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Abstract

Recent re-evaluations of Milgram's obedience experiments have drawn attention to the role of social identity and group processes. Milgram himself was concerned to explore processes of group influence by varying the collective dynamics of his experimental scenario in several conditions. The present study seeks to explore archived audio recordings from one of Milgram's group experiments – the 'two peers rebel' condition – from a perspective informed by discursive and rhetorical psychology. The findings show that collectivity was an active concern for speakers in the sessions, with contestation over the relevant group boundaries, and the appropriate course of group action. It is suggested that explanations of behaviour in Milgram's experiments that emphasise intergroup dynamics would benefit from attention to the ebbing and flowing of solidarity in the experimental sessions.

‘We have a choice’: Identity construction and the rhetorical enactment of resistance in the ‘two peers rebel’ condition of Stanley Milgram’s obedience experiment.

Recent re-evaluations of Milgram’s (1963, 1965a, 1974) obedience experiments have drawn attention to the role of social identity and group processes (Haslam, Reicher & Birney, 2014; Haslam, Reicher & Millard, 2015; Haslam, Reicher, Millard & McDonald, 2015; Reicher, Haslam & Smith, 2012). This is part of a broader project challenging the pathologization of groups – and of the social more broadly – and emphasising the positives of group membership and collective action. As Reicher and Haslam (2006, p. 2) have argued in their critique of the Stanford Prison Experiment, ‘powerful and effective groups provide an effective psychological bulwark against tyranny’. The Milgram experiment is, of course, one of the canonical examples of the way in which the social world is a danger to the rationality and morality of the individual. And yet, within the numerous conditions conducted by Milgram is one that stands as a counterweight – a condition that points to the positive effects of groups. The ‘two peers rebel’ condition explored the effects on obedience of two additional confederates who defied the experimenter, and featured one of the lowest obedience levels of all of Milgram’s conditions. Indeed, Milgram himself emphasised the positive role of groups in similar terms to Reicher and Haslam: ‘When an individual wishes to stand in opposition to authority, he does best to find support for his position from others in his group. The mutual support provided by men [*sic*] for each other is the strongest bulwark we have against the excesses of authority’ (Milgram 1974, p. 121).

However, relatively little is known about the way in which this condition unfolded. Milgram described his procedure only relatively briefly, and we do not know how either the naïve participants or the additional confederates enacted their resistance. The present paper

therefore has two aims: First, it will set out for the first time how key aspects of Milgram's procedure operated in this condition; Second, it will explore how the group was implicated in participants' rhetorical strategies for resisting the experimenter. It will be argued that collectivity was an active concern for participants – and indeed for the experimenter and confederates – in this condition. In doing so, it will be suggested that by drawing on the insights of analyses informed by discursive and rhetorical perspectives, Haslam and Reicher's (2017) engaged followership explanation of behaviour in the obedience experiments can be enhanced by considering the active rhetorical construction of group processes. Collectivity was the focus of active contestation and construction during the experiments, with both group boundaries and the appropriate course of group action being 'up for grabs' in the moment-by-moment unfolding of the experimental sessions.

The obedience experiments and group processes

Milgram's obedience experiments remain an enduring source of controversy and fascination in the social sciences and beyond (Miller, 2016). Perhaps the best known version of the procedure is what became known as the 'new baseline' condition (Milgram, 1974), in which participants (all male) were ordered to administer what they were told were electric shocks to a confederate as punishment for apparent mistakes on a learning task. The learner, seated in an adjoining room, appeared to let out a series of cries of pain and demands to be released, and yet 65% of participants administered the highest shock of 450 volts (Milgram, 1974). However, Milgram varied this basic procedure in conducting many more experimental conditions which are still relatively underexplored, and which are frequently omitted from standard textbook accounts (Griggs & Whitehead, 2015a, b). Indeed, as N. Haslam, Loughnan and Perry (2014) note, across Milgram's experiments as a whole, defiance was actually more common than obedience. Recent research has drawn on the wealth of

materials available in the Stanley Milgram Papers archive at Yale University in order to reconceptualise a number of aspects of the experiments, including theoretical (e.g. AUTHOR REF; Haslam, Reicher, Millard & McDonald, 2015), methodological (e.g. AUTHOR REF; Hollander & Maynard, 2016; Russell, 2011) and ethical issues (e.g. Nicholson, 2011; Perry, 2012). However, even this work has only begun to scratch the surface of what is available in the archives, with most conditions still to be subjected to sustained analytic attention. The present paper seeks to extend this ongoing re-evaluation of Milgram's studies using archival material from a condition which has hitherto remained unexplored: the 'two peers rebel' experiment.

Milgram (1965a, 1974) reported three experimental conditions in which he explicitly sought to address the role of group processes.¹ Of particular note, the 'two peers rebel' condition featured two additional confederates in the role of extra teachers. In Milgram's (1965a) description of the condition, one of the confederate-teachers reads the word pairs that are the object of the memory test, the second confederate-teacher informs the learner whether he is correct or not, and the naïve participant administers the electric shock. Milgram specifies that these additional confederate-teachers staged their own apparent withdrawal from the experiment, with the first defying the experimenter after the delivery of the 150-volt shock (the point at which the learner first demands to be released), and the second after the 210-volt shock. Naïve participants who continued in the experiment assumed the responsibilities of the dissenting confederates.

As in the 'new baseline' condition, if participants hesitated or showed reluctance to go on, the experimenter had a series of 'prods' available to him with which to order the participant to continue:

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)

These main prods were to be used in sequence, starting anew from prod 1 for each separate attempt at defiance, and only when all of these prods had been used was an experimental session discontinued. In addition, the experimenter could use two 'special prods' to answer specific queries from participants as appropriate. These were: 'Although the shocks may be painful, there is no permanent tissue damage, so please go on' (*ibid.*) and 'Whether the learner likes it or not, you must go on until he has learned all the word pairs correctly. So please go on' (*ibid.*, p. 22). In this condition, 90% (36 out of 40; all male) of naïve participants *defied* the experimenter and refused to continue administering shocks. Milgram (1965a, p. 131) noted that, 'of the score of experimental variations completed in the Yale study on obedience none was so effective in undermining the experimenter's authority'.

Milgram (1965a) compared 'two peers rebel' with a condition in which the confederate-teachers performed their duties without resisting, as well as with a baseline condition (seemingly the condition reported as experiment 5, 'A new baseline', by Milgram [1974]). Milgram (1965a) noted that whilst the addition of defiant peers led to a statistically significant reduction in obedience levels amongst naïve participants when compared with the baseline, the obedient peers did not result in significantly higher obedience levels than those found in the baseline. Milgram thus concluded that, in his experimental paradigm, group influence could reduce the experimenter's authority, but could not enhance it. Milgram (1974) went on to compare 'two peers rebel' with a condition in which the naïve participant performed only a subsidiary role, with the shocks being administered by a confederate. In this latter condition, only three out of 40 participants effected their withdrawal from the experiment. Milgram concluded that while groups could have a prosocial influence, it was

therefore equally possible for people to see themselves as less responsible for their actions if they were able to ‘hide’ in the group.

Little work has sought to directly follow-up or replicate Milgram’s group-effects conditions. Meeus and Raaijmakers (1986, 1987) conducted an analogue of the ‘two peers rebel’ condition in their ‘administrative obedience’ experiments which, when compared to a baseline condition, yielded comparable reductions in obedience levels with those found by Milgram. By contrast, Burger (2009) found that the inclusion of a defiant confederate in the ‘modeled refusal’ condition of his partial replication of Milgram’s experiments yielded results that did not differ significantly from a baseline condition. However, given that Burger’s procedure only involved one additional confederate – whereas Milgram’s involved two – his findings have limited comparability with Milgram’s (Miller 2009).

In a different vein, some recent re-interpretations of Milgram’s findings have engaged with group processes as part of a more thoroughgoing attempt to frame the experiments in terms of intergroup processes. Haslam and Reicher’s work has also included an attempt to stage a version of the ‘two peers rebel’ procedure (Haslam, Reicher & Millard, 2015), but is particularly notable for the wider development of the ‘engaged followership’ perspective (Haslam, Reicher & Birney, 2014; Haslam, Reicher & Millard, 2015; Haslam, Reicher, Millard & McDonald, 2015; Reicher, Haslam & Smith, 2012). This body of work has drawn on the social identity approach (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) in order to re-conceptualize the experimental situation as a conflict between two competing sources of identity: the experimenter, who stands for the wider scientific community and the broader ideals of science; and the learner, who represents the wider (moral) community. Haslam and Reicher are careful to point out that much of their evidence for the engaged followership model is indirect and that it requires confirmation through experimental tests using the Milgram paradigm itself (e.g. Reicher, Haslam & Smith,

2012). To date, however, no such tests have been conducted. Moreover, studies which involve direct measures of participants' levels of identification in Milgram-esque paradigms have shown mixed results (Haslam, et al. 2014; Haslam, Reicher & Millard, 2015).

These inconsistencies may of course be the result of many factors, but it remains a possibility that attempts to characterise the social identity dynamics in terms of an overall level of identification with experimenter and learner may underplay the subtle dynamics of identity processes in operation as the experimental sessions unfolded. Rather than an overall level of identity that might be presumed to have been in operation throughout the experiment, or which developed relatively straightforwardly over the course of the experiment, we might instead conceive of participant identities as rapidly evolving throughout the experimental sessions, with moment-by-moment shifts in who is identified with, how groups are conceived of, and who is treated as members of which groups. Such a focus follows from other work in the social identity tradition (e.g. Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) which has emphasised the extent to which social categories and identities are not simply 'read off' social contexts, but are instead the focus of active construction and contestation. Indeed, it can be seen as consistent with engaged followership theorising more generally (e.g. Haslam, Reicher & Platow, 2011), yet it is fair to say that this has yet to be foregrounded in empirical analyses of intergroup processes in the Milgram experiments.

The present analysis thus aims to return to Milgram's own work, and in particular to a data source from the 'two peers rebel' condition which is as-yet untapped: the archived audio recordings of the experimental sessions themselves. This builds on recent attempts to explore the rhetorical and interactional features of Milgram's experiments in other experimental conditions, and before exploring 'two peers rebel' in detail it is worth briefly describing this previous work.

Milgram's experiments as rhetorical encounters

The status of Milgram's experimental situation as a specific, and carefully constructed, social context has long been appreciated. A number of scholars have identified the flexible way in which Milgram's procedure was employed (e.g. Darley, 1995; Perry, 2012), however, this has rarely been matched by sustained and detailed analysis of the interactions in the experimental sessions themselves (see Modigliani & Rochat (1995) for an exception). More recent research has, however, employed secondary qualitative analysis to highlight a range of interactional contingences in the obedience experiments (e.g. AUTHOR REFS; Hollander, 2015; Hollander & Maynard, 2016; Kaposi, 2020), and to move beyond arguments concerning whether the flexibility of Milgram's procedure should be taken as an indication that he was a sloppy or dishonest scientist (for such an argument, see Perry, 2012).

AUTHOR'S (REF) analysis drew on Billig's (1996) rhetorical psychological perspective to explore how participants sought to argue their way out of the experiments, and how the experimenter sought to convince them to continue. In particular, it was apparent that the experimenter's utterances were much more flexible than is typically assumed, with frequent improvisations and departures from the standardized prods (see also AUTHOR REF). In a follow-up study, AUTHOR REF explored the ways in which participants in two experimental conditions engaged in 'knowledge work' – knowledge claims, denials of knowledge and constructions of common knowledge – in their attempts to argue their way out the experiment. More recently, AUTHOR REF has re-analysed a section of an audio recording presented in transcript form by Milgram (1974) in order to show how Milgram's transcription practices further obscured the level of rhetorical work being done by both the participants and the experimenter.

Hollander (2015; Hollander & Maynard, 2016) has extended this line of work, drawing on conversation analytic methodology to explore participants across five

experimental conditions. Notably, Hollander and Maynard (2016) have drawn attention to differences in the ways in which obedient and defiant participants engaged with the experimenter. For example, defiant participants made more use of arguments that they would not wish to receive the same treatment as the learner, and of arguments in which they essentially treated continuation as being a matter solely for the learner.

Taking a somewhat different approach, Hollander and Turowetz (2017) have recently drawn on the post-experiment interviews conducted with participants in Milgram's experiments to suggest that there is relatively little indication of obedient participants explaining their continuation in terms of engaged followership. They use these findings to suggest that analysts should consider a wider array of social psychological processes in operation in the obedience experiments. This point concerning the value of avoiding attempts at premature theoretical closure is surely correct (and indeed Halsam & Reicher, 2018, have suggested that their engaged followership explanation should not, in any case, be read in such terms), but their analysis has itself been challenged on the grounds that we should not necessarily expect participants to be able to introspect and report accurately on their internal psychological processes (Haslam & Reicher, 2018). However, there is another problem with this line of analysis. In order to treat the accounts of participants in the post-experiment interviews as providing an explanatory resource for participants' behaviour in the experimental sessions, Hollander and Turowetz (2017) are required to engage in selective reification (Potter, 1996). The experiments are treated as the context in need of explanation, and the interviews as a decontextualized resource for doing this job of explanation, meaning that the accounts provided by participants are not treated as accounts produced for a particular purpose in a particular context, but as windows on the psychological processes that were in operation during the experiments. A more symmetrical approach would be to treat utterances produced in both contexts (i.e. the experiments and the interviews) as situated

social action (AUTHOR REF). This raises the question of how analysis of interaction in the Milgram experiments can engage with questions concerning social identity. The solution suggested here is to explore collectivity in action. Thus, rather than looking at participants' retrospective accounts of identification, we can explore how social identity was the subject of active construction and contestation during the experiments themselves. Indeed, such an approach is more consistent with the tenets of discursive and rhetorical psychology (e.g. Antaki, Condor & Levine, 1996; Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998), as well as with those approaches that seek to integrate social identity perspectives with discursive/rhetorical approaches (e.g. Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

Previous work on the audio recordings of the obedience experiments has highlighted the extent to which most conventional treatments of Milgram's work have neglected the role of rhetoric and interaction, and has shown that careful analysis of the audio recordings of the experimental situations can bring to light the previously obscured interactional dimension of the experiments. However, there still remain many experimental conditions for which the audio records remain to be analysed, and these approaches are yet to be used to explore the construction of collectivity within the experiments. In applying the rhetorical approach to the 'two peers rebel' condition, the present study therefore attempts to extend this line of analysis by providing the first qualitative analysis of the enactment of collectivity in the audio recordings from this condition, and in particular by turning the analytic lens on the construction of group identity in the experiments – a phenomenon thus far explored only through experimental methodology.

Method

Data

The data are drawn from audio recordings of the ‘two peers rebel’ condition held in the Stanley Milgram Papers archive at Yale University’s Manuscripts and Archives Service. This condition is identified as experiment 17 by Milgram (1974), but in the archives it is labelled as condition 07. To maintain consistency with the archival record, it will be referred to as condition 07 here, with extracts from experimental sessions identified by the condition number followed by the participant number. Recordings of 31 experimental sessions (out of a total of 40) are present in the archives. Of these, 27 are of obedient participants, and four of defiant participants (this means that all the obedient participants from this condition are represented in the archives). All but one of these recordings cover the full duration of the experimental session, with one incomplete recording of a defiant participant. The audio recordings were transcribed by the author using a form of ‘Jefferson-lite’ transcription notation (see Appendix for conventions).

Analytic procedure

A perspective informed by discursive and rhetorical psychology was adopted. The aim was not to identify what was going on ‘under the skull’ of the interactants, but rather to explore how the experimental sessions unfolded, how the confederate-teachers enacted their staged resistance, and how the naïve participants resisted the experimenter. Discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wiggins, 2017) is ideally suited to such an endeavour given its generally agnostic position on the referentiality of discourse, whereas rhetorical psychology (Billig 1996) is of particular use given its central concern with argumentative discourse. The two perspectives, though not equivalent, are nevertheless sympathetic to one another, and are frequently combined as part of the same analytic project (e.g. Billig, 1997; Potter, 1996). Indeed, this broad approach has previously been drawn on by social identity theorists to highlight the contested and constructed nature of social categories, in contrast to

perceptually-oriented approaches that have tended to treat categories and identities as being given by particular contexts (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001),

Analysis proceeded initially through close and repeated reading of the transcripts, involving frequent checking back against the original audio recordings. At this stage, detailed notes were made on each experimental session to capture potentially interesting phenomena. Transcripts were then coded for rhetorical strategies used by each of the confederate-teachers and by the naïve participants. Subsequent analysis focussed in detail on the invocation and enactment of collectivity during the passages when participants and/or confederate-teachers were resisting the experimenter. At this stage of the analysis, attention was paid to the use of specific discursive devices (see Edwards & Potter, 1992, pp. 160-3; Wiggins, 2017, chapter 7), with a particular focus on the situated construction of identities (Antaki, Condor & Levine, 1996; Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) and the use of collective deixical referents (*us, we, them, etc.*; Billig, 1995). Extracts used in the write-up of the analysis were selected using criteria that combined representativeness with economy of presentation, such that where multiple empirical observations could be demonstrated with a single example (as in the case of extract 3 below), this was favoured over multiple extracts.

Analysis & Discussion

The analysis will be outlined in two stages. First, I outline how the confederate-teachers enacted their resistance. Particular attention will be paid to attempts to construct the group dynamics of the situation. Second, the ways in which collectivity was enacted and constructed in the naïve participants' attempts at defying the experimenter will be explored, with a particular focus on (a) the way in which participants could resist jointly with confederate-teachers; and (b) the way in which participants could construct the group once the confederate-teachers had completed their resistance.

Staging resistance

Milgram (1965a, 1974) reported that the first confederate-teacher withdrew at 150 volts. However, the audio records show this to be incorrect: the first withdrawal came after the 165-volt shock. This means that the Learner's initial demand to be released at 150 volts was followed by a further shock before the first confederate-teacher (hereafter T1) enacted his withdrawal from the experiment. In 12 cases, T1 anticipated his eventual withdrawal by claiming some form of reluctance or discomfort following the learner's demand to be released and before the 165-volt shock, but in other cases this was absent. It is also notable that it is in the later experimental sessions in the condition that T1's resistance begins at this earlier stage.

This is not the only variation in the way in which T1's withdrawal is played out. Also notable are the differences in the prods used by the experimenter. The same prods employed for naïve participants are used, but not consistently. For example, prod 4 ('You have no other choice, you *must* go on') is used in response to T1's resistance in 12 experimental sessions, but is not used in 13 sessions. With one exception, the sessions where it is used are later in the condition. It is employed in all available sessions where it could be used from 0727 onwards, but in only a single session before this.² Coupled with the more extensive resistance from T1 in later sessions, this highlights that participants in these later sessions were exposed both to greater resistance from T1 and more concerted attempts by the experimenter to demonstrate the need to keep T1 in the experiment.

The rhetorical strategies employed by T1 also varied, although it is possible to identify some clear commonalities across many sessions. First, and most notably, all sessions accessed for the present analysis featured T1 offering to return the cheque for \$4.50 that each participant had been given as payment. In all cases, this was followed by a response from the

experimenter that money was ‘not an issue’ and/or that the cheque was his ‘simply for showing up at the laboratory’. This has also been observed in response to naïve participants in other conditions (AUTHOR REF), and as such should almost certainly be treated as part of Milgram’s regular procedure, despite the fact that this is not listed amongst the prods in Milgram’s published work. We might thus consider this the ‘cheque prod’, a type of special prod used in response to a specific rhetorical strategy. However, while certain aspects of the cheque prod were regularly observable in the staged conflict between T1 and the experimenter, other elements were much more flexible. Notably, on six occasions the cheque prod was used in isolation; on four occasions it was followed by versions of prod 2; on nine occasions versions of prod 3; on one occasion it was followed by a version of the first special prod (‘Although the shocks may be painful...’); on three occasions it was followed by a version of the second special prod (‘Whether the learner likes it or not...’); and on four occasions it was followed by some combination of more than one of the prods. Finally, in one session it was used not in an apparent attempt to convince T1 to continue, but at the end of the exchange as the experimenter accepted T1’s withdrawal.

Other strategies commonly used by T1 included drawing attention to the learner’s yelling (N = 26), assertions that the situation was ‘not right’ or ‘wrong’ (N = 23), and explicit statements that the learner had a right to be released and/or that it was not right for him to be held against his will (N = 23). However, there were additional rhetorical strategies that were used less frequently, including drawing attention to the pain that the learner must be feeling (N = 11) or to his heart condition (N = 4). As a result of these variations in both the experimenter’s prod use and T1’s strategies for resisting the experimenter, it is not possible to provide a ‘typical’ case. However, for illustrative purposes, it is worth considering an example in order to show how some of the most common elements of this part of the experimental procedure were enacted. In the following transcript (and in all subsequent

transcripts), T1 and T3 are confederate-teachers, T2 is the naïve participant, L is the learner, and E the experimenter:

Extract 1 (0718; 450 volts³)

- 1 T2: Hundred and sixty five
2 volts.
3 ((SHOCK))
4 T?: sheesh
5 L: ugh!
6 T3: Short, time.
7 L: Let me out!
8 (2)
9 T1: I don't know ((inaudible))
10 E: Please [continue.]
11 T1: [I ((inaudible))] I'm out
12 he's yelling that he wants
13 to come out.
14 E: Well the experiment c- er
15 requires that we continue
16 teacher please go on.
17 T1: I know but I don't think
18 it's right that he stays in
19 there and gets these shocks he's
20 yelling that he wants to come
21 out. (((inaudible)))

- 22 E: [Whether the] learner
23 likes it or not we must
24 continue until he has
25 learned all the, word pairs
26 correctly.
- 27 T1: Well, [I don't believe]
28 E: [It's absolutely ess]ential
29 to the experiment that we
30 continue so please go on.
- 31 T1: I don't believe- I'd rather
32 turn the, cheque back in
33 and er, than=
- 34 E: [No the cheque is]
35 T1: =[to listen to him yelling]
36 and all that I don't I don't
- 37 E: The cheque is yours simply
38 for showing up at the
39 laboratory sir this is not
40 an issue of money.
41 [The er]
- 42 T1: [(?No I-?)]
43 E: The experiment must go
44 on to its completion
45 ((inaudible)) it's essential.
- 46 T1: I don't believe in it. I

47 think the man has a right to
48 come out, if he wants to.
49 He's, he's getting shocked
50 and hollering and, I don't
51 E: Well, we'll have to continue,
52 er without you.

Following the administration of the 165-volt shock, the learner repeats his demand to be released – initially made at greater length following the 150-volt shock – on line 7. It is at this point that T1's staged resistance begins. This example features the use of several of the strategies noted above, including the reference to the learner's 'yelling that he wants to come out' (lines 11-13), an assertion that it is 'not right' that the learner be held against his will (lines 17-21; 46-48), and an offer to return the cheque (lines 31-33). The experimenter responds with prod 1 (line 10) and modified versions of prod 2 (lines 14-16), one of the special prods (lines 22-26) and prod 3 (lines 28-30), as well as the cheque prod (lines 37-40) followed by a prod that combines elements of prods 2 and 3 (lines 43-45).

One modification in particular is worth noting. In the published version of the prods, the experimenter refers to participants individually in the second person ('The experiment requires that *you* continue'; 'Whether the learner likes it or not, *you* must go on...'; 'It is absolutely essential that *you* continue'). Here, however, these prods are delivered using the first person plural (lines 14-16: 'the experimenter c- er requires that *we* continue'; lines 22-24: 'Whether the learner likes it or not *we* must continue...'; lines 28-30: 'It's absolutely essential to the experiment that *we* continue'). Such formulations avoid individualising T1 and thus seek to construct a collective identity based around the requirements of the common task in which they are all engaged. Once T1's withdrawal has been accepted, the

experimenter continues to use the collective *we*, but this time in a way that makes it clear that *we* no longer includes T1 (lines 51-52: ‘we’ll have to continue, er without you’). This is reminiscent of Haslam, Reicher and van Bavel’s (2019) recent analysis of archival materials from the Stanford Prison Experiment, in which the use of collective pronouns can be seen as a key aspect of attempts at identity leadership by the experimenters. In the ‘two peers rebel’ experiment, collective pronouns were used inconsistently by the experimenter in response to T1’s staged resistance, but are used on at least one occasion in all but two of the 28 experimental sessions that featured T1’s defiance.

In contrast to T1, the second confederate-teacher’s (T3) withdrawal was typically enacted more straightforwardly, but also featured an even greater level of variation in the rhetorical strategies employed. Offering to return the cheque (N = 10 out of 19) and suggesting that the experiment was ‘not right’ (N = 7) were the most common strategies, but these were used with much less regularity by T3 than by T1. Other strategies, such as referring to the pain being caused to the learner (N = 4), suggesting that continuation would not be good for the learner’s health (N = 4), and offering to change places with the learner (N = 4) were used in only a handful of sessions. Of particular note, a subset of rhetorical strategies employed by T3 involved references to the group dynamics of the situation, such as prefacing withdrawal on agreement with T1 (N = 2), suggesting that T1’s withdrawal had set a precedent (N = 2), or, conversely, suggesting that the experimenter and T2 should go on without him (N = 3). In some of the later experimental sessions, T3 also appeared to orient to the experimenter’s use of the ‘cheque prod’ when T1 had been resisting by noting that the cheque is irrelevant or that the mere fact of his showing up at the laboratory is enough (N = 5). Again, there is no ‘typical’ example that can be provided of T3’s resistance, but extract 2 serves as an illustration of how some of these strategies were employed, whilst also highlighting further variations:

Extract 2 (0727; 210 volts)

- 1 T2: Two ten.
- 2 ((SHOCK))
- 3 L: ow!
- 4 T3: Er, b- [red, sunset.]
- 5 L: (((inaudible)))
- 6 T3: I'd just as soon not go on with
- 7 this either.
- 8 L: I've had enough
- 9 [and I won't be in]=
- 10 T3: [If he's not well.]
- 11 L: =the experiment anymore.
- 12 T?: ((inaudible))
- 13 E: The experiment requires that
- 14 you continue teacher. And it's
- 15 absolutely essential to the
- 16 experiment.
- 17 T3: No I think if er, one of us sat
- 18 out I think I ought to be able to,
- 19 also.
- 20 (2)
- 21 T3: I mean er I think er, like you
- 22 say the cheque has
- 23 [nothing to do with it]

- 24 T2: [Why don't you let me] go in
25 there? I wanna go in there and
26 take the shocks, you see.
27 That's what I [((inaudible))]
28 E: [No once the]
29 experiment's started sir we must
30 continue as it has started. Er
31 we cannot change roles in the
32 middle of the experiment. We
33 must continue, er once we start
34 it must be continued to its
35 completion. The way it starts.
36 (2)
37 T3: ((inaudible)) just as soon not
38 er, I mean I
39 E: Well it's absolutely essential er
40 T3: ((inaudible))
41 E: you have no other choice we
42 must go on.
43 T3: No I'd, rather not.
44 (2)
45 T3: And er, I'm sorry I came down
46 here now. If I knew something
47 was this- like this was gonna
48 happen I don't think I would.

- 49 (3)
- 50 T3: I don't think er I just don't think
- 51 it's right that ((inaudible))
- 52 E: Well
- 53 T3: I mean er, if it was a younger
- 54 man or something maybe er,
- 55 go higher.
- 56 E: We'll er
- 57 (3)
- 58 E: We'll have to continue without
- 59 you too. Te- teacher two er,
- 60 would you go on with the
- 61 experiment please.

Here we see examples of T3 predicating his withdrawal on the learner's poor health (line 10), citing T1's withdrawal as having set a precedent (lines 17-19), anticipating the cheque prod (lines 21-23), and arguing that the experiment is not right (lines 50-51). In addition, however, we see two rhetorical strategies that were unique to this session: the claim that had he known what was involved he would not have taken part in the experiment (lines 44-47), and the suggestion that it may be possible to administer higher shocks if the learner was younger (lines 52-54). As an example of one of the ways in which collectivity could be invoked by T3, his formulation of T1's withdrawal as having set a precedent is worth noting. He could have said something along the lines of, *you've let him withdraw, so why not me?* However, he instead invokes the collective *us* (lines 17-18: 'if er, one of *us* sat out...'). To individualise would imply that the two teachers are distinct, whereas the collective pronoun

constructs a momentary commonality between the teachers – insofar as they share membership of the same role-based group – in order to highlight the inconsistency of treating individual group members differently. Again, it is notable that the experimenter too uses collective deixical referents (lines 29, 31, 32 & 33). This was apparent in all but one of the 19 experimental sessions which continued long enough for T3 to enact his staged resistance. It is striking that in extract 2 the experimenter's use of 'we' follows the beginnings of resistance by T2, the naïve participant. Participants could in effect make it difficult for the experimenter to avoid treating the teachers collectively by following up defiance from one of the confederate-teachers with resistance of their own. However, it was not the case that all uses of the collective first person by the experimenter in response to defiance from a confederate-teacher followed this pattern – more frequently they came when responding to defiance solely from a confederate, and indeed extract 2 concludes with the experimenter accepting T3's withdrawal by suggesting that 'We'll have to continue without you too'; *we* in this context clearly refers to a group that includes the experimenter and the remaining teacher, and thus withdrawing from the experiment also necessitates withdrawal from the group.

The variation in the experimental procedure raises issues concerning the nature and meaning of the experiments, which touches on matters of validity similar to those that have long been raised about Milgram's studies (e.g. Orne & Holland, 1968; and see Perry, Brannigan, Wanner & Stam, 2020). For some scholars, the flexibility of the procedure is grounds for criticism of Milgram on the grounds that these notable and unreported departures from standardization are indicative of an approach to science that is, at best, sloppy and, at worst, dishonest (e.g. Perry, 2012). My approach to this issue is to note the extent to which social studies of science have long highlighted the contingency of social action in a variety of laboratory contexts (e.g. Latour, 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1986). While Milgram's

experiments are certainly a striking example of these processes, there is nothing intrinsically different about the way in which Milgram conducted and reported his research from what would have been expected at the time in which he was working (AUTHOR REFS).

Group-based resistance by naïve participants

Once the experimenter had accepted T3's withdrawal, participants were seemingly left to complete the experiment alone, with T1 and T3 sat on the side-lines, sometimes chipping in with occasional comments to indicate their disbelief at the situation. However, this is not to suggest that once the confederate-teachers had withdrawn there were no possibilities for participants to construct collective alliances. As this section will show, group boundaries and group action was still very much a 'live' issue.

Two forms of group-based resistance were apparent. First, participants could resist jointly with confederates; second, participants who were resisting in isolation could invoke the group and/or previous resistance by other group members as one of their rhetorical strategies for defying the experimenter.

Joint action

In many experimental sessions, participants engaged in what might best be termed *joint action* with one of the confederates; this directly preceded the termination of the experiment in 6 experimental sessions. Such joint action could involve the construction of consensus (e.g. 'I'm in agreement now'), explicit construction of momentary alliances through the use of collective deixis (e.g. 'we don't want the cheque'), or direct questioning of confederate-teachers to ascertain their likely support (e.g. 'what do you think?'). Insofar as this resulted in the joint production of a united front, the experimenter often resorted to addressing the teachers collectively in response (e.g. 'No the cheques are yours gentlemen').

To get a sense of how these strategies could be used, it is worth considering a single extended example which features a number of them, and in which the collective nature of resistance is itself topicalized. In extract 3a we see the naïve participant (T2) and confederate T3 resisting following the 195-volt shock:

Extract 3a (0724; 210 volts)

- 1 T2: Wrong. A hundred and ninety
2 five volts.
3 ((SHOCK))
4 L: ugh!
5 T3: Er slow, dance.
6 L: Get me out of here. My heart's
7 bothering me.
8 T3: Think we got to let [him out.]
9 L: [Let me]
10 out of here you have no right to
11 keep me [here. ((inaudible))]
12 E: [Please continue.]
13 L: Let me out of here let me out.
14 T?: phew
15 L: ((inaudible))
16 T?: ((inaudible))
17 E: Please go on teacher. Read the
18 words.
19 T2: I can't er, give him a shock

- 20 anymore.
- 21 (2)
- 22 E: Well the experiment requires
- 23 that you go on.
- 24 (2)
- 25 E: It's absolutely essential. Er
- 26 please [continue.]
- 27 T2: [How about] you
- 28 Mulberry?
- 29 T3: Er I might be able to go on a
- 30 little bit longer ((inaudible))
- 31 T2: Can you give him the shocks I
- 32 can't?
- 33 T3: No I don't think I could give
- 34 him the shocks. I don't think so.
- 35 (2)
- 36 E: a- you must continue teacher.
- 37 Er, it's absolutely essential to
- 38 the experiment. Please continue.
- 39 (8)
- 40 T?: ((inaudible))
- 41 T2: I don't think I can give him the
- 42 shocks (((inaudible)))
- 43 T3: [y-] your decision
- 44 shouldn't have anything to do

- 45 with mine anyway.
- ((28 lines omitted))
- 74 E: Er you have no other choice
- 75 please go on.
- 76 (2)
- 77 T2: What do you think Mulberry?
- 78 E: Oh, this is not a deci- er, this is
- 79 not a discussion between three
- 80 of us. It's between two of us
- 81 right now. Er, please go on
- 82 teacher.
- 83 T2: I'll try him, one more.

This extract is notable for the interaction between T2 and T3, and introduces a strikingly simple feature of this condition: the participant could engage the confederate-teachers in discussion, and in so doing momentary alliances could be built – and challenged – between the teachers. This ebbing and flowing of solidarity involved contestation around the definition of group boundaries, and we see this begin on line 8 when T3 initiates resistance following the administration of the 195-volt shock. His statement ('Think we got to let him out') is notable in that it is not framed as a report of a personal desire to quit (e.g. compare his utterance on lines 6-7 of extract 2 above: 'I'd just as soon not go on with this either.')

Instead, T3 uses collective deixis ('we') in an attempt to define the appropriate course of action to be taken by the group. It is thus not framed as a report of an internal psychological process – not want *I want to do* – but rather as an injunction to collective action – *what we should do*. When asked by the experimenter to continue (lines 17-18), the participant (T2)

resists, framing this in terms of an inability to administer any more electric shocks (lines 19-20). The experimenter moves swiftly through modified versions of prods 2 and 3 (lines 22-23 and 25-26), before T2 addresses T3 by name (lines 27-28). As this is before T3's pre-planned withdrawal point, his response on lines 29-30 indicates that he can continue, but makes it clear that he is not making any kind of firm commitment – he *might* be able to go on a *little bit* longer. T2 re-states that he can no longer administer the shocks, but instead of using this as an argument for withdrawal, he asks T3 if he is willing to perform this task. T2 thus demonstrates a willingness to compromise – he shows himself to be seeking solutions that would enable the continuation of the experiment. T3 responds that he is not able to do this (lines 33-34).

Following the experimenter's further adapted prod on lines 36-38, T2 re-states his lack of certainty in his ability to administer the shocks. This argument is notable in that it is not formulated in terms of T2 not *wanting* to administer the shocks, but in terms of him not being *able* to do so. This positions his resistance as being beyond his control rather than as a subjective response to the situation. T3's response to this is to rhetorically distance himself from T2 (lines 43-45). In contrast to his earlier attempt at defining the appropriate form of collective action, T3 now explicitly states that T2 should approach his 'decision' as an individual. If previously we witnessed the building of a momentary alliance and solidarity, we now see it ebbing away.

After the omitted lines (in which T2 continues to resist), the experimenter proceeds to issue prod 4 (lines 74-75), following which T2 again addresses T3 (line 77: 'What do you think Mulberry?'). In response to this, the experimenter further attempts to undermine the alliance between T2 and T3 by reframing the relevant collective from 'the three of us' (i.e. Experimenter, T2 and T3) to 'the two of us' (i.e. Experimenter and T2). T2 does continue – unusually so for a participant who has received prod 4 (AUTHOR REF), but sets a clear

condition on his continuation (line 83: 'one more') before administering the 210-volt shock. Having reached this point, the experimental procedure now requires T3 to resist the experimenter and withdraw from the experiment. Extract 3b continues shortly after the end of extract 3a:

Extract 3b (0724; 210 volts)

- 94 L: Experimenter! Get me out of
95 here!
- 96 T3: No [I-]
- 97 L: [I've] had enough and I won't
98 be in the experiment [anymore.]
- 99 T3: [I think]
100 I've had enough too.
- 101 (2)
- 102 E: Well, the experiment requires
103 that we go on teachers.
- 104 (2)
- 105 T3: I, I can't do it. Like he said it's
106 not right to keep him in there if
107 he wants out.
- 108 (2)
- 109 T2: I guess we had it.
- 110 E: It's absolutely essential that we
111 continue the experiment er,
112 teachers. Er you're not going

- 113 to continue either teacher two?
- 114 T2: I tell you what I'll doing, I'll er,
- 115 I'll do the reading, but er, I can't
- 116 give the shocks anymore. I can't
- 117 give the shocks. I can't push
- 118 that button anymore.
- 119 (2)
- 120 E: Well you have no other choice
- 121 gentlemen er you- we- we must
- 122 continue the experiment.
- 123 (2)
- 124 T2: We have a choice eh heh.
- 125 T?: right.
- 126 (2)
- 127 T2: We have plenty of choice.
- 128 (2)
- 129 E: Well, we'll have to discontinue.

Following the beginnings of T3's withdrawal, the experimenter addresses T3 and T2 collectively (note the use of the plural *teachers* on line 103). In his response, T3 frames his own withdrawal as following from T1's earlier arguments (line 105: 'Like he said ...'). T2's subsequent contribution provides a summary formulation (line 109: 'I guess we had it') that projects a course of action for the group (i.e. termination of the experiment), but the experimenter resists this, indicating that it is imperative not simply that the experiment continues, but that *we* continue (line 103). In this respect, the experimenter is clearly

attempting to enlist T2 and T3 into a collective which also includes himself, and attempting to project a course of action which contrasts with that suggested by T2. Again, we see how arguments over the continuation of the experiment could become arguments over competing injunctions to collective behaviour.

The experimenter then focuses specifically on T2 and queries whether he is continuing (lines 112-113). T2 again states that he can continue reading the test but cannot administer the shocks (lines 114-118). It is notable how T2 is displaying a willingness to keep the experimental session going here, but the experimenter rejects this offer of compromise. In issuing a version of prod 4 (lines 120-122), the experimenter again addresses the teachers collectively ('gentlemen'), as well as correcting an initial second person pronoun (*you*) to include himself in the collective (*we*), and projects the required collective action ('we must continue'). In response, T2 speaks on behalf of himself and T3 (lines 124-127: 'we have a choice ... we have plenty of choice'). There is no attempt here to consult with T3, or to attempt to find a further form of compromise; nor is there any attempt to project alternative courses of action for the three of them. Instead, the relevant collective for whom choice is asserted is that for which the experimenter had sought to deny choice – the teachers together in opposition to the experimenter. In seeking to dictate collective action, the experimenter has instead galvanised the alliance between T2 and T3.

Constructing consensus and invoking the others

More commonly than acting jointly with one of the confederates, participants argued their way out of the experiment following the experimenter's acceptance of either T1's or T3's withdrawal. We should be wary of drawing too clear a distinction between these strategies; many participants who successfully extracted themselves from the experiment following the withdrawal of one of the confederates had begun to query the experimenter

during earlier exchanges between the experimenter and either T1 or T3. However, the removal of a potential ally meant that, once the experimenter had accepted a confederate's withdrawal, the participant was essentially left to make their case alone. In this context, the confederates could become relevant to participants' arguments as a rhetorical resource to be invoked. Ten participants mobilised the confederates in this way as they argued their way out of the experiment.

For example, in extract 4, we see participant 0735, who had not previously sought to argue his way out of the experiment, resist the experimenter's instructions to continue following the withdrawal of the second confederate-teacher:

Extract 4 (0735; 210 volts)

- 1 E: Er, teacher, er two, you'll have
2 to, continue we- er doing the
3 role of teacher three also please.
4 The word is, er, [[[inaudible]]]
5 T2: [No I think I'll
6 quit too.]
7 (5)
8 E: Well the experiment requires
9 that you go on [[[inaudible]]]
10 T2: [I understand]
11 but er, seeing that the gentlemen,
12 er, stopped the experiment I
13 don't feel as though I wanna
14 go on by myself.

- 15 (6)
- 16 E: It's absolutely essential that
- 17 we continue.
- 18 T2: I understand that well er, thing
- 19 is eh heh heh it seems to be four
- 20 to one, us four to you one I
- 21 think we'll stop the experiment.
- 22 (4)
- 23 E: Well, we'll have to er,
- 24 discontinue, everything.

Here we see three separate ways in which the collective could be invoked in arguments for the cessation of the experiment. First, T2's initial attempt to withdraw is oriented to its status as following on from the withdrawal of the confederate-teachers (lines 5-6: 'I'll quit *too*'). This implicit reference to the confederate-teachers subtly positions T2's actions as part of a pattern, and as therefore not exceptional or particularly noteworthy. It builds the ordinariness of the act of withdrawal by positioning the participant as doing something that two other people have already done. Second, after his initial attempt to 'quit' is rejected, T2 explicitly invokes the other 'gentlemen' and makes his own 'feel[ing]' that he does not want to continue contingent on the confederates having already stopped (lines 10-14). This is notable in that it implies that it is *only* the fact that the confederates have stopped that leads him to want to withdraw, rather than any conviction that to continue would be wrong, or concern for the well-being of the learner. The strategy thus explicitly positions his actions as the product of a process of conformity – doing something because others have done likewise, and to do otherwise would make one feel uncomfortable. Third, when the experimenter again rejects

his withdrawal, this time using the collective *we* (line 17) rather than the previous singular *you* (line 9), T2 switches strategies and uses an ingroup referent ('us') to construct consensus and isolate the experimenter (lines 18-21). This involves a move away from positioning himself as potentially being at odds with the actions of the confederate-teachers, to treating them, himself and the learner as a majority of four with whom *the experimenter* is at odds. We thus see how a contest over the boundaries of the collective are central to arguments over continuation. It is only at this point that the experimenter – without using prod 4 – accepts his withdrawal.

Other participants could invoke the confederate-teachers in order to challenge claims made by the experimenter. For example:

Extract 5 (0715; 315 volts)

- 1 E: You have no other choice teacher
2 we must go on.
3 (3)
4 T2: Well apparently there is another
5 choice because the other two
6 teachers have refused to go on.
7 E: Yes but we're at the end of the,
8 line now we just don't have any
9 teachers to continue with er, in
10 this if you re- insist upon er
11 stopping we'll have to
12 discontinue the h- the whole
13 experiment.

T2's contradiction of prod 4 ('You have no other choice...') constitutes a variation on similar forms of rejection observed in other conditions, whereby participants responded to the experimenter's bald assertion of lack of choice by asserting that they did, indeed, have a choice (AUTHOR REF). However, here this argument is buttressed by the invocation of the actions of the two confederate-teachers who have already withdrawn from the experiment. T2 thus works up the contradiction between the experimenter's utterance and the actions of 'the other two teachers', with the word 'apparently' (line 4) being particularly useful for marking the experimenter's claim as overstated insofar as it neglects a state of affairs that is readily apparent. It is also noteworthy that, rather than accepting the participant's resistance and ending the experimental session at this point, the experimenter provides a counter-argument, suggesting that T2's status as the final remaining teacher means that his withdrawal would result in the discontinuation of the experiment.

A final variation on the invocation of the other teachers can be seen in extract 6:

Extract 6 (0727; 210 volts)

- 1 E: Now would you er please continue.
2 ?: [((inaudible))]
3 T2: [((inaudible))] the only thing is
4 that er, actually er, er if I go
5 against these fellows you got,
6 one man yelling and two men
7 saying that they don't want to.
8 I happen to be a physician
9 E: [(?I realise that?)

10 T2: [and I feel there are] certain
11 things that you do, but, the
12 thing of it is er, these people are
13 going to think that I'm sort of a
14 hard hearted cruel individual if
15 we go on with this thing
16 particularly in view of the fact,
17 that this man has already stated
18 that he's had some sort of cardiac
19 difficulty.

This participant initially works up a similar argument to one of the rhetorical strategies employed by participant 0735 (extract 4, lines 10-14), positioning himself as reluctant to 'go against these fellows' (lines 4-5). However, he also mentions the learner here (line 6: 'one man yelling') and thus constructs himself as 'going against' not only the confederate-teachers, but also the person to whom he is administering the electric shocks. Thus the argument is not simply that he does not wish to continue with the experiment alone, but that to keep going would place him in opposition to individuals in *two* other key roles (i.e. teachers and learner). He then invokes an extra-experimental identity (line 8: 'I happen to be a physician') as grounds for his claim that 'there are certain things that you do' (lines 10-11). This combination of category entitlement and strategic vagueness functions to claim a level of epistemic authority, without having to advance specific claims that he would then need to defend. Identifying oneself as a physician claims entitlement to pronounce on medical matters, but given the ambiguity of the situation the vague claim concerning 'certain things' ensures that he is not making a specifically medical assertion. Instead, he goes on to

construct the likely opinions of ‘these people’ (i.e. the learner and the confederate-teachers) as a reason for discontinuation. Thus, his argument is not that he is morally opposed to what he is doing in any principled sense, but is based around the avoidance of disapproval lest the others present think him ‘a hard hearted cruel individual’ (lines 13-14). Of particular note, he constructs a collective identity with the experimenter as he outlines his reasons for withdrawing: it is what the others will think of him ‘if *we* go on’ (lines 14-15). At the very moment of resistance, the participant is not constructing common identity with the learner, or with the confederate-teachers; instead he positions himself as part of a group *with the experimenter*, which is opposed to ‘these people’. It is the consequences for himself as an individual of the experimenter’s projected action for this group that he mobilises as a reason for withdrawing. Constructing shared group identity with the experimenter, then, need not only be associated with ‘engaged followership’: here we see a participant seek to ‘engage’ with the experimenter in order to resist him.

Concluding remarks

The present study has focussed on identity-in-action within Milgram’s ‘two peers rebel’ condition. In the to-and-fro of the experimental situation, we see the construction and dissolution of momentary alliances as participants seek to argue their way out of the experiment, and as the experimenter and confederate-teachers enact their own roles in Milgram’s procedure. The analysis highlights the diversity of ways in which collective processes were enacted in the experimental sessions, with tussles over group boundaries, and over the appropriate course of group action. In doing so, three key findings are highlighted:

First, we saw how the staging of the confederate-teachers’ resistance was achieved. In common with analyses of other conditions from Milgram’s experiments (e.g. AUTHOR REF; Perry, 2012), it was shown that Milgram’s procedure was operationalised with a fair

amount of flexibility and contingency. Of particular note, in enacting the staged resistance, the experimenter and confederate-teachers could draw the boundaries of the group in such a way as to define either continuation (extract 1) or defiance (extract 2) as the appropriate action for the group.

Second, we saw how participants and confederate-teachers could engage in projects of joint resistance. This could involve the ebbing and flowing of solidarity as speakers used pronouns to position themselves as acting individually or collectively, constructed the boundaries of group identity in various ways, and projected different courses of action as appropriate for the group.

Third, rhetorical strategies used to resist the experimenter could involve various constructions of collectivity and the intergroup context, including lay versions of conformity pressures (extract 4), the construction of majority-minority group relations (extract 5), and even the construction of a group consisting of the participant and experimenter in opposition to the learner and confederate-teachers (extract 6).

Previous analyses of intergroup dynamics in the Milgram experiments have emphasised relatively broad differences in the extent to which different conditions promoted identification with either the learner or the experimenter (Haslam, et al. 2014; Haslam, Reicher & Millard, 2015). The present analysis suggests that during the experimental sessions, alliances and group composition shifted, and that rather than being simply the product of the situation, identities were available for active contestation by participants, experimenter and confederates alike. Milgram's structuring of the conditions clearly did provide for different forms of collectivity; for example, given the presence of the confederate-teachers, the 'two peers rebels' condition affords forms of collectivity that were not available in most other conditions. But this was not deterministic of collective behaviour,

which was instead as much a product of what Billig (1996) terms ‘witcraft’ – the ability of social actors to engage in the creative and flexible use of rhetoric.

The present paper thus extends both the rhetorical perspective on Milgram’s studies, and the conceptualization of the experiments in intergroup terms. Indeed, the analysis follows from previous attempts to emphasise the rhetorical construction of social categories (e.g. Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) and thus highlights the extent to which the nature of the context itself was ‘up for grabs’ in the to-and-fro of the experimental interaction. The analysis, has, of course, explored only this one condition, and the question of whether similar processes would be at work in other conditions is a matter for further research. Indeed, many of the specific rhetorical strategies identified here would not be available to participants in other conditions given that the different structuring of conditions afforded different rhetorical resources. Nevertheless, in attending to the ways in which collectivity was performed in the moment-by-moment unfolding of the experimental sessions, the present analysis does highlight the extent to which identification can be conceived as an active rhetorical process in which collectivity is a matter of construction and contestation. To the extent that we might see the experiment as involving engaged followership, we should treat this as an active process, with the experimenter seeking to engage participants, and participants often seeking to disengage themselves from versions of collectivity in which the experimenter was trying to enlist them. Moreover, on occasions the participants *could engage the experimenter* in their own version of the collective in order to seek to enact their withdrawal. If previous analyses of interaction in the obedience experiments have shown that behaviour in Milgram’s lab is more nuanced than had typically been appreciated (AUTHOR REF; Hollander, 2015), the present analysis extends this to the role of intergroup processes in the experiments. As has been demonstrated by numerous analyses from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, the experiments do not stand as demonstrations of people following orders

(Burger, Girgis & Manning, 2011; AUTHOR REF; Haslam et al., 2014). The question of what they *do* show, however, is still a matter of debate. With the engaged followership perspective, Haslam and Reicher (2017) have pointed the way to an important alternative perspective that re-frames our understanding of the experiments in terms of social identity and leadership. Similarly, perspectives informed by rhetorical psychology and conversation analysis have shown how the outcome of any specific experimental encounter was contingent on the contingencies of argumentation and interaction. The present analysis draws these two perspectives together to show how the dynamics of engaged followership can be conceived as active, rhetorical processes that are not determined by the properties of situations in the classical sense, but which are instead ‘up for grabs’ in the to-and-fro of interaction.

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Appendix: Transcription conventions.

- ((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.
- volts. A full-stop (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.

Endnotes

¹ In addition, Milgram (1964) reported a condition in which he used a version of his experimental paradigm to study group conformity effects, rather than obedience. All four 'group' conditions are also summarised briefly in Milgram (1965b).

² It is used in one additional earlier session, but this is at a point where the naïve participant is also resisting.

³ The voltage level given for each extract indicates the level at which the experimental session was terminated. Thus, for obedient participants this is 450 volts, whereas for defiant participants the voltage level corresponds with the point in the procedure at which they were able to successfully extricate themselves from the experiment.