Est. 1841 | YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

Gibson, Stephen (2019) Obedience without orders: Expanding social psychology's conception of 'obedience'. British Journal of Social Psychology, 58 (1). pp. 241-259.

Downloaded from: https://ray.yorksj.ac.uk/id/eprint/3293/

The version presented here may differ from the published version or version of record. If you intend to cite from the work you are advised to consult the publisher's version: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/bjso.12272

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form. Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms governing individual outputs. Institutional Repositories Policy Statement

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at ray@yorksj.ac.uk

Obedience without orders: Expanding social psychology's conception of 'obedience'.

Stephen Gibson

York St John University

Author Note

Stephen Gibson, School of Psychological & Social Sciences, York St John University.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Mary Caldera and Stephen Ross of Yale University's Manuscripts and Archives Service in accessing material from the Stanley Milgram Papers archive. I would like to thank Graham Hamilton for his comments on an earlier version of this paper. The article presents extracts of material transcribed from audio tapes of a participant in condition 04 of the Milgram Obedience Experiment. Permission is granted by Alexandra Milgram. The research was supported by a grant from the Leverhulme Trust (RF-2015-431).

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Stephen Gibson, School of Psychological & Social Sciences, York St John University, York, UK, YO31 7EX. E-mail: s.gibson@yorksj.ac.uk

Abstract

Psychologists have typically defined obedience as a form of social influence elicited in response to direct orders from an authority figure. In the most influential set of studies of obedience, conducted by Stanley Milgram in the early 1960s, the orders at the disposal of the authority figure were a series of verbal prods. However, recent research has suggested that Milgram's experiments *do not* show people following orders. It has therefore been suggested that the experiments are not demonstrations of obedience. However, in the present paper it is argued that rather than abandoning the idea that Milgram's work is a demonstration of obedience, it is in fact our conceptualisation of obedience that is wrong. Obedience should not be understood as requiring direct orders from an authority figure. This argument is developed with reference to an extended case example from one of Milgram's experimental conditions in which a participant completed the experiment in the absence of direct orders. It is argued that such participants can still be understood as obedient if we consider the implicit demands of the system in which participants find themselves. The paper concludes by presenting a new definition of obedience that omits the need for direct orders.

Keywords: authority, obedience, rhetoric, social influence

Obedience without orders: Expanding social psychology's conception of 'obedience'.

Milgram's (1963, 1965a, 1974) experiments on obedience to authority continue to be widely cited both within and beyond social psychology (Miller, 2016). Scholars in fields such as law, business, history, sociology and criminology have drawn lessons from them to apply to the problems of their own fields, and they have been the subject of numerous documentaries and creative works, including a recent Hollywood biopic of Milgram, *Experimenter*, that focussed heavily on the obedience experiments. A conventional view of the experiments has crystallised which sees them as a demonstration of a tendency towards passive obedience in the face of an authority figure (Griggs, 2017; Griggs & Whitehead, 2015a, b).

However, recently there has been a sustained challenge to this image of the experiments as a new wave of theoretical, methodological and ethical criticism has been developed (e.g. Brannigan, Nicholson & Cherry, 2015; Gibson, 2013a, b; Haslam & Reicher, 2017; Nicholson, 2011; Perry, 2012, 2013; Russell, 2011). Of particular note, some of this work has challenged the extent to which Milgram's (1963, 1965a, 1974) studies of destructive obedience can properly be said to have shown people obeying orders (e.g. Burger, Girgis & Manning, 2011; Gibson, 2013a; Haslam & Reicher, 2017). As a result, it has been suggested that the experiments are not about obedience at all. In this conceptual paper, I suggest that, attractive though this line of argument is, it neglects the wider issue of how obedience itself is to be understood. Specifically, I will argue that the definition of obedience typically used in social psychology – as a form of social influence elicited in response to direct orders/commands – is too limited. Through an illustrative consideration of a case example of one of Milgram's experimental sessions, I will suggest that we should conceive of

obedience as a function of more diffuse processes of authority, and will propose a new definition of obedience which removes the need for an order/command.

In doing so, my conceptual analysis touches on issues concerning the appropriate description of action. The question of the extent to which the focus on participant descriptions of action either should, or ever possibly could, replace the more conventional social scientific preoccupation with arriving at satisfactory analysts' definitions, has been a feature of debate for some time (e.g. Billig, 1999a; Schegloff, 1997, 1999; Wetherell, 1998). As yet, these issues have yet to be considered in relation to obedience, and in seeking to provide a new definition of obedience I am explicitly moving from a concern with participants' own descriptions to a concern with the appropriate way in which, as analysts, we might make sense of the phenomena captured in Milgram's lab. As my argument develops, I will highlight areas in which we might exercise more caution in the way in which we draw inferences as analysts (e.g. in relation to the referentiality of participants' talk), but I will suggest that it is nevertheless useful to work towards a revised *analysts'* definition of obedience itself. This should not, of course, be taken either as a suggestion that analyst definitions should be the sole focus of attention, nor as an indication that attempts to explore how 'obedience' can function as a *participants'* resources are ruled out (and see Gibson, Blenkinsopp, Johnstone & Marshall, 2018, for just such an attempt).

Defining obedience: the role of the order/command

The standard social psychological definition of obedience is well-established and continues to be widely used. For example, it can be found in textbooks, such as Kassin, Fein and Markus's (2017, p. 292) most recent edition of their popular introductory social psychology text, in which obedience is defined as, 'Behavior change produced by the commands of authority'. This is no mere simplification for a novice audience; in a recent

handbook chapter providing a review of research on obedience, Burger (2015, p. 1) opens by stating that 'Obedience researchers are interested in how individuals respond to orders or demands from a person or institution in a position of authority.'

It is therefore clear that the social act of the *order* or *command* is central to conceptions of obedience in social psychology, and yet few researchers have sought to explicitly define these terms[1]. A notable exception to this can be found in the most influential contribution to the study of obedience, and yet rather than providing a resolution this in fact opens up further problems that have, to date, received scant attention in the literature. Milgram (1974) defined *command* as follows:

> 'A command consists of two main parts: a definition of action and the imperative that the action be executed. (A request, for example, contains a definition of action but lacks the insistence that it be carried out.)'
>
> (Milgram, 1974, pp. 147-8).

However, a number of authors have noted that when we examine Milgram's procedure it is actually rather difficult to identify examples of commands (Burger, Girgis & Manning, 2011; Reicher & Haslam, 2011). Most of Milgram's (1963, 1965a, 1974) experimental conditions required participants to administer what they thought were potentially dangerous electric shocks to someone who they believed to be a fellow naïve participant, but who was in fact a confederate. The shocks were administered as punishments for incorrect answers on a memory task. If participants hesitated, or refused to continue, the experimenter running the session could use a series of verbal prods in order to elicit obedience. The prods, described by Miller (2009, p. 25) as 'one of the most important features of the obedience paradigm … [and] the most explicit operationalization of authority', were as follows:

Prod 1: Please continue, *or*, Please go on.

Prod 2: The experiment requires that you continue.

Prod 3: It is absolutely essential that you continue.

Prod 4: You have no other choice, you *must* go on.

(Milgram, 1974, p. 21, italics in original)

In addition, the experimenter could use two 'special prods' more flexibly as required by the situation. If the participant expressed concern for the potential harm to the learner, the experimenter could respond with, 'Although the shocks may be painful, there is no permanent tissue damage, so please go on' (Milgram, 1974, p. 21). If the participant drew attention to the learner's apparent lack of willingness to continue, he could say, 'Whether the learner likes it or not, you must go on until he has learned all the word pairs correctly. So please go on' (Milgram, 1974, p. 22).

Given his own definition of *command* it is perhaps surprising that Milgram did not treat at least some of his prods as requests rather than commands. In particular, prod 1, 'Please continue' or 'Please go on', appears to meet Milgram's own definition of a request (insofar as it lacks insistence) rather than his definition of a command. We might, of course, suggest that Milgram's definition is unsatisfactory and that even a phrase such as 'please continue' should be counted as a command, albeit a softened one, when issued by an authority figure in a context over which they have jurisdiction. Nevertheless, it has recently been argued that only one of Milgram's prods – the fourth one – resembles an actual order (Burger, Girgis & Manning, 2011; Reicher & Haslam, 2011) in that it is predicated on the straightforward removal of choice without any rationale. Describing prod 4, Miller (2009, p. 25), has argued that, '[t]aken literally and out of context, these words are clearly preposterous. They violate any reasonable sense of ethics. In context, of course, they appear to have had considerable persuasive force'. However, until recently there had been no attempt to determine whether this 'considerable persuasive force' was more than merely

apparent. This led Reicher and Haslam (2011, p. 167) to argue that 'The question of whether or not people obey this fourth prompt is decisive in establishing the validity of those interpretations of Milgram's studies that see them as a demonstration of how people follow orders.' It is notable, therefore, that three lines of recent convergent evidence from researchers adopting quite different theoretical perspectives points to the *ineffectiveness* of the fourth prod.

First, Gibson (2013a) has explored the extent to which participants in two of Milgram's experimental conditions actually obeyed the fourth prod. Of the 23 participants on whom prod four was used, it elicited further shocks from only two, and only one of these subsequently went to the maximum 450-volt level on the shock generator. In Milgram's own experiments, therefore, it appears that the prod that most closely resembles an order is actually rather easy for participants to resist.

Second, Burger et al (2011) explored the extent to which participants in a partial replication (Burger, 2009) of the Milgram paradigm continued with the experiment after receiving each of the prods. They found that no participants continued after having received the fourth prod, findings which they argued 'question the assumption that participants in the obedience studies continued with the procedure because they were obeying orders' (Burger et al, 2011, p. 464-5). However, Burger et al also noted a major confound concerning the ordering of the prods. Essentially, because the prods were always used in the same order, it may simply be that participants have already become committed to resisting the experimenter by the time the fourth prod is delivered, and that had the fourth prod been delivered first it would have elicited greater levels of obedience.

Third, Haslam, Reicher and Birney (2014) addressed this potential confound through a novel experimental analogue of the Milgram paradigm. Haslam et al's procedure involved participants having to select from a list of negative words to describe a range of images which

depicted groups of people. At first the groups depicted were clearly unpleasant (e.g. the Ku Klux Klan; Nazis) and thus rating them negatively did not present a problem for participants. However, as the experiment went on the groups became progressively less unpleasant, culminating in scenes of children and happy family groups. The terms participants were required to ascribe to the groups thus became increasingly incongruous as the experiment went on. In order to test participants' reactions to Milgram's four sequential prods, participants were divided into four conditions. Each condition was shown one of the prods between each trial. Haslam et al found that participants receiving the second prod ('The experiment requires that you continue') were the most likely to complete the study, most likely to complete a post-experimental questionnaire, and had the highest mean termination point. On the latter two measures, continuation in the group receiving prod 4 ('You have no other choice…') was significantly lower. Haslam et al interpreted this as evidence that appeals to science ('The experiment requires…') were most successful in eliciting continuation, and that direct orders were not particularly successful.

Taken together, these studies point to the conclusion that participants in Milgram's studies were *not* following orders. Insofar as obedience has typically been defined in terms of following orders, this suggests that the phenomenon captured in Milgram's experiments should *not* be understood in terms of obedience. However, such a suggestion presupposes that the standard definition of obedience used in psychology is adequate. In this paper, I want to argue that this definition has never been adequate, and that a new definition is required that avoids the conflation of obedience and orders. It should be made clear, however, that a new definition of obedience it is not needed simply to tidy up some minor terminological issue, but rather that the uncoupling of obedience and orders is vital if the present state of conceptual confusion is to be clarified.

Theorising obedience

Despite the continuing fascination with Milgram's experiments, they have resisted adequate theoretical conceptualisation. Milgram's (1974) own agentic state theory is generally regarded as weak even by authors who are typically favourably disposed towards Milgram and his work (e.g. Blass, 2004; Miller, 1986). Indeed, in summarising the state of theoretical discussion on the obedience experiments, Miller (2009, p. 21) has argued that, 'Plausible ideas here are rampant, but somewhat vague and always numerous.'

Recently however, Haslam and Reicher (2017; Reicher & Haslam, 2011) have drawn on the social identity perspective (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) to develop an explanation based on the concept of 'engaged followership'. They argue that participants did not obey the experimenter's orders, but rather that they were faced with a situation in which there were two competing sources of social identity. Participants could identify with the experimenter, and the wider scientific community which he represented, or with the learner, and the broader (moral) community of ordinary people which he represented. When participants continued administering the electric shocks, it was not therefore a result of blind obedience, but rather because they identified with the experimenter's scientific project, and they made a decision to follow him.

Haslam and Reicher have developed novel empirical paradigms which have begun to generate supporting evidence for this explanation (Haslam et al., 2014; Haslam, Reicher & Millard, 2015; Haslam, Reicher, Millard & McDonald, 2015; Reicher, Haslam & Smith, 2012), and the approach is attractive insofar as it connects Milgram's experiments with a wider analysis of power and social influence (Haslam, Reicher & Platow, 2011; Turner, 1991, 2005), and in that it places the emphasis as much on defiance and resistance as on obedience. However, it has also been challenged on the grounds that it effectively seeks to replace Milgram's over-simplistic agentic state explanation with another one-size-fits-all

explanation which oversimplifies the complex behaviour captured in Milgram's paradigm. Hollander and Turowetz (2017) use evidence from Milgram's post-experiment interviews to highlight the relative absence of accounts that might be understood as indicative of engaged followership, and argue that the aim of producing a single explanation for all behaviour in the Milgram experiments may be unrealistic. Instead they advocate a composite approach that recognises the likelihood that multiple processes are in operation.

However, while Hollander and Turowetz's (2017) cautions against premature theoretical closure are important[2], their analysis is itself problematic in that it uses participant utterances generated on one context (i.e. the post-experiment interviews) as resources through which to explain participant behaviour in another context (i.e. the experimental sessions themselves). From a discursive psychological perspective, it can therefore be understood as an example of selective reification (Potter, 1996), whereby rather than treating all accounts as oriented to performing particular functions in the specific context of their production, the analyst applies this perspective only to certain accounts, whilst choosing simply to take other accounts at face value. In contrast, we might understand Milgram's post-experiment interviews not in terms of what they can tell us about what participants were 'really thinking' during the experimental sessions, but as specific contexts themselves, in which participants were engaged in specific interactional projects. For obedient participants, this entailed providing *accounts* for why they had continued to administer electric shocks to the protesting learner (Gibson et al., 2018; Haslam & Reicher, 2018). While Hollander and Turowetz (2017) suggest (albeit cautiously) that there are good reasons to take participants' accounts as indicative of underlying psychological processes, this in effect contradicts the epistemological principles of the ethnomethodological/conversation analytic position that they adopt. Whilst the relationship between accounts and cognition (understood as underlying process) has been the subject of debate (e.g. Drew, 2005; Potter, 2006), analysts

in these traditions typically signal a concern for members' methods over analyst-driven conclusions about the truth or falsity of accounts. The key issue is thus not to take an analysts' position on whether participant accounts are – to use Hollander and Turowetz's terms – either *candid* or *self-exculpatory* – but rather to treat all such utterances as situated social actions without taking a position on the ultimate referentiality of such talk.

We therefore need to broaden our conceptual frameworks for understanding obedience in a way that connects them with broader analyses of power and authority while retaining an appreciation of the complexity of behaviours within the Milgram experiment, but which does so without losing the sensitivity to the contextual contingencies of Milgram's paradigm. Foucault's (1979) seminal analysis of the operation of disciplinary power in modern societies provides one lens through which to re-orient our understanding of Milgram's studies. In treating obedience as synonymous with following orders, social psychologists have neglected the more subtle ways in which authority operates, and in which obedience is enacted. Following Foucault, we might suggest that there would be no reason to expect power to be exercised through the issuing of direct commands, but rather through the operations of more subtle techniques of control and domination which ultimately come to work on the shaping of individual subjects themselves. However, Foucault's perspective is less concerned with the details of language-in-use than with the tectonic movements of wider discursive patterns, and in this respect places individuals as being at the mercy of forces beyond their control (e.g. Potter, 1996). For this reason, the conceptual analysis outlined in the present paper will go beyond Foucault to draw on Billig's (1995, 1996, 1999b) rhetorical perspective, which has the crucial advantage of enabling us to retain the concern with resistance as much as with domination.

Rhetoric and defiance

Much of the recent re-evaluation of Milgram's work can be summarized as suggesting that when the experimenter issued orders, participants found them fairly easy to resist. Allied to this is the observation that the experimenter frequently departed from the standardized form of the prods in ways that rendered his interventions more akin to persuasive rhetoric than the exercising of blunt authority (Gibson, 2013a, b). Secondary analysis of Milgram's studies has thus drawn attention to the levels of resistance and argumentation in the experiments (Gibson, 2013a, 2014, 2017; Hoffman, Myerberg & Morawski, 2015; Hollander, 2015; Hollander & Maynard, 2016), and has found that there are regularities in the timing of participants' attempts at defiance (Packer, 2008). Moreover, across all experimental conditions defiance was *more* common than obedience (N. Haslam, Loughnan & Perry, 2014). This work has provided an important corrective to the received view of Milgram's studies presented in textbook accounts, which typically de-emphasise resistance in favour of an account focussed on passive obedience (Griggs, 2017; Griggs & Whitehead, 2015a, b).

However, if this work has shown that disobeying explicit orders thus appears to be much more straightforward than the standard treatment of Milgram's studies would suggest, the corollary of this is that those participants who went all the way on the shock generator did so without having to obey direct orders. Whatever was keeping them in the experiment, it was not the social act of an order or command as defined by Milgram, or as assumed by generations of textbook writers. Indeed, this brings us back to a consideration of how experimental sessions unfolded when participants completed the procedure all the way to the maximum shock level. One iconic representation of such a participant can be found in Milgram's (1965b) own documentary film of his experiments. The film focuses at most length on one individual – pseudonymized by Milgram (1974) as Fred Prozi – who is shown repeatedly questioning and resisting the experimenter, but who nevertheless continues with the experiment all the way to the end of the scale. This has been used to suggest that the

levels of resistance – even amongst 'obedient' participants – was apparent all along, hidden in plain sight, but obscured by the standard account of passive participants fulfilling their role as functionaries in Milgram's chain of command.

However, the availability of audio recordings of most of Milgram's experimental sessions in the archives at Yale University means that the extent to which 'obedient' participants actually engaged in resistance can be assessed. In an early study, Modigliani and Rochat (1995) found that defiant participants initiated resistance earlier in the procedure than obedient participants, and more recently Hollander (2015; Hollander & Maynard, 2016) has identified systematic differences in interactional strategies employed by defiant and obedient participants, and has drawn attention to the sequential organisation of participant resistance. Drawing on the conversation analytic concept of the *directive*, Hollander (2015) has identified a common interactional pattern whereby a directive from the experimenter is responded to by resistance from participants, which then elicits a further directive from the experimenter. Participants could then either upgrade their resistance in order to hasten their exit from the experiment, or yield to the directive and keep administering the shocks.

There is still much work to be done on this issue, but these studies point to the preliminary conclusion that some participants simply resisted earlier and to greater effect than others. It is therefore necessary – without seeking to reinstate the standard view of Milgram's participants as passive automata simply acting as agents of an authority's commands – to re-visit the studies in an attempt to explore how Milgram's situation kept a sizeable number of participants administering shocks to an innocent victim. To do this, I will consider a single case from Milgram's experiments – not in an attempt to suggest that this can be used to generalize to the experiments as a whole – but rather to explore a particularly non-resistant participant in what would appear to be an experimental condition in which resistance was the norm rather than the exception. Such a participant constitutes an ideal case with which to

explore the nature of 'obedience' in the experiments given that the participant continues with the experiment despite the fact that no direct orders are issued. However, it constitutes a 'hard case' for perspectives emphasising the rhetorical nature of the experiments insofar as it appears that argumentation is completely absent. It will be suggested, however, that consideration of this case points the way both to an expanded definition of obedience, and an expanded conception of the role of rhetoric in Milgram's experimental procedure.

Obedience without orders: An extended case example

The example used is taken from a participant in condition 4 of the experiments, known as the touch-proximity condition (Milgram, 1965a, 1974). This condition was part of the 'proximity' series of experiments, which varied the physical and psychological proximity of the victim to the participant. Unlike in many other of Milgram's conditions, in which the learner was in a different room to the teacher, in the touch-proximity condition the learner and teacher were in the same room. Moreover, once the learner had withdrawn consent at the 150-volt shock level, the participant had to physically manoeuvre the learner's hand onto a shock plate in order for the electric shock to be administered. As a result, the condition is typically seen as requiring much greater involvement on the part of the naïve participant than other experimental conditions. Accordingly, the obedience rate of 30% (12 out of 40 participants) was lower compared with other conditions in the proximity series, such as when the learner was in an adjoining room (conditions 1 & 2; 65% & 62.5% obedience respectively), or when no physical contact was required to administer the shock (condition 3; 40% obedience). And yet it is possible to find participants in condition 4 who completed the experiment with minimal resistance. The case selected for extended analysis here has thus been chosen precisely because it features a participant who at no point attempts any obvious resistance to the experimenter. The audio recording of this experimental session (labelled

session 0427 in the archival records) was accessed in the Stanley Milgram Papers archive at Yale University, where it is held along with hundreds of others from the experiments, including a total of 27 from the touch-proximity condition. The recording was transcribed by the author. Although focussing on a single experimental session for illustrative purposes, this case forms part of a wider analytic project focussing on secondary qualitative analysis of the audio recordings from the obedience experiments that has drawn on the tools of discursive and rhetorical psychology (Gibson, 2013a, b, 2014, 2017; Gibson, Blenknisopp, Johnstone & Marshall, 2018).

In the extracts that follow, speakers are identified as T (teacher; the naïve participant), L (learner) and E (experimenter); other transcription conventions are summarised in the Appendix. We join the experiment as the participant, who has progressed through the test swiftly and with no obvious response to the learner's apparently increasing discomfort, is about to administer the 150v shock:

Extract 1

1	T:	Wrong. One fifty volts.
2		((SHOCK))
3	L:	OW!
4	T:	White, horse.
5	L:	Experimenter I don't want
6		to go along with this any
7		more. I er refuse to go on
8		any more I don't want the
9		shocks.
10	E:	Relax and try and

11		concentrate on what the
12		teacher is saying.
13	L:	I'm not gonna touch that
14		plate any more. I don't
15		want these shocks
16		[any more.]
17	E:	[Teacher], please
18		continue.
19	T:	Sad, face, music, clown,
20		girl.
21		((CLICK))[3]
22	T:	Correct. Short, sentence,
23		movie, skirt, time.
24		((CLICK))
25	T:	Wrong. One sixty five
26		volts.
27		((CLICK))
28	E:	Er
29	T:	Put the pla-
30	E:	Learner you must er,
31		depress the plate
32		[in order to re-]
33	L:	[I'm not touch]ing that
34		plate any more I don't
35		want these shocks any

more.

E: Y- you must depress the plate in order to receive the punishment.

L: I'm not part of this experiment any more I don't want any more shocks. I'm not touching the plate.

(2)

E: Teacher, er you'll just, er have to reach over and push his hand down onto the plate [please.]

L: [naw] I don't want any more.

E: And then administer the punishment when you have his hand down onto the plate. Please continue teacher. [Administ-]

T: [Do the same] one over?

E: Er, er yes. Administer the punishment for short

61 time please.

62 (2)

63 L: I don't want any more I

64 don't want any more

65 shocks so don't push my

66 hand down.

67 (2)

68 L: I don't want any more.

69 ((SHOCK))

70 L: OW!

Following the learner's withdrawal of consent on lines 5-9, there is no obvious attempt at resistance by the teacher. Instead, we see a fairly typical exchange in which the experimenter responds to the learner in such a way as to minimize his resistance by suggesting that he simply needs to 'relax'. Despite the learner's continued protestations, however, the teacher continues with the experiment by administering the next items in the memory test. When the learner next makes a mistake, and in line with the procedure for this condition, the initial attempt at administering a shock does not work because the learner is not placing his hand upon the shock plate. As is typical in this condition, the experimenter's first attempts to resolve this situation are directed at the learner (lines 30-32; 37-39), and indeed the teacher himself appears to be telling the learner to put his hand on the plate (line 29) before he is cut off by the experimenter. The teacher thus appears to be aligned with the experimenter in trying to elicit the learner's co-operation, and is not showing any signs of resistance, even in the face of the learner's persistent assertions that he will not put his hand on the shock plate (lines 33-36; 40-44). At this point, the experimenter then turns to the teacher to ask him to

press the learner's hand onto the plate. The learner again protests, but the teacher's only response is to ask the experimenter a minor procedural query (lines 57-58).

In straightforward terms, then, this extract features no attempt at resistance by the participant, and – according to recent attempts to specify what counts as an 'order' in the experiments – no orders from the experimenter directed at the participant. It might be suggested that the participant is, in fact, obeying orders insofar as he is continuing the sequence of actions which the experimenter ordered him to undertake in the earlier stages of the experimental procedure (not shown in the transcript) in which the participant was given instructions on what he should do in the experiment (Hollander, 2015). Equally, it could be said that as the participant is hearing the way in which the experimenter is ordering the learner to continue (e.g. lines 37-39: 'you must depress the plate in order to receive the punishment'), he is in effect being given an insight into the response that awaits him should he try to defy the experimenter. However, in both of these cases we are dealing with aspects of the situation that, while persuasive in themselves, are not orders that the participant continue in the sense defined above.

Subsequent to the exchanges presented in extract 1, the participant continued with the experimental procedure – with no attempt at resistance – all the way through to its completion following repeated administration of the 450-volt shock:

Extract 2

1	T:	Brave, woman, soldier,
2		dog, horse.
3		(9)
4	T:	Four fifty volt.
5		((CLICK))

((CLICK))

L: OW!

(3)

T: That's it what you wanna do? Start from the beginning?

E: No continue using the last switch on the board please.

(2)

T: Brave woman. White, cloud, horse, rock, house.

(4)

T: Four fifty volt.

L: [No]=

[((CLICK))]

L: =AHHHH!

T: I, press it down there that time.

L: I don't want any shocks I don't wanna, I [don't wanna ner-]

E: [Teacher be sure] you hear the buzz on that shock please.

T: Hm.

31 L: I- [I don't want 'em.]
32 E: [Administer the
33 punish]ment again.
34 L: I don't want any more
35 shocks. I want [out.]
36 E: [So]
37 you can hear the buzz.
38 ((SHOCK))
39 L: OWWW!
40 T: Sad, face, music, clown,
41 girl.
42 (4)
43 T: Four fifty volt.
44 ((CLICK))
45 ((SHOCK))
46 L: OW!
47 T: Short, sentence
48 E: All right we'll er, we'll
49 have to discontinue the
50 experiment.

Again, there is no overt attempt at resistance from the teacher,[4] and as such he requires little in the way of direct orders from the experimenter to continue. In this context, then, what are we to make of the experimenter's utterances addressed at the participant? On lines 12-13 he says 'continue using the last switch on the board please', and on lines 32-33 he says

'Administer the punishment again … So you can hear the buzz'. To meet Milgram's definition of a *command*, an utterance needs to contain both 'a definition of action and the imperative that the action be executed' (Milgram, 1974, p. 147). Each of these utterances clearly contains the first part – a definition of the action to be carried out: the participant should *continue using the last switch* and *administer the punishment again*. However, 'the imperative that the action be executed' is less clear. The utterance on lines 12-13 even ends with the word 'please', which might be taken to indicate that this is a polite request, rather than an imperative to action. Part of the confusion may lie in the term *imperative*, which has both a commonsense meaning concerned with urgency (e.g. *it is imperative that this action be performed*), and a technical grammatical meaning referring to verbs used to tell someone to do something (e.g. in the phrase *Practice your clarinet*, 'practice' is in the imperative mood). Imperative verbs can, however, also be used to form grammatical requests (*Please practice your clarinet*). Ultimately, the precise definition is secondary to the fact that, in context, the function of the imperative is the same – to compel someone to do something in such a way as to make it clear that they really ought to do it. This suggests that the crucial feature of the imperative form is its directness, and in this respect the concept of *directives*, as outlined in linguistic philosophy (e.g. Searle, 1979) and conversation analysis (e.g. Goodwin, 2006) might be useful. Indeed, as noted above, Hollander (2015) has explored the ways in which Milgram's experimental interactions could be framed in terms of directive-response sequences, identifying six distinct types of response to directives issued by the experimenter. However, as Craven and Potter (2010) note, Searle (1979) included requests, orders and commands (as well as various other actions) in his list of functions that directives can perform. Craven and Potter (2010, p. 420, italics in original) themselves go on to make a distinction between requests, defined as actions 'in which one participant *asks* another to do something', and directives, 'where one participant *tells* another to do something' (see also

Curl & Drew, 2008; Hollander, 2015). Again, by this distinction, the addition of 'please' appears to make an imperative verb part of a request rather than a directive.

These definitional issues are clearly important, and there are many good reasons why it may be useful to define specific terms (imperative, order/command, request, directive, etc.) in a grammatical sense. However, what any definition misses is the context-specificity of function (Craven & Potter, 2010). Conversation analysts have shown how a great deal of social business is conducted indirectly – for example, something that appears to be a statement, such as declaring that 'it's rather warm in here', can be oriented to by recipients as a request to open a window. In certain contexts – and the Milgram experiment may be a good example of just such a context – something that takes on the appearance of a request may function as an order. As Milgram himself understood, the force of utterances such as 'Please continue' lies not in its abstract grammatical form, but at least in part on a range of contextual contingencies such as who is saying it, where it is said, who is hearing it, and what previous actions have occurred. Indeed, if we get bogged down in arguing over whether this – and other – formulations *really were* orders, requests, or something else, we risk paying too much attention to a debate about terminology amongst analysts, and insufficient attention to participants' orientations to what they have heard. In this respect, Milgram's term 'prods' may be a much better description of the experimenter's utterances than orders/commands, although even better would be the term 'utterance' itself. The experimenter's utterances are made in a context of authority – the experimenter himself is clearly in charge of the situation, although on occasion it is equally clear that he is himself only a subsidiary in a longer chain of authority; he is also (in most conditions) clearly attached to Yale University, with the implicit authority provided by such an affiliation. In these circumstances, it doesn't much matter whether the experimenter's utterances are best glossed as requests, commands, or whatever. Indeed, despite Miller's (2009, p. 25) suggestion that the prods constitute 'the

most explicit operationalization of authority', the experimenter's utterances themselves were arguably never the crucial vehicle for securing obedience. It is not the prods that mark out Milgram's experiments as being concerned with obedience, but rather the much more complex social and institutional context in which the prods were uttered. The prods only had to be used when the unspoken requirements of the institution were not working. In this respect, the prods were *the last resort* for securing obedience.

Concluding remarks

If direct orders are no longer to be seen as a defining feature of obedience, a widening of psychology's conceptual toolkit may be needed to enrich its understanding of obedience as a process located in a complex socio-institutional context. Indeed, even if we wish to retain a sense in which utterances that don't meet Milgram's (1974) or Reicher and Haslam's (2011) definition of order/command (e.g. 'please continue') can in fact be understood in these terms, we are still likely to be confronted with situations in which people go along with the requirements of authority in the absence of even these somewhat milder commands. Of particular use is making sense of this is Foucault's (1979) argument concerning the way in which authority operates in modern societies. Far from requiring the blunt exercising of disciplinary power, Foucault noted that the administrative demands of contemporary societies necessitate an altogether more subtle approach. Authority is built into the fabric of social relations in such a way that it no longer needs to be exercised overtly, but rather so that people regulate themselves. The classic example of this perspective is in Foucault's use of Jeremy Bentham's idea of the panopticon – a prison in which inmates might be monitored at any time without them being aware, and thereby regulate their own behaviour. The inmates thus come to behave as if they were potentially being watched all the time. Such ideas underlie much commentary on the nature of present-day 'surveillance societies' (Lyon,

2001). As Lyon (2001, p. 115) argues, 'The panopticon's power does not reside simply in the (supposedly) ever-observant guard. Rather, it is manifest in the way that the whole discourse and practice of the system bears down, constituting the subject as criminal and normalizing him or her into rehabilitation'. In this respect, in Milgram's experiment it is not simply the experimenter who constitutes the authority, but the wider system he inhabits, and of which he is a part. If the subject in Foucault's panopticon is constructed as criminal, then the subject in Milgram's experiment is constructed as research participant, a figure who takes a specific place in the institutional arrangement of the scientific endeavour. As Reicher, Haslam and Smith (2012; Haslam et al, 2014) have argued, the nature of the authority figure as a scientist is key to understanding how participants were kept shocking the learner. In many respects, Milgram himself was well aware of these issues. His experimental conditions included variations designed to manipulate the extent to which the institutional arrangements of the laboratory would be likely to compel participants to go on with the experiment. His 'Bridgeport' manipulation, for example, which was conducted in an office building with no apparent connection to Yale University, was aimed at assessing the impact of the wider system of which the experimenter is a part. Moreover, such considerations are built into his discussion of the antecedent conditions for obedience (Milgram, 1974). Even the title of Milgram's book, *Obedience to authority*, implies a broader conceptual purview than the focus on orders. Yet, as so often in psychology, it is in the operationalisation of concepts that the damage is done. For the purpose of experimental design, Milgram returned to a definition of obedience in terms of following orders, and in construing his orders purely in terms of the experimenter's verbal prods, Milgram ultimately missed the implications of these wider contextual arguments for how we might conceive of obedience itself.

But where does this leave the role of argumentation in the Milgram experiments? As noted above, several recent analyses have emphasised rhetoric and argumentation, and have

noted that this has been suppressed in standard treatments of the experiments (Gibson, 2013a, b, 2017; Hollander, 2015; Hollander & Maynard, 2016). Moreover, levels of defiance in the experiments – which were very high in some conditions – have typically been downplayed in favour of an emphasis on overwhelming obedience. When faced, however, with an example of a participant who did not resist, who did not argue back, and with an experimenter who did not need to resort to persuasive tactics, let alone direct orders, it appears that a perspective that seeks to highlight the role of rhetoric is presented with a challenge. Nevertheless, if we understand rhetoric broadly, this challenge is less problematic that it might appear. In his influential text on rhetoric and social psychology, Billig (1987) focussed on the overt use of rhetoric, and used this as a model for human thinking writ large. However, in some of his subsequent work, Billig (1995, 1999b) drew attention to that which is left unsaid – that which *need not be stated*. Indeed, Billig (1999b, p. 51) has framed this as a logical and necessary extension of his rhetorical perspective, suggesting that his earlier text 'displays a theoretical one-sidedness':

> The book, in its enthusiasm for argumentation, concentrates on the way that the rhetoric of argument opens up topics for thought. It does not consider how the same rhetoric might provide the means for avoiding argument, or for repressing matters from the agenda.'
>
> (Billig, 1999b, p. 51)

In turning his attention to the absence of argument, Billig's (1995) study of *banal nationalism* is of particular relevance for the present arguments. Billig argued that, in its focus on periodic outbursts of 'hot nationalism', social science had neglected the more mundane and routine sense in which 'the nation' is reproduced on a daily basis as a taken-for-granted backdrop to everyday life:

> The flags hanging in the street, or attached to the lapels of politicians, carry no propositional message for the ordinary citizen to receive passively or consciously argue against. Yet, such symbols help to maintain the everyday world as belonging to the world of nation-states.
>
> Billig (2009, p. 349)

This does not mean that such banal symbols can *never* be noticed and made the subject of explicit argumentation, but rather that for much of the time their power is precisely a function of the extent to which they remain unspecified – unremarked upon – in the background.

There is no reason to think that this banality applies only to nationalism (Reicher, Hopkins & Condor, 1997), and indeed we can apply the broad idea to the Milgram experiments by suggesting that it is in the banal institutional location of the experiments as part of the scientific endeavour, as well as in the physical configuration of the laboratory itself, that Milgram sought to render some arguments unnecessary. Certainly, the experimenter *could* remind reluctant participants of the scientific nature of their participation (e.g. in prod 2, *The experiment requires that you continue*; Haslam et al, 2014), but equally this was not always needed. It was clear to participants that – however unusual the task – it was part of a scientific enterprise accorded legitimacy by a number of features of the institutional set-up. Equally, the experimenter never needed to make certain arguments concerning specific details of the procedure, such as that each successive shock was only a modest increase on the preceding one, because these were woven into the very fabric of the apparatus used in the experiment (Gilbert, 1981; Oppenheimer, 2015).

Thus, explicit resistance and argumentation is not needed in order to assert the centrality of rhetoric to the experiments. For those participants who went all the way with minimal obvious attempts at defiance, we might suggest – in everyday terms – that they were *already* persuaded by the experimental setup, and needed no further attempts at persuasion to

keep them going. Recent developments in rhetorical scholarship have argued for an understanding of rhetoric that moves it beyond human symbolic action such that 'things' themselves can be understood as having a rhetorical dimension (e.g. Barnett & Boyle, 2016; Davis & Ballif, 2014). In this respect, rhetoric is not only to be found in the words, but *in the walls*. Institutions and situations have a rhetorical structure that functions persuasively, *before anyone opens their mouths*. In this context, direct orders are not necessary for obedience, all that is needed is for the system to do its job – to persuade people that a certain thing needs to be done, and that they are the ones that need to do it. If an authority figure has to issue direct orders in such a situation, it is a sign that the institution – the very fabric of the context in which the action takes place – is failing to be sufficiently persuasive. The direct order is thus a sign of the *weakness* of the authority – a sign that the institution itself is not sufficiently authoritative.

In terms of wider processes of obedience, this appears to make intuitive sense. The everyday use of the term 'obedience' and its derivatives clearly do not always presume direct orders. When we speak, for example, of *obeying the law* we do not typically conceive of situations in which we are given commands by a police officer or similar authority figure. Instead, the term indexes normative understandings of what constitutes legally-sanctioned behaviours that have come to be regulated without the need for direct orders. A new definition of obedience might thus be proposed as simply *the submission to the requirements of an authority*. On the face of it this appears to be a modest amendment, but it removes the key element of the standard definition that has constrained psychological work on obedience for decades – the social act of the order or command. If we limit ourselves to seeing obedience only where such direct attempts at the exercising of authority are apparent, we in fact limit ourselves to those situations where authority is at its weakest, at its most fragile. Clearly, it remains important to continue to study such contexts, but equally it is vital to

expand the purview of psychological research on obedience such that it takes in the much more diffuse – and arguably more pernicious – processes by which obedience is embedded in the fabric of everyday life.

References

Barnett, S., & Boyle, C. (2016). Introduction: Rhetorical ontology, or, how to do things with things. In S. Barnett & C. Boyle (Eds.), *Rhetoric, through everyday things* (pp. 1-14). Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Billig, M. (1987). *Arguing and thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism.* London: Sage.

Billig, M. (1999a). Whose terms? Whose ordinariness? Rhetoric and ideology in conversation analysis. *Discourse and Society, 10,* 543-558. doi: 10.1177/0957926599010004005

Billig, M. (1999b). *Freudian repression: Conversation creating the unconscious.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Billig, M. (2009). Reflecting on a critical encounter with banal nationalism – reply to Skey. *The Sociological Review, 57,* 347-52. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2009.01837.x

Blass, T. (2004). *The man who shocked the world: The life and legacy of Stanley Milgram.* New York: Basic Books.

Brannigan, A., Nicholson, I., & Cherry, F. (2015). Introduction to the special issue: Unplugging the Milgram machine. *Theory & Psychology, 25,* 551-563. doi: 10.1177/0959354315604408

Burger, J. M. (2009). Replicating Milgram: Would people still obey today? *American Psychologist, 64,* 1-11. doi: 10.1037/a0010932

Burger, J. (2015). Obedience. In S. Harkins, K. D. Williams, & J. Burger (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of social influence.* Advance online publication. doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199859870.013.5

Burger, J. M., Girgis, Z. M., & Manning, C. C. (2011). In their own words: Explaining obedience to authority through an analysis of participants' comments. *Social Psychological & Personality Science, 2,* 460-466. doi: 10.1177/1948550610397632

Craven, A., & Potter, J. (2010). Directives: Entitlement and contingency in action. *Discourse Studies, 12,* 419-442. doi: 10.1177/1461445610370126

Curl, T. S., & Drew, P. (2008). Contingency and action: A comparison of two forms of requesting. *Research in Language and Social Interaction, 41,* 129-153. doi: 10.1080/08351810802028613

Davis, D., & Ballif, M. (2014). Guest editors' introduction: Pushing the limits of the *anthropos*. *Philosophy and Rhetoric, 47,* 346-353. doi: 10.5325/philrhet.47.4.0346

Drew, P. (2005). Is *confusion* a state of mind? In H. te Molder & J. Potter (Eds.), *Conversation and cognition* (pp. 161-183). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. London: Penguin.

Gibson, S. (2013a). Milgram's obedience experiments: A rhetorical analysis. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 52,* 290-309. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02070.x

Gibson, S. (2013b). 'The last possible resort': A forgotten prod and the in situ standardization of Stanley Milgram's voice-feedback condition. *History of Psychology, 16,* 177-194. doi: 10.1037/a0032430

Gibson, S. (2014). Discourse, defiance, and rationality: "Knowledge work" in the obedience experiments. *Journal of Social Issues, 70,* 424-438. doi: 10.1111/josi.12069

Gibson, S. (2017). Developing psychology's archival sensibilities: Revisiting Milgram's 'obedience' experiments. *Qualitative Psychology, 4,* 73-89. doi: 10.1037/qup0000040

Gibson, S., Blenkinsopp, G., Johnstone, E., & Marshall, A. (2018). Just following orders? The rhetorical invocation of 'obedience' in Stanley Milgram's post-experiment interviews. *European Journal of Social Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.2351

Gilbert, S. J. (1981). Another look at the Milgram obedience studies: The role of the gradated series of shocks. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 7,* 690-695. doi: 10.1177/014616728174028

Goodwin, M. H. (2006). Participation, affect, and trajectory in family directive/response sequences. *Text and Talk, 26,* 515-543. doi: 10.1515/TEXT.2006.021

Griggs, R. A. (2017). Milgram's obedience study: A contentious classic reinterpreted. *Teaching of Psychology, 44,* 32-37. doi: 10.1177/0098628316677644

Griggs, R. A., & Whitehead III, G. I. (2015a). Coverage of Milgram's obedience experiments in social psychology textbooks: Where have all the criticisms gone? *Teaching of Psychology, 42,* 315-322. doi: 10.1177/0098628315603065

Griggs, R. A., & Whitehead III, G. I. (2015b). Coverage of recent criticisms of Milgram's obedience experiments in introductory social psychology textbooks. *Theory & Psychology, 25,* 564-580. doi: 10.1177/0959354315601231

Haslam, N., Loughnan, S., & Perry, G. (2014). Meta-Milgram: An empirical synthesis of the obedience experiments. *PLoS One, 9* (4). doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0093927

Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. D. (2017). 50 years of "obedience to authority": From blind conformity to engaged followership. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science, 13,* 59-78. doi: 10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-110316-113710

Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. D. (2018). A truth that does not always speak its name: How Hollander and Turowetz's findings confirm and extend the engaged followership

analysis of harm-doing in the Milgram paradigm. *British Journal of Social Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12247

Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., & Birney, M. E. (2014). Nothing by mere authority: Evidence that in an experimental analogue of the Milgram paradigm participants are motivated not by orders but by appeals to authority. *Journal of Social Issues, 70,* 473-488. doi: 10.1111/josi.12072

Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., & Millard, K. (2015). Shock treatment: Using immersive digital realism to restage and re-examine Milgram's 'obedience to authority' research. *PLoS One, 10* (3). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0109015

Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., Millard, K., & McDonald, R. (2015). 'Happy to have been of service': The Yale archive as a window into the engaged followership of participants in Milgram's 'obedience' experiments. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 54,* 55-83. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12074

Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., & Platow, M. J. (2011). *The new psychology of leadership: Identity, influence and power*. Hove: Psychology Press.

Hoffman, E., Myerberg, N. R., & Morawski, J. (2015). Acting otherwise: Resistance, agency, and subjectivities in Milgram's studies of obedience. *Theory & Psychology, 25,* 670-689. doi: 10.1177/0959354315608705

Hollander, M. M. (2015). The repertoire of resistance: Non-compliance with directives in Milgram's 'obedience' experiments. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 54,* 425-444. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12099

Hollander, M. M., & Maynard, D. W. (2016). Do unto others…? Methodological advance and self- versus other-attentive resistance in Milgram's "obedience" experiments. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 79,* 355-375. doi: 10.1177/0190272516648967

Hollander, M. M., & Turowetz, J. (2017). Normalizing trust: Participants' immediately post-hoc explanations of behaviour in Milgram's 'obedience' experiments. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 56,* 655-674. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12206

Kassin, S., Fein, S., & Markus, H. R. (2017). *Social psychology* (10th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage.

Lyon, D. (2001). *Surveillance society: Monitoring everyday life.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology, 67,* 371-378. doi: 10.1037/h0040525

Milgram, S. (1965a). Some conditions of obedience and disobedience to authority. *Human Relations, 18,* 57-76. doi: 10.1177/001872676501800105

Milgram, S. (Producer). (1965b). *Obedience* [DVD]. Available from PennState Media Sales, http://www.mediasales.psu.edu

Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to authority: An experimental view.* New York: Harper & Row.

Miller, A. G. (1986). *The obedience experiments: A case study of controversy in social science.* New York: Praeger.

Miller, A. G. (2009). Reflections on "Replicating Milgram" (Burger, 2009). *American Psychologist, 64,* 20-27. doi: 10.1037/a0014407

Miller, A. G. (2016). Why are the Milgram obedience experiments still so extraordinarily famous – and controversial? In A. G. Miller (Ed.), *The social psychology of good and evil* (pp. 185-223). New York: Guilford.

Modigliani, A., & Rochat, F. (1995). The role of interaction sequences and the timing of resistance in shaping obedience and defiance to authority. *Journal of Social Issues, 51* (3), 107-123. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.1995.tb01337.x

Nicholson, I. (2011). "Torture at Yale": Experimental subjects, laboratory torment and the "rehabilitation" of Milgram's "obedience to authority". *Theory & Psychology, 21,* 737-761. doi: 10.1177/0959354311420199

Oppenheimer, M. (2015). Designing obedience in the lab: Milgram's shock simulator and human factors engineering. *Theory & Psychology, 25,* 599-621. doi: 10.1177/0959354315605392

Packer, D. J. (2008). Identifying systematic disobedience in Milgram's obedience experiments: A meta-analytic review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3,* 301-304. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-6924.2008.00080.x

Perry, G. (2012). *Behind the shock machine: The untold story of the notorious Milgram psychology experiments.* London: Scribe.

Perry, G. (2013). Deception and illusion in Milgram's accounts of the obedience experiments. *Theoretical & Applied Ethics, 2* (2), 79-92. doi: 10.1353/tha.2013.0018

Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction.* London: Sage.

Potter, J. (2006). Cognition and conversation. *Discourse Studies, 8,* 131-140. doi: 10.1177/1461445606059562

Reicher, S., & Haslam, S. A. (2011). After shock? Towards a social identity explanation of the Milgram 'obedience' studies. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 50,* 163-169. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.2010.02015.x

Reicher, S. D., Haslam, S. A., & Smith, J. R. (2012). Working towards the experimenter: Reconceptualizing obedience within the Milgram paradigm as identification-based followership. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 7,* 315-324. doi: 10.1177/1745691612448482

Reicher, S., Hopkins, N., & Condor, S. (1997). The lost nation of psychology. In C. C. Barfoot (Ed.), *Beyond Pug's tour: National and ethnic stereotyping in theory and literary practice* (pp. 53-84). Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Russell, N. J. C. (2011). Milgram's obedience to authority experiments: Origins and early evolution. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 50,* 140-162. doi: 10.1348/014466610X492205

Schegloff, E. A. (1997). Whose text? Whose context? *Discourse and Society, 8,* 165-187. doi: 10.1177/0957926597008002002

Schegloff, E. A. (1999). 'Schegloff's texts' as 'Billig's data': A critical reply. *Discourse and Society, 10,* 558-572. doi: 10.1177/0957926599010004006

Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations.* London: Academic Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47). Monterey, CA: Brooks Cole.

Turner, J. C. (1991). *Social Influence.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Turner, J. C. Explaining the nature of power: A three-process theory. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 35,* 1-22. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.244

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society, 9,* 387-412. doi: 10.1177/0957926598009003005.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

In the excerpts from the transcripts presented in the paper, speakers are identified as E (Experimenter), T (Teacher) and L (Learner). Other transcription conventions are as follows:

((inaudible))	Double parentheses indicate comments from the transcriber.
(11)	Numbers in parentheses indicate a timed silence, with the number indicating the amount in seconds.
URGH!	Capitals indicate utterances that are noticeably louder than the surrounding talk. Exclamation marks indicate increased urgency in the delivery of the utterance.
I can't, I	A comma indicates a pause of less than a second.
I-	A dash indicates a sharp cut-off of the preceding utterance.
[continue]	Brackets indicate overlapping talk.
horse.	A period indicates a 'stopping' intonation, rather than the end of a grammatical sentence per se.
Why?	A question mark indicates a questioning intonation, rather than a grammatical question per se.
=answering	Equals signs indicates 'latching' talk where the start of one line follows on immediately from the end of a previous line.

Footnotes

[1] Given the definitional issues to be discussed in this paper, it is important to note that I treat the terms *order* and *command* as synonyms.

[2] Haslam & Reicher (2018) have recently argued that their perspective should not, in any case, be understood as a 'one-size-fits-all' explanation.

[3] The 'clicks' referred to in the transcript excerpts represent either the sound produced when the learner's response to one of the test items is displayed, or the sound produced when a participant attempts to administer a shock but fails to do so as a result of the learner not having placed his hand upon the shock plate. The two sounds are both rendered as 'click' owing to their similarity.

[4] Notwithstanding the absence of overt resistance, the participant's seemingly inadequate pressing of the shock level – as oriented to by the experimenter on lines 27-29 and 36-37 – might nevertheless be said to constitute a more subtle form of resistance.