

MEMORY

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The following primary sources discussed in this chapter are available to view within the 'Memory' collection on Biblioboard:

[\[A\] HMSO, *The Atomic Bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki: report of the British mission to Japan* \(1946\).](#)

[\[B\] HMSO, *Home Defence and the Farmer* \(1958\).](#)

[\[C\] Interview with Lawrence Holmes, audio and transcript. Part of 'The National Trust oral history' project \(2011\).](#)

[\[D\] Interview with Elsie Hinkes, audio and transcript. Part of 'Voices of the Cold War' project \(2015\).](#)

[\[E\] Interview with Bruce Kent and Brian Wicker, transcript. Part of 'Nuclear weapons and the Cold War challenge to the Christian churches' project \(2013\).](#)

[\[F\] Interview with Barbara Harrison, audio and transcript. Part of 'Nuclear Culture' postgraduate dissertation project \(2011\).](#)

[\[G\] Interview with Vera Jeffers, audio and transcript. Part of 'Nuclear Culture' postgraduate dissertation project \(2011\).](#)

[\[H\] Selection of anti-nuclear badges \(c.1960s\).](#)

[\[I\] Sash with anti-nuclear badges \(c.1960s\).](#)

[\[J\] Baseball cap with Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament logo \(c.1966\).](#)

[\[K\] Photograph of the Liverpool Festival of Peace \(c. April 1981\).](#)

[\[L\] Selection of letters.](#)

[\[M\] Selection of pamphlets and newsletters.](#)

Using Primary Sources

Introduction

It is largely agreed that memory is a universal human quality whereby individuals are able to 'recall' or 'retrieve' an experience from the past. In the twentieth century, memory studies emerged as a field in its own right, and it now straddles disciplinary boundaries. Interdisciplinary debates on concepts of 'memory' continue to present challenges to the application of memory studies in psychology, social psychology, and the humanities. The theoretical construct 'memory' is also something that historians attempt to use in many forms in their research. By defining, retrieving, and explaining its relevance to history, memory has proved a useful frame of analysis for historians interested in the ancient world as well as those focusing on modern and contemporary eras. Historians commonly deploy the concept as an alternative way to interpret the past, and may discuss collective memory, religious memory, official memory, gendered memory, socialised memory, or individual memory, among other forms.

In 'retrieval', memory can offer new perspectives, interpretations, and impressions of the past. It can offer reasons for the emergence of particular ideas and opinions, or suggest new histories of emotions, sexuality, race, and gender. This is perhaps why, as an interpretative lens, memory is commonly used in areas of history with acute contemporary resonance, such as genocide studies. Historians of memory may attempt to explain the origins and continuation of particular memories or constructions of memory, or seek to expose individual 'agency' within histories of prejudice, myth, and the formation of ideas.

A vast range of sources can be used to construct histories concerned with memory, including interviews, text-based sources, source materials with an official origin, artefacts, and images. In this chapter, we will be focusing on the ways in which conceptualising 'memory' can help historians make sense of a particular aspect of history: the social history of the nuclear age. The concept of memory might seem an abstract idea but, used carefully, it has the potential to assign new meanings to past events, shining a light on lived realities and experiences.

Overview

It is important to make an instant distinction about the status of 'memory' in history. In the most basic reduction, we can discuss how the memories of

Memory

individuals or collective groups contribute to an understanding of history. Yet, once historians start to analyse source materials and then use memory as a concept, it is very important to define exactly how a methodological approach has been decided. Jay Winter stated that 'history is a discipline. We learn and teach its rules and its limits. Memory is a faculty. We live with it, and at times are sustained by it' (Winter, 2014, p.12). Along similar lines, Pierre Nora, writing in 1989, argued that history and memory had become increasingly opposed. Memory signifies 'real life', with its messy inconsistencies and relentless human unpredictability, while, with its rational tradition, history can only ever hope to offer representation, reproduction, and critical analysis (Nora, 1989, p.9).

With these ideas in mind, it begins to make sense why historians clearly define the form of memory they are interested in, or have identified. For instance, by defining 'collective memory' or 'gendered memory' as the focus of their work, historians are acknowledging their own approach to the history-writing process, perhaps offering reasons why certain memories might be formed, articulated, structured, or ordered. Another concept, such as gender, might be introduced to help to explain or categorise this process. Scholars have theorised the diverse meanings 'memory' can take on, and have dealt with epistemological and conceptual questions at length (Erl and Nünning, 2010). Indeed, writing on memory, and the history of memory, has now become an established corner of historical research, theory, and practice. There are a number of journals dedicated to the theme. One of the aims of *History and Memory*, a journal established in 1989, is to explicitly assess 'the manifold ways in which the past shapes the present and is shaped by present perceptions'.

The origins of memory as a field of study are normally linked to the work of Maurice Halbwachs who, through a persuasive sociological thesis, theorised that 'collective memory' could exist (Halbwachs, 1925). Grounded in ideas rather than historical evidence, Halbwachs' work inspired many social scientists, especially in relation to the rise of extremist politics in 1930s Europe. The extremes of twentieth-century warfare and politics led to an increased interest in the politics of memory in relation to the rise of aggressive nationalism and fascism, and the persistence of prejudicial beliefs such as anti-Semitism, racism, and sexism. To take one important example, scholars of twentieth-century genocide have found memory to be a crucial lens of interpretation (Jacobs, 2010; Sharples, 2012). There has been a great deal of interest in the history of war memorialisation, especially in the study

Using Primary Sources

of the First World War, after which new cultures of commemoration arose (Winter, 1995; 2006). We have already mentioned Pierre Nora, a prominent historian of memory, and his sweeping histories utilised a range of source materials to interpret the origins of French national identity and collective memory (Nora, 1996).

A number of very useful edited collections have been published in recent years, signifying the continuing proliferation of memory studies. Probably the best and most accessible collection of critical assessments on the history of memory is *Writing the History of Memory* edited by Berger and Niven. Early in this edited collection, they make the useful distinction between 'the writing of history and the operations of collective memory' (Berger and Niven, 2014, p.3). A recent edited collection concentrated on 'performativity' as a key conceptual concern when thinking about history and memory (Tilmans, van Vree and Winter, 2014, p.12), while others have explored memory, heritage, and landscape (Moore and Whelen, 2007).

In relation to the developing understanding of the concept of memory, new areas of specialism have arisen due to the legitimacy of using new types of oral, material and textual source types. Indeed, debates around the theme of history and memory are normally tied to the way in which source materials are viewed and conceptualised. Jay Winter's work on the First World War used a great deal of source material such as autobiography, memoir, diary, letters, and also fictional narratives such as film, literature, poetry, and theatre. In this sense, historians interested in the concept of memory are open to many forms of source material in order to explore new research questions. Narrative analysis can suggest how language is deployed politically in the present to shape meanings of the past, thus leading to explorations of the 'politics of memory'. One famous example of the way in which the politics of memory disrupted public historical representation was the controversy surrounding the *Enola Gay* exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum in the mid 1990s. The narrative of a new atomic bomb exhibition was highly contested, because certain interest groups were uncomfortable with particular interpretations of the atomic attacks on Japan (Boyer, 1996). In this sense, constructions of exhibitions and exhibition spaces sometimes have to negotiate a path between historical debate and the politics of memory.

So, it is clear that there are a number of important distinctions to make about the definition, status, and use of memory. It is important to recognise that the term 'memory' has many connotations, and is often used in

Memory

conjunction with other themes, specific places, or groups. The ways that historians choose to conceptualise history and memory will have important ramifications for how they choose to interpret the past, and we have seen that many historians see the terms 'history' and 'memory' as fundamentally opposing concepts. How will you choose to define these terms in your work?

For the purposes of this chapter, we will now turn to specific source materials in order to think about how historical evidence can be related to our theme of memory and then incorporated into written work. We will look at sources with an official origin, interviews, artefacts, and images in an attempt to approach the cold war and the nuclear state through the lens of memory. In this way, we gain an appreciation of the varying ways in which cold war policy affected individual citizens, think through the ways in which the cultural memory of the cold war itself has changed, and assess public understanding of a modern nuclear weapons state. But, how can we interpret sources in this way? Which memories do we privilege? How can we hope to define, retrieve, explain, and use histories of memory in this context?

Selecting and interpreting sources

For now, we will categorise the sources into those that can help us understand official memory, and those that get us nearer to understanding social and gendered memory. These sources may lead to contrasting interpretations of the British nuclear state and life in the nuclear age, and also suggest that different types of memory are co-dependent (Abrams, 2014).

Sources with an official origin

We start with those sources that allow us to identify the ways in which official memory was constructed in the years after 1945. As one example, [The National Archives](#) offers access to a range of government sources related to policy and decision-making, some of which was previously classified. These include memoranda, minutes of meetings, reports, and speeches, all of which must be approached carefully, and placed alongside other sources from the time. Autobiography can also be used to gather supplementary material and alternative opinions. We can use these sources to gather facts about government policy, trace disagreements, or make conclusions about the behaviour of prominent politicians. Such sources have been well used to create 'top-down' histories of nuclear Britain (Hennessy, 2010).

Using Primary Sources

The British government also produced an array of publications relating to the nuclear state, especially once nuclear civil defence became a priority in the 1950s. Intended for a national audience, civil defence information was mainly disseminated through pamphlets, but attempts were also made to attract the public to the Civil Defence Corps through recruitment literature, film, and advertisements in newspapers. So, when we look to these sources, we must be aware of the audience they were created for, and the explicit and implicit messages that are being manufactured for public consumption. We must also pay attention to the precise context of their creation, and their links to relevant public and secret government policy. We argue that these publications contributed to the creation of an official memory of nuclear Britain.

Because they were created by the nuclear state, such publications shared many assumptions, including the legitimacy and permanence of the nuclear deterrent, the assumed survivability of nuclear attack, and the possibility of preparedness and good citizenship in the face of nuclear danger. They suggested ways in which citizens should respond and act in the event of a nuclear attack. Clearly, they were intended to be persuasive and powerful messages to citizens, inculcating ideas about duty, responsibility, and Britishness in the nuclear age. To resist civil defence and the nuclear deterrent was presented as unpatriotic and irresponsible. Playing on the emotions and patriotism of the British public, civil defence publications also activated the shared memory of the Blitz to persuade people to support nuclear civil defence.

To demonstrate this claim, we can look to the use of language in these government publications. A common textual and visual vocabulary was mobilised to construct and reinforce ideas about nuclear Britain. Although we acknowledge that it is hard to demonstrate the impact of such language on the intended audience, analysis of language can lead to compelling interpretations of the activity of the nuclear state. As we will see in the next section of this chapter, it is possible to argue that there were identifiable continuities across government nuclear publications that combined to create a dominant official memory of the nuclear past.

Interviews

The interview offers many interpretative possibilities, and reminds us that lived experience can only ever be partially accessible for historians. It is important to think about the fact that the interview environment itself is a

Memory

nuanced and provisional site. The way in which dialogue between interviewer and interviewee is conducted will be unique, and has a huge impact on how we might interpret the interview. We must also pay attention to the way in which the dialogue between past and present is constructed, and consider the impact of contemporary cultural and political contexts on the investigation and recollection process. Every oral history interview will have been conceived with a set of aims in mind, and the interviewer, in most cases, is responsible for retrieving memories useful to these aims. We recommend that you develop a familiarity with approaches to oral history if you are planning to conduct interviews, or use interviews as a source (Perks and Thomson, 2006).

Oral histories will benefit from an analysis of how the participant achieves a sense of 'self' via reminiscence, how the dialogue between interviewer and participant shapes the memory narrated, and how the cultural inheritance of both individuals constructs an interview setting conducive to particular narratives. This 'collision' between the two (or more) individuals present in an interview and the 'specific context of the performance of memory' is called intersubjectivity (Abrams, 2010, p.58; Summerfield, 1998, p.29). For example, cultural and social attitudes towards gender at the time of memory formation have provided a focus for many oral historians (Leydesdorff, Passerini and Thompson, 1996, p.14). Memories can tell us about discourses of gender across the participant's lifetime, and how the participant has defined a narrative in gender terms. In addition, a gendered environment *in* the interview (between participant and interviewer) might affect the transmission of memory. However, it must not be assumed that because a respondent is male or female their memories will be shaped in set ways (Pattinson, 2011).

Relationships between individual memory, personal identity, public memory and group identity require careful distinction. With this in mind, it is likely that complex and contested narratives will emerge. Historians might also unpick 'counter-memory'; the way in which dissonant narrative can challenge dominant interpretations. Listening for hidden meaning is vital in order to avoid generalising or obscuring memory, so analysis of language is, again, very important. If you are seeking to highlight particular cultural assumptions, political opinions, or perhaps attempting to pick up on the way in which emotion can frame recollections, you can demonstrate this with reference to the language of the narrative. Interpretative tools to consider

Using Primary Sources

include agency, chronology, and conscious or unconscious patterns of speech.

Memories revealed in an interview are independent sources, yet the oral historian can further an interpretation and develop a history of memory by employing other sources and historiographies as points of reference. In the most basic terms, when working with oral history sources, the concept of memory offers a layered structure of analysis for historians, which must be carefully defined and justified. An excellent example of thoughtful historical scholarship that uses interviews is Kate Brown's *Plutopia* (2013). In this book, Brown also spends time reflecting on her own role as an interviewer, and explains how she wove together a historical narrative from the disparate voices she encountered during her research.

Artefacts and images

It is possible to use many other source materials to explore notions of memory in relation to the recent past. Collections created by anti-nuclear groups, student societies, authors, and artists may contain letters, newspaper clippings, photographs, and material objects such as badges and baseball caps. Intriguing work has been done to uncover the historical importance of particular objects (Houlbrook, 2007). Diaries are also a great untapped source for historians of the nuclear century, and while whole collections are rare, the [Mass Observation](#) archive contains many diaries (which were solicited, raising interesting questions about the precise status of these diaries), as does the [Great Diary Project](#). Letters and diaries are useful in the facts and information they can provide, and they can offer historians insight into the emotional world of individuals, or point to everyday life experiences (Dobson, 2009; Hammerle and Evans, 2009). In this sense, these sources are very different to formal official records in terms of their production, broader significance, and intended reception, and these contrasts are something to think about.

Sometimes, these sources might contradict interview recollections or, if shown to interviewees, awaken forgotten memories. It is in this sense that these historical fragments can suggest new things to historians, or place more formal collections of source materials in a new light: what are often called 'fragments' of the past can offer surprising and exciting opportunities when it comes to research and writing. For example, there are many unanswered questions relating to nuclear anxiety that these types of sources can help explore. Rather than dwelling on the 'reliability' of these sources, it

Memory

is more fruitful to analyse the language used in relation to the bigger questions or themes that you are exploring. How much of this type of source material remains? Does it matter how widely caps or badges were produced, worn and seen?

Practical advice

To end this chapter, we will now turn to some practical advice concerning how these three broad types of source material can be used to explore the theme of memory in written work, concentrating mainly on interviews as a source. The practical advice is intended to be suggestive and illustrative rather than conclusive, and deliberately focuses on the co-dependency of different forms of memory.

Sources with an official origin

One of the earliest official publications after the atomic attacks on Japan was [*The Atomic Bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki: report of the British mission to Japan*](#) [A]. This report was a stark encapsulation of the physical effects of the atomic bomb. Although the report is official, you will notice moments where the language appears emotive. Official publications like these show how particular opinions and memories may have been generated about nuclear history and policy, perhaps especially when it came to ideas about atomic victimhood. If you were writing about the official memory of atomic victimhood, this source could be used as an indication of the view of government towards the atomic bombings of Japan.

[Photograph No. 21, between pages 8 and 9](#), mentions the death of two individuals at Hiroshima, via descriptions of their incinerated bodies (shadows) on polished granite. Preoccupations with 'shadowing' continue on page 12, in relation to white cotton blouses, kimonos, and so on. This could be interpreted as a rationalised description of this horrendous new weapon of war that focuses more on material consequences than human suffering, a theme that runs through the pamphlet. Of course, it could be argued that the text is a scientific report, so it should be expected that it would contain rational, straightforward and descriptive details. However, what is the significance throughout of the preoccupation with measurement, categorisation, and examining material evidence in the cities? Perhaps by thinking about the use of language, we could argue that the report adopts the 'language of the experimental' which dehumanises and rationalises. The conclusion on page 20 can be read as a break from the scientific neutrality

Using Primary Sources

that pervades the report, but why might any claim to ‘neutrality’ or ‘objectivity’ be interpreted as problematic in this context? Perhaps we could argue that the official memory of the use of atomic weapons against Japan was influenced by publications such as this.

Other government sources published in the 1950s and 1960s were intended to be ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’ in presenting the dangers of the nuclear age, but, we could argue, also contributed to a consistent official narrative about nuclear Britain, which would then influence memories of it. Civil defence literature served to normalise the threat of nuclear attack, offer education and reassurance, create the impression of survivability, and attempt to persuade civilians to partake in civil defence activity. For example, if we were using [Home Defence and the Farmer](#) [B] as a source to back this up, we might look to the specific use of language and images in the pamphlet that exemplify this. [The Waking Point \(1951\)](#) was a civil defence recruitment film that used the memory of World War Two to persuade citizens to join the Civil Defence Corps. The visual vocabulary used in the film was intended to heighten public awareness and engagement with the nuclear state, but it is easy to see why the depiction of a nuclear nightmare may also cause, or reflect, contemporary anxiety. In essay work you could suggest this point, and then link together the continuities across these official sources to make an argument about the status of official memory. If we take these government sources in isolation, we may create a distorted interpretation of the era, and there is a danger in suggesting that official publications alone created the cultural memory of the nuclear age.

Interviews

When it comes to excavating cold war memories, interviews are an excellent source of information. Now we are going to examine interviews conducted with individuals who were directly involved with the nuclear state, individuals who were opposed to it, and individuals who had no specific relationship to it.

An [interview](#) [C] with Lawrence Holmes focuses on the transformation of the Royal Observer Corps (ROC) from an aircraft observation to a nuclear warning role in the mid 1950s. In one section of the interview he describes how the ROC was attributed nuclear responsibilities. You will notice that Lawrence included dates, names, and places, and critiqued causes, consequences, and effects, linguistic indicators that are mirrored throughout the interview. For example, phrases such as ‘I think’

Memory

and ‘in effect’ indicate that he was offering retrospective analysis. Lawrence’s language prioritised the neutral, objective, and rational tone of an official history text. More evidence for this includes his description of how weapons development altered the scenario for attack on Great Britain, which he relayed in a chronological, factual, and procedural tone.

There are several reasons why an interview participant might remember their own experience through references to official or fact-based history. It might seem an authentic memory, or provide distance from, or ownership of, personal memories left untold. It could be a way to assert authority in the interview within the power dynamic created by participant and interviewer, where ‘knowing’ the facts of history is assumed to be important, or sought after. It may also be a means by which to bring coherence to personal memories within the wider context of often complex and non-linear collective histories (Samuel and Thompson, 1990). In this case, Lawrence seemed to silence his personal memory by deferring to the official memory of the ROC and British nuclear weapons development. In any oral history source where this is the case, instances where personal memory is expressed become significant. Indeed, as the interview progresses, it is clear how his personal story begins to fit into the story of British nuclear development. Lawrence’s interview demonstrates how language, narrative voice, and public versus individual memories interweave to tell a history. This type of analysis could lead to an argument around the co-dependency of official and personal memory, where strong allegiance to the nuclear state creates personal memories that might more readily align with official memory.

We now turn to another [interview \[D\]](#) conducted with Elsie Hinkes. Elsie became a member of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship in the late 1950s and took part in Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) protests. In the interview, Elsie describes marching to Aldermaston with CND. The transcript teaches us why and how an individual chose to dispute the British nuclear programme, and also hints at how this experience might have differed according to gender. In the interview she presented social and political activities throughout her life as offshoots of her husband’s activism. For example, when asked about the moment at which she defined herself as a pacifist, she said ‘it came a little bit later when I started realising that I was, I was in it with him you know’.

Elsie’s narrative was structured around her private, ‘caring’ role. In her words, when she joined CND with her husband, ‘always, my my part of

Using Primary Sources

it, was always caring, or [laughs] [...] I was always looking after someone, um'. Later she described putting CND marchers up at the parsonage, describing the scene as 'very happy, kitchen was full of people cooking, and eating. I usually had a couple of chickens cooked and plenty of veg [...] it all worked'. Although Elsie participated in marches shoulder to shoulder with men, her role continued to be in the traditionally feminine activities of cooking, feeding, home-making, and supporting. Elsie's language, her emphasis on collective stories of a wide and diverse 'family', and use of personal pronouns ('we', 'us') might also indicate a gendered narrative. Here, narrative coherence is achieved through a memory that describes being central to 'a web of relationships' (Abrams, 2010).

In addition, she said, 'I was limited in what I could do with, five sort of well they weren't all small by this time, but we did take the children'. In effect, within the gender discourse of the 1950s, Elsie revealed that even if she had wanted to participate more in CND, she may have been too busy as the mother of five children to do so. Although she frequently dismissed her personal political opinions – the public discourse of a masculine sphere – Elsie's narrative contains indicators that she expressed her politics in a different way. For instance, while Elsie referred to her 'personal point of view', we can interpret this as being a 'political' opinion. Perhaps Elsie's interview demonstrates that being a woman in 1950s Britain did not prevent her from holding strong political beliefs, but these beliefs were not always publically articulated as 'political', nor heard as strongly as male voices. Thus, Elsie's memories indicate that gender did influence the experience and articulation of nuclear politics in the late 1950s. Histories of the 1950s argue that gender remained highly differentiated between public and private spheres, and analysis of this interview might lead you to offer further evidence for this in your written work. Your analysis of these interviews could build into a broader and subtle exploration of women's roles in 1950s cold war Britain.

In another [interview](#) [E] a female historian of British cold war history and Christianity [interviewed two male participants](#) simultaneously about the moral and political difficulties that churches in Britain faced in relation to the nuclear arms race. Both men played significant roles in churches and in peace activism from the 1950s to the date of the interview. The interaction between two participants, in the presence of an interviewer, lends itself to an interpretation of the 'selves' being 'performed'. For example, the interview begins with Brian and Bruce explaining how they came to be

Memory

involved in Pax Christi, a Catholic peace campaigning group. Both men were influenced by the pacifist thinking of prominent Catholic priests, including Archbishop Thomas Roberts; however, the way in which they describe this influence differs. Bruce begins the interview by differentiating himself from Brian. Perhaps, in the presence of another man with a different background to him, it is important for Bruce to define a personal anti-nuclear identity. This highlights that the anti-nuclear movement comprised diverse belief systems, and the [interview transcript](#) [E] could be used in written work to exemplify this.

Later in the interview, the interviewer frequently articulates her research purposes and passes comment on memories being brought to light in the interview. She states, 'one of the things I think is important to bring up – certainly I remember as a young woman growing up and being aware of nuclear weapons – people were frightened. We used to talk about what we would do if we had our three-minute-warning, and you really thought this could happen in your lifetime, that you could be incinerated.' It is important to consider how Bruce and Brian interact with her personal memories. The purpose in relaying this memory was to ask Brian and Bruce to consider whether nuclear fear among the general public assisted their campaigns as peace activists at certain 'hot' moments of the cold war. Yet her memory of nuclear fear was rooted in personal, generational, and gendered experiences and therefore might differ from other conceptualisations of the same theme. Bruce replied by linking his own memory of the film [The War Game \(1965\)](#) to the contemporary anti-nuclear campaign. His response is an example of how memories and recollections can move fluidly beyond the interview format and the interviewer's expectations. The intersubjectivity occurring in this interview brings to mind Alessandro Portelli's statement that the interview 'offers less a grid of standard experiences than a horizon of shared possibilities' (Portelli, 1997, p.88). It is our job when considering memory in oral history to interrogate those possibilities revealed in the interview.

The final two interviews we will examine display personal reflections on the nuclear age from Barbara Harrison and Vera Jeffers, two women with no link to the nuclear state or anti-nuclear politics. These interviews were conducted by Sarah Hewitt as part of a post-graduate project on personal memories of nuclear anxiety in the cold war era. Turning to one [interview](#) [F]: in response to a question about the use of atomic bombs against Japan, Barbara said 'you felt guilty in a way because your country was involved in

Using Primary Sources

killing; alright it brought an end to the war but at the cost of thousands of innocent people [...] you know people used to go round saying, oh, it will only take one man to have a row with his wife in the morning and go in work in a bad temper. And one turns it all and takes the rest of us with him and put his finger on the button, this is the way people used to talk you know.’ This is a complex narrative. In the [interview transcript \[F\]](#) you can see that Barbara was aware of the moral dilemma surrounding the use of the atomic bomb against Japan, and also spoke of the uncertainty of living in the nuclear age. Does her reference to ‘the way people used to talk’ suggest that she was keen to let the interviewer know about the reality of collective nuclear anxiety, or was it a form of exaggeration in the interview context? If you were to use this source in written work, it would be helpful to provide analysis of the interview context, along with other source types, such as newspapers, to illustrate the prevalence of these emotions in the past, thus offering balance or support to Barbara’s personal memory.

When remembering the threat of nuclear war during another [interview \[G\]](#), Vera stated ‘it made me very frightened and very fearful for the future and worried about my son [...] Do you know what my husband used to do? He used to hide all the papers from me because I was so worried about it [...] especially the Sunday papers because I’d sit there all day reading them up. He’d say “look you’re worrying for nothing. What’s worrying? Don’t be worrying about it. Just forget about it.” But you couldn’t forget about it [...] I would look at John playing in the garden with his little friends and you’d think are they going to grow up and have a future?’ Here, [the transcript \[G\]](#) could be analysed to demonstrate the personal, and gendered, memory of this individual. Vera described her husband’s attempts to soften her anxiety by taking away one of the presumed sources of nuclear knowledge, which offers a fascinating glimpse of nuclear anxiety in a domestic setting. These memories suggest that nuclear anxiety could impact on everyday life in unusual ways, and your analysis of such memories could be positioned against those historians of the nuclear age who tend to downplay nuclear anxiety.

We must not forget that there were different reasons for conducting the interviews examined above, and the selection process for participants and the questions that were asked would need to be looked at in some detail. Given that the era of the cold war spanned over 40 years, it is important to consider whether and how participants’ memories relate to historical periods within that era. From this brief exploration, it would seem that those

Memory

individuals who worked as part of the nuclear state were more sympathetic to the official memory encouraged by government, while those who lived and worked outside the formal boundaries of the nuclear state foregrounded personal memories above official memory. Placed together, you could offer an argument about the contested nature of memory in relation to the cold war, using your analysis of the interviews to demonstrate specific points that you want to make.

Artefacts and images

It might seem strange to examine material artefacts when exploring the history of memory, but the design and use of clothing and badges remind us about the lived experience of some individuals. Anti-nuclear activist [badges \[H\]](#), [sashes \[I\]](#), and [baseball caps \[J\]](#) remind us that individuals created artefacts, participated in marches and showed commitment to a cause. These artefacts may be easily used in written work for illustrative purposes, or perhaps you might analyse their relevance to localised histories of the nuclear age, or to broader trends in anti-nuclear visual culture. For instance, CND badges offer a glimpse into the lively and varied debates that occurred at the time of their creation.

Such activity is also confirmed by [photographs \[K\]](#), [letters \[L\]](#), [pamphlets and newsletters \[M\]](#), showing that individuals created a variety of ideas, activities, and objects as a result of the nuclear weapons state and the debates that followed. Seen alongside the official government sources that we looked at earlier, these sources remind us that a rich anti-nuclear culture was an important part of the lives of some people. It is up to you to decide how important these individual artefacts and images are, and whether they can be used beyond illustrative purposes.

Conclusions

We have hoped to show that while using the concept of memory in historical writing is challenging, it can also be rewarding. We have seen that the politics of memory in relation to the nuclear state are contested. It can be argued that the official memory of the atomic attacks on Japan, linked later to the politics of nuclear civil defence, was deliberately generated for a number of reasons. However, we have seen that we cannot rely on official memory alone when we think about the history of memory in relation to the nuclear age. Rather, other types of source material can offer us access to different histories of the nuclear age and suggest that there are patterns of

Using Primary Sources

memory co-dependency. By identifying this, we are offering a new analytical perspective on the source materials, and combining source materials in a new way. If you were to develop this further in your written work, you would need to provide analysis of more relevant primary sources, build an argument, and carefully locate your work within the broader historiographical and methodological debates.

Through our exploration of different source types in relation to memory, we have suggested that it is possible to offer creative and imaginative interpretations of nuclear history. When working with such a concept, you should take time defining your understanding of the term and explain your methodology clearly, because it is possible to define memory in many different ways. The oral history interview and resulting transcripts need conscious and multilayered interrogation. You should always find a way to acknowledge the problems and limitations of the source material and persuasively embed it in your research topic, perhaps by placing oral history sources alongside other sources. In broader terms, by utilising memory as a conceptual tool, history itself is more explicitly revealed as a 'social form of knowledge' (Samuel, 1994, p.8), where it is possible for you to argue that modern and contemporary history written from archives alone is always provisional.

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Memory

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