

A Mixed Methods Study of Stereotypes of People Who Stutter

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Guitar (2006) stated that stuttering consists of an abnormally high frequency and duration of stoppages in the forward flow of speech. These stoppages can take the form of repetitions, prolongations of sounds, and blockages of the airflow required for fluent speech. Emerick (1988) stated that oral communication is such an important part of being human that an impairment of speech like stuttering, which has no obvious basis and is intermittent in nature, can cause people to think unfavorably of people who stutter (PWS). This unfavorable thinking can cause individuals to hold negative stereotypes of PWS. Stereotyping occurs when attitudes toward a specific characteristic or group of people tend to cluster and form a specific pattern of beliefs concerning that group (Yuker, 1988). Research has found that PWS are

often described according to negative stereotypes by many groups of people, including teachers and school administrators (Crowe & Walton 1981; Lass et al., 1992; Lass et al., 1994; Yeakle & Cooper 1986), college students and college professors (Dorsey & Guenther, 2000), speech-language pathologists (SLPs; Cooper & Cooper 1985, 1996; Cooper & Rustin 1985; Ragsdale & Ashby, 1982; Turnbaugh, Guitar, & Hoffman, 1979; Woods & Williams, 1971; Yairi & Williams, 1970), employers (Hurst & Cooper, 1983b), and vocational counselors (Hurst & Cooper, 1983a).

There are two theories that can provide possible explanations for the formation and the effects of negative stereotypes of PWS. Goffman's (1963) *stigma* theory suggests that the stigmatized person will have a "spoiled identity" due to the perceptions that others have of a single characteristic

ABSTRACT: Purpose: Many research studies have consistently found that a variety of individuals who do not stutter report stereotypical attitudes toward stuttering and people who stutter (PWS). There is less agreement regarding whether certain characteristics of listeners, such as their relative familiarity with PWS and their gender, have any effect on the attitudes they report regarding PWS. The purpose of this study was to explore whether normally fluent speakers would report negative stereotypical attitudes toward PWS and whether they perceived certain careers as less appropriate choices for PWS. In addition, the impact of the participants' familiarity with stuttering and gender were explored using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Method: One-hundred and fifty-four individuals from the general population completed a questionnaire that included both open-ended and forced-choice items. The participants'

responses were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Results: Findings suggest that this group of participants reported negative stereotypical attitudes toward PWS. In addition, the participants reported that stuttering had a negative impact on employment and that certain careers were not appropriate for PWS. Findings also suggest that participants' familiarity with stuttering and their gender improved their attitude toward PWS.

Conclusion: The findings of this study are supportive of past research exploring stereotyping and role entrapment of PWS. Directions for future research in this area of study are discussed.

KEY WORDS: stuttering, negative attitudes, stereotyping, role entrapment

that is labeled as deviant. Consequently, these people can be perceived as deficient in every aspect of their being due to this one difference. Wright (1983) discussed the *spread* phenomenon, which suggests that perceptions of individuals with a disability form a fundamental negative bias. According to the spread phenomenon, negative perceptions of a specific disability can generalize or spread to perceptions of the whole person. For instance, a person with a disability may be perceived to be unable to perform certain tasks effectively in a given career due to his or her disability, despite the fact that this perception is not necessarily true. Both theories suggest that the stigmatized person will suffer from prejudices and discrimination because of the characteristic that makes him or her different from others. Similarly, both theories explain how people's perceptions of stuttering, which is a single characteristic of an individual, can generalize to other characteristics of the person who stutters, such as intelligence, personality, or competence. Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998) suggested that a stigmatized individual experiences discrimination in social, educational, and occupational settings. For PWS, the attitudes held by a group toward stuttering may lead to limited social, educational, and occupational opportunities.

Stereotypes may result in a process called *role entrapment*, which is perhaps one of the most damaging effects of the spread of stereotypes. Smart (2001) described role entrapment as occurring when a group in power defines the social and occupational roles that a minority group can fulfill. Role entrapment generally leads to the stereotyped person being assigned to roles that are perceived as undesirable. For occupational choices, role entrapment is often referred to as *occupational stereotyping*. African Americans and other ethnic minority groups have been found to suffer from role entrapment and reduced career opportunities (Crocker et al., 1998; Smart, 2001). Studies have also found that females experience role entrapment (Callahan, 1991; Holleran & Lopez, 1984; Lupaschuk & Yewchuck, 1998). Individuals of minority backgrounds and females may be confined to career choices that are less than desirable for their personal needs and may confront many obstacles when choosing a career outside of their expected role. Role entrapment may also have an adverse effect on the occupational choices of people with physical disabilities. Several authors have discussed the limited occupational choices available to individuals with disabilities (Decaro, Evans, & Dawaliby, 1982; Yucker, 1988). DeLoach (1989) found that employers were concerned that individuals with disabilities would be underqualified for most careers. These employers reported being hesitant to place individuals with disabilities into management positions. These findings were true for individuals with physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities.

Gabel, Blood, Tellis, and Althouse (2004) studied role entrapment of PWS by exploring university students' perceptions of appropriate career choices for PWS. Their findings suggested that there were 20 careers that were judged to be less advisable or inappropriate choices for PWS. Conversely, there were 23 careers that were judged to be advisable or appropriate choices for PWS. This study provided initial evidence that PWS may experience role entrapment.

Other research exploring the stereotypes of PWS has explored ways to improve the perceptions that individuals report toward PWS. Klassen (2001, 2002) studied whether people who are familiar with PWS held fewer negative attitudes toward PWS than was previously reported in the literature. These studies found that personal contact with PWS decreased the amount of negative attitudes reported toward PWS and stuttering in general. In a similar study, Gabel, Tellis, and Althouse (2004) studied whether familiarity affects the perceptions that normally fluent speakers report toward PWS. They found that there were no significant differences between the stereotypical attitudes held by people who knew PWS and people who did not know PWS. Thus, there seems to be disagreement as to whether familiarity alters attitudes toward PWS. In addition, no studies have identified whether or not familiarity alters reports of role entrapment toward PWS.

Other studies have explored whether the listener's gender influences attitudes reported toward PWS. For example, Burley and Rinaldi (1986) found that males provided more negative evaluations of the personalities of PWS than females. Other studies have had similar results. For example, Weisel and Spektor (1998) found that high school boys reported more negative attitudes toward PWS than did their female counterparts. Conversely, other studies found that males and females in different age groups did not report a higher degree of negative attitudes toward PWS (Hartford & Leahy, 2007; Langevin & Hagler, 2004). Thus, there appears to be some controversy as to the potential effects that gender might have on reported attitudes toward PWS. Additionally, no studies have explored the effects of participants' gender on reports of role entrapment of PWS.

We conducted the present study to explore the attitudes that individuals from the general population report toward PWS and their perceptions of appropriate career choices for PWS. We sought to add to the existing literature on this topic by employing a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative procedures while studying both general attitudes and role entrapment simultaneously. The following questions guided this research:

- Does familiarity with PWS affect the attitudes reported by normally fluent individuals toward PWS?
- Does familiarity with PWS affect the attitudes reported by normally fluent individuals regarding appropriate careers for PWS?
- Does the gender of the participant affect the attitudes reported toward PWS?
- Does the gender of the participant affect the attitudes reported regarding appropriate careers for PWS?
- Will participants report that stuttering affects employment and employment opportunities for PWS?

METHOD

Participants

One-hundred and fifty-four individuals who do not stutter from Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and

the larger Northwest Ohio area participated in this study. The mean age of participants was 23 years ($SD = 8.56$). Ninety-two participants were female and 62 were male. The ethnicity of the participants consisted of 138 Caucasians, 8 African Americans, and 8 individuals from other minority groups. The participants represented a variety of majors, and the nonstudents worked in a variety of careers. All of the participants were older than 18 years, did not stutter, and were not communication disorders majors or SLPs.

Instrument

Each participant was asked to fill out a questionnaire (Appendix). The first part of the questionnaire contained demographic questions that allowed participants to share information about their background. The second part contained items designed to collect data regarding the participants' familiarity with PWS, their relationship to that individual, adjectives used to describe that individual, and adjectives used to describe PWS in general. The questionnaire also collected data on whether participants felt that PWS would have difficulties related to employment, and what career choices would be appropriate and inappropriate for PWS. In past studies, career advice has been used as a valid measure of role entrapment (Decaro et al., 1982; Gabel, Blood, et al., 2004; Smart, 2001). The questionnaire used a mixed methodology approach, combining both open-ended and forced-choice questions.

Procedure

The first author and two research assistants recruited participants using a standard script. Participants were recruited from a variety of settings, including classrooms and offices at BGSU, church groups, malls, places of business (such as grocery stores and restaurants), and local schools. This script outlined the need for the study and the exclusionary criteria. Participants were asked to exclude themselves from the study if they stuttered, were under the age of 18, or were majoring in speech-language pathology or working as an SLP. The primary researcher or a research assistant met with each participant individually and provided a questionnaire packet. Each packet contained the questionnaire and a typed informed consent statement informing the individual about his or her rights as a participant. Additionally, each packet contained instructions on how to complete the survey and how to return the questionnaire to the researchers.

Analysis

We analyzed the data using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency analysis, means, and standard deviations) and thematic analysis. For all quantitative analysis, the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 15) was used. For the questions that required qualitative analysis, the participants' responses were transcribed into a database and analyzed thematically.

Item 1 (*Do you know anyone who stutters? If you do, what is your relationship to this person?*), Item 2 (*Did you*

work with this person?), and Item 5 (*Do you think that people who stutter may have difficulties related to employment, such as performing specific tasks, performing well in certain careers, etc.?*) were analyzed quantitatively. For Item 3 (*What are some of the characteristics you would use to describe people who stutter?*) and Item 4 (*If you know someone who stutters, what characteristics would you use to describe this person?*), the characteristics provided by the participants were initially coded as positive, negative, or neutral. To guide this analysis, we used findings from various studies of stereotypes (Ragsdale & Ashby, 1982; Woods & Williams, 1971; Yairi & Williams, 1970) and procedures for coding responses as positive, negative, and neutral, as suggested in more recent studies (Healey, Gabel, Daniels, & Kawai, 2007; Susca & Healey, 2001). We then tabulated the coded characteristics using a frequency count to obtain the number of positive, negative, and neutral characteristics that were listed by the participants. To adjust for the variation in number of comments made by individual participants, we also calculated the ratios of positive to total comments, negative to total comments, and neutral to total comments. Thus, seven indices of participants' attitudes were used: (a) total descriptions, (b) total positive, (c) positive ratio, (d) total negative, (e) negative ratio, (f) total neutral, and (g) neutral ratio.

We used a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to compare the responses from Item 3. Thus, a MANOVA was completed to explore the effect of familiarity, gender, and the interaction of these factors on each of the seven indices. The participants were divided into groups based on their familiarity with PWS and their gender. Another MANOVA was used to explore the differences in the reports made for the differences in responses for Items 3 and 4. Thus, the MANOVA compared the difference in responses for the type of person who stutters (familiar or general), gender, and the interaction of these factors on each of the seven indices.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze Item 6, which asked for the reason why participants may have reported that PWS will have difficulties with employment. Once themes were identified, the responses were then tabulated to get a frequency count for each of the five themes. Items 7 and 8, which asked for careers that were well suited and not well suited for PWS, were analyzed using a frequency count to tabulate the number of times each career was stated by the participants.

Reliability of the thematic analysis. To ensure that the analysis of the positive, negative, and neutral responses was reliable, procedures were used to establish both intra- and interrater reliability. Specifically, a Sanders Agreement Index (Sanders, 1965) was conducted for each type of analysis. The primary researcher and the two research assistants reviewed all of the data until they could come to an agreement on the types of statements that fell into each category (be it positive, negative, neutral, or one of the thematic codes). Then the researchers each reviewed 25% of the responses for each item individually. The independent analyses were then analyzed for the number of agreements between the judges, which was compared with the sum of agreements plus disagreements (total agreements/total

agreements + disagreements). For all comparisons, the researchers obtained greater than 95% agreement. For intrajudge agreement, the researchers completed the analysis on 25% of the items on a second occasion. Similar to the agreement index for interjudge reliability, the researchers achieved greater than 95% agreement for each item.

RESULTS

Experiences With PWS

Eighty-two of the participants (53.3% of the sample) reported knowing a person who stutters, and 72 (46.7%) did not. Of the participants who knew a person who stutters, their relationship with the PWS included being friends, family members, and/or coworkers. Twenty of the 82 participants who knew a person who stutters reported working with that person (12.9% of the total sample), and 62 did not (40.2% of the total sample).

Attitudes Toward PWS

The 154 participants made a total of 340 comments describing PWS, or a mean of 2.20 ($SD = 1.05$) comments per individual. The participants made 147 positive comments, for a positive to total comments ratio of .432 ($SD = .414$). The participants made 182 negative comments, for a negative to total comments ratio of .535 ($SD = 1.18$). The participants made 11 neutral comments, for a neutral to total comments ratio of .033 ($SD = .116$). A t test was used to compare whether there was a significant difference between the number of positive and negative comments made by the participants. The findings suggested that there was no significant difference ($t = -1.51$; $p = .132$) between the total positive and negative comments, nor was there a significant difference between the positive to total comments ratio or the negative to total comments ratio ($t = -.812$; $p = .416$).

The participants reported a variety of characteristics to describe PWS. These responses were interpreted as positive, negative, or neutral. Examples of positive descriptions included *happy, perfectly normal, just like everyone else,*

friendly, hard working, and expressive. Negative comments included statements such as *should be able to control their stuttering, self conscious, reserved, quiet, mean, grumpy, slow, shy, struggling, and depressed*. Neutral comments included *interesting, they learn to deal with it, and emotional*. Ratio scores for positive adjectives to total adjectives, negative adjectives to total adjectives, and neutral adjectives to total adjectives were also calculated. The means and standard deviations for these indices, as reported for each condition and the interaction of the two conditions, are reported in Table 1.

A MANOVA was conducted to explore the effects of familiarity (knowing a person who stutters and not knowing a person who stutters), gender (male and female), and the interaction of familiarity and gender on these indices. Familiarity had a significant effect for the total positive comments ($F = 5.89$; $p = .016$; $\eta^2 = .038$; observed power = .674), positive to total ratio ($F = 5.88$; $p = .017$; $\eta^2 = .038$; observed power = .673), and negative to total ratio ($F = 5.09$; $p = .026$; $\eta^2 = .033$; power = .674). For these measures, participants who reported being familiar with PWS reported more positive comments, a higher ratio of positive comments to total comments, and a lower ratio of negative to total comments than those who were unfamiliar with PWS. Gender had a significant effect on reports of total positive comments ($F = 6.09$; $p = .015$; $\eta^2 = .039$; observed power = .687) and negative to total ratio ($F = 3.76$; $p = .050$; $\eta^2 = .007$; observed power = .168). For these findings, female participants reported more positive comments and a lower ratio of negative to total comments about PWS. The interaction of familiarity and gender had a significant effect on only the total positive comments made ($F = 4.21$; $p = .042$; $\eta^2 = .122$; observed power = .975). For these results, female participants who were familiar with a person who stutters reported the most positive comments about PWS.

A MANOVA was conducted to compare (a) the descriptions of the familiar person who stutters (Item 4) and a general person who stutters (Item 3) provided by the groups of respondents who were familiar with PWS, (b) the effects of gender on these responses, and (c) the interaction of the type of description they were responding to (familiar or general person who stutters) with gender. Table 2

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for seven indices of attitudes toward people who stutter (PWS; $N = 154$).

Attitude index	Female		Male		Familiar		Unfamiliar		Female by familiar		Male by familiar		Female by unfamiliar		Male by unfamiliar	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Total descriptions	2.260	1.010	2.080	1.060	2.220	1.020	2.140	1.050	2.260	.964	2.140	1.120	2.240	1.090	2.030	1.020
Total positive	1.130	1.020	.690	.841	1.070	1.000	.700	.874	1.420	1.010	.720	.649	.730	.769	.670	.990
Positive ratio	.495	.414	.347	.403	.522	.411	.332	.397	.594	.411	.390	.383	.353	.379	.308	.421
Total negative	1.070	1.100	1.310	1.210	1.000	1.110	1.360	1.170	.810	.982	1.340	1.260	1.430	1.170	1.270	1.180
Negative ratio	.416	.402	.571	.430	.394	.397	.579	.424	.311	.375	.545	.397	.567	.395	.593	.461
Total neutral	.090	.323	.080	.275	.090	.322	.090	.282	.090	.354	.070	.258	.080	.275	.090	.323
Neutral ratio	.042	.171	.042	.184	.039	.175	.045	.179	.055	.212	.011	.061	.025	.085	.068	.244

Table 2. Responses provided for the familiar person who stutters and the general person who stutters ($n = 82$).

Attitude index	Female		Male		Familiar PWS		General PWS		Female by familiar PWS		Male by familiar PWS		Female by general PWS		Male by general PWS	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Total descriptions	2.190	1.440	2.130	1.060	2.110	1.440	2.220	1.030	2.110	1.600	2.110	1.100	2.260	.964	2.030	1.020
Total positive	1.550	1.380	.980	1.020	1.540	1.510	1.170	1.010	1.690	1.620	1.250	1.240	1.420	1.080	.670	.990
Positive ratio	.612	.425	.468	.421	.603	.440	.522	.413	.630	.441	.550	.442	.594	.411	.308	.421
Total negative	.340	.515	.850	1.010	.510	.835	.520	.681	.350	.619	.820	1.090	.320	.387	1.270	1.180
Negative ratio	.475	.789	.708	.904	.238	.368	.875	1.030	.157	.296	.396	.443	.799	.984	.593	.461
Total neutral	.060	.239	.040	.191	.060	.241	.050	.206	.070	.264	.040	.189	.050	.212	.090	.323
Neutral ratio	.089	.313	.018	.134	.055	.222	.074	.307	.083	.270	.000	.000	.033	.023	.036	.189

provides a summary of the means and standard deviations for this analysis. The responses differed for the familiar and general person who stutters for only the negative to total ratio ($F = 24.83$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .000$; observed power = .520). This finding suggests that the general person who stutters was evaluated with a higher ratio of negative to total comments than was the familiar person who stutters. There was a significant effect for gender for the total positive comments ($F = 7.44$; $p = .007$; $\eta^2 = .045$; observed power = .774) and positive to total ratio ($F = 4.24$; $p = .041$; $\eta^2 = .026$; observed power = .534). For these two indices, the females in this study reported a higher number of positive comments and a larger ratio of positive to total comments. In addition, gender had a significant effect on the total negative comments reported by the participants ($F = 18.47$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .104$; observed power = .990). For this index, female participants reported fewer negative comments than male participants. There was not a significant effect for the interaction of type of description (familiar or general) with gender.

Perceptions of Employment and Career Choice

One-hundred and twenty-seven participants (82%) believed that PWS would have difficulty with employment; 27 (18%) did not believe that PWS would have difficulty with employment. Of those individuals who reported knowing a

person who stutters, 61 (73%) reported that they believed that PWS would have difficulty with employment; 22 (27%) did not. Sixty-six (93%) of the individuals who did not know a person who stutters believed that PWS would have difficulty with employment; 5 (7%) did not. Seventy-two females (78%) believed that PWS would have difficulty with employment; 20 (22%) did not. Fifty-four males (87%) believed that stuttering would affect employment; 8 (15%) did not. A MANOVA was conducted to explore the effects of familiarity and gender on responses to this item. Familiarity had a significant effect on the perceptions that individuals had toward difficulties for PWS related to employment ($F = 7.32$; $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .047$; observed power = .767). Thus, participants who did not know a person who stutters were more likely to report that stuttering would affect employment. Gender ($F = 1.68$; $p = .196$; $\eta^2 = .011$; observed power = .252), and the interaction of familiarity and gender ($F = 3.72$; $p > .05$; $\eta^2 = .024$; observed power = .483) had a significant effect on these judgments.

Participants reported their reasons for their perceptions of the impact of stuttering on employment. These responses were analyzed thematically. The results of this analysis appear in Table 3. Examples of reasons the participants gave were that stuttering would not cause problems unless the field involved public speaking or if the career required a lot of communication such as teaching or communicating via telephone. The group of participants who knew a person who stutters reported more statements than did the

Table 3. The reasons survey participants reported for why PWS may or may not have difficulty with employment.

Type of comment	Number of comments made by participants who knew a person who stutters		Number of comments made by participants who did not know a person who stutters		Number of total comments
Communication disability	28	31%	27	37%	55
Stressful situation	1	1%	0	0%	1
Difficulty with certain tasks	14	18%	16	22%	30
Avoid certain careers	21	26%	20	27%	41
No limitations	16	20%	10	14%	26
Total	80		73		153

group who reported not knowing a person who stutters. The majority of responses reflected the theme of communication disability, such that several participants reported that the presence of stuttering would make employment difficult. From the table, a lower percentage of participants in the group of individuals who knew a person who stutters reported this belief than in the group of individuals who did not know a person who stutters. More individuals in the group of participants who knew a person who stutters than in the group who did not reported that there should be no limitation for PWS related to employment. A lower percentage of individuals who knew a person who stutters reported that PWS should avoid certain careers when compared to those who did not know a person who stutters. Also, a higher percentage of participants who did not know a person who stutters reported that PWS would have difficulties related to employment that would be due to the need to avoid certain tasks. Despite these differences in responses for each group, it should be noted that all of the differences between the groups were quite small.

Participants shared which careers they believed were well suited for PWS. The results of this analysis appear in Table 4. For the participants who knew a person who stutters, the two most frequent responses were that PWS should pursue “any career” and “nonspeaking”-oriented careers. For those who did not know a person who stutters, the two most frequent responses were “any career” and “computer”-oriented careers. In general, it appears as if many of the respondents believed that PWS should pursue many careers, but that there was also a belief that PWS should pursue careers that required less speaking (e.g., computer-oriented, mechanic, construction).

In addition, participants reported which careers they believed were not well suited for PWS. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 5. The comments most often reported by individuals who knew a person who stutters were that PWS were not suited for careers in which they felt “uncomfortable” or that required “public speaking.” The group of respondents who did not know a person who stutters reported that careers involving “public speaking” and “teacher” were not well suited for PWS. The responses appear to suggest that careers involving a large amount of communication and public speaking should be avoided by PWS.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes that normally fluent speakers report toward PWS and also their perceptions of appropriate career choices for PWS. This was done by employing a questionnaire that incorporated both forced-choice items analyzed quantitatively and open-ended items evaluated using thematic analysis. The results suggest that many participants reported negative stereotypical attitudes toward PWS, similar to those found in past research (Cooper & Cooper, 1985, 1996; Cooper & Rustin, 1985; Crowe & Walton, 1981; Dorsey & Guenther, 2000; Hurst & Cooper, 1983a, 1983b; Lass et al., 1992; Lass et al., 1994; Ragsdale & Ashby, 1982; Turnbaugh et al., 1979; Woods & Williams, 1971; Yairi & Williams, 1970; Yeakle & Cooper 1986). Similarly, these participants reported that certain careers that required public speaking would not be well suited for PWS, and that careers that required less speaking would be well suited for PWS. Conversely, many participants reported that PWS could be well suited for any career of their choosing. In this section, results related to these issues and to the effects of familiarity and gender on attitudes toward PWS will be reviewed.

Attitudes Toward PWS

This study used descriptive, thematic analysis to analyze participants’ attitudes toward PWS. It was found that the participants made more negative than positive comments about PWS, but this number was not significantly different than the number of positive comments. Similarly, the ratio of negative to total comments was higher than the ratio of positive to total comments made, though there was not a significant difference between these ratios. It is important to note, though, that there was a predisposition in this group toward negative descriptions of PWS. In addition, many of the negative statements (e.g., self-conscious, quiet, shy, struggling, and depressed) are consistent with the negative stereotype of PWS reported in the literature. It is important to recall that little research supports that PWS share a core set of characteristics that are inherent to having a stuttering problem (Guitar, 2006). Said another way,

Table 4. The careers that survey participants reported to be well suited for PWS.

<i>Responses made by participants who knew a person who stutters</i>		<i>Responses made by participants who did not know a person who stutters</i>	
Any career	31	Any career	22
Nonspeaking	15	Computers	15
Computers	10	Nonspeaking	14
Office work	5	Accountant	3
Anything written	4	Architecture	2
Accountant	3	Artist	2
Book keeping	2	Construction	2
Construction	2	Finance	2
Doctor	2	Mechanical worker	2
Mechanic	2	Office worker	2
Total	76	Total	66

Table 5. The careers that survey participants reported to not be well suited for PWS.

<i>Responses made by participants who knew a person who stutters</i>		<i>Responses made by participants who did not know a person who stutters</i>	
Any career that is uncomfortable	15	Public speaking	16
Public speaking	13	Teacher	12
Speaking oriented	12	Salesman	10
Teacher	9	Speaking oriented	8
Telephone operator	6	Any uncomfortable	6
Business work	4	Public relations	5
Customer service	4	Telemarketing	5
News anchor	4	News anchor	4
Public relations	3	Administrative assistant	3
Sales	3	Customer service	3
Total	73	Total	72

there are no studies that support that there is any truth to this stereotype of PWS.

A comparison between the attitudes reported by participants who were familiar with a person who stutters and those who were not was made for each of the seven indices. It was found that participants who reported being familiar with a person who stutters were more likely to report more positive attitudes toward PWS. In addition, participants who knew a person who stutters were more likely to report a lower negative to total comments ratio for the individual who stutters who they knew when compared to a general person who stutters. The findings of this study support the work of Klassen (2001, 2002), who found that individuals who knew a person who stutters were more likely to be more positive toward PWS in general, but also more positive toward the person who stutters with whom they were familiar. In addition, this study compared the attitudes reported toward a person who stutters with whom participants were familiar to those reported toward PWS in general, a similar method to Klassen (2001, 2002). In our findings and those of past studies, it appears consistent that a familiar person who stutters is more likely to be perceived positively than is a general person who stutters.

The gender of the participants also appeared to have an impact on their attitudes toward PWS. In general, it appeared that females were more likely than males to report positive attitudes toward PWS. These results support the work of other researchers (Burley & Rinaldi, 1986; Weisel & Spektor, 1998), who found that female participants were more likely than male participants to report positive attitudes toward PWS. Similarly, these results support the general findings in the disabilities literature related to attitudes toward PWS (Smart, 2001; Yaker, 1988).

As in other studies of the attitudes of adults (Burley & Rinaldi, 1986) and adolescents (Weisel & Spektor, 1998) toward PWS, males in this study reported more negative attitudes toward PWS than did females. This appears to be a consistent finding in the literature related to disabilities in general (Smart, 2001). Interestingly, in two studies exploring the attitudes that younger children report toward PWS (Hartford & Leahy, 2007; Langevin & Hagler, 2004), gender did not seem to impact their attitudes. It should be noted that the groups of young children in these studies still reported negative attitudes toward their peers who

stutter. These conflicting results might suggest that the gender effect on people's attitudes toward PWS only occurs with individuals of a certain age group. Future research should consider exploring this phenomenon.

These findings do conflict with other literature. For example, Gabel, Tellis, and Althouse (2004) found that there was no effect for familiarity on attitudes toward PWS. There may be at least two possible reasons for the differences reported in the research. First, the Gabel, Tellis, and Althouse study incorporated a relatively simple design in comparison with the present study, in that only a forced-choice questionnaire, the semantic differential scale (Woods & Williams, 1971), was used and the effects of simply knowing PWS (familiar or unfamiliar) were explored. In this study, participants were not provided with specific attitudes to choose from, but were allowed to make comments that were likely to be representative of their attitudes regarding PWS. Other recent studies have questioned whether the use of close-ended questionnaires, specifically the semantic differential approach, is sensitive enough to gain a true measure of attitudes toward PWS (Healey et al., 2007). These conflicting results suggest that there should be more research exploring the effects of familiarity on attitudes reported toward PWS.

Attitudes Toward Employment and Career Choices

The research questions related to the participants' attitudes toward the effect of stuttering on employment and appropriate career choices were answered through Items 5–8. Each of these items was analyzed descriptively. One of the most consistent findings in this study was related to the participants' perceptions of the impact that stuttering had on employment. First, a large percentage (83%) of participants believed that stuttering would have an adverse effect on employment. Also, people who knew a person who stutters were less likely to report that stuttering would affect employment, but a large percentage (73%) of those who knew a person who stutters did report that stuttering would affect employment. Finally, though the gender of the participants did not appear to have a significant effect on their perceptions of the effect of stuttering on employment, a higher percentage of males (87%) than females (78%) believed

that stuttering would impact employment. These findings are similar to past research that found that individuals who do not stutter reported that stuttering would negatively impact employment (Hurst & Cooper, 1983a, 1983b).

Study participants reported that their primary reasons for believing that stuttering would affect employment included the perceived “communication disability,” need for “avoidance of difficult careers,” and that “PWS would need to avoid specific work-related tasks (particularly those related to communication).” These findings appear to support studies that have explored the work experiences of PWS (Klein & Hood, 2004; Rice & Kroll, 1997). In these studies, large percentages of PWS reported that they had a variety of problems related to employment.

The participants also reported careers that they believed would be well suited or not well suited for PWS. The most frequent response was that PWS should pursue any career they wanted, and this report did not differ for either those who knew a person who stutters or those who did not. The second most frequent response, also similar for both groups of participants, was that nonspeaking-oriented careers, including computer-oriented careers, would also be suitable for PWS. When asked to report those careers that they perceived to be not well suited for PWS, most comments included that PWS should avoid careers in which they felt uncomfortable and those that required public speaking. These findings are similar to those reported by Gabel, Blood, et al. (2004). In that study, the authors found that there were 20 careers that were judged to be significantly less advisable for PWS. The authors of that study hypothesized that these careers were those that required more communication skills and public presentation than the 23 careers that were judged to be advisable for PWS. Similarly, other studies by Silverman and Paynter (1990) and Silverman and Bongey (1997) found that PWS working as a lawyer or doctor were perceived less favorably than individuals who did not stutter in the same careers. The findings of this study, coupled with the findings of past research, suggest that individuals who do not stutter perceive a number of careers to be less advisable for PWS, especially those that require a significant amount of communication skills and public presentation. Additionally, these findings support that PWS may suffer from role entrapment related to career choices.

Limitations of This Study and Future Directions

One area that was not explored in this study and in other studies exploring familiarity is the effect of the quality or type of relationship on attitudes toward PWS. A study that explores whether positive or negative experiences with PWS lead to a specific set of attitudes would provide an important piece to this discussion. Also, the effect of relative intimacy of the relationship, for example, whether the person is a close friend or merely an acquaintance, would also be an important question to answer. Another important variable in this study that was not explored was whether working with PWS would alter attitudes toward them or the perceived effect on employment issues. Future research should explore these important variables.

One limitation of this study is that it surveyed a general population's attitudes toward career choices and the impact that stuttering has on employment. Although the attitudes that these individuals reported toward PWS are important to understand, many who participated in this study may never be in a position to provide career advice to or deny employment to PWS. Future research might attempt to replicate this study or others that have explored the phenomenon of role entrapment by studying the attitudes that professionals working in human resources, business owners, and career counselors report toward appropriate and inappropriate careers for PWS and the impact that stuttering might have on employment.

Another limitation of this study is that the qualitative nature of most of the analyses and the smaller sample size limits the ability of these findings to be generalized. Although this is a difficulty, this study does present a first attempt to incorporate quantitative and qualitative analysis to study attitudes toward PWS. Future research should consider replicating this design with larger populations.

Summary

This study found that a group of individuals who do not stutter reported negative attitudes toward PWS, and that they deemed certain careers less suitable than others for PWS. Additionally, the participants reported that they felt that stuttering had an impact on employment for PWS. Replication of these findings in future research will be important due to the clinical and practical importance of gaining a deeper understanding of stereotyping of PWS and role entrapment.

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APPENDIX. STUTTERING QUESTIONNAIRE

Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Ethnicity: _____

Major/Occupation: _____

Do you stutter: Yes No

Directions: Please answer the following questions honestly. Please provide as much detail as possible.

1. Do you know anyone who stutters? If you do, what is your relationship to this person?
2. Did you work with this person (circle the best answer)?
 Yes No
3. What are some of the characteristics (adjectives such as *bad*, *good*, *happy*, etc.) you would use to describe people who stutter (in general)?
4. If you know someone who stutters, what characteristics (adjectives such as *bad*, *good*, *happy*, etc.) would you use to describe this person (characteristics specific to this person)?
5. Do you think that people who stutter may have difficulties related to employment, such as performing specific tasks, performing well in certain careers, etc. (circle the best answer)?
 Yes No
6. Provide your reasons for your answer to question number 5.
7. In your opinion, what types of careers or vocational choices *are well suited* for people who stutter? In other words, what careers would you advise a person who stutters to pursue, if you were asked?
8. In your opinion, what types of careers or vocational choices *are not well suited* for people who stutter? In other words, what careers would you advise a person who stutters not to pursue, if you were asked?