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# Children's Perspectives on Stuttering: A Video Project

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## Background

Several studies have shown that people who stutter greatly benefit from meeting with other people who stutter (Yaruss et al., 2002; Trichon & Tetnowski, 2011). Doing so can make people who stutter feel connected and less isolated. However, various factors, such as living in a rural area, can prevent people from meeting other people who stutter. Therefore, they must rely on other mediums, such as videos, to connect with other people who stutter. Videos that highlight a persons' stuttering experiences serve as a valuable clinical resource, as they can be used to help patients who stutter see the perspectives of others and to facilitate meaningful discussion. In addition, they can serve to educate people who do not stutter about the unique experiences people who stutter face. For example, Flynn & St. Louis (2011) used the MTV *True Life: I stutter* episode as one way to improve reactions of adolescents toward people who stutter.

Many existing videos feature adolescents and young adults who stutter including: *Transcending Stuttering: The Inside Story* (Schneider, 2004), *Go With the Flow: A Guide to Transcending Stuttering* (Schneider, 2010), and *MTV True Life: I Stutter* (2007). Only one, however, *Stuttering: For Kids by Kids* (2007), features school-aged children who stutter. That video has relevant and important information for children who stutter, however, was produced over a decade ago. Since that time, there have been no other published videos of children who stutter discussing their experiences and reactions associated with stuttering. This project sought to address the need for a current documentary to benefit school-aged children and adolescents who stutter.

## Purpose

The purpose of this project was to create a video that can be used as a therapy tool so children, particularly those in rural areas who may not know any other children who stutter, can view the experiences and reactions of others who stutter. It was produced to: (1) add a new and updated resource to similar existing videos, (2) serve as a clinical resource to help people who stutter learn about others' stuttering experiences and discuss their own, and (3) potentially be used as an intervention to improve public attitudes toward stuttering.

## Methods

Clients who received treatment at the Marshall University Speech and Hearing Center (MUSHC) were invited to participate in the video. In addition, clients from specialty stuttering clinics in neighboring states were also invited to participate. All persons featured in the video willingly agreed to participate and signed a consent form, allowing a free release of the video upon completion. The production of the film involved two SLR digital cameras, an external sound recorder, a lapel microphone, a lighting system, and a laptop with video editing software.

Eight people who stutter participated. They included all males ages 9, 12, 14, 17, 17, 23, 33, and 34. They represented diverse backgrounds and stages of their stuttering journey. Three participants attended the MUSHC, and five were from neighboring states. For participants from surrounding states, the authors traveled to a neutral location in their hometown to conduct the interview. A ninth person who stutters narrated the opening portion of the film.

The student researcher (first author), with the help of two faculty mentors (second and third authors), developed a list of questions for the participants about themselves (e.g., what do you like to do?), their stuttering experiences (how has stuttering shaped who you are?) and their advice/recommendations for others (e.g., what do you want other people to know about stuttering?) Once all of the rough footage was obtained, the student researcher selected and edited portions to be included in the final video. Select quotes from the video are below:

*Somebody isn't just a  
stutterer. They are whoever  
they are and they happen to  
have a stutter...*

*We all have a  
voice and we  
all deserve to  
be heard.*

STUTTERING  
PART OF ME

*It is a part  
of me, but  
it doesn't  
define me.*

*Believe in yourself because you're  
awesome...you've overcome so much  
and you should be recognized as a  
beautiful person.*

## Results

The final 26-minute video premiered in mid-October, 2018 and has already been viewed over 2900 times via the Stuttering Academy Facebook page and YouTube.

The full video can be freely accessed here:



## Discussion

The aim of this project was to create a film featuring individuals who stutter that could then be used in treatment, especially with school-aged children and adolescents. In its current form, the video lacks adequate gender representation, as all participants are male. It is intended that a follow-up video will be produced, which will feature females who stutter.

The video has strong clinical utility as well as the potential to be used in future research projects. It is intended that the film will be used as an intervention aimed to improve the reactions and knowledge of stuttering in both children who stutter and their peers. It is hoped that such research will help people who do not stutter be more knowledgeable about the disorder and sensitive when talking to people who stutter. The authors encourage the responsible use of this video in therapy, education, etc. as one resource to help people who stutter.

## References

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