Perceived Shame-and Guilt-Proneness of People Who Stutter by Caucasian and African-American College Students

Perception d'une propension à la honte et à la culpabilité des bègues par des étudiants caucasiens et afro-américains de niveau collégial

Jianliang Zhang
Joseph Kalinowski

Abstract

Shame and guilt are two powerful negative social emotions with deep influences on the development and treatment of stuttering. However, their uses have been ambiguous and their relative roles associated with stuttering are unclear. This current study examined listeners' perceptions of shame- and guilt-proneness of persons who stutter (PWS) as compared to normally fluent individuals. Sixty-two African-American and 60 Caucasian college students completed the Test of Self-Conscious Affect – 3, a scenario-based questionnaire survey, either from their own perspectives as normally fluent individuals or assuming the identity of PWS after watching video segments depicting stuttered speech. Two-way ANOVAs revealed that both groups perceived PWS as being more prone to shame than guilt. Caucasian participants scored higher than African-American participants on both shame- and guilt-proneness from both perspectives. No significant interaction effect was observed. The results suggest that listeners tend to perceive stuttering as more related to shame than to guilt, implying that stuttering is seen as capable to damage one's core self. In addition, the results suggest that in different cultures PWS are subject to different levels of social pressure. These findings may shed light on the development of stuttering, and have implication for the treatment and public education of stuttering.

Abrégé

La honte et la culpabilité sont deux émotions sociales négatives ayant des influences profondes sur le développement et le traitement du bégaiement. Cependant, l'utilisation de celles-ci est ambiguë et leurs rôles associés au bégaiement restent obscurs. La présente étude a examiné les perceptions qu'ont les auditeurs de la propension à la honte et à la culpabilité de bègues par comparaison à des individus qui ont un débit normal. Soixante-deux étudiants afro-américains et 60 caucasiens de niveau collégial ont complété le *Test of Self-Conscious Affect – 3*, un questionnaire d'enquête basé sur un scénario, soit de leurs propres points de vue comme individus ayant un débit normal, soit en assumant l'identité de bègues après avoir regardé des segments de vidéos qui décrivaient le bégaiement. Une analyse de variance à deux facteurs a révélé que les deux groupes percevaient les bègues comme étant plus enclins à la honte qu'à la culpabilité. Les caucasiens ont accordé des scores plus élevés que les afro-américains pour les deux émotions. Il n'y a pas eu d'interaction significative entre les deux facteurs. Les résultats suggèrent que les auditeurs perçoivent le bégaiement comme pouvant affecter l'identité profonde d'une personne. De plus, les résultats suggèrent que, dans différentes cultures, les bègues sont soumis à divers niveaux de pression sociale. Ces constatations peuvent aider à comprendre le développement du bégaiement et avoir une implication sur le traitement du bégaiement et sur la sensibilisation du public à cette condition.

Jianliang Zhang
Department of Allied
Professions,
School of Education,
North Carolina Central
University, NC,
USA

Joseph Kalinowski
Department of Communication
Sciences and Disorders,
College of Allied Health,
East Carolina University, NC,
USA

INTRODUCTION

Social emotions are emotions that link the self to the others and include shame, guilt, pride, and embarrassment, etc. (Lewis, 1995; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Many of the social emotions are intimately involved in the development of stuttering, especially during the adolescent and adult years (Bloodstein & Bernstein-Ratner, 2008; Van Riper, 1982). Joseph Sheehan, in his famous iceberg analogy of stuttering, suggested that stuttering is comprised of 20% overt manifestations (e.g., perceivable stuttering behaviors), and 80% covert manifestations, which include shame, guilt, fear, embarrassment, anxiety, hopelessness, isolation, and denial, etc. (Sheehan, 1958). Corcoran and Stewart (1998) interviewed eight adult people who stutter (PWS) and concluded that PWS' negative emotional responses to stuttering consist of feelings of helplessness, shame, fear, and avoidance. An interesting questionnaire survey study (Ginsberg, 2000) correlated shame and social anxiety in PWS with stuttering dimensions such as struggle in speaking, expectancy of speech difficulty, and avoidance of speaking, as measured by the Perception of Stuttering Inventory (PSI; Woolf, 1967). The author suggested that social emotions could be a valid predictor of whether a PWS would use more compensatory strategies of struggle, expectancy and avoidance to deal with anticipated speaking difficulty. In another study, with the help of a mathematical model, the authors suggested that PSI results could indicate a PWS' development of responses to stuttering with each stage containing more shame-related avoiding behaviors and fewer guilt-related struggling behaviors (Kalinowski, Kalinowski, Stuart, & Rastatter, 1998).

Social emotions are often an integral part of stuttering treatment. One of the most influential stuttering treatment programs, Van Riper's stuttering modification and its derivations, put emphasis on reducing shame, low self-esteem, fear, and anxiety, etc., in PWS (Blomgren, Roy, Callister, & Merrill, 2005; Leahy, 2008; Van Riper, 1982). Negative social emotions, especially shame and guilt, are hypothesized to play a role in regulating the patient's or her/his caregiver's decision-making of seeking professional help (Daniels, Hagstrom, & Gabel, 2006; Plexico, Manning, & Dilollo, 2005; Plexico, Manning, & Levitt, 2009a; 2009b).

However, there is a lack of empirical research that focuses on stuttering and social emotions, especially shame and guilt. Both shame and guilt are negative, powerful, and self-conscious emotions, and they are frequently related to stuttering experience by PWS,

researchers, or clinicians (see above discussion). Shame seems to appear more frequently than guilt in the narratives of PWS (Corcoran & Stewart, 1998). However, the two terms have been used in an ambiguous, usually interchangeable manner, by both lay persons and researchers. For example, Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary defines shame as "a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety." In some recent reports, shame and guilt were not clearly defined or differentiated (Daniels et al., 2006; Plexico et al., 2005; Plexico et al., 2009a; 2009b).

Recent empirical research in social-personality has provided a relatively clear demarcation of the two emotions: Shame is more about the core self, whereas guilt is more about specific acts (Lewis, 1995; Rusch et al., 2007; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2006). With the focus on self, shame is considered the more painful emotion, making one to feel powerless and worthless, defend one's core self by hiding, and reducing motivation. Guilt is considered less painful, leading one to remorse and regret, making one to struggle, and strengthening motivation to make reparative efforts (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). In the field of stuttering, some workers had suggested that stuttering is capable of altering one's self-image and identity (Van Riper, 1982), which is probably the consequence of shame rather than guilt, although empirical evidence is needed for this notion.

By definition, social emotions are cultural. Naturally, one may wonder what the interaction of stuttering, social emotion, and culture looks like. There is a paucity of research in the social-personality literature about the cultural difference in social emotions; in the stuttering literature, the relevant reports were limited and inconsistent. In an interesting report, Leith and Mims (1975) reported that African-American PWS possess more covert stuttering behaviors compared to Caucasian PWS, and posited that the difference is caused by the higher level of social pressure to African-American PWS. This difference in stuttering behaviors between Caucasian and African-American PWS was not observed by others (Olsen, Steelman, Buffalo, & Montague, 1999). However, the oral tradition and the high influences from church and community in the African-American society might suggest a high social pressure on PWS (Battle, 2002), which may provide ground for the argument that there is a high level of shame- and guilt-proneness related to stuttering in the African-American society.

To study shame and guilt as related to stuttering, one of the first questions to ask is "Are PWS more prone to feel

ashamed, or guilty?" The degree to which an individual is prone to feel ashamed or guilty is determined by a complicated interaction of self and the others (Tangney et al., 2007). The attitudes, behaviors, and verbal expressions of the others, or the listeners as opposed to PWS, have a strong impact on one's social emotions. Another important question to ask is the role of culture. Are PWS living in a specific culture more prone to shame and/or guilt? Will these differences in shame and guilt cause different patterns in the development of stuttering? Questions like these are inevitable when investigating stuttering in the cultural context, since culture has significant impacts on an individual's value system, attitudes, and behaviors (Chiu & Hong, 2006).

As a preliminary study of shame, guilt, and stuttering, the current study set out to investigate PWS' shame- and guilt-proneness in the eyes of the others, the normally fluent listeners, from Caucasian American and African-American groups. The two groups are among the majority and the biggest minority populations in North America, and data from these groups might provide a general depiction of the listeners that a PWS encounters in daily basis. Specific research questions included: 1) Do normally fluent listeners perceive PWS have stronger shame- and guilt-proneness than themselves? 2) Do African-American and Caucasian groups differ in their perception of PWS' shame- and guilt-proneness? And 3) Is there an interaction of fluency and race for the perceived shame- and guilt-proneness? It was predicted that PWS were perceived as being more prone to shame, but not guilt, than listeners, as implied by previous analysis of PWS' narratives (Corcoran & Stewart, 1998; Daniels et al., 2006). For questions two and three, previous research was inadequate, and results were inconsistent (see previous discussion); hence, a null hypothesis was used.

Results from this study may have important clinical and social implications. The involvement of shame and guilt may offer, at least partially, explanations for PWS' stuttering dimensions (e.g., struggling and avoidance), their motivations to seek therapy, and their effort to maintain fluency techniques. Results could shed light on the pervasively negative social consequences to PWS. In other words, whether listeners see stuttering as something that a PWS sometimes does or something that is innate to a PWS, whether listeners believe that a PWS should feel guilty or ashamed for his/her stuttering, could affect listeners' attitude and perceptions toward PWS, and consequently change the way listeners treat PWS. Furthermore, information garnered from this study could be used by stuttering help groups for better public

education, especially regarding the emotional aspect of stuttering as involved in its development and treatment.

Method

The current study used the Test of Self-Conscious Affect-Version 3 (TOSCA-3; Tangney, Dearing et al. 2000), a scenario-based self-report questionnaire that measures six social emotions, including shame, guilt, externalization, detachment/unconcern, alpha pride ("pride in self"), and beta pride ("pride in behavior"; Tangney, Dearing et al. 2000). It has 16 questions, and for each scenario question, there are four to five possible responses that reflect different social emotions. Shame and guilt are included in each scenario, but not the other emotions. Participants are requested to rate all of these responses on a 5-point scale (1=not likely and 5=very likely) indicating their likeness to react in that way. For example, one question says "You break something at work and then hide it." An indication of guilt is measured by the choice "You would think: 'This is making me anxious. I need to either fix it or get someone else to.'" Another choice "You would think about quitting" measures guilt.

TOSCA-3 has been frequently used in social-personality studies and its validity and reliability are well documented (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). For the purpose of this paper, although descriptive results of all emotions are displayed, only shame and guilt are discussed. Recent reports suggested that the internal consistency of the shame and guilt scales might be an issue, especially for guilt (Rusch et al., 2007).

Participants were 62 African-American and 60 Caucasian college students in a Southeast city of USA. They were recruited either in their class or by word of mouth (i.e., snowballing procedures). No incentives, for example, monetary reward or extra credit, were given for their participation. To be included, participants needed to self-report that they 1) were of either Caucasian/White race, or African-American/Black race; 2) were at least 18 years of age; 3) were born in the United States; 4) had never received treatment from speech language pathologists or audiologists; or 5) had never been diagnosed or labeled with a cognitive/communicative disorder or impair. The research protocol was approved by the University IRB. Informed consent was obtained before the administration of the questionnaire.

Each racial group was divided into two subgroups: FLU (those who took their own identity as normally fluent individuals) and STU (those who took a PWS' identity). The African-American FLU group had 22 females and 9

males (age mean = 20.97, range = 18-34, SD = 3.71), and the African-American STU group had 19 females and 12 males (age mean = 21.06, range = 18-45, SD = 4.78). The Caucasian FLU group had 20 females and 10 males ((age mean = 29.23, range = 18-49, SD = 8.20), and the Caucasian STU group had 26 females and 4 males (age mean = 26.53, range = 18-50, SD = 10.32).

Upon being briefed about the study, participants were requested to complete the TOSCA-3 assuming either their own identity, or the identity of a PWS. Those who assumed the PWS identity watched three video segments of stuttering speech before completing the questionnaire. Detailed descriptions of the video segments were reported elsewhere (Zhang & Kalinowski, 2012). In short, each video segment was 30 s in length, and contained the head-to-shoulder profile of a Caucasian adult male, who demonstrated moderate-to-severe stuttering behaviors, including primary behaviors such as syllable repetitions, sound prolongations, and silent blocks, along with ancillary behaviors such as lip protrusion, eyes blinking, and facial grimaces, while reading aloud scripted text. The videos were presented to the participants either on a television set, or a 13 inch MacBook screen with a pair of ear buds for individual student. The volume was set at comfort level.

Results

In accordance with scoring instructions of the TOSCA-3 (Tangney et al. 2000), scale responses for each emotion were summed. Because of the purpose of this study, only shame- and guilt-related questions were included for analysis. The means and standard errors of the mean (SEMs) of the responses are displayed in Figure 1. Unlike standard deviation, which measures the variability of a sample, SEMs provide an estimation of the sample mean.

Two-way ANOVA was conducted using IBM SPSS (version 19) with race (Caucasian and African-American) and fluency status (FLU and STU) as factors for each emotion. Significance level was set at p = .05. Fluency exerted significant influence on shame, $F(1, 118)$ = 17.44, $p < .001$, η^2 = .129, and ϕ = .985, but not guilt. The race effect was observed in both shame and guilt [for shame, $F(1, 118)$ = 15.81, $p < .001$, η^2 = .118, and ϕ = .976; for guilt, $F(1, 118)$ = 25.51, $p < .001$, η^2 = .178, and ϕ = .999]. No significant effect was observed for the interaction of group and fluency. Here, the effect size was estimated by the partial η^2, which measures the proportion of the total variance attributable to a particular factor. The benchmarks to define small, medium, and large effect sizes are values of partial η^2 of .0099, .0588, and .1379, respectively (Richardson, 2011).
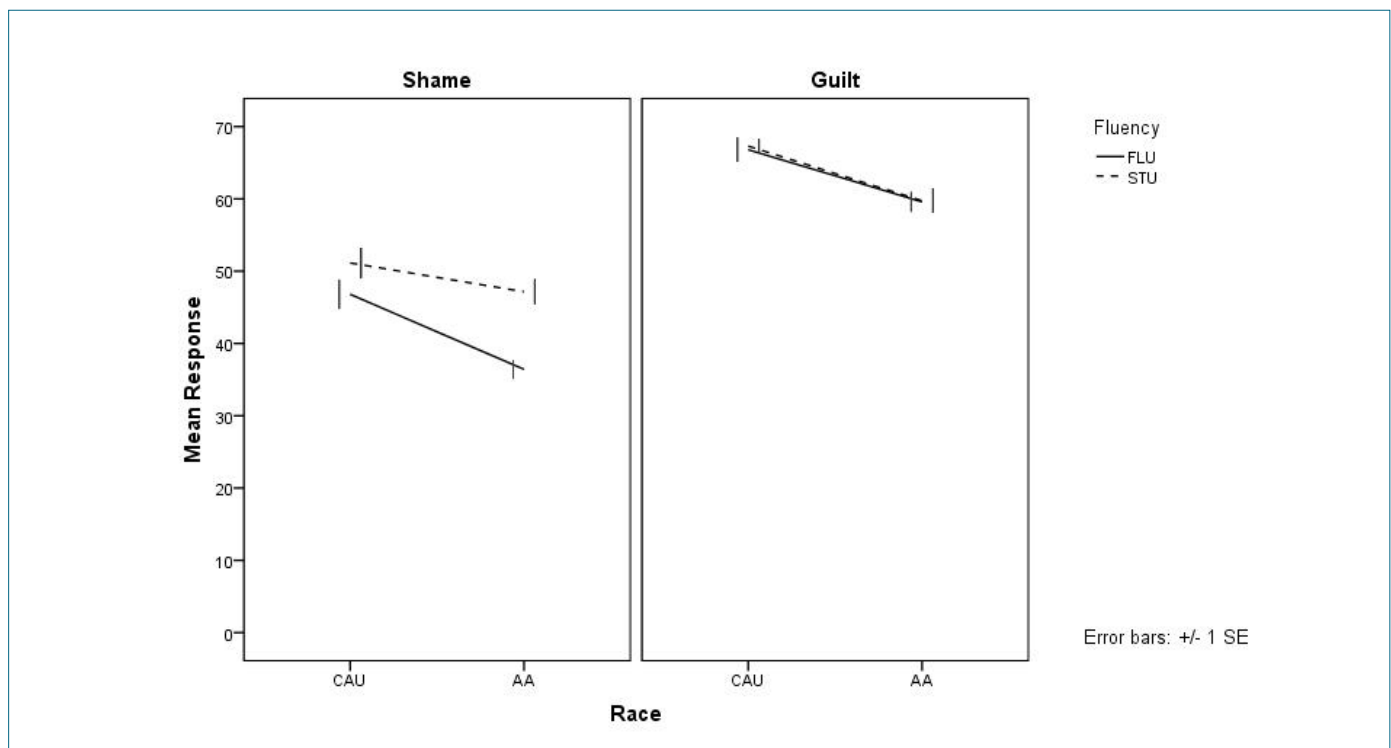

Figure 1: Means and SEM of African-American and Caucasian college students' perception of shame- and guilt-proneness of people who stutter and normally fluent individuals (FLU = fluent; STU = stutter; CAU = Caucasian; AA = African-American).

Internal consistency was good for both shame and guilt scale: For shame, Cronbach's alpha = .83 for both STU and FLU groups; for guilt, Cronbach's alpha = .82 for STU group and .80 for FLU group (Bland & Altman, 1997).

Discussion

The current study investigated college students' perception of shame- and guilt-proneness of PWS. The main findings are threefold. Firstly, both African-American and Caucasian participants perceived PWS as being more prone to shame compared to normally fluent individuals. Secondly, Caucasian participants scored higher on both shame- and guilt-proneness measures when compared to African-American participants. Thirdly, no significant interaction effect was found by fluency and race.

It is interesting to see that in listeners' eyes, stuttering is related to heightened possibility of feeling ashamed, but not guilty. This finding is important in that it illustrates listeners' conceptions of the nature and impact of stuttering. Social emotion researchers generally agree that shame relates to the stable, uncontrollable, and global self, whereas guilt is about a behavior or action that is specific, unstable, and controllable (Lewis, 1995; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney et al., 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2006). In this sense, results suggest that stuttering is tightly related to shame because stuttering is perceived as an internal, inseparable component of self that defines a PWS; stuttering is not as much related to guilt because stuttering is not perceived as an isolated speech act that happens haphazardly. This conception has a certain degree of truth considering the biological factors of stuttering supported by genetic studies (Fedyna, Drayna, & Kang, 2011; Kang et al., 2010; Raza, Riazuddin, & Drayna, 2010) and twin studies (Dworzynski, Remington, Rijsdijk, Howell, & Plomin, 2007), along with the proposed involuntary and persistent nature of stuttering for adult PWS (Bloodstein & Bernstein-Ratner, 2008; Kalinowski & Saltuklaroglu, 2006; Perkins, 1990). However, this conception neglects some important facts about stuttering. For example, a PWS' stuttering severity oftentimes fluctuates; even for a severe PWS, most of his/her speech contains fluent utterances; and, generally, stuttering does not have negative impact in one's motor abilities, language development, personality traits, and ability to perform at work, etc. (Bloodstein & Bernstein-Ratner, 2008; Van Riper, 1982). When listeners tend to think that PWS "should" feel ashamed for their stuttering, they may see PWS as having reduced self-worth and react to the PWS in a way that influences the PWS to feel less self-worth, and many negative consequences for PWS ensue. However, why listeners generally think

that stuttering is more related to the core self remains unanswered. One hypothesis is that listeners may share emotional fluctuations with PWS at moments of stuttering (Guntupalli, Everhart, Kalinowski, Nanjundeswaran, & Saltuklaroglu, 2007; White & Collins, 1984), that when a PWS struggles to utter the sound, he/she demonstrates negative emotional responses, and suffers from the damaged self, and so will the listeners. Future research is needed for support of this hypothesis.

These findings suggest that future research to determine the extent to which PWS experience shame- and guilt-proneness is needed. If PWS are shown to experience greater shame-proneness, such a finding would provide a theoretical frame to understand the development of the psychological and emotional consequences of stuttering. As previously discussed, PWS usually develop numerous avoidance strategies to "hide" from difficult speaking situations (Bloodstein & Bernstein-Ratner, 2008) and are emotionally and psychologically distressed by stuttering (Sheehan, 1958). Considering the differential influences of shame and guilt on motivation (i.e., guilt may lead to one's reparative efforts to amend the fault, and shame often motivates one to deny, hide from, or escape the shame-inducing situations; see previous discussion), one might infer that these behavioral, emotional, and psychological responses are consequences of stuttering's perceived impact on the global self (e.g., "I am a stutterer."), rather than specific behavior (e.g., "I just stutter sometimes."). Stuttering help groups and clinicians have intuitively employed the differential roles of shame and guilt on PWS' motivation for seeking therapy and maintaining fluency in their public education campaigns and treatment, respectively, for a long time. That is, although they used the pair of words in an interchangeable way, their work focuses more on separating stuttering from "me," that "me" is not a stutterer, but a person who stutters, and does so only sometimes. Findings from this study that listeners tend to see PWS as more shame-prone than guilt-prone offer a solid ground for their activities. Stronger evidence to support these activities will come from future research, if PWS are found to show greater proneness to shame than guilt.

Cultural difference was observed in perceptions of both shame- and guilt-proneness. Contrary to expectation, African-American participants assigned weaker proneness to shame and guilt to both themselves and PWS. However, because the social-personality literature has a poor coverage of racial-cultural variance, a functional explanation for this observation has yet to be discovered. Furthermore, no significant interaction effect of fluency by race was found, which did not agree

with the notion that African-American community puts a higher pressure on PWS (Leith & Mims, 1975), but was in accordance with other reports, which did not find a significant difference in the stuttering behaviors between African-American and Caucasian PWS (Olsen et al., 1999).

Future studies are needed to investigate both adult and young PWS' social emotion proneness, and parents' perceptions of social emotion in PWS. These studies will provide good descriptions of the role of social emotions for both PWS and their parents in the development of stuttering. Future research should also to correlate PWS' shame- and guilt-proneness to their stuttering behaviors. By correlating behaviors to their social emotion proneness, a better understanding of stuttering development, both psychologically and behaviorally, would be achieved.

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Authors' Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jianliang Zhang, PhD, Department of Allied Professions, School of Education, North Carolina Central University, 712 Cecil Street, Durham, NC, USA, 27707. Email: jzhang1@nccu.edu.

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