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Research Article

"I Didn't Even Think of This": Examining the Influence of Student Disability Accommodation Training on Basic Course Instructors' Attitudes and Self-Efficacy

Jillian A. Joyce, Illinois State University

Abstract

Despite the growing number of students with disabilities in the university setting, few resources are offered to teach instructors about specific disabilities or provide direction for how to accommodate these students. This study¹ used quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the influence of accommodation training on basic communication course graduate teaching assistants' attitudes and self-efficacy regarding students with disabilities. The training used attribution theory as a lens to examine stuttering, a stigmatized disability that can uniquely affect the basic course classroom, and explore the logistical requirements for accommodating students in postsecondary education. This study used pretest and posttest data from 12 basic course instructors who attended the training session and posttest responses from 27 basic course instructors who did not. Additionally, this study examined responses from three focus groups, totaling 13 instructors, to determine their perceptions

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about the training session. Results suggest the training was effective in increasing self-efficacy and instructors are desirous of further training and resources to accommodate students with disabilities.

Keywords: disability, stuttering, PWS, attribution theory, attitudes, self-efficacy, training, basic communication course

In the fall of 2015, I attended a conference session with a colleague on a whim. It was earlier than I like to be up, but she seemed interested in the topic, so I decided to go. The conversation was about accommodating students who stutter in the university classroom. After listening to several presentations, I was especially struck by a young man who was in his junior year of college. He spoke with a pronounced stutter and explained what his experience had been like during his freshman year public speaking class. He commented on his uncertainty about whether his peers would accept him, described his fear of having to complete specific oral assignments, and talked about the thankfulness he had for the teacher who worked with him to develop specific accommodations that allowed him to not only pass the class successfully, but enjoy it.

As an instructor of the basic communication course, my mind raced after this session. How would I accommodate a student who stuttered in my class? What do I know about stuttering? More than that, what do I know about the logistics of accommodating a student with any disability within the university setting? I realized that although I had received helpful training in how to assess student assignments, engage in classroom management strategies, and develop my own teaching style, the training I had received about accommodating students with disabilities was virtually limited to directions about where the office of disability services was located.

These questions peaked my curiosity about students with disabilities in the basic communication course and especially made me wonder about students who stutter. Even though students with disabilities are more likely to attain positive professional outcomes after graduation than their non-disabled peers (National Council on Disability, 2003), students with disabilities may face significant challenges within the university system, including high dropout rates (Hartley, 2010), course failure (Sanford et al., 2011), and difficulties in their relationships with instructors and peers (Adriaensens, Beyers, & Struyf, 2015; Butler, 2013; Klompas & Ross, 2004).

Unfortunately, instructors are often unaware of how to accommodate these students (Daniels, Panico, & Sudholt, 2011) and are typically provided with little to no accommodation training (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006). This issue must be examined as instruction about accommodating students with disabilities can influence teacher self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusion, and because inclusive education is widely recommended to foster both academic and social outcomes for students with disabilities (Ruppar, Neeper, & Dalsen, 2016). Teachers who do receive consultation on how to accommodate students with disabilities experience lower levels of learned helplessness, higher levels of self-efficacy (Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011), and are able to better meet the needs of their students (Kosko & Wilkins, 2009).

Morreale, Worley, and Hugenberg (2010) found that most universities do not have basic communication courses geared for special student populations, including students with high levels of communication apprehension, anxiety, or reticence. Instead, these students are typically included in the general population classroom. This data speaks to the need for all basic communication course instructors to receive training about accommodations. As improved attitudes about students with disabilities and increased self-efficacy concerning accommodation can benefit student learning, it is therefore necessary to not only train instructors on how to accommodate students with disabilities, but to understand their perceptions of these students. Students with disabilities should not be barred or excused from the course; instead, appropriate accommodations should be provided to allow these students an equal footing in the class with their peers.

Literature Review

Students With Disabilities and Legislation in Higher Education

While transitioning to the university setting can be difficult for many students, the transition from high school to college may be especially challenging for students with disabilities (Madaus, 2005). The National Center for Education Statistics found in 2012 that approximately 11% of students enrolled in postsecondary education had a disability (NCES, 2016). These students may face a variety of challenges in higher education, including navigating the differences between the disability laws that govern primary and secondary education and postsecondary education (Kelepouris, 2014). Specifically, it is important for students to understand the difference between the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). IDEA guarantees that all students with disabilities will receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in primary and secondary school (20 U.S. Code § 1412) and provides regulations regarding the rights of children to receive an Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Beatty, 2013; 20 U.S. Code § 1412).

However, unlike primary and secondary education, postsecondary education is not considered a guaranteed right in the United States (Kelepouris, 2014). Once a student leaves high school, he or she is no longer protected under the IDEA. Instead, the student is only protected by Section 504 and the ADA, which function primarily as “anti-discrimination, or access, laws rather than specific education laws” (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005, p. 8). Kelepouris (2014) explains, “the focus of educational rights in postsecondary education is not on whether the student is provided a FAPE, but whether the college or university has discriminated against the student because of his/her disability” (p. 28). Additionally, the requirements for disability disclosure change drastically after high school. While the IDEA requires that schools must locate and serve students in need of special education, Section 504 and the ADA prohibit postsecondary institutions from searching for a student’s disability status (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005).

It is therefore up to the student not only to disclose their disability to the university, but also to provide documentation to prove the need for accommodations. Often providing an IEP from high school is not substantial evidence; students commonly must also provide documentation concerning the diagnosis of the disability, the credentials of the individual who diagnosed the disability, and the influence that the disability has on major life activities and the student’s academic performance (Kelepouris, 2014). This burden of proof may be especially challenging for students newly entering the university. Eckes and Ochoa (2005) state that, “many students with disabilities leave high school without the self-advocacy skills they need to survive in college” (p. 6).

Students with disabilities and university faculty. While students with disabilities may feel a lack of preparedness in registering with the office of disability services (ODS) at their university, students may also choose to not disclose their disability in order to avoid potential stigmatization. Hong (2015) found that students with disabilities experience concerns about how faculty may perceive them if they reveal a need for accommodation. Students stated they feared their need for academic adjustments would indicate that they were “less capable of making it through the class” and an accommodation letter would signal “something’s wrong

with me" (p. 214). Abreu, Hillier, Frye, and Goldstein (2016) state one key issue is that faculty members may lack an understanding about various types of disabilities and may not be aware "of their role in ensuring students with disabilities do not feel stigmatized when utilizing accommodations" (p. 326). This lack of knowledge may be detrimental, as several studies have shown that receiving support from faculty is influential to the academic achievement of students with disabilities (e.g., Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002; Troiano, Liefeld, & Trachtenberg, 2010).

It is important to note that since basic communication course instructors often teach first-year university students (Hunt, Simonds, & Simonds, 2009), their willingness and ability to accommodate a student with a disability can have a profound influence on that student's collegiate future. Teachers may be able to help students with disabilities manage social challenges related to negative attitudes from peers (Franck, Jackson, Pimentel, & Greenwood, 2003) and encourage students to continue to seek accommodations in future classes. Positive experiences with instructors early on can influence students with disabilities to utilize their accommodations, while negative experiences can prevent a student from seeking assistance. Hong (2015) states that empathy is a vital part of providing accommodations. One student from her study indicated, "I'd rather deal with the repercussions of being a 'lazy' pupil than if the other option is being resentfully given help" (p. 216). Similarly, students in her study feared negative reactions from their classmates. For students with communicative disabilities in the basic course, accurate beliefs and positive attitudes from teachers may function to improve peer relationships between these students and their fluent peers (Arnold, Li, & Goltl, 2015).

Stuttering

In everyday vernacular, people often use the term "stuttering" to describe a moment of verbal dysfluency: a brief stammer in answering a difficult question, a moment of repetition while saying a challenging word, or an instance of verbal fillers when attempting to gather thoughts. The phrase, "When I feel nervous to speak in front of others, I stutter" is heard routinely in basic communication course classrooms. Stuttering, however, is not the same thing as general verbal dysfluency. While students may stumble over their words when they experience psychological discomfort, this is different from the communicative disability of stuttering.

Stuttering is defined as “a disruption in the fluency of verbal expression characterized by involuntary, audible or silent, repetitions or prolongations of sounds or syllables” (Büchel & Sommer, 2004, p. 159) and may be accompanied by other movements, known as secondary or accessory behaviors, such as closing of eyes or lips, tensing jaw or cheeks, or tapping fingers or feet (Scott, Guitar, & Chemla, 2010). Stuttering is typically divided into three main patterns: repetitions of sounds and syllables (li-li-li-like this), sound prolongations (lllllllike this), and blocks, which are periods of silence while the PWS attempts to make the sound.

Stuttering can also be cyclical, varying in frequency and severity throughout an individual’s life (Scott et al., 2010). For example, a PWS may not stutter at all when speaking to friends, but may stutter when reading aloud. Similarly, the content of the speech or the audience may influence a stutter. The National Stuttering Association (2017) states that a PWS may be more likely to stutter when saying his/her name or speaking to an authority figure. Individuals who stutter may also be more likely to stutter due to external factors such as fatigue or stress, or if they feel obligated to hide their stutter. Moments of stress or concern about needing to hide a stutter may be especially prevalent in the basic communication course.

Stuttering and Public Speaking

In basic course literature, very little research has been dedicated to individuals with disabilities or PWS. Whaley and Langlois (1996) provide a review of the literature concerning the nature of stuttering, and while this information is valuable in basic course dialogue, the article does not describe how basic course instructors view PWS or address concerns about how they can accommodate PWS.

Butler (2013) found that PWS described difficulties in their educational experience because of the focus on verbal communication in the classroom. Because of these negative school experiences, many of the participants in Butler’s (2013) study decided not to attend a university after graduating. Of the 38 participants in her study, five went on to a higher education setting where “they enjoyed the relative anonymity afforded to them at university where the fear of speaking was reduced and they were ‘better able to hide’” (p. 61). These PWS described purposefully missing classes where they had to give oral presentations, choosing to accept a lower grade instead. These behaviors are poignant for PWS who find themselves in a basic communication course, as students who stutter often experience higher levels of

communication apprehension compared to fluent students and perceive they have poorer communication competence than their peers (Blood et al., 2001).

Attribution Theory

A specific challenge for PWS is battling perceptions about the cause and controllability of their disability. While stuttering can have many causes, including issues related to genetics, neurophysiology, and child development, stuttering is not caused by psychological differences (Scott et al., 2010). Scott et al. (2010) state that individuals who stutter "do not begin stuttering because they are more anxious, more shy, or more depressed" (p. 2) than fluent individuals; however, many studies have shown that fluent speakers often have negative and stereotypical views about PWS (e.g., Abdalla & St. Louis, 2012; Boyle, 2014; Johnson, 2008).

Heider (1958) argues that individuals use attributions to "interpret other people's actions [to] predict what they will do under certain circumstances" (p. 5) and assign either internal or external causes as the root of another's behavior (Whitehead, 2014). Internal attributions are made when behaviors are perceived as a result from an individual's character or attitude, while external attributions are made when a behavior is credited to factors outside an individual's control (Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2013). Several studies (e.g., Boyle, 2014, 2016; Weiner, 1985) have shown that individuals are more willing to exhibit help when they perceive that the source of another's behavior is external and uncontrollable, while negative behaviors that are seen as internal and controllable often incite blame.

Attribution theory and students with disabilities. Boyle (2016) found in a study of 165 university students that those who viewed stuttering as controllable reported higher levels of blame and anger toward PWS than those who viewed stuttering as resulting from a biological (or uncontrollable) cause. Similarly, a study of 330 speech language pathologists showed that perceptions of controllability were significantly related to higher levels of blaming students for stuttering, as well as decreased sympathy and decreased willingness to help the student (Boyle, 2014). Higher levels of blame were not only linked to higher perceived controllability, but also to a greater dislike of students who stutter and more beliefs about negative stereotypes. Conversely, participants who attributed uncontrollable, biological causes for stuttering reported higher levels of sympathy for PWS.

Further studies have shown that teachers are often more willing to include students with physical disabilities as opposed to cognitive or behavioral disabilities

(Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998) and students with non-visible disabilities face the extra challenge of “convincing” teachers of their disability. Beilke and Yssel (1999) explain, “Easily verifiable, physical disabilities do not place faculty in the position of compromising academic integrity or being duped into ‘believing’ students who only claim to need special assistance” (p. 1). PWS face the issue that although their disability is physical, it is not visible. Misunderstandings about the causes and controllability of stuttering has the potential to lead fluent speakers to assume stuttering has a psychological root, instead of a biological cause, and can be “treated” as a psychological issue. Therefore, it is important to examine what teachers know about stuttering and their attitudes regarding PWS.

Knowledge and Attitudes About Stuttering

One hurdle for PWS is a lack of knowledge about the causes and effects of stuttering in the general population. In their study of 471 teachers, Abdalla and St. Louis (2012) found most participants held stereotypical views about PWS, including the belief that PWS are shy or fearful, and 65% indicated that PWS may have themselves to blame for their disability. Additionally, teachers who want to engage PWS in the classroom might lack the knowledge or resources about how to do so. Scott et al. (2010) explain remarks such as “slow down,” “take a deep breath,” or “think about what you’re going to say, then say it” are unhelpful for PWS. While these phrases could be beneficial for fluent speakers, they suggest PWS are simply able to control the stutter by trying harder. Similarly, teachers may try to help PWS by saying the stuttered word. Abdalla and St. Louis (2012) explain that this “urge to fill in may not [stem] from impatience per se but might be an action taken to help the person become ‘unstuck’” (p. 65). However, several studies have shown that this action is often unappreciated and PWS emphasize their desire to finish their own sentences (e.g., Butler, 2013; Daniels et al., 2011, Klompas & Ross, 2004).

Zhang et al. (2010) explain that a teacher’s willingness to provide accommodations for students with disabilities is influenced by his or her attitude about the ability of the student to be as successful as the student’s peers. The authors note that teachers “want to see that their time and effort are worthwhile” (p. 284); therefore, it is important to make instructors aware of the potential that students with disabilities have for academic achievement. Additionally, increasing instructor familiarity with disabilities can have a positive influence since individuals who are

familiar with people with disabilities often have more positive attitudes about accommodation (e.g., Boyle, 2016; Brockelman, Chadsey, & Loeb, 2006).

Self-Efficacy and Disability Training

Bandura (1997) describes self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). This is the self-confidence an individual has in his or her ability to successfully exhibit or perform a behavior. Bandura identified four sources that contribute to an individual’s level of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states. In general, individuals who are high in self-efficacy “consider most tasks to be manageable, feel confident, and perceive their behavior to be useful across contexts” (Housley Gaffney & Frisby, 2013, p. 211).

While teachers may want to accommodate students with disabilities, they may lack the self-efficacy to do so; however, training may be able to help bridge this gap. Marshall et al. (2002) found that 81.2% of trainee teachers said teaching a student with a communicative disability would be a positive challenge, yet only 10.7% stated they would feel competent. Most participants explained feeling apprehensive and anxious about having a student with a speaking disorder in the classroom, citing a lack of preparedness or institutional support. Daniels et al. (2011) found that professors stated similar obstacles. All the participants in their study indicated a supportive classroom environment and supportive instructor would be important to the success of a student with a communicative disability, yet several said they were unsure of how to handle accommodations and noted a lack of knowledge and experience as main stumbling blocks.

The influence of professional development may have noteworthy implications for teachers and trainers. Kosko and Wilkins (2009) determined that “professional development was found to be a better predictor of teacher’s improved perceptions of their ability to adapt instruction for students with [Individualized Education Programs] than years of experience teaching students” (p. 8), and Miller, Wienke, and Savage (2000) found that general education teachers who participated in workshops focusing on specific instructional, learning, or behavioral strategies regarding teaching students with disabilities indicated a significant increase in their perceived ability to teach these students.

Providing knowledge about specific legal requirements regarding students with disabilities may be beneficial for instructors as well, as studies have shown that many

faculty members and administrators at higher education institutions are unfamiliar with the requirements of Section 504 and the ADA (e.g., Katsiyannis, Zhang, Landmark, & Reber, 2009; Vasek, 2005; Wilson, Getzel, & Brown, 2000). Rao and Gartin (2003) found that there is a strong relationship between faculty members' willingness to accommodate students with disabilities and their knowledge about laws regarding accommodation. Because of the influence that training can have on educators, it is important for universities to provide teachers with proactive education about accommodating students with disabilities and not wait until a problem arises (Zhang et al., 2010).

The current study explores an important gap in the communication research about the perceptions basic course instructors have about students who stutter and about a training session regarding students with disabilities. It is interesting to note that scholars outside the field of communication studies have conducted almost all of the literature concerning PWS. Researchers in the fields of biology, psychology, and communication sciences and disorders have studied PWS, yet this disability that has the potential to uniquely influence the field of public speaking has scarcely been addressed within communication. In fact, little research about accommodating students in general in the basic communication course classroom has been conducted. Based on the above research, the following hypothesis and research questions are proposed:

H1: Basic communication course instructors who attribute the source of stuttering to psychological (internal) causes will have more negative attitudes toward people who stutter than those who attribute the source to biological (external) causes.

RQ1a: Is there a difference in attitude toward people who stutter between basic communication course instructors who receive training on how to supportively interact with PWS and instructors who do not?

RQ1b: Is there a difference in self-efficacy in dealing with people who stutter between basic communication course instructors who receive training on how to supportively interact with PWS and instructors who do not?

RQ2: Will basic communication course instructors who have had prior experience with PWS have more positive attitudes toward students who stutter?

RQ3a: Was the training effective in positively changing instructors' attitudes?

RQ3b: Was the training effective in positively changing instructors' perceived self-efficacy?

RQ4: What perceptions do basic communication course instructors have of a training session concerning accommodating students with disabilities, specifically the communicative disability of stuttering?

Method

Training Development

Prior to this study, I developed a training session about stuttering and accommodating students with disabilities, which was incorporated into a larger teacher training session that all new basic communication course graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) at a mid-sized Midwestern university were required to take. The training took place in 2016 prior to the start of the fall semester. The accommodation training was an hour and a half long. The instructional design process for this training included analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (ADDIE) to "ensure congruence among goals, strategies, and evaluation" (Gustafson & Branch, 2002, p. 18). First, I developed an analysis of needs of the university, the basic communication course program, and the incoming instructors by conducting interviews.

In my interview with the director of the basic course, I learned that the GTA training session had never previously focused on disability accommodation and that this was an area in need of attention. Because many of the GTAs would not have had previous teaching experience, it was unlikely that the participants would have received instruction on accommodation elsewhere. I also interviewed coordinators from the university's ODS. I learned that this office wanted more opportunities to participate with departments on campus and inform instructors about the legal

requirements of accommodating students with disabilities. They explained that instructors often only interact with the ODS when they need to, which creates reactive conversations instead of proactive ones. Finally, I conducted interviews with a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) who described the role that professionals play in accommodating students who stutter within the university. In these interviews, I discovered that both the ODS and the basic communication course program wanted GTAs to be knowledgeable about how to accommodate students, but a lack of communication, time, and resources between the departments had prevented this from happening.

The data from this analysis was used to design and develop the goals, outcomes, and objectives for the training, as well as partner with a SLP and the university's ODS to assist in implementing the training. The training used media examples, group discussion, and presentations from the SLP and a coordinator from the ODS. At the end, GTAs were invited to engage in a question-and-answer session with experts. The training initially began by addressing stuttering in the basic communication course and then extended to a discussion about accommodating students with disabilities in general. Incorporating subject matter experts, and not presenting all the content myself, was a strategic design choice (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2012) since individuals are more likely to be persuaded by people they perceive as specialists (Margolis & McCabe, 2006; Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). Finally, the evaluation of the training was assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Quantitative Research Participants

Two groups participated in the quantitative portion of this study. Group 1 consisted of 22 first-year GTAs who attended the training session; Group 2 consisted of 27 second-year GTAs and non-tenure track instructors (NTTs) who did not attend the training. All participants were instructors for the basic communication course at the same mid-sized Midwestern university. Group 1 was 61.9% female and 38.1% male. In Group 1, two participants indicated that they either currently have a stutter or experienced a stutter in the past, six participants indicated they had a close relationship with someone who stutters, and five participants indicated that they had taught someone who stutters. Group 2 was 73.3% female and 23.3% male. In Group 2, one participant indicated that he/she currently has a stutter or experienced a stutter in the past, three participants indicated they had a close relationship with someone who stutters, and 12 participants indicated that they had taught someone

who stutters. Self-selection was used to recruit participants who participated in this study.

Procedure

Group 1. While participation in the training session about accommodating students with disabilities was a mandatory segment of the overall teacher training for new GTAs, instructors in Group 1 were informed that their participation in this study was optional. Prior to the training, an email to recruit participants to take the pretest survey was sent to all 22 incoming basic course GTAs. Participants were eligible to participate in the survey if they had never attended a training course about stuttering previously. Twenty instructors chose to participate in the survey section of the study. After reading the recruitment email, participants were linked to an online version of the pretest survey, which required completion before the training. Three months later, participants in Group 1 were sent a posttest, which was an exact replica of the pretest. Fourteen participants completed the posttest; however, two responses did not include a matching identification number, so those entries were removed, resulting in 12 posttest responses. This sample was 66.6% female and 33.3% male. In this group, two participants indicated a current or previous stutter, no participants indicated a close relationship with PWS, and four participants indicated that they taught someone who stuttered.

Group 2. A recruitment email was sent to 35 second-year GTAs and NTTs. A volunteer sampling produced 27 responses. Participants in Group 2 only took the posttest survey. Participants who responded to the email were linked to an online version of the posttest survey.

Instrumentation

The pretest and posttest surveys were exactly the same and used a three-part instrument. The first section included a modified version of Yeakle and Cooper's (1986) Teachers' Perceptions of Stuttering Inventory (TPSI) and Crowe and Walton's (1981) Teacher Attitudes Toward Stuttering (TATS) Inventory to measure instructors' knowledge and perceptions about students who stutter. This survey used a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The TPSI was created by Yeakle and Cooper (1986) to assess a variety of facets related to the teacher's relationship with a student who stutters, including the perceived personality of a PWS, the influence a stutter can have on a student, and the role a

teacher plays in interacting with a PWS. In their study, Yeakle and Cooper (1986) examined responses from teachers in both primary and secondary education.

Similarly, the TATS was developed by Crowe and Walton (1981) to assess teacher attitudinal beliefs about students who stutter as well as teachers' general knowledge about stuttering. For example, the survey questions asked teachers to indicate their agreement as to whether stuttering is curable, if students tend to stutter to get attention, and if stuttering is a psychological issue. This study was originally tested on elementary school teachers, so questions were altered or omitted to reflect the experience of a college instructor. Any duplicate or redundant questions between the TPSI and the TATS were adjusted.

The second portion of the instrument asked participants to consider the following prompt: "Imagine that tomorrow a new student will be enrolling in your basic communication course. This student has a noticeable stutter. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements." This portion of the survey was designed to encourage teachers to consider how they would personally feel about having a student with a stutter in their classroom, their teacher self-efficacy in their ability to accommodate a PWS, and how they would perceive this hypothetical student. This portion also used a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Instructors indicated their level of agreement about 10 statements including "I have the resources I need to accommodate this student" and "I would feel anxious interacting with this student."

Finally, the third section of this instrument asked for demographic information about the participant. Participants were asked to state their sex, age, level of education, and total number of years teaching. They were also asked to answer "yes" or "no" to the following questions: "Do you currently have a stutter, or have you experienced a stutter in the past?", "Do you have a close relationship with someone who stutters?", and "Do you currently or have you previously taught a student who stutters?"

Procedure for Scales

The 38 Likert-type scale questions were assessed to determine which measured self-efficacy and which measured attitude. To create variable groups, Likert-type questions were recoded into categorical data. This process was first conducted to determine a scale for self-efficacy. Originally, 23 items were identified as measuring self-efficacy in dealing with PWS. After running scale reliability, items were removed

to improve Cronbach's Alpha. The final scale resulted in seven items that produced a very good Cronbach's α of .803 (DeVellis, 2003). The same process was conducted to determine a scale for attitude toward PWS. Originally 21 items were identified as measuring attitude. After running scale reliability, items were removed to improve Cronbach's Alpha. The final scale resulted in 14 items that produced a respectable Cronbach's α of .749 (DeVellis, 2003).

Qualitative Research Participants

The qualitative portion of this study consisted of 13 participants from Group 1. An email to recruit participants was sent to all instructors who attended the training inviting them to take part in a focus group. Of the 22 instructors who took part in the training session, 13 chose to participate in the study, yielding three focus groups. Nine women and four men chose to participate. While all participants were first-time university instructors, several had varying experiences teaching in other contexts. The first group consisted of five participants, the second group consisted of three participants, and the third group consisted of five participants.

Data Collection

Each focus group lasted approximately 45 minutes. In each, I used a semi-structured interview protocol (Morgan, 1997), which allowed participants to expand on the questions and organically introduce themes. Because I served as the organizer of the original training session and was the conductor of the focus groups, I incorporated questions for participants to identify and explain any weaknesses or areas for improvement within the training session to help curb researcher expectancy bias and encourage participants to share freely. I asked participants open-ended questions about their experience during the training session and their experience as a teacher after the training session. I acted as the moderator to promote a positive group experience, facilitate conversation from each member, and keep the group on task (Krueger, 1988; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

The focus groups provided a helpful method for gathering data for this study because of the linkages between each participant's comments. As opposed to one-on-one interviews, participants could build on one another's experiences in creating their own thoughts, an effect that Lindlof and Taylor (2011) refer to as "chaining" or "cascading" (p. 183). Before conducting each group, I briefly reviewed what happened during the training session and asked participants to mentally step out of

the interview room and think back to the original training environment (Krueger, 1988). By examining their personal experiences during the training and their current experiences as a teacher, participants engaged in a group discussion that created a process of “sharing and comparing” (Morgan, 1998, p. 12).

Procedure

All focus groups took place in a secure, private room on the university’s campus. Participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form and were debriefed about the confidential nature of the study. They were informed they would receive pseudonyms in any written work, and were asked to keep the identities of their fellow participants confidential as well. Participants were also informed that each focus group discussion would be audiotaped, videotaped, and transcribed verbatim. Finally, participants were given contact information for the university’s ODS to assist them with any pressing needs.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, yielding 33 pages of single-spaced content. The first two transcriptions were then read to find emerging categories. Data were analyzed using Glaser and Strauss’ (1999) constant comparative method where the responses from participants were first gathered into units of speech that encompassed important content characteristics. These units were then bracketed and grouped together. I then inductively developed several categories for units with similar characteristics (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Once categories were established, the third transcription was unitized and coded to discover any remaining categories. Finally, categories were analyzed for similarities and overarching connecting themes. It is important to note that I analyzed the qualitative data before analyzing the quantitative data to inductively develop categories without potential bias from the results of the quantitative data.

Quantitative Results

Attribution Theory and Attitude (H)

According to attribution theory, individuals who view the root cause of a negative behavior as internal, or controllable, have more negative attitudes toward the person committing the behavior than individuals who see the root cause as external, or uncontrollable. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to

determine if there was any difference in attitude toward PWS between instructors who view stuttering as having an internal, psychological cause and instructors who view stuttering as having an external, biological cause. The Levene's test for variance was not significant ($F = .801, p = .383$), so equality of variance was assumed. There was no statistically significant difference between instructors who viewed the root of stuttering as psychological ($M = 55.91, SD = 5.32$) and those who viewed the root of stuttering as biological ($M = 60.67, SD = 8.23$), $t(18) = -1.56, p = .14, 95\% CI [-11.15, 1.63]$.

Attitude Toward PWS Between Trained and Non-Trained Groups (RQ1a)

An independent samples t -test was conducted to determine if there was any difference in attitude toward PWS between instructors who received training on how to supportively interact with PWS and instructors who did not. The Levene's test for variance was significant ($F = 6.36, p = .016$), so equality of variance was not assumed. There was no statistically significant difference between those who received training ($M = 59.67, SD = 4.14$) and those who did not ($M = 57.14, SD = 7.16$), $t(34.31) = 1.40, p = .17, 95\% CI [-1.15, 6.19]$.

Self-Efficacy Between Trained and Non-Trained Groups (RQ1b)

An independent samples t -test was conducted to determine if there was any difference in self-efficacy toward PWS between instructors who received training on how to supportively interact with PWS and instructors who did not. The Levene's test for variance was not significant ($F = .061, p = .806$), so equality of variance was assumed. Trained participants' ($M = 26.58, SD = 4.87$) scores were statistically, significantly different from the scores of non-trained participants ($M = 21.93, SD = 5.11$).

Attitudes and Prior Experience (RQ2)

An independent samples t -test was conducted to determine if there was any difference in attitude toward PWS between instructors who had previously taught PWS and those who had not. The Levene's test for variance was significant ($F = 12.34, p = .001$), so equality of variance was not assumed. Attitude scores for participants who had taught PWS ($M = 60.72, SD = 3.94$) were statistically, significantly different from participants who had not taught PWS ($M = 56.12, SD = 7.01$).

An independent samples *t*-test was also conducted to determine if there was any difference in attitude toward PWS between instructors who had a close relationship with a person who stutters and those who did not. The Levene's test for variance was not significant ($F = 2.88$, $SD = .09$), so equality of variance was assumed. There was no statistically significant difference between those who had a close relationship with someone who stutters ($M = 54.17$, $SD = 9.13$) and those who did not ($M = 58.22$, $SD = 5.99$), $t(49) = -1.46$, $p = .15$, 95% CI [-9.63, 1.52].

Training Effect in Attitudes (RQ3a)

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the attitudes toward PWS of instructors before and after training. There was not a significant difference in the scores for attitude before training ($M = 57.18$, $SD = 6.72$) and after training ($M = 60.18$, $SD = 3.92$), $t(10) = -1.45$, $p = .177$, 95% CI [-7.61, 1.61].

Training Effect in Self-Efficacy (RQ3b)

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the self-efficacy toward PWS of instructors before and after training. There was a significant difference in the self-efficacy scores before training ($M = 22.83$, $SD = 3.54$) compared to the self-efficacy scores after training ($M = 26.58$, $SD = 4.87$), $t(11) = -2.90$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [-6.61, -.89].

Qualitative Results

Results revealed that participants perceived the training session through three unique lenses: self-perception, student-perception, and logistical-perception. Each focus group centered on these topics and while each participant had their own story to bring to the table, each viewed the training through these lenses and was affected by them either during the training or in their classroom later. The following explains the themes and categories with a thick description (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) to define and support the findings.

Self-Perception

Increased self-efficacy. The first major theme that developed for the lens of self-perception was increased self-efficacy. Across the focus groups, there was a high level of consistency about the personal ability participants felt because of the training. Prior to the training, hardly any of the participants had received training on

students with disabilities, and only two described interactions with people who stutter. An increase in knowledge provided a variety of experiences for the participants. Many participants stated that they felt an increased sense of ability because of new knowledge they received. These participants emphasized their capacity to communicate with the university's ODS, follow disability laws, and dialogue with students who have disabilities, including providing resources for students who are not yet registered with the office. Drew, an instructor with no prior teaching experience, described her interaction with a student in her class who needed accommodation:

If we hadn't have had that training I wouldn't have known that I'd need to ask for the [student's disability card]...I felt very, like, I understood what was going on and I could be like, ok, just let me know whenever that gets done and make sure it gets sent to me and we can do your accommodation. And I knew not to ask about it because I think that's a natural thing if you don't know not to is to be like, oh, what are you getting accommodated? But I knew not to ask about that and just to say, oh, well, whenever that comes to me then I can work things about with you at that time. So, I felt very prepared to deal with that. (1:92-100 [notations reflect focus group number and transcript line numbers])

Drew's experience reflects her level of preparation. Even participants who had previous teaching experience commented on the increase in self-efficacy that they received because of the training. For example, Jordyn, an instructor with previous teaching experience, explained that in her case, she already felt confident about her ability to interact with students, but was unsure about the process of accommodating students at the university level. She explained, "I was just glad I was told what to do when issues come up because in my past experience, it's just been, ok, figure it out... I felt like I was getting something that was useful with that session" (2:64-70).

Other participants, however, described self-efficacy in terms of what they did not know beforehand. While Drew and Jordyn both described their new capability to have a discussion with a staff member or a student about disabilities, several participants emphasized the lack of understanding they had about the topic. For instance, Matt, an instructor with no prior teaching experience, explained that prior

to the training, his lack of knowledge was hindering his self-efficacy, and during the two weeks of teacher training, he wanted to know more about accommodations:

I had heard [the student disability office] name mentioned, but I didn't know exactly what they did or even that students could just go there to sort of find out "Are there accommodations that can be made for me if I have an issue?" And so that was something I was wondering about sort of throughout the training, like what do we do if we have a student who has a special accommodation that needs to be made? (3:89-43)

Similarly, Chris, an instructor with no prior teaching experience, joked about the group discussion section of the training where instructors discussed their beliefs about people who stutter.

I think it came down to the discussion being kind of the moment where it was like, this training session is important because of how poorly the discussion is going without any sort of basis to guide it with. Just because- the discussion itself was great- because it was able to kind of show everyone, like, we don't really know what stuttering is. (3:32-35).

Chris' insecurity about understanding the root of an issue that could affect a student's communication is evident in his statement. Several participants, like Jasmin, an instructor with no prior teaching experience, explained that this knowledge had not been on her radar. She explained, "It just felt nice feeling prepared for it, and it wasn't even something that I had even thought of. And so when the training came up I was like, oh, I didn't even think of this" (3:284-286).

Finally, several participants described feeling a sense of self-efficacy because of decreased anxiety. For first-time instructors, there is often already a heightened sense of nervousness about teaching a class and navigating a curriculum. Participants in each focus group described how their anxiety about teaching was lowered after the training. This category speaks to the necessity of training, as well as the information that should be provided to teachers. Instructors need to not only know information about disabilities, but also about how those disabilities are managed and accommodated. For Mike, an instructor with no teaching experience, the two weeks

of teacher training was exhausting; however, just having the knowledge of where to go in the future if a need arose was enough to calm his nervousness:

It was like, I don't have to stress or worry. If I get a student who has one of these challenges I can go talk to the right people then and I know how to get the help for them, which was important for me going into teaching. I hadn't taught before, and that was my best thing out of it was- I may not know everything on how to help them right now, but I know who to go to talk to; we'll get that taken care of if we need to. (2:39-44)

Feelings of inadequacy. However, many instructors also echoed the opposing theme. While almost all the participants expressed confidence about their ability to interact with the office of disabilities and more confidence about interacting with students who stutter, a prominent theme was also lingering inadequacy. Some participants expressed that while they were informed in general about the ODS, they did not feel confident or secure in their knowledge of what the office could provide for their student. Kathryn, a first-time teacher, explained that she realized this inadequacy when she took a student with a disability to the office:

I walked up there with one of my students, and I still think he felt kind of lost there, too. And I couldn't really give him instructions. I just brought him there and was like, ok, they will take care of you and he was like, oh, so you're leaving? Because I didn't know what to do, right? (3:102-105)

Participants in each group expressed Kathryn's uncertainty. Whitney, an instructor with no prior teaching experience, described wanting further information about accommodating students "because I did feel kind of helpless" (3:84-85). Several instructors also described the difficulty they experienced in navigating specific disabilities in their classroom, such as anxiety and depression. In addition to feeling personally inadequate, participants expressed wanting more knowledge and resources about a wider variety of topics. Once this theme surfaced in each group, I asked participants what specific disabilities training they would want to receive. Responses ranged from anxiety and depression to ADHD/ADD to seizure

disorders. Many participants expressed wanting further information about ways to help all students who need extra assistance, and not just students with disabilities.

Student-Perception

Increased empathy and understanding. When reflecting on the training session, increased empathy and understanding for participants' current students was a main theme. Several instructors described a change in attitude about students with disabilities and described accepting their students as they are. Participants described being more patient with their students as well as not "babying" students who are capable of performing assignments. Kathryn described a student with a stutter in her class, and explained "I had a feeling that it was easier for me just to, you know, just to listen to him, and not say, 'come on, just talk' and be calmer" (3:24-25). Similarly, Amber described that the training session had changed her mind about students with disabilities. She said, "It's made me stop and think that, ok, they can't really help this ... this is something that they can't help and how would I feel if I were in their shoes" (1:331-334).

Another category participants described was being more understanding toward themselves in the classroom. Several expressed that having students with disabilities and behavioral issues made them question if they were a bad teacher. Kayli, an instructor with no prior teaching experience, explained that her experience with a student with ADD was originally frustrating: "I think especially at the beginning I would look out and be like, why is she talking all the time? It must be me. I think she's so rude. And I really am upset about this" (1: 272-274). However, Kayli later identified that her teaching was not to blame: "I think it helped me with an attitude change and just seeing it's really nothing that I'm doing, they're just going to be the way that they are sometimes...helping other people see that I think just helps" (1:277-279).

Future concern. While many participants expressed empathy and understanding, several also expressed concern about interacting with students with disabilities. Jessie, an instructor with no prior teaching experience, described a disruptive student in her class with ADHD who had inappropriate and random outbursts. She stated, "As much as I can, I try to reign it back and just try to ignore him and not feed into whatever attention-seeking behaviors he's doing. I don't actually know how to combat that" (1:505-507). Ashley, an instructor with no prior teaching experience,

stated that, overall, the training made her feel anxious. She was concerned about the potential of future students with communicative disabilities:

I actually hadn't really thought about what would happen if I got a student who stuttered; it wasn't even on my radar. I guess I would say that I had low-level anxiety about that, and then we talked about it, and then I got higher-level anxiety about it [laughs]. Oh dear, I might have to deal with this. (1:304-307)

Logistical-Perception

Desiring specific resources. In addition to wanting more information about disabilities and services to help students, participants described desiring specific tools as a prominent theme. Several participants expressed wanting a database of online resources. Other instructors desired more interactions with professionals. Participants described wanting to interact with the ODS with more consistency. Mike stated:

When we do need to talk, we're going to talk to people we know, not just people we saw one time at a particular training. When we see people on a regular basis, we're much more inclined to go talk to them, and bring our issues, and get help. (2:455-458)

Desiring extended time. Each focus group discussed that they wished the training session had been longer. They discussed wanting to continue the conversation about how to accommodate both students who stutter and students with disabilities as a whole. Jay, an instructor with previous teaching experience, specifically described wanting more time focusing on specific disabilities, like stuttering, because much of this information is new to the instructors. He said, "Just because that's the first time I'm sure most of us have encountered that, and it's really cool. Like- oh yeah! Tell me more" (1:439-441). Instructors also described wanting extended training throughout the semester in addition to training before the school year starts. Drew explained that having several mini-lessons throughout the semester could be beneficial for both teachers and students. She said:

That helps spread it out a little bit, so we'd be better prepared to help our students throughout the semester rather than just having it all at once, which we might not even remember once we actually get to teaching. (1:490-492)

Valuing expert insight. Overall, participants were pleased to have expert insight from the SLP and representative from the ODS. They valued both their first-hand experiences, as well as the way that the experts explained content. Chris explained, "I don't need to have necessarily that educational background, but if this is how they're doing it, then that's how I need to be doing it" (3:337-342). Similarly, Mike expressed his appreciation for the comfort of being able to ask experts difficult questions in a safe space. He stated:

That was a comfortable environment. A good, safe environment to ask any questions about it, where you're not going to ask someone with a disability about it because you don't want to- you just don't want to do it. That's not the right place. So, it was great to have that opportunity there where it was a safe place to ask specific questions about any disabilities. (2:364-368).

Discussion

This study focused on the attributions, attitudes, and self-efficacy of basic communication course instructors in regard to PWS, as well as their perceptions of a training session concerning accommodating students with disabilities, including stuttering. Research indicated that instructors who attribute the source of stuttering to psychological causes would have more negative attitudes toward PWS than those who attribute the source to biological causes, but this hypothesis was unsupported. Additionally, results revealed that no significant difference was found between participants who attended the training and those who did not in regard to attitude. However, it is important to note that due to the nature of the GTA population, the sample size was underpowered and the effects would have needed to be large to detect a difference. The qualitative data helped inform this finding, as instructors who participated in the training revealed increased empathy and understanding for students with disabilities. Results regarding self-efficacy, however, revealed a statistically significant difference. Participants in the group that received training

showed higher self-efficacy than the group that did not receive training. These findings are similar to previous research (e.g., Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011) that demonstrate the positive relationship between self-efficacy and training. It is interesting to note that even though the qualitative results revealed participants also described feelings of inadequacy regarding their ability to accommodate students with disabilities, the results for RQ1b reveal that specifically in regard to self-efficacy concerning PWS, instructors reported increased self-efficacy. This finding may have implications about the specificity of information provided during training sessions.

Results revealed instructors who had taught PWS had more positive attitudes toward PWS. This finding is valuable as it lends to the growing body of literature concerning attitudes and familiarity with individuals with disabilities. Instructors who had taught PWS previously may be more willing to help PWS (Boyle, 2016), experience less anger or dislike toward PWS (Boyle, 2016), and feel less helplessness regarding accommodating PWS (Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011). It is also possible that instructors who have taught PWS previously have seen that PWS are just as capable as their fluent peers (Zhang et al., 2010). However, results examining if instructors who have a close relationship with PWS have more positive attitudes toward PWS than instructors who do not have a close relationship with PWS revealed no statistically significant difference.

This study also explored if the training was effective in positively changing instructors' attitudes and perceived self-efficacy toward PWS. The results revealed no statistically significant difference regarding attitude; instructors did not report significant attitude change after the training. The results did reveal a significant difference in perceived self-efficacy toward PWS between pretest and posttest scores for instructors who received the training. This finding is strengthened by the qualitative data, which found increased self-efficacy to be the first major theme in participant focus groups.

Across the focus groups, participants commented on a sense of empowerment they felt because of the training. Instructors explained they could use content from the training in their own classrooms and while interacting with students. These real-life mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997) made them feel like they were successfully prepared in both interacting with the student and with the ODS. Even participants who had not needed to accommodate any of their students described that having the knowledge of what to do in the future provided them with a sense of personal-ability. Several participants explained that reflecting on how little they knew before the training made them feel a greater sense of self-efficacy, and many highlighted

that they had never considered they might have a student with a disability in their classroom. One participant commented, “We always just assume that we’ll have the perfect case scenario class” (1:415). Further, participants described increased self-efficacy as decreased anxiety. Some explained the disability training helped calm their fears about accommodating students, while others expressed that an increased knowledge about university procedures made them feel more confident. Teacher’s self-efficacy is considered a key predictor of behavior and action (Zee, Koomen, Jellesma, Geerlings, & de Jong, 2016), and participants seemed to echo that finding.

Interestingly, several participants also expressed feelings of inadequacy and a lack of self-efficacy. This was originally surprising, as Kosko and Wilkins (2009) found that amongst early childhood teachers and course-specific teachers, “professional development was found to be a better predictor of teacher’s improved perceptions of their ability to adapt instruction for students with [Individualized Education Programs] than years of experience teaching such students” (p. 8). However, upon examining the categories, participants were mostly desirous of more information.

Participants also viewed the training through the lens of their students. Many participants shared the theme of increased empathy and understanding. Some participants expressed that they used more patience when working with students with disabilities. Others indicated they would choose not to “baby” students with disabilities, but would encourage them in course work. Both categories are encouraging as research on students with disabilities indicates teachers often assign blame to students with disabilities (Boyle, 2016) or try to help by coddling them (Abdalla & St. Louis, 2012). The theme of increased empathy and understanding was juxtaposed with the theme of future concern. Jessie’s case, for example, shows that instructors experienced uncertainty about how to accommodate behavioral issues in the classroom. Some participants had not experienced teaching a student with a disability, but attending the training made them anxious. For these teachers, fear of future interactions outweighed a sense of self-efficacy. Future research should be conducted to determine why knowledge about accommodating students might produce anxiety in some teachers and not others.

Finally, the study showed that instructors desire more resources to accommodate students. Some participants like Chris also stated they wanted more interaction with students with disabilities. This finding is encouraging because research shows that individuals who are familiar with people with disabilities often have more positive attitudes about accommodating people with disabilities (e.g., Boyle, 2016; Brockelman et al., 2006). Across all groups, participants said that they wanted

extended training. Incorporating up to eight hours of training throughout the school year could potentially allow instructors to feel twice as capable as they did previously (Kosko & Wilkins, 2009). Future research needs to be conducted on the use of mini-lessons for busy teachers. Lastly, participants stated that they valued input from credible experts, like the speech language pathologist and representative from the office of disabilities.

Practical Implications

This study has several practical implications for basic course instructors and program directors. One of the most important findings in this study is that instructors need more information about how to interact with and accommodate a growing body of diverse students. While some of these findings are particularly salient for students who stutter, the overarching messages about examining knowledge, attributions, and attitudes can be applied to all students, particularly students who fall outside of the "norm." As students with disabilities may be more likely to slip through the cracks and suffer from lower graduation rates (Zhang et al., 2010), it is important for instructors to assess how their knowledge and attitudes may play a part in the academic success (or failure) of their students. Additionally, this study's focus on attribution theory explains why instructors should engage in self-reflection about their perceptions of the cause of a student's behaviors. For instance, Amber explained that a new perspective on the controllability of a student's disability made her more empathetic. Educating instructors about the externality of disabilities can help prevent blaming the student for their disability (Boyle, 2014, 2016; Weiner, 1985).

Additionally, this study makes a strong case for basic course directors to build partnerships with other invested groups. This study utilized experts in the fields of speech language pathology, disability services, and the basic communication course to fill gaps in knowledge that the other departments lacked. Disability services can play an essential role in providing support and increasing faculty knowledge about the laws and provision of accommodations (Bourke, Strehorn, & Silver, 2000). This study reflected previous findings that instructors often know very little about disability laws (Zhang et al., 2010), yet knowledge of these legal requirements can increase teacher self-efficacy (Rao & Gartin, 2003). For instance, Drew described feeling "very prepared" knowing that she needed to wait for a student to first disclose his/her disability (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005).

Likewise, basic course directors should partner with their university's ODS to provide information about the specific requirements of their course. In this study, conversations between the SLP, ODS, and basic course director uncovered accommodations for PWS that had not been previously considered. By discussing the delivery requirements for the basic course and strategies in speech therapy, these conversations provided the ODS with new accommodations, including offering students who stutter the option to read their speech directly off an outline or to allow them to sit down while presenting.

Finally, it is also necessary for teachers to consider the way they discuss disabilities in class. A participant in Hong's (2015) study explains that while many instructors review their university's disability policy briefly in their syllabus, very few indicate they are interested in helping students with disabilities. She explains, "I look for posturing, expression...any other indicators of how they feel about the topic. I've found majority of teachers seem pretty neutral to the whole thing" (Hong, 2015, p. 215). In the basic course, it would be beneficial for instructors to communicate to their class that specific accommodations exist for public speaking, and that students should be encouraged to register with the ODS. Eckes and Ochoa (2005) aptly point out that while many primary and secondary preservice teacher programs require teachers to take at least one course in special education, postsecondary teachers do not have this requirement and, consequently, "are unlikely to possess the knowledge or skills to make educational accommodations for students with disabilities" (p. 11). The authors point out that despite this lack of education, college-level instructors are still "expected to possess the skills to provide instructional accommodations for [these] students" (p. 11). Providing instructors with disability training and education could help close these gaps.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

This study had key strengths and limitations, and revealed several areas for future research. The role I played as the moderator served as both a strength and a limitation. Because of my familiarity with the instructors and the training content, I was able to utilize my background knowledge on the topic (Krueger, 1988) and was able to follow the unique language and flow of the conversation without confusion. A moderator unfamiliar with the topic may have had several questions and needed more explanation about the conversations regarding disabilities. This intimacy with the topic and participants may have also served as a limitation. Since I conducted the

training and served as the moderator, it is possible that participants may have felt a lack of freedom because of my presence or the presence of other teachers. I did, however, follow Krueger's (1988) suggestions to focus on creating a nonthreatening environment and emphasized that participant responses would not change their relationship with the university. In future research, an assistant moderator to ask additional questions and probe for depth would be beneficial (Krueger, 1988). This could also help to curb another limitation: over-familiarity. Because of participant familiarity, broader conversations that could have yielded different results may have been missed. A multi-school approach may be helpful, where participants from several universities are trained, then sorted into focus groups with strangers.

A multi-school approach may help address another limitation: the sample size of this study. This study was underpowered, and since the university where this study took place only trains a certain number of basic course GTAs per year, acquiring more GTAs was not plausible. By training instructors at multiple universities, researchers would be able to better assess instructor attributions and attitudes.

This study also speaks to the need for future research regarding basic course instructors' knowledge, attributions, attitudes, and self-efficacy for a wider range of disabilities than just communicative disabilities. Disabilities such as anxiety, depression, and ADD/ADHD were prominent topics in each focus group because they affect a significant portion of the student population. Future research should focus on developing and conducting training sessions for instructors on these topics, as specific instructional strategies for managing various disabilities can provide trainers with opportunities to increase instructor self-efficacy.

Additionally, future research should examine the influence a training session about student accommodations may have on instructor attitudes and attributions. Because of the underpowered sample size, this study was unable to determine if instructors who attribute the cause of stuttering to psychological factors have more negative attitudes about PWS than instructors who attribute the cause to biological factors. This study was also unable to determine the impact that the training had on instructor attitudes. Future research should focus on these two areas, as a change in attribution may lead to a change in attitude.

Overall the findings from this study are exciting because they show that instructors want to be more knowledgeable about accommodating students with disabilities and feel a greater sense of self-efficacy when they have appropriate resources. Life as a teacher can be full of challenges, especially when teaching a diverse student body. Many participants expressed this sentiment during the focus

groups. However, participants also identified the value of learning about disability accommodation. Mike identified that even though the process of training to become an instructor was overwhelming, having the knowledge, resources, and community he needed to accommodate his students made him feel successful. He explained, “The big take-away was, ‘you have a resource, we’re here to help ya’, and that’s what I needed to hear at that time.”

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