Stuttering, as viewed from the vantage point of a person who stutters who usually functions as a normally fluent speaker

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September 18, 2024

Erving Goffman, variously described as a Canadian sociologist, an American sociologist, and a Canadian-American sociologist, wrote a series of impressive studies which have been widely read by both academic and general readers. Some of his books about everyday life became widely translated best sellers. Goffman was a keen student of everyday human interaction. In some but not all of his studies, he introduced metaphors from the world of theatre and drama to describe what's at play when people engage in everyday conversations.

In speaking about the theatrical side of conversations, Goffman often referred to how people spoke: to whether the delivery was smooth or halting. He also frequently spoke about body language: whether it was smoothly flowing or slow and awkward. Speech and body language are central features of theatrical productions. They're also central features of everyday life – including the everyday life of people who stutter. The writer Michel de Montaigne is another great source, aside from Goffman, for exploring how – and for what purpose – conversations are constructed.

Each of us has an interest in conversations, and in learning from each other through the conversations that we engage in. Conversations are among the resources we all turn to, when we seek to make sense of the events in our lives. Sense making, whether it's on the tiniest of scales or on the vastest of scales imaginable, is a universally shared communications project.

Stuttering as viewed from vantage point of a normally fluent speaker

I have stuttered since I was 6 years old. However, since my early forties, I've done quite well in dealing with my stuttering. As a volunteer, I've met a good number of people who stutter who've made similar gains – and a good number, I may add, who have no reason to follow the pathway I have chosen. In my everyday conversations, or when speaking on the phone, or engaged in public speaking, most of the time listeners would not identify me as a person who stutters. For the record, I do self-identify as a person who stutters. That said, I also now tend to look at my speech from the vantage point of the

normally fluent speaker. When I was very young and up until my early forties, it was another story altogether: there were times when I stuttered very severely. How severely? Sometimes, I was essentially mute. I would try to say a word, and no sound would come out at all. If someone had said, "Well, just go ahead and stutter," I would have been speechless.

What helped me during my childhood was that every once in a while, an older person would notice my struggle and rather than looking away, as was the standard practice, would make it a point to share with me a life-changing message. That very brief message, from a handful of helpful sources, gave me a good outlook on life. I owe each of those people, all of whom are now long ago gone, many thanks. By means of a gesture – a warm facial expression, and a word or two of encouragement – they would look me in the eye and say (and I paraphrase): "You're a fine human being, young man. You're one of us. You are a full-fledged, valuable member of the human race. We celebrate your presence among us!" Before that, I had seen myself primarily as a visitor from Planet Stutter. Up until then, that had been pretty much my central role in life. I had until then not felt at home, at all, among all of these incredibly talkative, naturally fluent speakers.

Until I found a method that works fine for me, I had encountered many forms of speech therapy. Some were helpful, to an extent, some not. I learned to seek out at least a few more speaking opportunities. I learned to look people in the eye when speaking, at least some of the time. Nothing I tried enabled me to find a solution to the problem that perplexed me, however, every time I tried to speak. Until the late 1980s, I also remained largely unacquainted with the idea of seeking out reliable evidence regarding the long-term efficacy of various methods of dealing with stuttering.

The notion of just going ahead and stuttering freely, without further concern, had not occurred to me, either. I'm now familiar with this novel concept – expressed in the apt comment that "Stuttering is just the way we talk!" When I've shared that phrase with nonstutterers, they've been intrigued. That was never going to be my own preferred method. Yet, I've encountered a number of people whose open stuttering works really well. That works better than a characteristic form of hesitant speech where a person is consciously seeking to do whatever can be done to avoid engaging in the overt blocks and repetitions that we associate with the term "stuttering."

One of the limitations in the concept of "just going ahead and stuttering" is that sometimes you will inevitably come up with issues related to intelligibility. In rare cases, a person may stutter freely – but it may be difficult to determine what they are saying. If intelligibility is an issue, that needs to be addressed head-on. One option, among others, is to enable a person to learn fluency skills: in 80 percent of cases, a person may be able to learn how to formulate sentences in such a way that they achieve a

sufficient level of clarity in spoken communication. This is an issue that needs to be faced directly; you can't just slide your way around it and say: "Just go ahead and stutter."

In my own story, finally, and just by chance, one day while living in Toronto, I read a brief newspaper article about a new stuttering treatment clinic which had recently been opened up in Edmonton, Alberta. This was a new start-up which Einer Boberg and Deborah Kully had founded in December 1986. The Alberta Elks Foundation had played a central role in enabling this clinic to open. In Edmonton, I re-learned how to speak: I learned fluency as a second language. On my return to Toronto, I spent four years and four months systematically practising my newly acquired fluency skills every day. I knew from a previous encounter, with re-learning how to speak, that a relapse would otherwise be waiting patiently for me, hidden from view just around the corner, ready to pounce upon me and cause my fluency skills to go flying out the window. I knew what a relapse was, what it felt like – and in Edmonton I learned how to avoid it. I was not about to take any chances.

As a result of what I learned in Edmonton at a three-week clinic in July 1987, and years of daily practice of my skills once back in Toronto, I've maintained a high level of fluency for thirty-seven years as of today's date. On occasion, I will still lightly stutter on a word, after which I resume my normally fluent way of speaking. In the event I run into a few moments of abrupt, major, absolutely threatening difficulty in my speech, I know from years of experience precisely what I need to do, in order to get the flow of words back on track, at once.

As a volunteer, I've met plenty of people who've arrived at the same level of fluency I've arrived at, not necessarily using the same method. There's something else that I also know – something that I keep firmly in mind: Not everybody is going to attain the same results as I did. About 20 percent of people who stutter, who are taught the speech method that worked well enough for me, are not going to attain the same long-term gains as I have attained. The Edmonton clinic also offers a stuttering modification approach – in place of a fluency shaping approach – which aims to help stutterers in the latter 20 percent category. One in five of those of us who stutter are not going to get the same long-term benefits from the approach that worked well enough for me. That is a substantial number of people.

Self-help movement

In his observations about the theatrics of social interaction, Erving Goffman quite often referred to people who stutter. Goffman spoke, for example, of the stigma surrounding stuttering, He spoke, as well, of the complicated manoeuvres that some stutterers may engage in, to avoid being identified as

stutterers. In one of his early studies, Goffman also repeated an unfounded allegation, which claimed that stutterers were absolutely incapable of forming themselves into groups. Subsequently, the worldwide stuttering self-help movement has underlined that such a claim had no foundation.

I became active in the self-help movement, initially at the local and later at national and international levels, starting a year after I had returned from my three-week visit to Einer and Deborah's new clinic in Edmonton. Because the time was right for starting up of such groups, and because I wanted to compare notes with other people who stutter, I was the founder of a new local self-help group, the Stuttering Association of Toronto. The group had its first meeting, at a local library in Toronto, in September 1988.

In a brief conversation with a person who stutters during the planning process, where I spent a few months talking with people, as part of my planning for the launch of the group, I encountered the comment that such groups come and go all the time. That is, the founder burns out, moves on to other things, or they grow old and die – and the group folds. The question was: How can we ensure that a group will keep on thriving, long after the founder is gone?

That one conversation prompted me to spend plenty of time thinking, especially when helping to launch and grow larger-size organizations, about how best to go about building a culture – and a set of operating procedures – which ensures that a solid leadership succession plan emerges. A strong culture of leadership succession can readily be built upon an understanding that the grassroots level constitutes the heart of the operation. A strong culture of leadership succession can be fostered, as well, when a strong sense of ownership of the organization is demonstrably shared by each and every member.

We can say, conversely, that when the grassroots is ignored, when nonprofit groups of any kind are launched, we have a state of affairs that may give rise to what the sociologist Robert Michels has termed the "iron law of oligarchy." According to this law, we may begin with governance structures that are a direct outgrowth of what people at the grassroots level have in mind when any kind of organization, such as a self-help group, is founded.

As an organization grows in size and complexity, however, it may happen that it comes to be controlled, according to Robert Michels, by a handful of people who take charge of its day-to-day operations. So long as the grassroots has a direct say in decision making, the "iron law" will not apply. As soon as the grassroots is ignored, however, Robert Michel's formulation will tend to make its presence known.

The Stuttering Association of Toronto folded after about a decade. People, me included, moved on to other things. The local group was, nonetheless, an absolutely essential launch pad for the

organizing work that was to follow at the national level. My own skills were centred on the launch of community-based, nonprofit organizations. Many other volunteers have stepped forward at the national level in Canada with equally essential skills: legal services, web design, fundraising, accounting, design of professional quality membership surveys.

I stepped back from the local Toronto group once I became involved with development of other, larger organizations. The larger groups are all still going strong. Some notes follow below regarding my own late-1980s speech-skills maintenance plan, and the central features of the Stuttering Association of Toronto and subsequent organizations.

Maintenance of fluency skills

Daily practice of speaking skills, and weekly analysis of recorded segments of my everyday speech, became for many years a routine part of my everyday life. Once established, my routine monitoring efforts didn't require any more attention to detail than the daily task of brewing a morning cup of coffee. Coffee brewing using a Chemex coffee filter has for decades been a daily routine for me. For over four years, in turn, the daily practice and generalization of fluency skills constituted my daily speech routine. No great effort was required.

Stuttering Association of Toronto

The group was open to everyone, whether they had attended speech therapy or not. Friends and family members were also welcome, for sure. For people who'd learned fluency skills, no one in the group was monitored with regard to how well the skills were being applied – unless, that is, a person asked the group to monitor them. In the latter case, a person would let us know two or three skills they wanted to be monitored on. At the meeting and during a coffee break, we would offer ongoing feedback on how well the skills were being attended to. In setting up the group, we arranged for each person, who wanted to, to lead two meetings in a row. We also established, from the outset, that speaking time would be shared more or less equally at meetings.

As a result of ongoing discussions at its regular meetings, many long-time members of the Toronto group made it a point to start to speak openly about their stuttering with colleagues at work. Such self-disclosure can be highly beneficial for opening channels of communication, at work and elsewhere, regarding stuttering. Many years later, however, in speaking with people who stutter who

were born in countries such as China, I learned that self-disclosure may be helpful in some circumstances, but not in others. I have learned, for example, that in some situations, it may not be advisable to self-disclose that you stutter, if you are employed as a teacher. That's because, in some jurisdictions, if school administrators learn you are a teacher who stutters, you may find yourself out of a job.

We made it a point with the Toronto group to ensure that people who stutter who would be turning up at our self-help meetings would be feeling safe and secure, at all times. On rare occasions, somebody might turn up at a meeting and it would be clear that they might have the intention of acting, in one way or another, in such a way that a meeting would get disrupted. We developed an informal procedure, whereby a newcomer to the group, who gave some indication that they had a tendency to engage in disruptive behaviours, would be given a choice, such as by means of a phone call, before they turned up at the next meeting. The choice was: "Attend the meeting, in such a way that everybody feels at ease. Otherwise, your membership in the group is terminated, and we do not want to see you again."

In larger organizations, the key is to have a policy in place, clearly stating that a board of directors is in a position to expel from membership any member – including any board member – who acts in such a way as to bring a high level of unease to any other member. Such an expulsion would be in accordance with a majority vote among a board of directors. Without such a procedure in place, and a willingness to act at once, one or more disruptive members can easily create chaos. In rare cases, such disruptions can mean the destruction of a group. When a procedure as outlined is in place, the opportunities for disruptions to cause trouble are minimized. The same applies to what takes place at conferences. If a code of conduct is in place, then organizers can deal at once with disruptions. In that way, people attending a conference are assured that everybody feels at ease.

Banff national conference, 1991

The Stuttering Association of Toronto along with other groups across Canada came together in Banff, Alberta, in August 1991. The invitation for groups to gather together involved the mail-out, via Canada Post letters sent across Canada, of a professionally designed survey to determine if there was enough interest among self-help groups to justify the staging of a national conference. From the survey responses we determined it was a great idea to proceed with the planning of the event, the first of its kind in Canada.

The conference in Banff, attended by about 80 people, led directly to the founding of the Canadian Stuttering Association. Three workshops involving all of the attendees were devoted specifically to sharing of information about Canadian self-help groups. We met in groups of eight, with one person from each group reporting back at a plenary session at the end of each workshop. The membership of each group was determined beforehand, by the organizers. In this way, we ensured that speaking time was shared more or less equally in the course of our three workshops. The final workshop addressed the question: Should we form a national organization?

Long-distance phone calls and fax messages

For several months, during an era prior to the internet, in the early years of organizing related to the Canadian Stuttering Association and the International Stuttering Association, we made a substantial number of long-distance fax transmissions and phone calls. That required substantial sums of money. As soon as our communications moved online, however, our costs went down dramatically. I was particularly active as a volunteer, working on projects related to stuttering, from 1988 to 2003.

In the summers of 1989 and 1990, I travelled to Estonia, which was at that time still occupied by the Soviet Union. In the first summer, I travelled across Estonia. In the summer of 1990, drawing upon contacts established the previous summer, I delivered a series of lectures in Estonia describing what I had learned in previous years in Canada about speech therapy for stuttering. I presented my own encounters with therapy as a case study and also spoke about the work underway in Canada, at that time, to set up a national stuttering self-help organization. My talks in Estonia led to the founding of the Estonian Stuttering Association in 1993.

I've been pleased to learn, regarding Estonia, that young Estonians who stutter are very actively involved in a European Erasmus+ youth exchange program. This program brings together young people from across Europe. With regard to youth exchanges specifically involving young people who stutter, there is no emphasis, from what I've learned in recent years, on fluency. I think the non-emphasis on fluency is a great way to go, in the circumstances.

In 1995, following my previous involvement with the International Fluency Association (IFA), which has since been rebranded as the World Stuttering and Cluttering Association (WSCO), I played a central role in the founding of the International Stuttering Association (ISA). A series of professionally designed surveys, mailed out to national self-help organizations worldwide, were a key feature of the planning which led to the launch of the ISA. My purpose in helping with the founding of the ISA was to

ensure that people who stutter would be speaking out on their own behalf at the international level. Since then, a number of other international bodies have been formed which speak on behalf of people who stutter. All such organizations perform a useful function.

After 2003, I took a big step back: I could not maintain such a pace of volunteer work indefinitely, on top of attending to my day job and family responsibilities. Since 2003, my volunteer work has been mostly unrelated to stuttering. I remain convinced that comparing notes in the course of in-person, face-to-face conversations, such as at meetings of local self-help groups, or in the course of in-person youth exchanges such as Erasmus+, constitutes a vastly better way than seeking to find each other solely through social media. That said, it's undeniable that the internet can serve a great purpose in the sharing of evidence-based information and for the setting up of in-person meetings and conferences. One of the big questions for me, then as now, is: Of all the people out there who stutter, who actually gets help?

Two ways to teach fluency shaping

Finally, I will conclude with comments about two of the models which are available, when we think of ways to position stuttering in our minds. I often switch back and forth: I engage in code switching between the medical model of fluency shaping, and the educational model.

Briefly, the Edmonton clinic I attended at the University of Alberta is based on the medical model of stuttering. When I was in Edmonton, I spoke in the code of such a medical model. Back home in Toronto (where we lived until we moved to Stratford in 2018), my thinking was in terms of an educational model of stuttering. According to that model, I had relearned how to speak: I had learned fluency as a second language. In the circumstances, the medical model has the advantage of being rigorous and scientific. I speak in the terminology of the medical model when it makes sense to do so. At other times, I speak using the metaphors of the educational model. I have no problem with code switching to my heart's content.

I will also address another topic – namely the variations in speech patterns which can be detected among graduates of two major streams of fluency shaping programs geared toward people who stutter. There are two major variations – two different ways of speaking – associated with fluency shaping as a form of therapy. It would be great, in my view, to see some research gets done, which would enable us to compare these two variations.

From what I have learned, with regard to such variations, researchers trained in speech-language pathology actually appear quite unlikely to be in a position – given gaps in their training – to contribute in a meaningful way to our understanding of what has been keeping two such streams of fluency shaping in place over the past half-century and more. Conversely, from what I can gather, researchers from academic disciplines such as sociolinguistics and business management – given their particular skill sets – may be in a better position to productively address such vital research questions.

If you are seeking to learn fluency as a second language (not everyone is engaged in such a pursuit: many self-help organizations are opposed to such a strategy), I recommend you steer clear of methods that give rise to a slow monotone. There is no point in learning to speak in such an anomalous manner if there is an option to learn to speak at a moderate speech rate, and with a level of expressiveness that corresponds to the expressiveness of a normally fluent speaker.

As noted earlier, it must also be kept in mind that 20 percent of people who stutter will not be able to attain long-term gains from attempts to learn fluency as a second language. This is not because people in the latter category are not trying hard enough; the reason has to do, instead, with how our brains are wired for speech production.

It strikes me that some clinicians can spend a lifetime teaching fluency shaping, all the while apparently convinced that uniform prolongation of syllables is the only available method to teach people who stutter to attain fluency skills. Another method is, indeed, available. Such a method requires instruction on an individualized basis; it's not something that can be taught on the basis of "one size fits all."

I have my own theory about what appears to be going on. It's clear that it's easier to teach a client the uniform prolongation of syllables. You can approach it like an assembly line in a factory. Just about every person who stutters can be placed on some assembly line, metaphorically speaking, and can learn how to engage in the uniform prolongation of syllables. To teach differential prolongation, in contrast, requires a little more time and effort. I have described, in a journal article published in 1988, how a series of clinicians worked with me, over several days, to enable me to correctly prolong syllables at an early stage of my three-week visit to Edmonton in 1987. Without individualized instruction, I would not have learned to how to correctly practise the differential prolongation of syllables. Never would have learned it.

Thus the first part of my theory is that, from a business perspective, it's easier to set up a clinic that teaches an assembly-line approach based on the uniform prolongation of syllables. It's more

challenging, by far, according to this theory, to set up a clinic where a team of clinicians provides individualized instruction in the differential-prolongation method.

An academic concerned with business practices in stuttering treatment clinics would be in a great position to test the above-noted theory. I can't picture a speech-language pathology researcher spending time trying to analyze, from a business perspective, the distinction between the two, above-noted approaches to fluency shaping. From what I can gather, researchers in the field of speech-language pathology are generally not trained in the analysis of business models for delivery of treatment services. That is not their area of expertise.

The second feature of my theory is that there's a world of difference between each of the speech patterns associated with the above-noted two approaches to fluency shaping. Some speech-language pathologists are aware of the distinction. The Edmonton clinic, for example, had chosen the differential prolongation route by the mid-1980s. It was evident even then, among researchers in Edmonton, that the speech pattern derived from differential prolongation was going to be easier for clients to actually apply in everyday speaking situations. That pattern would work out much better for them than speaking in a slow monotone. Yet other clinics, in many parts of the world, persist in teaching clients to speak in a slow, laborious, droning way of speaking.

For clinicians in the latter settings, the slow monotone is viewed as perhaps a little awkward, but clearly an option worth considering for a client who speaks with a severe stutter. I've met plenty of people who speak in a slow monotone. They are doing the best they know how. I do not for a moment criticize them for how they speak. In many cases they do fine in expressing themselves, monotone delivery notwithstanding. Often they emphasize points through facial expression, and through body language; a person can get by well enough speaking in this way. But it's not the only option that's available.

In order to make any progress in distinguishing between these two treatment outcomes, representative samples of speech from the uniform-prolongation school of fluency shaping would need to be compared, in a systematic way, with representative samples from the differential-prolongation school. The ideal researchers to set up such comparative studies would be sociolinguists who have training and experience in detecting differences in speech variations of various kinds. I would not recommend leaving such research solely in the hands of speech-language pathologists.

Endnotes and Sources

Selected works by Erving Goffman

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* Doubleday, Anchor Books: New York, 1959.

_____ *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction.* Bobbs-Merrill:
Indianapolis, 1961.

_____ *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* Simon & Schuster: New
York, 1963.

_____ *Interaction Ritual: Essay on Face-to-Face Behavior.* Pantheon Books: New York, 1967.

_____ *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience.* Northeastern University Press: Boston,
1974.

_____ *Forms of Talk.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 1981.

Selected studies of the sociology of Erving Goffman

Greg Smith, *Erving Goffman.* Routledge: London and New York, 2006.

Goffman has been widely characterized as building his sociology around the model of the theatrical performance. Greg Smith (2013) has argued, however, that there is more to Goffman's sociology than the concept of "dramaturgy." Greg Smith, *The Drama of Social Life.* Routledge: London, 2013.

Goffman has been described variously as an American sociologist, a Canadian sociologist, and a Canadian-American sociologist

Goffman's connection to both Canada and the United States has been addressed at a Preserved Stories post entitled: Erving Goffman began his graduate work in Chicago in 1945.

https://preservedstories.com/2012/12/27/after-working-at-the-nfb-and-completing-a-ba-at-the-university-of-toronto-erving-goffman-commenced-graduate-studies-at-the-university-of-chicago-in-1945/

Sociologists were once convinced that stutterers were incapable of forming themselves into groups

Erving Goffman (1963, p. 22) commented that, "There are speech defectives whose peculiarity apparently discourages any group formation whatsoever." He cited Edwin Lemert, *Social Pathology*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1951, p. 151:

Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* Simon & Schuster: New

York, 1963.

An excerpt from an unpublished paper by Michael Petrunik and Thomas R. Klassen (2003) reads:

In his classic 1951 text, *Social Pathology,* the godfather of labeling theory, Edwin Lemert,

declared that self-help/mutual aid/advocacy groups for stutterers did not exist. He argued that

the few efforts to form such groups were unsuccessful because of the fundamental concern of

stutterers to avoid situations where they might be compelled to speak:

Michael Petrunik and Thomas R. Klassen. [Unpublished paper] (2003): A Sociological Analysis of

Stuttering: From Clinical Conceptions to Self-Help/Mutual Aid/Advocacy.

https://preservedstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Petrunik-Klassen-2003.pdf

In Chapter 9, "Participation Patterns and Benefits of Membership in a Self-Help Organization of Stutterers," in Alfred H. Katz and Eugene I. Bender (1976), Thomasina Borkman noted (pp. 81-82) that

Self-help organizations of stutterers had been thought to be non-existent by students of

social deviance and the stigmatized. Edwin Lemert, the one sociologist extensively

interested in stutterers, wrote in 1970 that

Stutterers – unlike the blind, the deaf, the physically handicapped, narcotic

addicts, criminals, and other deviants – do not form groups of their own, nor do

they develop a subculture. Furthermore, they neither organize nor support

therapy groups comparable to Alcoholics Anonymous.

The quotation of Edwin M. Lemert which Borkman cited is from the article by

Lemert, entitled "Sociological Perspective," which appeared in Joseph G. Sheehan

(Ed.), *Stuttering: Research and Therapy.* New York: Harper & Row, 1970, pp. 172-187.

The above-noted quotation from Thomasina Borkman appeared in Alfred H. Katz and

Eugene I. Bender, *The Strength in Us: Self-Help Groups in the Modern World.* Franklin Watts:

New York, 1976.

Borkman added, in the passage cited above, that "Lemert's assertion must be revised to fit new evidence." By the time that Katz and Bender's 1976 study was published, nineteen self-help organizations of stutterers were definitely known to have been initiated in the world, of which fourteen were in the United States. Of the fourteen known associations in the United States, Borkman observed that seven were currently functioning: "The oldest self-help group of stutterers in the United States that is still surviving was initiated in December 1965 for adults in a large metropolitan area on the East Coast."

Michel de Montaigne

Marina Webster Perkins (2022) [PhD thesis], *Communication, Relevance, and Power in Montaigne's 'Essais'* [Apollo – University of Cambridge Repository] https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.86922

Hesitant speech, compared to open stuttering

Hesitant speech is a particular form of stuttering. I became aware of this way of stuttering only after I read about it recently.

Johannes Von Tiling and Alexander Wolff Von Gudenberg (2012, p. 207) observed that this form of stuttering contains no core behaviours associated with overt stuttering: the listener will not observe any of the standard repetitions, prolongations, or blocks.

Such a form of speech production does, however, feature behaviours associated with stuttering including interjections (starters, fillers), revisions, incomplete phrases and pauses that occur when the stutterer seeks to avoid core behaviours. Further, according to Von Tiling and Von Gudenberg (2012),

Hesitant speech contains more and longer interjections, revisions, incomplete phrases and pauses than the speech of most normally fluent people. It is, like stuttered speech, a form of coping with the feeling of stuttering, or, in a word, a form of stuttering:

Johannes Von Tiling and Alexander Wolff Von Gudenberg, Listener perception beliefs of stuttering, prolonged speech and verbal avoidance behaviors in people who stutter. *Canadian Journal of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology,* 36(3) (2012) 204–219.

[**Please note:** when I've looked at the above-noted journal website to check out a PDF file, I've come across a warning of a potential virus at the site.]

Iron law of oligarchy

An Encyclopedia Britannica entry has outlined the sociological thesis known as the iron law of oligarchy:

https://www.britannica.com/topic/iron-law-of-oligarchy

Fluency shaping involves either uniform prolongation or differential prolongation of syllables

Einer Boberg and Deborah Kully (1985) described the teaching of differential prolongation of syllables, through a process of individualized instruction: Einer Boberg and Deborah Kully, *Comprehensive Stuttering Program. Clinical Manual & Client Manual.* College-Hill Press, San Diego, 1985.

Jaan Pill (1988) described achieving mastery of differential prolongation of syllables following individualized instruction, spread out over several days and involving several clinicians working with him at different times, at the Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research (ISTAR), July 1987. **Correction:** Jaan Pill referred (p. 388) to "the exploratory breath just prior to the onset of voicing." In place of "exploratory breath," the correct term is "expiratory breath":

Jaan Pill, A comparison between two treatment programs: A personal account. *Journal of Fluency Disorders,* 13 (6) (1988) 385-398.

https://doi.org/10.1016/0094-730X(88)90006-X

Michael Blomgren (2013) described the teaching of uniform prolongation of syllables as a feature of one version (not the sole version available) of fluency shaping:

Michael Blomgren (2013), Behavioral treatments for children and adults who stutter: a review. *Psychology research and behavior management,* 6 (2013) 9–19. https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S31450

Robert Kroll and Lori Scott-Sulsky (2010) described the teaching of uniform prolongation of syllables as a standard procedure in one particular approach to fluency shaping:

Robert Kroll and Lori Scott-Sulsky, The Fluency Plus Program: An Integration of Fluency Shaping and Cognitive Restructuring for Adolescents and Adults Who Stutter. In Barry Guitar and Rebecca McCauley (Eds.), *Treatment of Stuttering: Established and Emerging Interventions.* Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, London, 2010.

https://slh.lwwhealthlibrary.com/book.aspx?bookid=1084

Uniform prolongation gives rise to a slow monotone; differential prolongation gives rise to a speech pattern closer to the rate and expressiveness of normally fluent speakers

The term *fluency shaping*, along with an associated term, *prolonged speech,* has often been equated with the Ronald L. Webster (1974) Precision Fluency Shaping Program (PFSP) speech therapy method. This method, which involves the uniform prolongation of syllables, tends to give rise to "very slow monotone speech, with no emotion" (Thomasina Jo Borkman, 1999, p. 113):

Thomasina Jo Borkman, *Understanding Self-Help/Mutual Aid: Experiential Learning in the Commons.* Rutgers
University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1999.

Ronald L. Webster, *The Precision Fluency Shaping Program: Speech Reconstruction for Stutterers.*
Communications Development Corporation, Roanoke, Virginia, 1974.

It warrants emphasis that fluency shaping and prolonged speech are not inevitably associated solely with uniform prolongation. Some fluency shaping and prolonged speech methods employ, instead, the differential (rather than uniform) prolongation of syllables.

Johannes Von Tiling and Alexander Wolff Von Gudenberg (2012, p. 215) referred to a study by Johannes Von Tiling (2011) which indicates that fluent listeners have found that stuttered speech is actually more expressive of a speaker's "emotional competence" than the prolonged speech (based on the uniform prolongation of syllables) described in the above-noted 2012 study:

Johannes Von Tiling, Listener perceptions of stuttered speech, prolonged speech, and verbal avoidance
behaviors. *Journal of Communication Disorders,* 44 (2011) 161-172.
https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20947094/

Johannes Von Tiling and Alexander Wolff Von Gudenberg, Listener perception beliefs of stuttering, prolonged
speech and verbal avoidance behaviors in people who stutter. *Canadian Journal of Speech-Language Pathology
and Audiology,* 36(3) (2012) 204–219.

[**Please note:** when I've looked at the above-noted journal website to check out a PDF file, I've come across a warning of a potential virus at the site.]

A study by Marie Christine Franken et al. (1992) described the slow monotone characteristic of a Dutch version of the PFSP program developed by Ronald Webster. "It is quite probable," Franken et al. (1992) observed (p. 237), "that the relatively slow and unexpressive speech resulting from a fluency shaping program is much more acceptable and much more effective in everyday communication than the heavily stuttered pretherapy speech":

Marie Christine Franken, Louis Boves, Herman F.M. Peters, and Ronald L. Webster, Perceptual evaluation of the speech before and after fluency shaping stuttering therapy. *Journal of Fluency Disorders,* 17(4) (1992) 223-241.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/0094730X9290035O

In contrast to the above-noted outcomes, Marilyn Langevin et al. (2006) described long-term outcomes for stutterers attending the Dutch and Canadian versions of the Comprehensive Stuttering Program (CSP). The stutterers in the study, the latter report noted, demonstrated a mean speech naturalness rating within the range of the naturalness rating of nonstutterers:

Marilyn Langevin, Wendy J. Huinck, Deborah Kully, Herman F.M. Peters, Holly Lomheim, and Marian Tellers, A cross-cultural, long-term outcome evaluation of the ISTAR Comprehensive Stuttering Program across Dutch and Canadian adults who stutter. *Journal of Fluency Disorders,* 31(4) (2006) 229-56.

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16914189/

In addition, Shelli Teshima et al. (2010) observed that a study of posttherapy speech naturalness involving a follow-up of clients, extending over a five-year period, rated by student speech-language pathologists, community members, and listeners who stutter, found that stutterers graduating from the Comprehensive Stuttering Program (which teaches clients the differential prolongation of syllables) achieved the range of naturalness ratings given to typically fluent speakers:

Shelli Teshima, Marilyn Langevin, Paul Hagler, and Deborah Kully, Post-treatment speech naturalness of Comprehensive Stuttering Program clients and differences in ratings among listener groups, *Journal of Fluency Disorders,* 35, (1) (2010) 44-58.

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20412982/

Fluency as a second language

Jaan Pill, *Fluency as a Second Language* [Keynote Presentation]. Canadian Stuttering Association Conference,
Calgary, Alberta, August 24, 2001.
The Calgary talk referred to the Canadian Association of People Who Stutter (CAPS); the name
was subsequently changed to the shorter version: Canadian Stuttering Association (CSA).

https://preservedstories.com/2015/12/09/fluency-as-a-second-language/

Jaan Pill, *Stuttering – A Listener's Guide: Presentation at Kiwanis Club of North York, April 20,
2011* [Video].
https://vimeo.com/24172074