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Coverage of recent criticisms of Milgram's obedience experiments in introductory social psychology textbooks

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Abstract

This article has two purposes: (a) to broaden awareness of recent criticisms of Milgram's obedience experiments by providing a relatively inclusive review of them interlaced within a discussion of Gina Perry's main substantive criticisms and (b) to report the findings of our coverage analysis for recent criticisms in current introductory social psychology textbooks. Past coverage analyses have found a "Milgram-friendly" trend (little or no discussion or even acknowledgment of the large body of criticism published from 1964 onward) that evolved in textbooks from the 1960s to the 1990s and has become more pronounced since that time period. Our findings on coverage of recent criticisms were consistent with those of past text analyses. None of the recent criticisms were covered, even in the social psychology textbooks dated 2015. We discuss a possible explanation for these findings that involves a proposed knowledge-conserving function of social psychology textbooks.

Keywords

Milgram obedience experiments, social psychology textbooks, textbook analysis

Arguably, the most famous (or infamous) set of experiments in psychology is Milgram's obedience experiments (Milgram, 1963, 1964, 1965a, 1965b, 1974). The 50th anniversary of Milgram's first major publication about the obedience experiments (Milgram, 1963) recently occurred in 2013. Surprisingly, according to Web of Science, the annual

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rate of citation to Milgram's 1963 article has risen significantly in recent years, especially from 2007 through 2012 (Reicher, Haslam, & Miller, 2014; see Figure 1, p. 395). This finding supports Gibson's (2013b) assertion with respect to the obedience experiments that the "debate surrounding the ethical, theoretical, and empirical issues they raise shows no signs of abating" (p. 177). Much of this recent interest in the Milgram experiments is concerned with presenting new criticisms of the obedience experiments, such as Milgram's misrepresentation of the debriefing process used in the experiments (e.g., Nicholson, 2011), but even some older criticisms, such as the unethical nature of Milgram's experimental paradigm, have been renewed (e.g., Baumrind, 2013). Most of these new criticisms of Milgram's experiments are based on analyses of the Stanley Milgram Papers in the Manuscripts and Archives section of Yale's Sterling Memorial Library. We will discuss these recent criticisms, focusing on those proffered by Gina Perry (2013a) because they are the most extensive.[1] Discussion of some other recent, related critiques of the obedience experiments will be interwoven within the summary of Perry's main critical points. A discussion of our examination of how current introductory social psychology textbooks have dealt with these recent criticisms will follow our examination of recent criticisms.

Perry's main criticisms

Over the course of four years through her review of the Yale archival materials, including 140 audio recordings of the original experiments, scores of participant debriefing conversations with a psychiatrist, and the documentation, notes, and correspondence accumulated during the study, and her personal interviews with former participants, experts familiar with the research, and relatives of the men who served as the experimenter and learner in the experiments, Perry (2013a) found serious methodological and ethical problems with Milgram's experiments. In an excellent summary of Perry's findings, Brannigan (2013) describes Perry's conclusions as "disturbing" and thinks that they will "fundamentally challenge the way scholars interpret Milgram and his experiments" (p. 624).

The experimenter's improvisational, extended prodding

Perry (2013a) found that Milgram's depiction of the experimental procedure with respect to the experimenter's use of prods to coax participants to continue on in the experiment is at odds with the experimenter's actual behavior in using the prods and following the script for their use. Supposedly, the experimenter (confederate John Williams) used a series of four prods to encourage the participant to continue when a participant protested or expressed doubt about continuing.[2] The sequence of prods was 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; and Prod 4: "You have no other choice, you *must* go on" (Milgram, 1974, p. 21).[3] The experimenter was to begin this sequence anew "on each occasion that the teacher balked or showed reluctance to follow orders" (p. 21). However, if after the fourth prod, the participant refused to continue, the participant would be classified as disobedient and the experiment terminated. But the archival audiotapes of the experimental sessions and the experimenter's notes about the sessions

revealed a very different story. The experimenter didn't always follow the controlled script for using the prods. He would parry participants' protests, escalating the pressure by *inventing* more coercive prods. The experimenter's behavior led Perry (2013c) to conclude that "The slavish obedience to authority we have come to associate with Milgram's experiments begins to sound much more like bullying and coercion when you listen to this material" (p. 223). How much parrying and coercing varied across both participants and experimental conditions (see Perry, 2013a, pp. 115–117, for a more complete description). Russell (2009) describes the experimenter's improvisational prodding in the following manner: "Williams frequently displayed great feats of bottom-up innovation in the invention of progressively more coercive (stressful?) prods in trying to bring about what he sensed his boss desired" (p. 182). Consistent with Russell's comments, Darley (1995), based on the transcribed experimental excerpts provided in Milgram (1974), concluded that "the experimenter's answers to the teacher's queries reveal that *the experimenter had defined his role as doing whatever was necessary to get the teacher to continue giving the shocks*" (pp. 130–132). Perry (2013a) reports a good example of this probable experimenter bias. The experimenter's variance from the script was very prominent in Condition 20 in which women served as participants.[4] For example, one woman was prompted 26 times and other women 14 times, 11 times, 9 times, and so on. Thus, it appears that the 65% obedience rate reported for this condition was at least partially due to a great deal of extra parrying and prodding by the experimenter. In sum, the experimenter's behavior with respect to prompting the participants was clearly not standardized, and the experimenter's deviations from script may have been driven by experimenter bias. Perry (2013a) also notes that Milgram *appears* to have tacitly allowed the experimenter the license to improvise because he watched a number of the experimental conditions through a one-way mirror.

Gibson (2013b) not only discusses the experimenter's improvisational behavior but also a "forgotten prod" (probably more accurately described as an experimenter tactic for getting the participant to continue in the experiment)—the experimenter leaves the room to check on the learner to make sure that he is okay. Gibson found evidence in the archival audio tapes that not only was there great flexibility in how the experimenter employed the four prods but also that the experimenter in the voice-feedback condition (Condition 2) sometimes complied with participants' demands for him to check on the learner once he had fallen silent. When he returned after supposedly speaking to the learner, he would report that the learner was okay and willing to continue. However, this "leaving the room" tactic was not employed in a standardized manner across participants when it was used and appears to have been abandoned in subsequent experimental conditions. Its use likely led participants to infer that the learner's predicament was not as serious as it seemed. It is important to note that Milgram failed to include any description of this experimenter tactic in this or any other condition in any of his publications on the obedience experiments. This is likely due to the fact that Milgram was still refining his experimental procedure during the proximity series of four experimental conditions, of which the voice-feedback condition was a part (Russell, 2009).

Another interesting recent development with respect to the four prods to be used by the experimenter concerns which of the prods actually constitute an order, and of those that do, how did Milgram's participants respond to them versus those prods that do not

constitute orders. As Burger (2009) points out, only Prod 4, "You have no other choice, you *must* go on." clearly constitutes an order (see also Gibson, 2013a). In his partial Milgram replication, Burger found that the fourth prod was the least successful in getting his participants to continue (Burger, Girgis, & Manning, 2011). In fact, this prod did not elicit any obedience because not a single participant continued after receiving Prod 4. Burger et al. concluded that whatever Milgram was studying, it was not obedience to orders, and "that the way the research is portrayed to students, scholars and the public may need to be reassessed" (p. 465).

Burger et al.'s finding agrees with what Gibson (2013a) found in the Milgram materials in the Yale archives. Gibson's rhetorical analysis of the recorded interactions between the experimenter and the participants revealed that the experimenter's most order-like interventions were overwhelmingly resisted by participants. Gibson (2013a) concluded that his analysis "points to the intriguing possibility that the studies ultimately may have little to do with obedience as conventionally understood" (p. 303). Thus, rather than showing that participants in the Milgram experiments were obeying orders of those in authority, the Milgram experiments seem to provide evidence of the opposite, that orders from an authority lead to *dis*obedience. Based upon these findings and some of their own, Alex Haslam, Stephen Reicher, and their colleagues have proposed an intriguing interpretation of Milgram's experiments as explorations of the power of social identity-based leadership to induce active and committed followership and not obedience (e.g., Haslam, Reicher, Millard, & McDonald, 2015; Reicher, Haslam, & Smith, 2012). Briefly, the "engaged followership" is predicated upon the teachers' acceptance of the experimenter's scientific goals and the leadership he exhibits in pursuing them. Also, in support of their explanation, Haslam and Reicher provide some empirical evidence that in an experimental analogue of the Milgram paradigm, participants are motivated not by orders but by appeals to science (Haslam, Reicher, & Birney, 2014).

Milgram's deceptive dehoaxing

Perry (2013a, 2013b) also discovered that the majority of participants were *not* appropriately debriefed ("dehoaxed" in Milgram's terminology) in a timely manner as Milgram led us to believe. The debriefing that Milgram (1963, 1965b) described simply did not happen. For most participants, the immediate debriefing did not tell them that the learner was not really shocked. According to Perry (2013a), the comments that the participants wrote on their questionnaires show that "far from being a systematic and detailed process, debriefing varied across time, and in most cases was not a debriefing in the sense that I had understood it at all" (p. 79). In addition, the transcripts of the follow-up participant group interviews involving a subset of the participants with a psychiatrist nine months after the experiments had ended also clearly demonstrate that the participants were not properly debriefed and that most participants had not received an explanation that the victim was unharmed before leaving the lab. The participants in Conditions 1–18, about three-fourths of the participants (roughly 600), left the lab believing that they had shocked a man and were certainly not debriefed in the manner that Milgram had claimed. Most participants were not told the full story until they received the study report and a questionnaire that Milgram sent to them almost a year later in July 1962. These findings

of Milgram's seriously inadequate debriefing of participants are particularly relevant to Baumrind's (1964) wondering "what sort of procedures could dissipate the type of emotional experience" (p. 422) that many of Milgram's participants may have experienced. Obviously, Milgram's inadequate procedure did not accomplish this.

Perry (2013a) is not the only researcher leveling these criticisms about the inadequate debriefing that participants received and the harm done to many of them. For example, in his 2011 article, "Torture at Yale," Ian Nicholson also uses the Milgram archival materials to provide a forceful argument that Milgram misrepresented the extent and efficacy of his debriefing procedures, the risk posed by his experiments, and the harm done to his participants. Based on his examination of participants' feedback about Milgram not informing them about the true nature of the study immediately afterward (Reaction of subjects, 1962), Nicholson was led to assert that Milgram "deliberately misrepresented his post-experimental procedures in his published work" (2011, p. 744), probably to protect his credibility as a responsible researcher and the ethical integrity and possible future of the obedience study.

The unreported relationship condition

Whereas Milgram (1974) reported 18 experimental conditions in his obedience study, Perry (2013a) reports that, according to her analysis of the archival experimental data, there were actually 24 (see Perry's Appendix: List of Conditions), but one (Condition 21, Expert Judgment) was not an actual experimental condition but rather the solicitation of estimations by psychiatrists and laypeople of the level of obedience that would be observed for the baseline voice-feedback baseline condition (Condition 2).[5] Of the unreported conditions (see Note 5), Perry found Condition 24, a second experimental condition conducted in Bridgeport, CT, to be the most interesting and devotes a chapter to it. Russell (2014) refers to this condition as "arguably the most controversial variation" (p. 194) of Milgram's obedience experiments. It was not reported by Milgram even though he said that he would do so in "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority" (1965b, p. 71). This condition is usually referred to as the Relationship condition because the pairs of participants in it (one serving as teacher and the other as learner) were related in some way, but it has also been referred to as the "Bring a Friend" condition (Rochat & Blass, 2014) because participants were asked to bring a "friend"—someone that they knew well, such as a close acquaintance, a neighbor, or a relative—to also participate in the experiment.

Twenty pairs of male participants who were relatives, friends, or neighbors served as teacher and learner. Only three of the 20 pairs were members of the same family—a father and son, an uncle and nephew, and two brothers-in-law. After the learner was strapped in and the teacher and experimenter left the room, Milgram explained privately to him about the experimental ruse and coached him on how to vocalize like the confederate learner had done in other experimental conditions in response to the supposed shocks. Thus, this condition was the same as the reported experiment in Bridgeport (which Milgram called the Office Building, Bridgeport condition), but the participants were related with one serving as teacher and the other as learner. Rochat and Blass (2014, p. 457) point out one other important difference between these two Bridgeport

conditions. In the reported condition with unrelated participants, the learner's protests are aimed at the experimenter. In the unreported one with related participants, the learner's protests are aimed at the teacher. An 85% rate of *dis*obedience, one of the highest rates in all of the experiments, was observed. Perry (2013a) discusses two possible reasons for Milgram not publishing the findings for this condition: (a) they did not suit his purpose in that they comprise a strong demonstration of *dis*obedience (which Milgram himself admitted in an archival note, see Perry, 2013a, p. 177), thereby challenging the study's overall emphasis on obedience and (b) the experiment itself would be difficult to defend ethically because the teacher was asked to inflict pain on a friend or relative, especially given the ethical criticisms (e.g., Baumrind, 1964) that had already been leveled against the experimental conditions that he initially reported (Milgram, 1963).

Perry (2013a), however, was not the first researcher to discover this particular unreported condition. Russell (2014) pointed out that Rochat and Modigliani (1997) described this unreported condition in the Milgram archives more than a decade earlier. Russell also gives a very insightful discussion of why Milgram may have decided against publishing this experiment and ends up concluding that reporting it "would have predictably stimulated an ethical firestorm" (2014, p. 200).

Skeptical participants

Perry (2013a) found evidence in the archives that a significant number of participants had expressed doubts about the experimental set-up and cover story in their responses to Milgram's questionnaire. For example, one participant wrote that he found it difficult to believe that Yale would allow a participant (the learner) to absorb such punishment, that the description on the control board of the shock generator was far-fetched, that the learner's poor answers were not believable, and that the experiment was rigged and the learner not hurt in any way. Another participant reported that he had lowered the shock level but noticed that the learner anomalously expressed increased pain. For more detail and examples, see Perry (2013a, pp. 133–138) and Parker (2000, p. 717).

Of more importance to this particular criticism, Perry (2013a) questions Milgram's claim that more than 75% of his participants believed that the learner was receiving painful shocks (pp. 139–141). In reviewing Milgram's Table 7 (1974, p. 172) in which he summarized his participants' responses to his question about their belief that the learner was being shocked, Perry points out that it is more truthful to say that only about half of the participants fully believed that it was real, and of those, two-thirds disobeyed the experimenter (2013a, p. 139). Milgram's questionable numerical conclusions stem from his inclusion of the 24% of the participants who had expressed *some* doubt about whether the learner was getting shocked. This criticism of how Milgram chose to report the questionnaire belief data has been discussed before (e.g., Parker, 2000; Patten, 1977).

The argument that many of Milgram's participants did not believe that they were really administering shock to another person has also been posited by many Milgram critics going all the way back to Orne and Holland (1968; but see Milgram's rejoinder, 1972). Orne and Holland report some data that Orne and Evans (1965) had collected which indicated that the vast majority of participants (84%) would comply with an experimenter's instructions to perform dangerous tasks, such as retrieving a coin from what appeared to

be nitric acid, if they thought that they were participating in an experiment because they assumed that things were not at all as they appeared to be. However, participants who were not told they were participating in an experiment declined to perform these tasks. Consistent with these data, Laurent (1987) points out a seldom-cited, congruent finding in a Milgram replication at the Max Planck Institute in Germany: "the subjects … seem to have felt that the Max Planck Institute would not let anything dreadful happen" (Mantell & Panzarella, 1976, p. 244). Laurent further points out that, in his opinion, Milgram was too concerned with participants' behavior and not enough with their perception of the situation. Participants in an experiment concern themselves with being good subjects and performing in a manner that they perceive is expected of them. As Mixon (1972) concluded in discussing the use of deception in Milgram's experiments, "it is often difficult to determine who is deceiving whom" (p. 145).

In further support of her skeptical-participants criticism, Perry (2013a) discovered an analysis that Milgram had his research assistant, Taketo Murata, compile, but then chose not to publish.[6] The analysis was a condition-by-condition breakdown of the degree of shock given by participants who were certain that the learner was being shocked versus that given by participants who had doubts about this. The analysis revealed that many of those who administered the maximum shock did not think that they were truly shocking the learner. In 18 of the 23 experimental conditions, the participants who fully believed that the learner was being shocked gave lower levels of shock than the participants who expressed doubts about the learner being shocked. Of most importance, Murata found that in all 23 conditions, the participants most likely to disobey were those who said they believed the learner was being shocked.[7]

Coverage of recent Milgram criticisms in introductory social psychology textbooks

We wondered how current social psychology textbooks have dealt with the spate of recent criticisms of Milgram's obedience experiments. Thus, we decided to examine the discussions of Milgram's obedience experiments in these textbooks to answer this question: Do current textbook discussions reflect any of the recent criticism of Milgram's experiments? The results of similar studies on the coverage of criticisms of another famous study in introductory psychology and introductory social psychology textbooks, the Stanford prison experiment (Zimbardo, 2007), would predict that the criticisms would be given minimal, if any, coverage, as this is what was observed for the prison study (Griggs, 2014; Griggs & Whitehead, 2014). Such a prediction also agrees with Nicholson's (2011) findings for a sample of three introductory social psychology textbooks with copyright dates from 2006 to 2011. Nicholson found that, counter to Stam, Lubek, and Radtke's (1998) findings for social psychology textbooks from 1965 to 1995, the three texts that he examined provided little or no coverage of the ethical and epistemological controversies that have surrounded Milgram's work for the past half century. He also found that the "Milgram-friendly" trend that Stam et al. had observed developing in the textbooks over the three decades that they studied had become even more pronounced with the obedience experiments now being presented as comprising a classic study with little or no discussion or even acknowledgment of the voluminous body of

criticism that has been published in the last 50 years. In addition, Miller (1995; but see Stam et al., 1998, Note 14, p. 182) examined a set of 50 social psychology, introductory psychology, and sociology texts with copyright dates in the early 1990s and found that well over half of them made no reference to the many external validity criticisms that have been levied against the obedience experiments over the past 50 years (e.g., Baumrind, 1964; Lutsky, 1995; Mantell & Panzarella, 1976; Orne & Holland, 1968). In those texts that did include mention of such criticism, almost all of them took a pro-Milgram stance on this generalization issue. Miller's finding agrees with Stam et al.'s observation that coverage of concerns over realism and generalizability of the obedience experiments have declined or, if covered, are dealt with summarily by textbook authors. In sum, based on the findings in all of these prior textbook analysis studies, it is likely that current introductory social psychology textbooks do not cover the recent criticisms of Milgram's experiments, and by failing to do so, are committing errors of omission and thus not covering Milgram's work accurately. We next report our study of current introductory social psychology textbooks to determine the accuracy of this coverage and its findings.

Our textbook study

Method. We used the most recent editions of 10 introductory social psychology textbooks as the text sample to ensure that we had the most up-to-date sample available. Copyright dates for these texts include three 2015s, two 2014s, four 2013s, and one 2012. We include complete reference information for all of these texts in the References section, with each reference denoted by an asterisk. These 10 texts essentially comprise the population of American introductory social psychology textbooks if briefer versions of two of these texts and Aronson's briefer, more trade-like *The Social Animal* (2012) are excluded.

To determine all of the locations of coverage of Milgram's obedience experiments within each text, the Name Index was checked for *Milgram* and the Subject Index was checked for *obedience to authority experiments* or any possible variants, such as *obedience* or *obedience experiments*.[8] Once all of the locations were determined, the extent of the coverage was measured in terms of the number of pages devoted to it. The number of coverage pages for each text was rounded to the nearest whole number. The coverage of criticism in each text was determined by noting which recent critiques of the obedience experiments were cited; if any were cited, how much space was devoted to them; and how the critiques were treated (e.g., were they dismissed and Milgram's view accepted).

Coverage of recent criticisms. None of the 10 textbooks cited or discussed any of the recent (from 2011 onward) criticisms. This is not surprising given the recent finding of little or no coverage of any criticism of the obedience experiments in introductory social psychology textbooks (Nicholson, 2011). First, with respect to citing Perry's (2013a) criticisms, realistically only the three texts with 2015 copyright dates could be expected to do so, but none of them did.[9] However, Nicholson (2011) was early enough to have been included in all but one of the 10 texts, but none of the texts cited or discussed his criticism. Most surprising was the fact that not one text mentioned either Burger et al.'s

(2011) finding that Milgram's participants were probably not obeying orders given their behavior with respect to Prod 4 or one of Haslam and Reicher's early articles on their social identity-based followership explanation of Milgram's findings (e.g., Reicher et al., 2012).

This lack of recent criticism coverage is definitely not due to lack of space. The 10 textbooks devoted on average 7.4 pages (*Mdn* = 8 pages) to coverage of Milgram's obedience experiments with a range from 4 to 16 pages. Though not as extensive as in introductory social psychology texts, introductory psychology textbooks typically provide rather substantial coverage of Milgram's obedience experiments in their social psychology chapters (Griggs, 2014). Thus, we were curious as to whether introductory psychology textbooks dated 2015 provided any coverage of the recent Milgram criticisms, so we decided to examine the social psychology chapters in four introductory psychology textbooks with 2015 copyright dates for coverage of such criticisms. Complete reference information for these four texts is included in the Reference section, with each reference denoted by an asterisk.

Given the early publication (publication before the copyright year of a text; see Note 9) of one of these texts, only three of these texts would have had sufficient lead time to incorporate coverage of Perry's (2013a) criticisms. Contrary to what we found in our examination of the three introductory social psychology textbooks dated 2015, two of the three introductory psychology textbooks did cite Perry (2013a) and include coverage of some of her criticisms. One of these two texts cited Nicholson (2011) along with Perry for a statement that Milgram's debriefing "was less extensive and his participants' distress greater than what he had suggested." In contrast, not only did none of the 10 introductory social textbooks mention this criticism, but only one of these texts even described the debriefing process per se and that description was inaccurate in that it claimed that all participants were "fully debriefed" once the experiment was over.

The other introductory psychology text that mentioned one of Perry's (2013a) criticisms included three sentences on Perry's discovery of Taketo Murata's unpublished data that indicated that Milgram's participants were more likely to disobey if they believed that the learner was actually being shocked. In this coverage, the authors say "Across the 23 variations of Milgram's experiment …" but do not mention that Milgram did not report all of these variations in his publications on the obedience experiments (see Note 5). This text also included two parenthetical Perry (2013a) citations: one with Perry alone for a statement about questioning the ethics of Milgram's experiments and the other among a group of citations for a statement asserting that there have been some recent replications and partial replications of Milgram's experiments including several by entertainment and news media.

The introductory psychology text dated 2015 that was published too early to include coverage of Perry (2013a), however, did include a paragraph on Burger et al.'s (2011) finding that the participants' behavior did not display obedience as normally portrayed but rather indicated that a social identity process was operating. The authors also cited Reicher et al. (2012) and briefly described how participants were likely identifying with the experimenter and not the learner and act in a way to demonstrate their commitment to the larger scientific process. In contrast, only one of the 10 introductory social psychology textbooks cited Burger et al. (2011), but instead of discussing Burger et al.'s

questioning the claim that Milgram was really studying obedience (following orders of a person of authority), it described Burger et al.'s finding that participants who expressed concern for the well-being of the learner exhibited a greater reluctance to continue than those who did not express such concern.

Given the coverage of recent criticisms in the introductory psychology textbooks dated 2015 versus that in the introductory social psychology textbooks also dated 2015, it appears that introductory psychology authors are more up-to-date in their coverage of criticism of Milgram's obedience experiments than introductory social psychology textbook authors and that they achieve this within fewer pages of overall Milgram coverage (*Mdn* = 3.5 pages). This counterintuitive finding is consistent with some other related findings on coverage accuracy in introductory psychology versus that in social psychology textbooks. For example, Griggs (2015b) found that introductory psychology textbook authors seem to be doing a better job than introductory social psychology text authors in providing an accurate version of the Kitty Genovese story, and Griggs and Whitehead (2014) found that more coverage of the Stanford prison experiment criticisms is provided in introductory psychology textbooks than in introductory social psychology textbooks.

Discussion of the coverage findings. Our examination of current introductory social psychology textbooks revealed that they provide no coverage of recent criticisms of Milgram's obedience experiments. We also found that current introductory psychology textbooks provided some coverage of recent Milgram criticisms, indicating that these texts are more up-to-date in their coverage of Milgram criticism than current introductory social psychology textbooks. To try to understand these findings, we discuss a proposal by Stam et al. (1998) that provides a tenable explanation for them. Stam et al. proposed that social psychology textbooks "serve a knowledge-conserving function for the discipline … there is a great deal of temporal consistency, a shared core of material and authors to be discussed, and the adoption of a homogenous, conservative perspective" (p. 156). More specifically, Stam et al. explain how as part of this knowledge-conserving function, the "standard" view of the obedience experiments in both social psychology textbooks and the broader literature has developed. According to Stam et al.:

> The obedience research is no longer a case study of the importance of obedience to authority but *an important promoter of the importance and necessity of experimental social psychological research*. The visibility of the research has become a token: by its critics, a token of the vulnerability of the discipline; by proponents, a token of its strengths. Within the discipline, Milgram is valorized for his contributions but the recurring appearance of discussions of methodology and ethics indicate that in order to valorize Milgram's studies social psychologists must continually engage in damage control. It is this combined valorization/defensiveness that we take to be the standard view of the obedience experiments. (1998, pp. 162–163)

The Milgram-friendly lack of coverage of recent criticisms of the obedience experiments that was observed in the present study for social psychology textbooks is definitely consistent with Stam et al.'s (1998) proposal of a standard view of the obedience experiments that evolved from a valorization/defensiveness process engaged in by social

psychologists. Such coverage would be part of the damage control. Given the knowledge-conserving function of social psychology textbooks, "standard views" of other famous studies in social psychology should have also evolved. Some recent related research indicates that this is likely the case. The Stanford prison experiment is clearly a famous social psychological study, and Griggs and Whitehead (2014) found no or very minimal coverage of the extensive body of criticism of the Stanford prison experiment in social psychology textbooks. As the lack of coverage of criticisms of the obedience experiments observed in the present study, the minimal coverage of the Stanford prison experiment criticisms would serve a damage control function. Similarly, this evolution of a standard view of famous studies likely plays a role in the finding that an analysis of social psychology textbooks from 1953 to 1984 revealed that although most of the responses on critical trials were independent ones in Asch's classic social pressure experiments (1951, 1952, 1955, 1956), textbooks increasingly overemphasized the minority conformity responding and deemphasized the majority independent responding during that time period (Friend, Rafferty, & Bramel, 1990). Griggs (2015a) found that this distorted coverage (the standard view) has not only persisted but also increased over the past 30 years.

This standard view theory may not only apply to famous experiments but also to famous stories in social psychology textbooks. Indeed, Manning, Levine, and Collins (2007) proposed this type of explanation for their finding of the perseverance of factual inaccuracies in the coverage of the murder of Kitty Genovese in the social psychology textbooks that they examined. Seven years later, Griggs and Whitehead (2014) found that this inaccuracy problem was still the case in introductory social psychology textbooks. The present finding that introductory psychology texts cover recent criticisms of the Milgram obedience experiments better than introductory social psychology textbooks and Griggs's (2015b) finding of more accurate coverage of the Kitty Genovese story in introductory psychology textbooks also provide indirect support for the standard view theory in that introductory psychology textbook authors would not be as likely to provide social psychology's standard view of its famous studies and stories because most would not be social psychologists. Griggs (2014, see Note 4) provides some support for this reasoning. In brief, Griggs found that a larger percentage of the introductory psychology textbooks *without* a social psychologist author included criticism of the Stanford prison experiment than those with a social psychologist author (57% vs. 25%).

Epilogue

Social psychology textbooks are still giving a large amount of space to Milgram's obedience experiments and his conclusions about them, but no space to the many recent criticisms of the experiments and how Milgram depicted them in his publications. According to Morawski (1992), textbooks are the key transmitters of psychological knowledge both to potential new members of the discipline and to those outside of the discipline (giving psychology away), and therefore it is essential that textbook information be accurate. Thus, it is important to identify inaccuracies in our textbooks so that they can be corrected and we as teachers and textbook authors do not continue to "give away" false information about our discipline. Given that Milgram's obedience study is one of the

most famous studies in psychology with far-reaching impact outside of psychology, it is especially important that coverage of it in our textbooks be accurate. We are not proposing banishing coverage of the obedience experiments in textbooks, but rather covering them in a more accurate manner that includes coverage of their flaws and shortcomings as explicated in the extensive criticism now available. Tavris (2014) argues that Milgram's obedience study should be taught as a "contentious classic," but that would prove difficult given that current introductory social psychology textbooks present it as an *un*contentious classic. As Peter Baker (2013) argues, "We have heard Milgram's version enough. What we need now is … a proper dehoaxing" (final para).

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Notes

1. Gina Perry's book, *Behind the Shock Machine: The Untold Story of the Notorious Milgram Psychology Experiments*, was initially published in Australia in May 2012 and reviewed in the U.S. in early 2013 (e.g., Whitbourne, 2013). The U.S. edition of Perry's book was published in September 2013.
2. Gibson (2013b, pp. 179–180) points out that there is an inconsistency between Milgram's (1965b) description of the prods and the experimenter's use of them and the descriptions given in Milgram (1963, 1974). He concludes that the description in Milgram (1963, 1974), consistent with the description here, has come to be the accepted view of this part of the experimental procedure.
3. In addition to the four main prods, the experimenter had two special prods that he was to use in specified situations (see Milgram, 1974, pp. 21–22). First, if the participant asked if the learner was liable to suffer permanent physical injury, the experimenter was to say: "Although the shocks may be painful, there is no permanent tissue damage, so please go on." If necessary, this would be followed by Prods 2, 3, and 4. Second, if the participant said that the learner did not want to go on, the experimenter was to reply: "Whether the learner likes it or not, you must go on until he has learned all the word pairs correctly. So please go on." Again, if necessary, this would be followed by Prods 2, 3, and 4.
4. The numbering of the experimental conditions used in this paper reflects the chronological order that they were conducted, except for Condition 22, which was conducted at various times during 1961 and 1962. The chronologically ordered list of conditions, along with brief descriptions of each condition, is given in the Appendix: List of Conditions (Perry, 2013a, pp. 304–312, and in Haslam, Loughnan, & Perry, 2014, Table 1). It is important to note that because Milgram did not report the findings of all of the conditions that he conducted, this numbering scheme is different than that used by Milgram (1974).
5. Gina Perry (personal communication, December 8, 2014) sent me (Richard A. Griggs) copies of the original data sheets for Milgram's obedience experiments that are part of the Milgram papers at Yale University. By using these data sheets and the listing of the 23 experimental conditions and the one non-experimental condition in Perry (2013a, Appendix: List of

Conditions) and the experimental conditions described in Milgram (1974, Tables 2–5) and in Milgram (1963, 1964, 1965a, 1965b), I determined that Milgram did not report Condition 17 (Teacher in charge) and only very briefly described the nature of Conditions 19 (Authority from afar) and 24 (Intimate Relationships) in "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority" (1965b). He also only reported a brief general description in a footnote of the obedience finding for Condition 19 and nothing on the outcome of Condition 24. In addition, Milgram did not report anything about Part B of Conditions 10 (Conflicting instructions) and 15 (Good experimenter, bad experimenter) and only provided a brief general description of the nature and results of Part B of Condition 18 (No experimenter) in "Some Conditions …" (1965b). All of the above condition numbers and names are those used by Perry in her listing of conditions. In this listing, Perry also includes descriptions of and the results for all 24 conditions that Milgram ran.

6. Taketo Murata's unpublished analysis is titled "Reported Belief in Shocks and Level of Obedience" and is in the Stanley Milgram Papers, Box 45, Folder 158 at Yale University.
7. Gus Brannigan pointed out that it would be interesting to use the data that Milgram reported in Table 7 (1974, p. 172), which juxtaposes defiance/obedience rates versus belief in the reality of the shocks, to compute the odds ratio of defiance based on belief (personal communication, December 9, 2014). Comparing the data for participants who believed the shocks to be real or probably real versus those who believed the shocks were not real or probably not real, he calculated the odds ratio of defiance based on belief to be 2.57. This means that if a participant thought that the shocks were real or probably real, this increased the odds ratio of defiance by 2.57 times, which is generally consistent with Taketo Murata's analysis.
8. For one textbook not yet published, this search process was not used. Instead, the publisher of this text sent us the PDF of the only chapter in which the Milgram obedience experiments were covered.
9. The publication date of a textbook (the date that the book is actually published and available) is typically different from its copyright date. Textbooks are sometimes published up to a year before their copyright date. In addition, the text finalization and production processes typically tack on another 3 to 6 months of time before the publication date. Thus, the authors of the social psychology textbooks with 2014 copyright dates would not have had sufficient time to incorporate coverage of the U.S. edition of Perry's book even if they were published in January, 2014. However, there is a caveat to this statement. They would have had sufficient time if they were aware of the earlier, more limited publication of the Australian edition in May, 2012 (Perry, 2012) because the two textbooks were published in January and February of 2013, respectively. The authors of all three 2015 textbooks in the present study, however, would have had sufficient time to be aware of the U.S. edition of the book because it was published in September, 2013, and they were published in July, 2014, November, 2014, and January, 2015, respectively.

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