

Learning from the voices of child soldiers and child victims, 2009

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Synopsis

The unit uses the stories of child soldiers and child victims to explore three major themes of social psychology: First, to illustrate how we underestimate the situational influences on other people's behavior while over estimating the dispositional influences, and do the opposite for their own behavior; Second, to show the power of propaganda, specifically radio broadcasts, to incite people to insidious and unconscionable acts of violence; Finally, to look at how good people can do evil deeds, specifically looking at cognitive dissonance and bystander effects. The unit will use Socratic seminars, personal voice exercises, role play activities, interactive technology, photo essays and debates to explore how societies could devolve into the use of child soldiers, gang lands, and genocides. The unit will also tie into previous learning looking at posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the different perspectives for explaining dispositional and situational influences on behavior and beliefs. Students will learn societies and individuals alike must remain ever vigilant to avoid the pitfalls of the dehumanization and discrimination of individuals, however small, lest it be the beginning of something so large as to ruin them and their society.