



École supérieure
du professorat
et de l'éducation
Académie de Caen

WHAT ABOUT THEM ?

**THE HOLOCAUST
FROM A TEENAGE VIEW:
ANALYZING YOUNG PEOPLE'S
MODES OF THINKING
FROM THE CLASSROOM
TO THE MUSEUM**

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**THEORETICAL
FRAMEWORK**



THE PROTOCOL

DATA



DISCUSSION



1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

WHEN ENCOUNTERING PAINFUL PASTS... CAN WE IDENTIFY WHAT STUDENTS THINK ABOUT A SPECIFIC HISTORICAL FACT WHEN THEY ARE OUT OF SCHOOL?

A FEW SCHOLARS SUCH AS SAM WINEBURG HAVE ASKED THE SAME QUESTION...



“ The images students carry with them come from places quite distant from the classroom - from the media, from popular culture, from the church and the home. ” Sam Wineburg

According to Sam Wineburg, our main preoccupation should be to understand how images get fixed in the historical consciousness of young adults. Many studies have revealed what young people know or what they do not know about images of the past learnt in school (these studies usually tend to ask the interviewees what they know as for instance “write about what you have learnt on the History of France”) However we remain ignorant of the historical knowledge they absorb in many other settings and how these images come to be formed in the first place.

A thesis which
initiated an original
research protocol...

KEYWORDS :

**HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS / HISTORICAL THINKING
NICOLE TUTIAUX-GUILLON, SEIXAS, HEIMBERG, MARTINEAU ...**

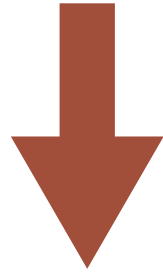
MEETING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

After a year's work, we had the unique opportunity to take to the museum the students we had first met in their classroom... There they were equipped with eye-tracking devices measuring the eye movements and the eye positions during their visit.

Our research project thus took a different direction and now encompasses receptivity in a museum context, museology, evaluation studies and research, and memory studies



THE PROTOCOL



"Focus groups give the researcher access to uncodified knowledge and stimulate imagination in the research process"
Alain Touraine et Johnson (1996)

As you can see the aim is to enhance students' historical thinking outside-of-school experiences. Two main questions:

- Is it possible to take a closer look at adolescents' modes of historical thinking and filter what they learn in school and in other settings?
- What part of knowledge does not concern teaching?

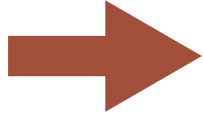
A thesis which initiated an original research protocol...



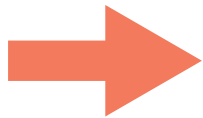
Borrowing from the field of didactics: disciplinary consciousness

CROSSING FRONTIERS...

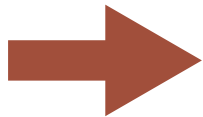
(Denis Peschanski on memory studies).

3 QUESTIONS:

Is it possible to take a closer look at adolescents' modes of historical thinking and filter what they learn in school and in other settings about the Holocaust?



What part of knowledge does not concern teaching about the Holocaust?



This workshop aims at presenting the preliminary findings of an exploratory deliberative research study. The purpose is to understand perceptions, receptions, feelings, attitudes, and motivations. The relation between a visitor and a museum is complex one. According to Piaget, assimilation and accommodation are two complementary processes which have to be taken into account whether we consider the artifact or the individual.

TO REACH THIS QUESTIONING, DID WE HAVE TO CROSS THE FRONTIERS?

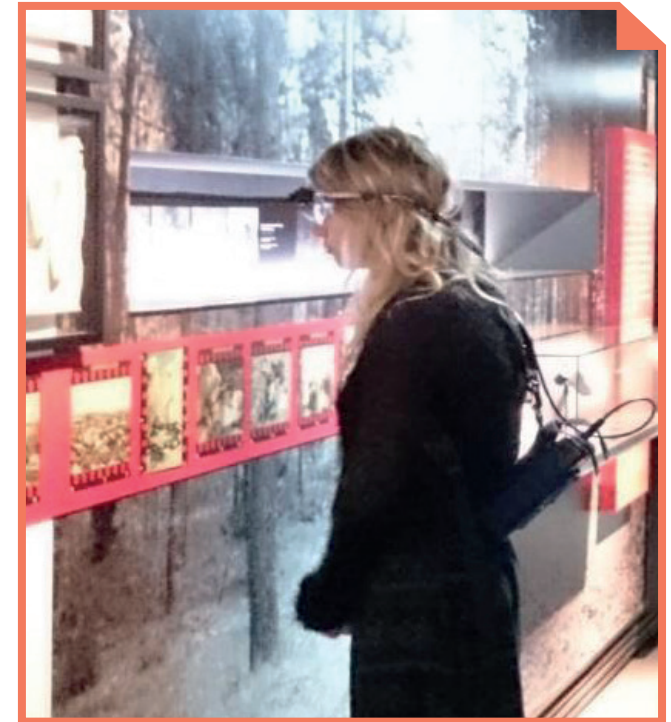
exploratory deliberative research : understanding the perceptions, receptions, feelings, attitudes, motivations

RECEPTIVITY

Focus groups and eye-tracking devices are both used to identify and question the mechanisms of reception.

Comprehensive inductive research method to observe specific facts in order to find an overall logic

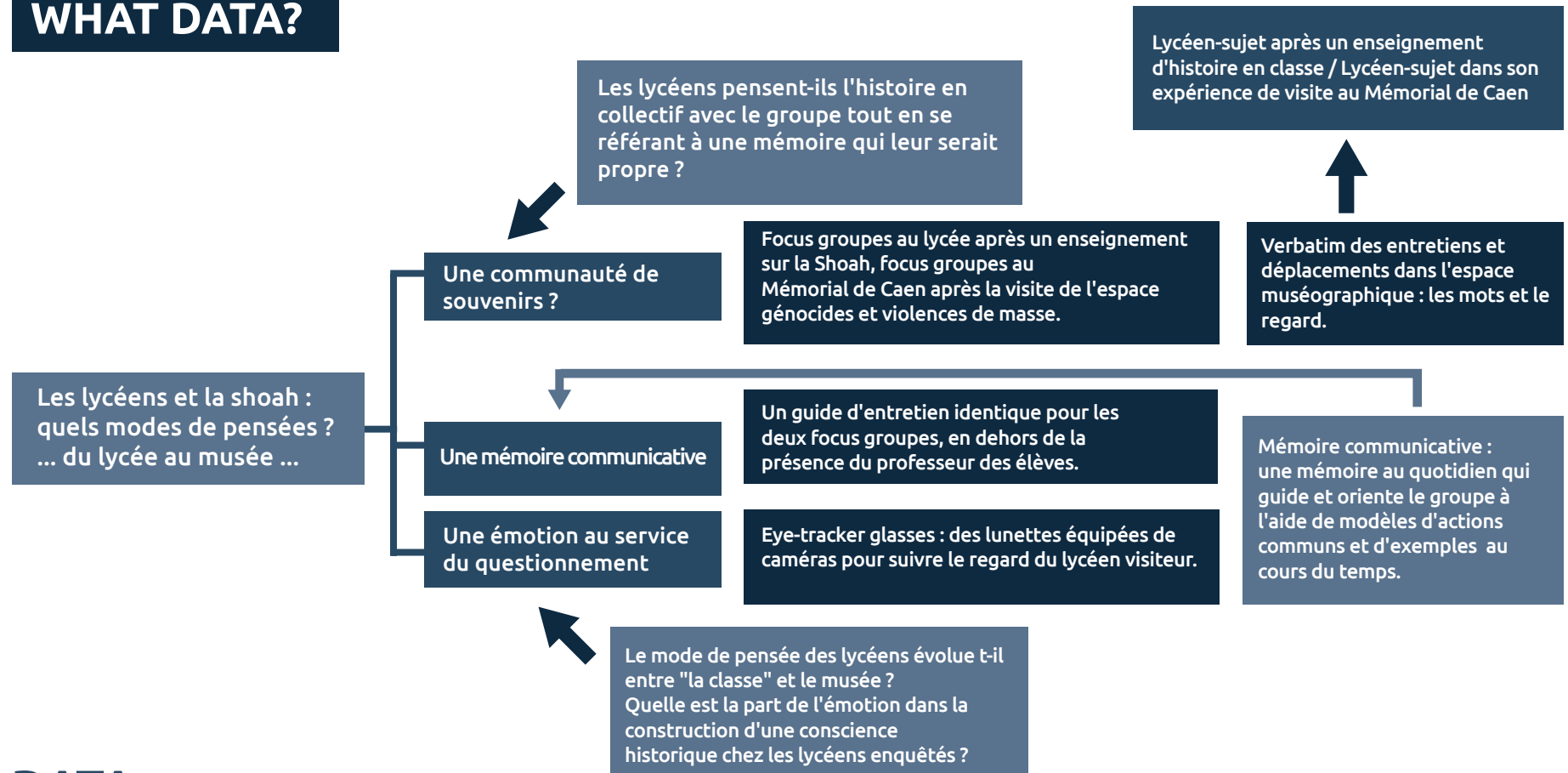
Enabling an exploration of individuals' ways of thinking and identifying practical results





DATA

WHAT DATA?



DATA :

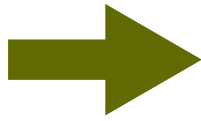
- MINUTES OF THE FOCUS GROUPS CONDUCTED IN HIGH SCHOOL
- MINUTES OF THE FOCUS GROUPS CONDUCTED AFTER VISITING THE MUSEUM
- EYE TRACKER RECORDINGS: WHAT THE STUDENT SAW (VIDEO), THE DISPLAYS WHICH ATTRACTED THE STUDENT (HEAT MAPS)



DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

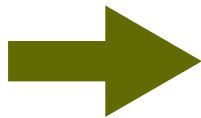
FOCUS GROUP: DO STUDENTS REFLECT ON THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN A WAY THAT IS UNIQUE TO THEM?



A communicative memory prevails among high school students (Ansmann) more than the cultural memory does - a memory being used daily, which guides and influences the group with models and examples drawn from the past. Sociologists have been studying this issue (Welzer) : the first frontier has been crossed : our theoretical framework also lies within sociology...



Emotional representations of the past are very important for the construction of a historical consciousness but it seems that they do not come to be formed in a school context. The role of the museum is being analyzed as part of our study. The students experienced emotions when visiting the room dedicated to "Genocide and mass violence". They seemed to accept more easily historical notions of responsibility, continuity etc. A new frontier has been crossed (Burnot, Dauchot in neurosciences : brain's center of emotions)



If historical consciousness and the theory learnt at school influence the interpretation of the past, the understanding of the present as well as future perspectives, the past tends to be seen as a selective and interpretative construction (as students say "I was not born yet" "I was told that...") The school approach is in many respects questioned within the family environment which represents a community of memory having a different interpretative framework. The classroom can be identified as a distinct group . Does this temporary community (Harald Welzer) of memory have its own specific features?

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