Center for Middle Eastern Studies

### Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad: Balkan Borderlands

#### Curriculum Project or Presentation Title:

*Explaining Sarajevo's Sniper Alley in Light of the classic Social Psychology Experiments*

#### Author:

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#### Course or Audience:

*PSY101: Introduction to Psychology, PSY 250: Social Psychology, PSY290: Research Methods, PSY132 Intercultural Psychology*

#### Overview:

*This presentation introduces the audience to the phenomenon of Sniper Alley in Sarajevo circa 1993, a warfare-based campaign of systematic murder and terror in Sarajevo in which military personnel executed order to randomly kill civilians in city*

#### Student Learning Outcomes:

1. *Identify where Bosnia and Sarajevo is and the general situation in Bosnia circa 1993.*
2. *Explain the situation that gave rise to sniper alley.*
3. *Describe the design and findings of Milgram's (1963) Shock experiment, Zimbardo's (1972) Stanford Prison Study, and Asch's conformity illuminate factors that can breakdown an ethical behavior.*
4. *Evaluate how Milgram (1963), Zimbardo (1972), and Asch's conformity studies illuminate how **authority** and **obedience**, **roles** and **context**, and **conformity** all may have contributed to the sniper's behavior in Sniper Alley.*
5. *Analyse on how the phenomenon of Sniper Alley is relevant in today's world and in the USA.*

#### Procedures/Lesson Sequence:

*This presentation works best with a prepared slideshow or access to a web browser. Resources for constructing the presentation are given as links in the procedure. Unless otherwise noted, source references for most general topics are Wikipedia. These will suffice as overview references for most general curriculum needs. In addition, all linked resources are meant only as suggestions to give a flavor for how to design the presentation*

- *Show video of sniper alley. ([example 1](#), [example 2 \(warning: violent and needs to have YouTube account to access\)](#))*
  - *Get reactions of the class to the video. Ask them what is going on.*
  - *(optional) If you want to expand the discussion to **stereotyping** ask the audience to describe how they see the people who are running to avoid being shot. After a few minutes, ask them what religion they probably are. Then let the audience know that most of the people being shot at are probably Muslims. A good reference for discussing stereotyping, prejudice and ultimately, discrimination is [Whitely and Kite \(2010\)](#). The following webpage [Oxford Bibliography Webpage](#) has a technical discussion with many references.*

- Ask the class what they know about the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia, and Sarajevo. Use this as your starting discussion point.
  - Below are some resource suggestion for creating a presentation:
    - A [map of Europe](#) or [the world](#) illustrating where [Bosnia and the other states of the former Yugoslavia](#) is.
    - A close up map showing [Bosnia and Sarajevo](#), and perhaps some photos of Sarajevo today (e.g., [example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#)).
    - Summarize source material on [Bosnia](#) and [Sarajevo](#).
    - Summarize source material on the [breakup of Yugoslavia](#) and [Bosnian war](#).
      - (Optional) Discuss any or all of the following in terms of explaining the violence and internecine warfare:
        - how the breakup of Yugoslavia destroyed economic stability and ability to address their basic **needs**, particularly the lowest three elements of Maslow's [Hierarchy of Needs](#). ([copy of original 1943 article here](#).)
        - how economic and social disruption led to [scapegoating](#). (See the editing volume by [Esses & Vernon, 2009](#), particularly Chapter 4 by Glick, When Neighbors Blame Neighbors: Scapegoating and the Breakdown of Ethnic Relations.
        - how Rene Girard's anthropological model of the scapegoat may explain (See [Girard, \(1986\)](#), particularly the second chapter Stereotypes of Persecution.)
    - Consider showing images of Sarajevo during the war ([example 1](#), [example 2 \(warning: this image has a dead body\)](#), [example 3](#)).
- Briefly describe the [siege of Sarajevo](#) and how [sniper alley](#) came to be ([map of sniper alley](#))
  - Ask audience to provide explanations about how soldiers, many of whom were young men and reservists (not professional soldiers) could find themselves shooting civilians trying to cross road intersections.
- Present [video on Milgram's \(1963\) shock study](#) on asocial behavior. (For more information, see [Milgram \(1974\)](#), and this [Wikipedia article](#) for a brief overview.)
  - Discuss the role of **obedience** and **authority** in facilitating people to act in ways that are later judged as immoral.
- Present [video on Zimbardo's \(1973\) Stanford Prison Study](#) For more information, see [Zimbardo \(2007\)](#) and [this Wikipedia article](#).
  - Discuss the role of **roles** and **context** in “allowing” people to act in ways that are later judged as immoral.
- Present [video illustrating Asche's research on conformity](#) (originally study in 1951) . For more information see this [pdf of Asche \(1955\) article](#) in Scientific American and this [Wikipedia article](#).
  - Discuss the role of **conformity** in “allowing” people to act in ways that are later judged as immoral
- Now it is time to discuss how these factors played a role in the soldier's shooting of civilians.
  - Discuss about how **obedience** and **authority** authorized and demanded the behavior, analogizing this to Milgram's study. Would soldiers have engaged in shooting civilians if they were not cajoled by superiors? Did the superiors help to remove the sense of responsibility on the part of shooters?
  - Discuss how **roles** and **context** changed soldier's perception of civilians and what the behavior meant. Discuss the role of “guard” and “prisoner” by analogy to “shooter” and “sniper.” It was noted by victims that the shooters often seemed to act arbitrarily. Analogize this to the description of guards' behavior in the Stanford Prison Study.
  - Discuss the role of **conformity** on the shooters' actions. Did the shooter's peers play a role in the behavior. (Perhaps discuss the role of depersonalization and uniforms). The video discussed two forms of conformity: **informational conformity** (believing what they are doing is “true”) and **normative conformity** (not believing, but just going along with the group.). Let the audience discuss whether either kind of conformity could lead to shooting. Keep the discussion open-ended.
- Bring the conversation back to the personal relevance of the audience.
  - If the optional topics of **needs** and **scapegoating** were discussed, discuss how it would be possible for the USA to find itself in a place in which citizens are actively scapegoating one another. Or, are there structures in place in the USA that would prevent a breakdown of

*structure that would endanger people's needs?*

- *Are there any current events that are leading people to behave in ethically questionable ways due to any of the factors explored (**obedience and authority, role and context, and conformity.**) Would it be possible for these factors to be so extreme that people could go all the way to homicide?*
- *How can our knowledge of these social psychology concepts help us be proactive in ensuring that we- both as individuals and collectively- don't fall into the trap of committing unethical acts.*

### **Assessment:**

- *Most of the formative assessment is informal, it is engaged by question and answer with the audience. However, at each bullet point, the speaker could implement a personal response system (e.g., TurningPoint, Kahoots, Socrative), to get a quantitative measure of participant understanding. (e.g., one could ask "Sarajevo is the capital of which country?", or "Which of the following countries has a predominantly Muslim population?)*
- *After each video a speaker could create a quantified response asking participants to identify a key concept or term from the video. (e.g., How was the amount of harm somebody was willing to do to another person measured?)*
- *In my class, summative assessments are often built into end-of-the class quizzes that I have built into the Canvas Learning Management System. For the presentation given, most questions are about the methodology of the social psychology studies, so they would not be appropriate for other use. However, tailoring multiple choice questions appropriate to the level of description given by the speaker should be fairly straightforward.*
- *Alternatively, the final bullet of the lesson sequence could be omitted. Instead, it would become an essay assignment. Here is an example of one possible essay "After considering how the three classic social psychology studies can be applied to "sniper alley, please pick an current issue in the USA that these studies can be applied to. In your discussion, make sure to use and define the following terms: **obedience, authority, role, context, information conformity, normative conformity.** Each term should be accompanied by an illustration taken from the current issue you chose to discuss. In the final paragraph, discuss what can be done to minimize the impact of each of these concepts. A complete paper will address all concepts."*

### **Materials:**

*Videos and links are included in the lesson sequence. These resources can be used to build a slide show if desired. In addition, here are the sources relevant to social psychology that would illuminate the presentation:*

Asch, S. E. (1955). Opinions and Social Pressure. *Scientific American*, 193 (5), 31-35.

Esses, V. M., & Vernon, R. A. (Eds.). (2008) Explaining the breakdown in ethnic relations: Why neighbors kill. New York: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd. Oxford, UK.

Girard, R. (1986). The scapegoat. Baltimore, MA. John Hopkins University

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.

Milgram, S. (1974/2009). *Obedience to Authority: An experimental view*. New York: Harper Collins.

Whitley, B. E., & Kite, M. E. (2010). *The psychology of prejudice and discrimination*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Zimbardo, P. (2007). *The Lucifer effect: Understand how good people turn evil*. New York: Random House

**Technology:**

- *My description of the lesson plan is written to be flexible. The minimal technology needed is a computer with internet connection and a web browser. If desired, A slide show could be created with the materials linked above,*
- *If a formative assessment is desired. I'd recommend tying student responses to a system like Kahoots (if all participants have a cell phone) or a system like TurningPoint (if students need to be provided with clickers.) However, index cards could be provided where students put their names on them and hand them in as they go.*
- *A summative assessment could be as simple as a paper and pencil test, a scantron, or as I tend to do, deployed on a Learning Management System. Alternatively, the summative assessment could be a take-home essay, as described above.*

**Adaptations:**

*This material is appropriate to many different kinds of classes in psychology. It could possibly even be used by people studying politics and contemporary history.*

**Reflections:**

*My first run through on this was successful. Students didn't know anything about Bosnia and sniper alley, so the novelty effect had them engrossed and engaged so that they were ready to encounter the social psychological concepts and discuss how they could be used to explain sniper alley. For myself, I will be continuing to build the material. As appropriate, I may build focused assessments, though I think assessments on topics like this should always be tailored by the presenter, the presenter's style, and the intended audience.*