

Cluttering and Stuttering Attitudes of Spanish-Speaking Adults from Puerto Rico

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American Speech-Language-Hearing Association - Chicago - 2013

Abstract

Adults from Puerto Rico completed Spanish versions of the *Public Opinion Survey of Human Attributes (POSHA)*, rating their attitudes toward stuttering (*POSHA-S*), cluttering (*POSHA-CI*) or stuttering/cluttering combined (*POSHA-S and POSHA-CI*). Public attitudes toward cluttering attitudes were unaffected by consideration of stuttering and were as negative as those toward stuttering.

Introduction and Purpose

Numerous reports indicate that public attitudes toward stuttering reflect bias, negative stereotypes, and stigma (e.g., review by Hughes, 2008). When provided printed definitions of cluttering and stuttering on experimental versions of the *Public Opinion Survey of Human Attributes-Stuttering or -Cluttering [POSHA-S; POSHA-CI]*, St. Louis, Filatova, Coskun, Ozdemir, Topbas, and Georgieva, et al. (2011) reported strikingly similar public attitudes toward cluttering and stuttering in four countries (USA, Turkey, Russia, and Bulgaria). However, since all respondents rated *both* fluency disorders in all questionnaires, it was possible—or even likely—that negative stuttering attitudes essentially determined negative cluttering attitudes.

The current study was part of an effort to disambiguate this possibility of confounding. In Norway, Sonsterud, Heitmann, Kvenseth, & St. Louis (2012) administered separate cluttering or stuttering Norwegian translations of the *POSHA-S* and/or the *POSHA-CI* questionnaires in different regions of the country. They also administered both questionnaires to the same persons in a different region of Norway. Sonsterud et al. (2012) showed that the presence or absence of attention to and rating of attitudes toward stuttering had little or no observable effect on public attitudes toward cluttering.

In addition to separating—and combining—the *POSHA-S* and the *POSHA-CI* with the same purpose as in the Sonsterud et al. (2012) study, the current study had two additional purposes. Second, it sought to examine the validity of new Spanish translations of the cluttering and stuttering versions of the *POSHA* with Spanish speakers. Third, it explored attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of Spanish-speaking adults from Puerto Rico about fluency disorders. Research about attitudes toward Latinos with disabilities have reported evidence of stigma and discrimination as result of the combination of culture and disability (Correa & McHatton, 2005.) Moreover, studies that examine attitudes of Latinos have shown different cultural meanings for disability and normalcy toward people with disabilities (Harry, 1992; Rogler, 1999; Shapiro & Tittle, 1986). Attitudes and beliefs of Puerto Rican adults towards stuttering and cluttering were hypothesized to be related to stigma and discrimination in this cultural group.

Prior to filling out questionnaires, a written lay definition of stuttering, cluttering, or both (as appropriate) was provided, as well as definition for

seven other attributes: intelligent, left handed, obese, multilingual, old, and mentally ill. The *POSHA*s were further adapted to permit identification of children and adults known by the respondents to exhibit cluttering, stuttering, or combined cluttering-stuttering.

Methodology

•A convenience sample of 87 Spanish-speaking adults from Puerto Rico, none of whom were SLP students or practitioners, filled out questionnaires as follows: *POSHA-S* (n=31), *POSHA-CI* (n=30), and *POSHA-S + CI* (n=26). All respondents lived in the San Juan Metropolitan area.

•Two SLP graduate students and the first author, all native Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico, administered paper versions of the survey through personal contacts, but were not present while respondents completed their surveys. Respondents were given one of three different versions of the survey in alternating fashion.

•Mean ages of the three respondent groups (*S/CI/S+CI*) were 35/41/42 years. Mean years of education were 15.5/15.5/15.6. Male/female percentages were 26%/74%, 30%/70%, and 27%/74%. Married percentages were 35%, 43%, 50%. From the groups, 35%, 33%, 38% were parents, 35%, 17%, 23% were students, and 65%, 63%, 77% were working. None of the persons in the *S* and *CI* groups identified themselves as stuttering or cluttering respectively, but one each (4%) indicated they had the disorder in the past. One person in the *S+CI* group indicated that she stuttered and cluttered, both currently and in the past (5%), and another indicated past stuttering. 18-33% indicated that they knew nobody who stuttered and 36-50% nobody who cluttered.

•*POSHA-S/CI* ratings were converted to mean ratings to a -100 to +100 scale, where higher scores reflect more positive attitudes for individual items; components (clusters of items); subscores (clusters of components for Obesity & Mental Illness, Beliefs About People Who Stutter/Clutter, and Self Reactions To People Who Stutter/Clutter; and an Overall Stuttering/Cluttering Score (*OSS/OCS*) (mean of the two stuttering or cluttering subscores) (St. Louis, 2011). We ran *t* tests for independent samples (with the Bonferroni correction whereby $p \leq .05/12 = p \leq .00417$) and Cohen's (1988) *d* effect sizes for statistically significant differences for all comparisons.

Results

The Obesity & Mental Illness Subscores for the *S*, *CI*, and *S+CI* groups were, respectively, -26, -25, and -19. The Belief Subscores for stuttering in *S* and *S+CI* groups were 37 and 28, the Self Reactions Subscores were 8 and 6, and *OSS*s were 22 and 17. The Beliefs Subscores for cluttering in *CI* and *S+CI* groups were 37 and 29, the Self Reactions Subscores were -8 and -9, and *OCS*s were 14 and 10. Of the 60 *t* test comparisons for the *POSHA-S/CI*, none (0%) were significant between the *S* versus *S+CI* groups for stuttering and none (0%) between the *C* versus *S+CI* groups for cluttering. Four

comparisons (8%) were significant between stuttering and cluttering for the *S+CI* group. Combining the stuttering versus the cluttering data, two differences (3%) were significant: the Self Reactions Subscore (worse for stuttering than cluttering), and less information about cluttering from print media than for stuttering. Cohen's *d*'s for these two significant differences were "small." Even so, the *OSS* (stuttering) was more positive than the *OCS* (cluttering), 20 versus 12. The median *OSS* mean score for 181 samples representing 7680 respondents from 27 countries and 19 languages in the *POSHA-S* database is 16 or very close to the Puerto Rican mean. Beliefs were quite similar between the two fluency disorders. The Help (i.e., —*who should help*) component was lower than average (relative to the database for stuttering) for both disorders, and the Potential component was higher than average for both.

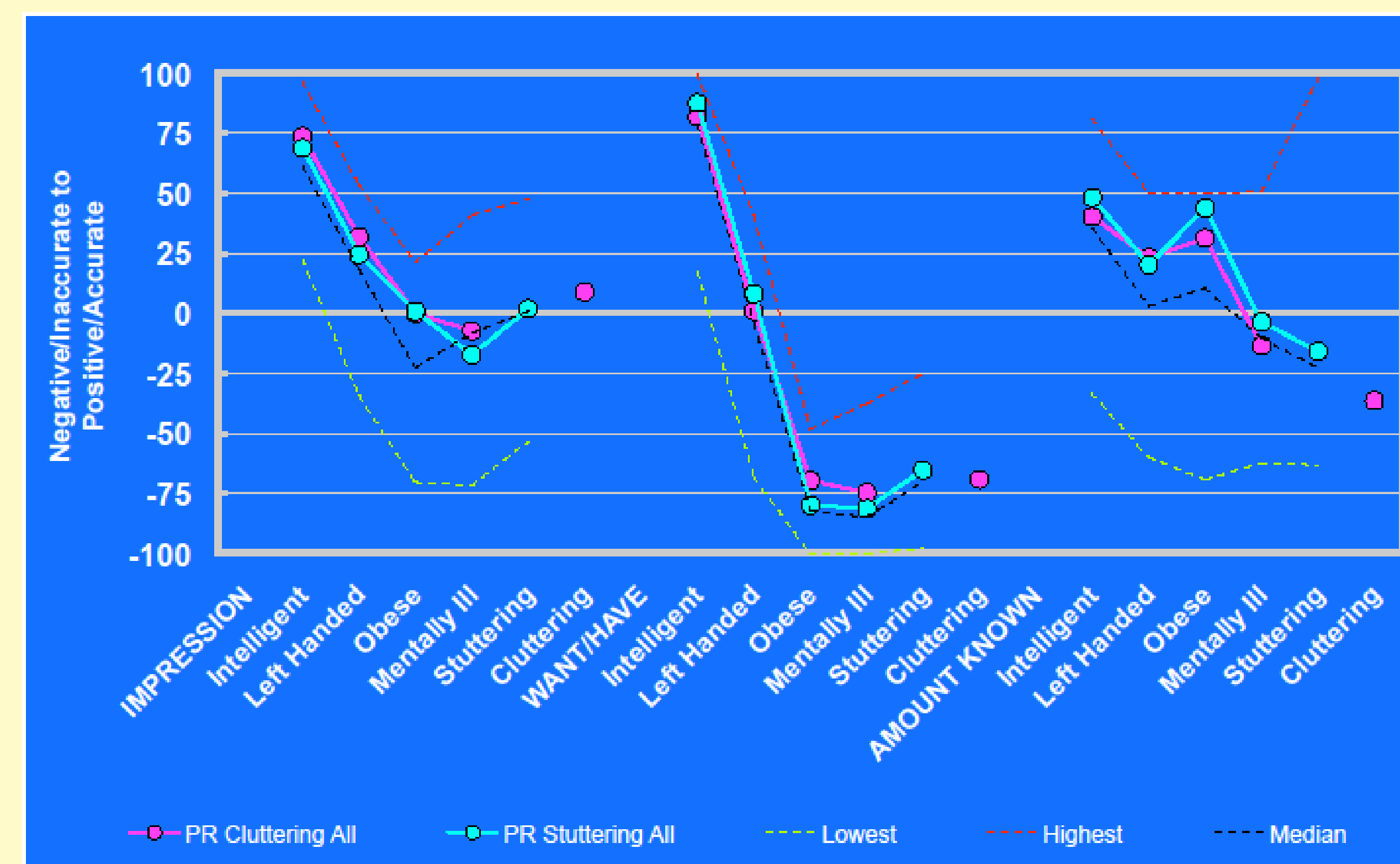


Figure 1. Mean ratings of respondents for Overall Impression of, Wanting to Have, or Amount Known about the human attributes (General Section).

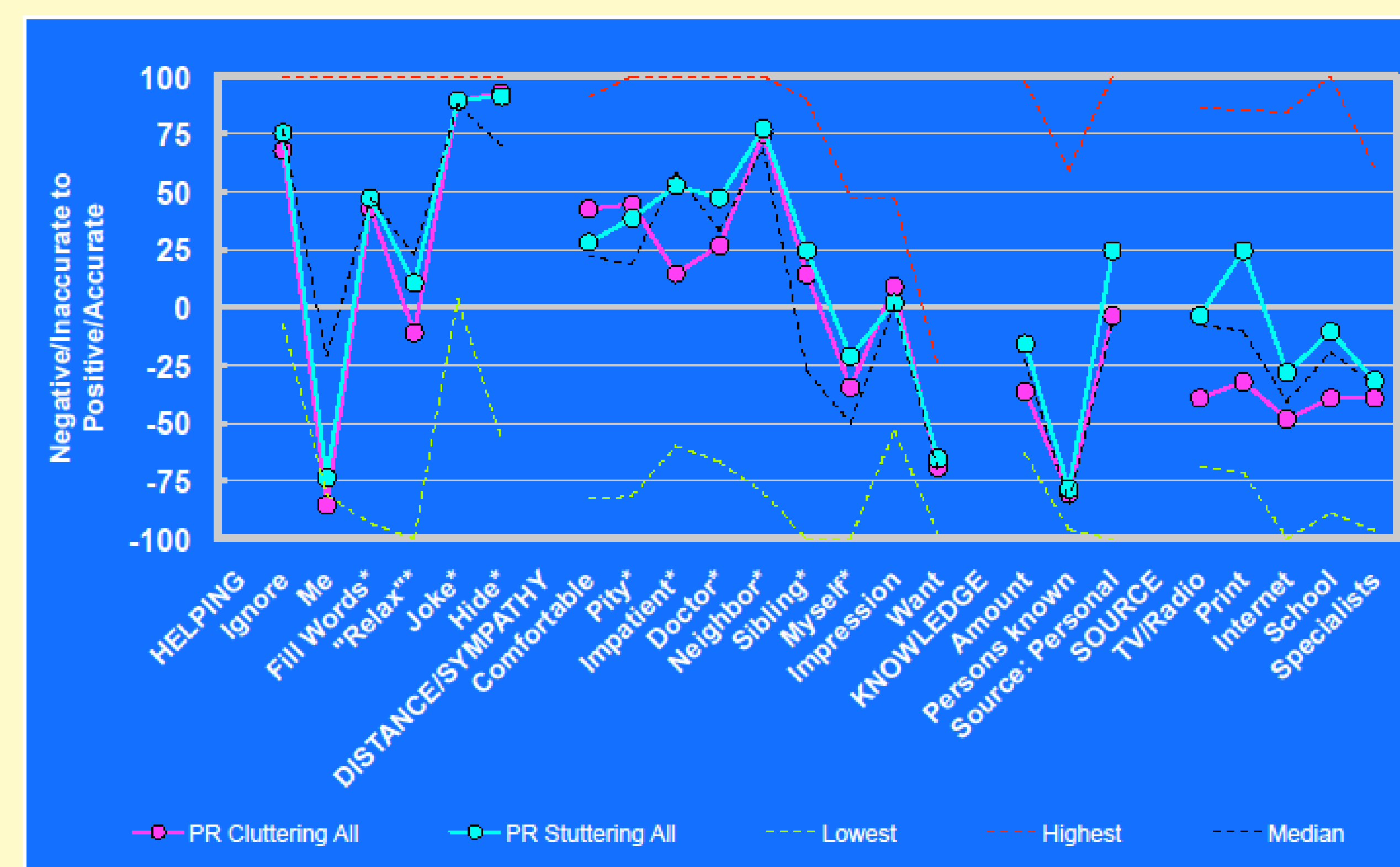


Figure 2. Mean ratings of respondents for Reported Action While Talking to a Person Who Stutters/ Clutters, Distance, Sympathy, and Sources of Knowledge (Self Reactions Subscore).

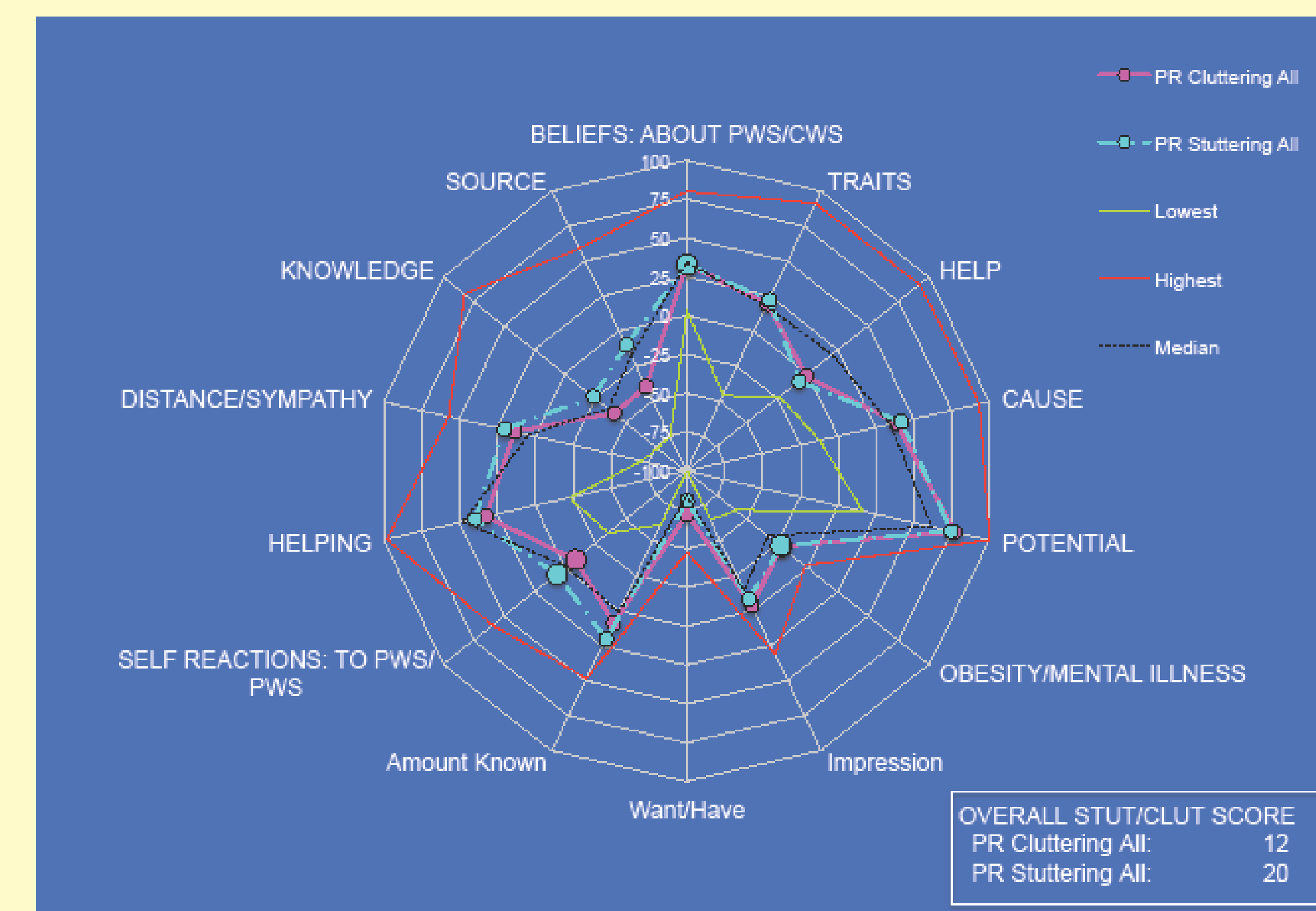


Figure 3. Comparison of the *POSHA-CI* (from cluttering only plus cluttering part of cluttering-stuttering sample) and the *POSHA-S* (from stuttering only plus stuttering part of cluttering-stuttering sample) for Puerto Rican respondents relative to previous investigations' highest, lowest and median sample means of *POSHA-S* comparisons for stuttering.

Implications

The similarities between the independent, separate ratings of cluttering and stuttering as well as the similarities between dependent, combined ratings for the two fluency disorders confirms the findings from Sonsterud et al. (2012) that cluttering ratings are unaffected by consideration of stuttering. Negative attitudes or stigma toward cluttering is just as strong, and perhaps a bit stronger, than for stuttering. The Spanish translations of the *POSHA-S* and *POSHA-CI* appear to generate valid data. Finally, potential stigma toward both fluency disorders in Puerto Rico is approximately as strong as it is for most other groups around the world.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the graduate students from the University of Puerto Rico, who assisted gathering data, and the University of Puerto Rico Graduate Translation Program for assisting on the back translation procedure of the *POSHA-Spanish*.