

# Stuttering Accommodations in Professional Environments: The Intersectionality between Multiculturalism, Multilingualism, Stigma, Disability Identity and Rights

Megann McGill, Ph.D., CCC-SLP & Sulema Rodriguez, B.S.

## Background

Stuttering is a fluency disorder that is characterized by overt prolongations, repetitions, and blocks, which disrupt the forward flow of speech (Guitar, 2014). The attainment of employment and higher education not only contributes to financial stability, but also to an individual's psychosocial and cognitive health (e.g., Bricker-Katz et al., 2013). Self-stigma has been associated with PWS as there's an awareness of the existing stigma regarding their identity and application of these negative judgments to other PWS. Additionally, increased awareness of their stigmatized identity has been linked to adverse physical health effects (Boyle, 2017). PWS also cognitively differentiate themselves from fluent individuals through the creation of negative ideation about themselves. After repeated experiences with public stigma, the "us vs. them" phenomenon is developed, which then generates internalized stigma and enforces self-stigma (Hedinger et al., 2020). PWS have been falsely represented in the media and perceived by the general public (e.g., Evan & Williams, 2015). This public stigma contributes to the development of self-stigma as some PWS integrate these negative beliefs in the workplace and when considering career advancements (Gerlach et al., 2018; Klein & Hood, 2014). PWS have also described a lack of discussion around higher education accommodations and limited knowledge around accommodations rights (Isaacs, 2020). Furthermore, the experience with stigmatization and self-perception has been evidenced to be unique for PWS with culturally and linguistically unique backgrounds (e.g., Dean & Medina, 2020; Plexico et al., 2019).

## Prevalence

This study will focus on the intersectionality between multilingualism and multiculturalism and how these backgrounds influence the type of disability stigma and experiences of PWS as this area has yet to be explored.

## Implications

This research will enable a greater understanding of how experiences with stigma and the intersectionality of cultural and linguistic factors influence PWS' willingness to pursue disability accommodations in professional environments, degree of advocacy skills, accommodation and rights knowledge, and perception of disability status.

## Research Questions

Through this study, we hope to address the following questions:

**RQ1:** How do unique multicultural and/or multilingual backgrounds contribute to differences in self-stigma related to stuttering?

**RQ2:** How does this self-stigma influence disability acceptance, identification, perception, advocacy, and knowledge?

**RQ3:** How does self-stigma interfere with the process of obtaining workplace and/or higher education accommodations?

## Methodology

### Recruitment Procedures

All participants will be recruited through the National Stuttering Association, online flyers via the Portland State University Stuttering Lab, and online postings to social media groups for PWS. To determine eligibility for this study, participants will complete a screener (Figure 1) and consent form prior to participating in the study, per the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol # 217205-18.

### Exclusionary Criteria

All participants were required to fit the following criteria to be eligible to participate in the study:

- Self-identify as a person who stutters
- Be over the age of 18
- Speak 2 or more languages
- Have 2 or more cultural backgrounds

### Interview Process

This study will consist of 10 participants who stutter, who will participate in an approximately 60-minute phenomenological semi-structured interview via Zoom. To ensure that a phenomenological approach is preserved, questions will be utilized as a guide that is subject to modification based on the participant's response. The modifications may consist of wording changes and/or follow-up questions (e.g., Why? How did you feel? Tell me more.).

| Participant # | Gender | Age | Current Residing Country | Linguistic Background          | Cultural Background               | Interview Length |
|---------------|--------|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| P1            | N/A    | N/A | United States            | Persian and English            | Persian, Afghan, and American     | 1:13:58          |
| P2            | Male   | 25  | United States            | Spanish and English            | Peruvian and American             | 1:06:33          |
| P3            | N/A    | N/A | United States            | Spanish and English            | Dominican and American            | 1:53:23          |
| P4            | Male   | 38  | Canada                   | Tamil, Sourashtra, and English | Indian and American               | 1:29:29          |
| P5            | Male   | 55  | United States            | Persian and English            | Iranian and American              | 1:24:14          |
| P6            | Male   | 27  | Canada                   | English, Hindi and Punjabi     | Indian, Canadian, and American    | 1:47:28          |
| P7            | Male   | 21  | Saipan                   | Tagalog, Chamorro, and English | Saipan, Philippines, and American | 00:49:33         |

Table 1. Participant Demographics

## Analysis and Results

### Data Analysis

This study will adopt a phenomenological semi-structured interview approach. This qualitative approach will facilitate an interview space where there's decreased interviewer bias as the participant can speak from their lived experience and answer in their own words. Results from this study will be analyzed via a thematic analysis utilizing in vivo coding. This data analysis method will allow for the participants' direct interview responses to be amplified and provide meaning to the study's data (Manning, 2017).

### Preliminary Results

Seven interviews have been conducted thus far, three have been fully transcribed and analyzed, and an additional three interviews scheduled but not yet conducted. Preliminary analyses indicate the emergence of individual and shared themes (see Table 2). These emerging results show that many participants did not identify as disabled or requiring accommodations. There was also a strong association between visible and physical disabilities as the necessary prerequisite for identifying as disabled. The majority of participants mentioned negative media presentations of stuttering and disability in their culture. Further, most participants were not informed of the protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act for stuttering and also mentioned their family's lack of general knowledge about stuttering, appropriate communication partner techniques, and a need for stuttering-related resources. Additional interviews are scheduled in the following weeks as there's a need for a more robust sample to more accurately reflect this population and results will be updated to reflect the additional data collected.

Figure 1. Screener utilized to determine participant eligibility

Figure 2. Phenomenological Interview Protocol

| Theme   | Subthemes  |
|---|--|
| General Societal Views on Stuttering                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accommodation Rejection</li><li>• Employer Discrimination</li></ul>  |
| Accommodation Pursuits                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Job Performance, Employment, and Promotion Hindrance</li><li>• Concern over Colleague Perceptions</li><li>• Lack of Accommodation Request</li><li>• Teacher Recommendation</li></ul>   |
| Family Perceptions/Beliefs of Stuttering and Disability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identity Denial</li><li>• Spontaneous Recovery</li><li>• Erroneous Stuttering Etiology Beliefs</li><li>• Lack of Ability</li><li>• Pity</li><li>• Inappropriate Communication Partner Behaviors</li></ul>                                      |
| Culturally-Specific Views on Disability                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Religious Beliefs</li><li>• Negative Media Presentations</li><li>• Country of Origin Vs. Western Culture</li><li>• Colloquialisms for Stuttering</li><li>• Lack of Education</li></ul>   |
| Stuttering Self-Perceptions                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acceptance</li><li>• Societal Influence</li><li>• Rejection of Disability Identity</li><li>• Negative Internalized Feelings</li></ul>  |
| Disability Perceptions                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical Disability Association</li><li>• Disability Distribution</li><li>• Neurotypical Performance Comparison</li><li>• Fluctuating Views on Disability</li><li>• Societal Constructs of Disability</li><li>• Terminology Exposure</li></ul> |
| Beneficial Accommodations                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre-recording Presentations</li><li>• Self-disclosure</li><li>• Alternative Text-Based Modality</li><li>• Letter to Teachers</li><li>• Avoidance of Cold-Calling</li><li>• Allocated Presentation Time</li></ul>                               |
| Rewriting ADA Protections for Stuttering                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stuttering Severity</li><li>• Protection Against Discrimination</li></ul>  |

Table 2. Emerging Themes and Subthemes

## Current Conclusions

The present results indicate that the prominent emerging theme across all participants is that the nature of stuttering, severity level, and/or belief of complete loss of ability are influencing factors and prerequisites for their disability identification, perceptions, and accommodation pursuits. Additionally, culturally- and linguistically-specific themes and perceptions are being identified in PWS' reports of their unique lived experiences as multilingual and/or multicultural people who stutter.

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