Understanding and Influencing the Stigma of Stuttering

Michael P. Boyle, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Abstract: Communicative participation and quality of life can be impaired by the stigma associated with stuttering. Public and private stigma can act as barriers to the achievement of life goals. This presentation will provide attendees with a deeper understanding of stigma as it pertains to stuttering, as well as evidence-based approaches to stigma reduction for individuals who stutter.

Learning Outcomes: As a result of this conference, participants will be able to:
1. Describe the importance of addressing stigma for increasing the communicative participation and well-being of clients who stutter.

2. Summarize the various evidence-based approaches available for reducing public stigma related to stuttering.


Illinois Speech-Language-Hearing Association Annual Convention

Rosemont, IL. February 9, 2019
Part I: Public Stigma and Stuttering

I. Comprehensive models for understanding disability
   A. International Classification of Functioning (ICF) from World Health Organization
   B. ASHA scope of practice for SLPs

II. Background on Stigma
   A. Definitions
      1. Public stigma
      2. Self-stigma
   B. Elements of stigma
      1. Descriptive stimuli/signals
      2. Cognitive and affective mediators
      3. Behavioral intentions/actual behaviors

III. Research background on stigma and stuttering
   A. Perceived public opinion
   B. Awareness and internalization of stigma among people who stutter (PWS)
   C. Correlates of stigma awareness and internalization among PWS

IV. Examples of stigma related to stuttering in real life
   A. Stigma in the media
   B. Stigma in public life

V. Strategies for reducing public stigma from the psychology literature
   A. Protest
   B. Education
   C. Contact
   D. Video examples of each approach

VI. Discussion of empirical research studies examining the effect of anti-stigma strategies on perceptions of PWS

VII. Discussion of Boyle, Dioguardi, & Pate (2016) study
    A. Sample
    B. Measurements included
       1. Social distance
       2. Negative emotional reactions
       3. Negative stereotypes
       4. Discriminatory intentions
       5. Affirming attitudes
       6. Retrospective baseline questions
          i. Better understanding of stuttering
C. Study design
   1. Pre-test vs. post-test vs. 1-week follow-up
   2. Participants randomly assigned to contact, education, protest, or control videos
   3. Analyzing if differences between measurements different across experimental groups
   4. Analyzing self-reported retrospective baseline responses

D. Results
   1. No significant interaction on social distance
   2. All approaches more effective than control group for reducing negative emotional reactions
   3. All approaches more effective than control group for reducing negative stereotypes
   4. All approaches more effective than control group for reducing discriminatory intentions
   5. Contact most effective for increasing affirming attitudes of PWS
   6. All approaches led to better understanding of stuttering compared to control group
   7. No significant effect for enjoyment of watching the video. All were rated as enjoyable to watch.
   8. Contact and education led to more positive attitude change than the control group, but not protest. Contact was the highest rated.

VIII. Discussion of Boyle, Dioguardi, & Pate (2017) study
   A. Qualitative analysis to investigate key elements of various anti-stigma strategies
      1. Protest
         i. More accurate understanding of stuttering
         ii. Awareness of negative societal reactions and media portrayals
         iii. Goal statements
         iv. Positive models
         v. Similarity to other people
      2. Education
         i. More accurate understanding of stuttering
         ii. Similarity to other people
         iii. Positive models
3. Contact
   i. Characteristics of presenter
   ii. Message of presenter
   iii. Effects on listener
4. Similarities across different groups
B. Obstacles to implementation
C. Future research needs regarding public stigma of stuttering
D. Addressing social communicative aspects of stuttering
E. Future objectives and goals for societal change
F. Conclusions/ Take-home points
Part Two: Self-stigma and Stuttering

I. Components of self-stigma
   a. Negative thoughts and feelings about self
   b. Stereotype endorsement
   c. Maladaptive behavior
   d. Identity transformation
   e. Resulting from:
      i. Past experiences
      ii. Personal perceptions
      iii. Anticipation of negative social responses to stuttering
      iv. Subjective process, embedded in sociocultural context

II. How self-stigma applies to PWS
   a. Evidence from qualitative studies
   b. Example quotes

III. Relevance of self-stigma to the work of SLPs

IV. The process of self-stigma
   a. Public stigma
   b. Awareness
   c. Agreement
   d. Application
   e. Psychological harm
   f. Behavioral consequences

V. Assessment of self-stigma associated with stuttering
   a. Description of studies related to development and testing of the Self-Stigma of Stuttering Scale (4S) (Boyle, 2013)
      ii. Boyle (2015) – replicated factor structure and reliability, and further establishing construct validity with measures of hope, quality of life, social support, empowerment, anxiety, depression, and physical speech disruption
      iii. Boyle & Fearon (2018) – further establishing construct validity with measures of physical health, stress, and health care satisfaction
   b. Summary of 4S and clinical applications/scoring

VI. Strategies for reducing self-stigma related to stuttering
a. Empirical research support for the importance of social, emotional, and cognitive variables for PWS
b. Summary of protective factors from self-stigma
c. The importance of self-efficacy in diminishing self-stigma
d. Treatment of social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of stuttering
   i. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)
   ii. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
   iii. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
   iv. Other counseling based approaches
e. Disclosure of stuttering
   i. Types of disclosure
   ii. Most helpful aspects of disclosure
   iii. Correlates of disclosure
f. Peer support
   i. Summary of benefits of self-help/support groups, and social support

VII. Goal writing – how to apply this information to your practice

VIII. Conclusions and take-home points

Further reading/references:


