

Methodological and Cognitive Psychological Principles in the understanding of source documents from Slave Societies and Societies with slaves

This lesson attempts to answer the big question: “how can this document be used?” In other words, what are the constraints and benefits to using one slave narrative in the evaluation of the American culture of bondage?

Day 1 (block day 95 minutes Weds or Thurs.)

Assignment:

Review in Myers
Scientific survey – especially randomization
Case Study
Memory – information processing paradigm – reconstructive memory (Loftus)
Flashbulb memory

Class Activities:

Large Group lecture/direction/discussion: Define/review the aforementioned social and cognitive psychological principles. 20 minutes

Small Group discussion: Find examples from your daily experience (personal or observed in others) which illustrate each of the aforementioned principles. Please do not use examples from the textbook. Students are strongly cautioned to reflect carefully on what they choose to discuss in public. 35 minutes

Large Group discussion: Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the examples for each of the definitions. Choose the most representative examples. For example “I experienced reconstructive memory failure when I described Mrs. L. as wearing a blue shirt on the first day of school. She actually wore a green one.” is a typically excellent and ‘most representative’ personal application of the principle. Mark each of these examples on your graphic organizer. 35 minutes

Introduction of Homework: Use knowledge of the scientific survey (especially randomization), the information processing paradigm of memory (especially reconstructive memory, Loftus) and Flashbulb memory to evaluate the representativeness of slave narratives from the American past. 5 minutes

Day 2 (50 minutes, Fri.)

Assignment:

Read Norman Yetman’s WPA online introduction to the slave narratives
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem>

or

Search An Introduction to the WPA Slave Narratives by Norman Yetman

Evaluate Yetman’s following assertion (found as the second paragraph under “Collective Portrait”

“Because the actual occupational distribution of the slave population is unknown, assurance of total randomness in this sample is impossible. But there appears little reason to believe that the processes involved in the selection of interviewees produced a sample that systematically diverged from the larger population. At least the sample biases that characterized the universe of antebellum slave autobiographies--the disproportionate number of runaways, individuals who had purchased their freedom or had been freed, males, craftsmen, and individuals from border states--are absent. While not totally eliminated, the methodological problem of sample bias that inevitably confronts the historian is substantially reduced in this

sample of the ex-slave universe. The WPA narratives thus constitute an illuminating and invaluable source of data about antebellum and post-Emancipation Southern life, the institution of slavery, and, most important, the reactions and perspectives of those who had been enslaved.”

Using your knowledge of scientific surveying outline, create a cognitive web, or list of the significant problems of Yetman’s assertion.

Class Activities:

Review the principles of randomization and scientific survey techniques. 15 minutes

Discuss homework assignment.

Distribute and read Dr. Warren Perry’s work (Summary and Conclusion excerpts) on the exhumation of African Americans in NYC. 30 minutes

Begin an e-mail to send to the Library of Congress addressing the dangers of Yetman’s assertion. Sign and send. 15 minutes

Day 3 (50 minutes, Mon.)

Assignment

Finish letter of concern in regards to the representativeness of the slave narratives.

Class Activities

Set up laptop mobile lab. 10 minutes

Discussion:

1. What is the value of the slave narratives as case studies of interpersonal relations? 10 minutes
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the slave narratives as historical sources? Please especially consider this question in concert with your knowledge of the nature of memory (reconstructive nature of memory, flashbulb memory and the information processing paradigm) in evaluating each narrative. 20 minutes.

Large Group lecture/direction: Research online slave narratives as examples of primary source information. Students are directed to identify specific passages of the narratives to which they attribute these dynamics. They are also cautioned that as this is primary research they may not find all the dynamics and that the dynamics may work in counterintuitive ways. Students are encouraged to discuss the passages with their seat mates and the teacher.

Directed research: Together the class reads the same short online narrative and discusses completion of the graphic organizer. 10 minutes

Day 4 (50 minutes, Tues.)

Assignment:

Complete and turn in graphic organizer from Monday’s narrative.

Class Activities:

Set up mobile laptop lab. 10 minutes

Distribute graphic organizers. Students are assigned separate portions of subject name lists and use a random number table to identify the five narratives they will summarize and analyze. Students research and discuss online slave narratives. 40 minutes

Day 5 (block day 95 minutes, Weds. or Thurs.)

Class Activities:

Set up mobile laptop lab. 10 minutes

Students research and discuss online slave narratives.

At end of class students turn in minimum of five narrative summaries (research) to Mrs. L. 60 minutes

Day 6 (50 minutes, Fri.)

Assignment:

Students answer following writing prompt:

Describe the limits and benefits of only using slave narratives in the construction of American history. You must address issues of representativeness, generalizability, the age of the narrator and the psychological quality of the memories.

Narrative Summary/Analysis sheet

Name _____ Date _____

Online resources – Search Google

From the Library of Congress:

American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers Project 1936 -1940

Born In Slavery Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers Project 1936 – 1938

Name and age of Narrator ('informant') _____

Name, Race and gender of Interviewer _____

Date of Interview _____

Style of the text – Did the text appear to be heavily edited or was the text in quotations indicating that it was more of a verbatim transcript?

Content notes:

Nature of memories – evidence of flashbulb and/or reconstructive please cite

Conclusion:

Reliability of the source or in what other ways might you use the source

Standards Analysis

**Methodological and Cognitive Psychological Principles
in the Understanding of source documents from Slave Societies and
Societies with slaves:**

Throughout the course of the lesson the following standards will have been met:

Ohio Standards for Social Studies Instruction (please see ODE web page)

History – Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States and the world. Grade 11-12 –B

People in Societies – Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices and products of cultural, ethnic and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional and global settings. Grade 11-12 A, B and C

Social Studies Skills and Methods – Students organize, evaluate and synthesize information from multiple sources to draw logical conclusion. Students communicate this information using appropriate social studies terminology in oral written or multi-media form and apply what they have learned to societal issues in simulated or real-world settings. Grade 9- 10 A and B, Grade 11-12 B, C and D

National Standards for the Teaching of High School Psychology (attached)

Methods Domain: IA-3.2

Cognitive Domain: IVA-3.1, IVB 1.1 – 1.6

National Standards for History (attached)

Era 4: 2-d 5-12 and 7-12

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