

Foucault Studies

Governing the Voice: A Critical History of Speech-Language Pathology

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Abstract: This essay argues that Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) emerged as a response to the early twentieth-century demand for docile, efficient, and thus productive speech. As the capacity of speech became more central to the industrial and democratic operations of modern society, an apparatus was needed to bring speech under the fold of biopower. Beyond simple economic productivity, the importance of SLP lies in opening the speaking subject up to management and normalization—creating, in short, biopolitical subjects of communication. We argue that SLP accordingly emerged not as a discreet institution, but as a set of practices which can be clustered under three headings: calculating deviance, disciplining the tongue, and speaking the truth of pathologized subjects.

Keywords: speech; communication; disability; speech-language pathology; genealogy

The therapeutic industry of Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) has become the dominant mode of approaching speech variation. The way we understand voices that stray beyond codified linguistic and temporal boundaries is widely assumed to be medical and scientific, not political. Part of this depoliticization stems from the fact that expert knowledges of speech disability have gone uncontested. This paper thus traces the emergence of SLP in the early twentieth century and argues that it be read alongside the increasing centrality of communicative networks within modern society and the need for a corresponding apparatus to govern speech. We suggest, building on and supplementing the recent work on dysfluency within critical disability studies,¹ that a critical history is required to excavate the pervasive but nevertheless ableist imperative to normalize dysfluent voices. This imperative not only oppresses disabled people by

¹ E.g. Joshua St. Pierre, "Crippling Communication: Speech, Disability, and Exclusion in Liberal Humanist and Posthumanist Discourse," *Communication Theory* 25, issue 2 (2015): 330-348; 1-21; Jay Timothy Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2013); Kevin Paterson, "It's About Time!: Understanding the Experience of Speech Impairment," in *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, eds. Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone, and Carol Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2012); Christopher Eagle, ed., *Literature, Speech Disorders, and Disability: Talking Normal* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

contorting their bodies and selves according to dominant norms of communication but constrains the possibilities of dysfluent subjects to participate meaningfully in social and political spaces,² and does so in order to make communicative bodies manageable and productive in an ever more streamlined and rational communicative society. How and why have we arrived at this present? What effects does pathologizing and instrumentalizing communication have on individual dysfluent speakers? And perhaps most importantly: how might we rethink such communicative practices?

We argue that the emergence of speech correction in the early twentieth century be understood as an operation of “biopower” — Michel Foucault’s concept of the normalization and governance of populations. As speech became more central to the civic and capitalist operations of the U.S., an apparatus (*dispositif*) was needed to make the capacity of speech more manageable, efficient, and thus productive. Speech correction is accordingly best conceived not as a discrete institution, but as an overlapping set of practices that both free the circulation of speech within society and integrate disabled speakers into the productive flows of communication. These practices can be clustered under three headings. First, speech correction produced a norm of good speech by *calculating deviance* across the population. This norm was shaped in relation to nationalistic, socio-economic, and eugenic anxieties. Second, speech correction *disciplined* individual speaking bodies to approximate the norm. The political utility of normalizing speech lay not simply in making bodies productive, but in making them docile and able to interface with streamlined and bureaucratic communicative networks. Third, speech correction internalized these disciplinary practices within pathologized subjects by claiming scientific legitimacy and *speaking the truth* of these selves. Through technologies of self-normalization, dysfluent speakers bound themselves to a pathologized identity of *being* a “speech defective” and thus came under the discursive power of speech correction. These technologies of power render speech correction a seemingly necessary response to the problem of unruly speech.

The official story of SLP³ however, goes something like this.⁴ At the beginning of the twentieth century, and particularly after WWI, an altruistic realization of the need for speech correction swept across society. In the U.S., the general and progressive interest in speech education within the academy was slowly turned towards the issue of speech defects and correction until, in 1925, the American Academy of Speech Correction (now AHSA: the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association) was founded. Distinct from the nineteenth-century “charlatans and quacks”⁵ who preyed on

² Cf. Stacy Clifford Simplican, *The Capacity Contract: Intellectual Disability and the Question of Citizenship* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2015).

³ We take ‘SLP’ and ‘speech correction’ to be more-or-less interchangeable, but try as much as possible not to use ‘SLP’ anachronistically.

⁴ Cf. Marcel E. Wingate, *Stuttering: A Short History of a Curious Disorder* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1997).

⁵ G. Oscar Russell, “Section on Elementary, Popular, and Semi-Popular Articles,” *Journal of Speech Disorders* 6, issue 1 (1941): 39-40.

the troubles of speech defectives, offering a quick fix for a price, modern speech correction was a distinctly scientific institution. There were of course many schools and internal debates. Some, for example, thought stuttering was primarily medical⁶ or linked with brain laterality;⁷ others believed stuttering and its treatment were under the domain of psychiatry;⁸ while still others saw stuttering primarily as a psychological habit encrusted over an organic deficit.⁹ Each presumed cause had a corresponding and often divergent treatment. Nevertheless, guided by scientific progress and philanthropic aims, speech correction flourished in the 30s and 40s, gaining recognition as a credible, authoritative, and much needed scientific practice.

There is nothing untrue about this story, yet its truth conceals as much as it reveals. Existing histories of SLP often resort to empty abstractions that have no causal force in their effort to tell a distinctly progressive narrative.¹⁰ Speech pathologist and historian Margaret Eldridge, for example, speaks of “a growing [social] awareness of the need” for speech correction.¹¹ What exactly is this need? Why did it arise? Others within the field like Marcel E. Wingate describe a history of ideas wherein SLP primarily develops in relation to progress in psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and medicine.¹² While somewhat more descriptive, this focus on conceptual advances cannot show the specific mechanisms that drive history forward. The official story is, in short, a fluent history, an (ableist) abstraction that smooths over the normalizing *practices* and biopolitical imperatives from which modern speech correction was born. The danger of fluent histories is that they reify such abstractions. They naturalize the ways that we relate to dysfluency: as if “aphasia” or “stuttering” were given, transhistorical objects; as if speech correction were the *rational* social response to non-normative forms of communication.

A “critical history”¹³ or “genealogy”¹⁴ is accordingly needed to show how fluent speaking bodies and the apparatus of speech correction are the products of history, a history that could have been otherwise. This is a trip down the back-alleys of SLP

⁶ Robert West, *Diagnosis of Disorders of Speech: A Clinical Manual of Methods and Apparatus* (Madison, WI: College Typing Company, 1936).

⁷ Edward Lee Travis, *Speech Pathology: A Dynamic Neurological Treatment of Normal Speech and Speech Deviations* (NY: D. Appleton Co., 1931).

⁸ E.g. Smiley Blanton, “Stammering and the Voice Teacher,” *Public Speaking Review* 4 (1914): 74-81.

⁹ Wendell Johnson, *People in Quandaries: The Semantics of Personal Adjustment* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946); Charles Van Riper, *Speech Correction: Principles and Methods, First Edition* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1939).

¹⁰ One notable exception is Judith Duchan, whose work we will return to below.

¹¹ Margaret Eldridge, *A History of the Treatment of Speech Disorders* (London: E. & S. Livingston Ltd., 1968), 110; Charles Van Riper, C. 1974. “Stuttering: Where and Whither?” *ASHA* September (1974): 483.

¹² Wingate, *Stuttering*.

¹³ Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *The Essential Foucault*, eds. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: The New Press, 2003), 351-369.

history. Genealogies outline not the continuities of history, but those “historically-contingent practices, encounters, events, and accidents [that] have enabled the emergence of current modes of thinking and acting and the limits that they impose.”¹⁵ A genealogy maps networks of power and is thus interested neither with origins and universals, nor precisely with the goals or intentions of individual agents. Rather, it traces specific historical *practices* and their rippling and often unintended effects. As Foucault aptly states: “People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does.”¹⁶ The attention to *how* rather than *why* we act and think allows us to consider what in history is necessary and what could have been otherwise.

In this way, Foucault’s technique of genealogy has proven itself immensely useful in the field of disability studies. Shelley Tremain’s landmark piece “On the Government of Disability” (2001) suggests that the agenda for critical disability studies should be to:

articulate the ways that disability has been naturalized *as* impairment by identifying the constitutive mechanisms of truth and knowledge within scientific and social discourses, policy, and medico-legal practice that have produced that contingent discursive object and continue to amplify its regulatory effects.¹⁷

Subsequent work in disability studies by, for example, Licia Carlson,¹⁸ Jane Berger,¹⁹ and Xuan-Thuy Nguyen²⁰ has taken up this genealogical challenge of identifying the historically contingent ways that disability as an object of knowledge and curative intervention is produced. Our paper follows in this trajectory. Until quite recently, speech disabilities have been absent from the analysis of disability, and focusing on the specific practices, or what Foucault terms technologies of power²¹ used to produce rational and productive speech patterns can, as Nikolas Rose argues, help us “think about our nature and our limits, about the conditions under which that which we take

¹⁵ Shelley Tremain, “This Is What a Historicist and Relativist Feminist Philosophy of Disability Looks Like,” *Foucault Studies* 19 (2015): 13.

¹⁶ Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1982), 187.

¹⁷ Tremain, “On the Government of Disability,” *Social Theory and Practice* 27. 4 (October 2001): 635.

¹⁸ Carlson, “Docile Bodies, Docile Minds: Foucauldian Reflections on Mental Retardation,” in *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, edited by Shelley Tremain, first edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 133-152.

¹⁹ Berger, “Uncommon Schools: Institutionalizing Deafness in Early-Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, 153-171.

²⁰ Nguyen, “Genealogies of Disability in Global Governance: A Foucauldian Critique of Disability and Development,” *Foucault Studies* 19 (June 2015): 67-83

²¹ Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16-49.

for truth and reality has been established.”²² “Denaturalizing” the pathologization of speech production reveals that our values about communication, particularly clear and fluent communication, have a history and an ignoble one at that. Critical history allows us to question that which seems necessary and rethink, perhaps quite radically, why and how we communicate.

A genealogy is necessarily specific, and we will accordingly contain our focus to the emergence of SLP in the U.S., which develops in relation to yet is distinct from such contexts as Canada, the UK, the Continent, and beyond. We do not, moreover, suppose this to be a complete genealogy. Our analysis covers the early years of SLP, up until the early 1940s, and intends to show the founding *trajectory* of SLP as a biopolitical institution and regime of truth. Further work is needed to trace SLP through its middle period (1940-70s) into the present, yet we suggest that while transformed in significant ways, technologies of calculating deviance, disciplining the tongue, and speaking the truth instituted in the early twentieth century remain at the center of this regime of truth.

Further work is also needed to broaden the scope of analysis. In the interest of specificity, our critical history will pay particular attention to the management of stuttering: a useful lens since this particular speech disability received a disproportionate amount of attention within the early years of SLP. To take a snapshot, during the first thirty years of AHSA records (1926-1957), there were three times as many conference papers given on stuttering and five times as many articles published on stuttering than the average for the other ten categories of “speech defects,” including aphasia, articulation disorders, cerebral palsy, and cleft palate.²³ Professional records were not kept before this time, but Eldridge notes that “as early as 1893 a survey of speech handicapped children was made in Boston, Massachusetts; of these 78 percent were classified as stutterers.”²⁴ While stuttering cannot be elided with other forms of speech disability, its treatment during the birth of speech correction provides a clear case study of speech correction’s early goals and practices.

Speech Anxieties

One cannot consider the formation of speech correction as an essential “apparatus” (a network of power and knowledge) of the modern state without a sense of the social role speech had come to play in the early twentieth century. Speech was no longer a skill perfected by the political, industrial, and religious elite, but was becoming a productive capacity central to American democratic and industrial society. Speech was necessary for normal psychological and intellectual development and was understood as the “greatest weapon of [man’s] brain in the fight for advancement.”²⁵ Changes in

²² Rose, *Inventing*, 41.

²³ Wingate, *Stuttering*, 89.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁵ Frederick Martin, “Stammering,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 5, issue 3 (1919): 287.

industry and technology rendered speech an important economic capacity. Democratic citizens were (presumably) ruled not by silent obedience but through civic participation. A productive, articulate citizenry required efficient speakers. Yet while managing American speech was a newly minted obligation, there were seemingly more speech defectives than ever. “Even the man in the street,” lamented an anonymous editorialist in 1919,

is conscious now that thousands in our midst are untouched by our American spirit because they cannot communicate with us; and that thousands, yes, tens of thousands, more are unable to play their full part as citizens and workers in the industrial democracy because they cannot talk.²⁶

In short, the U.S. had a speech problem.

Starting in the 1820s, lyceums and Chautauquas had affirmed clear, useful, and aesthetically pleasing speech as correct, as public, and in turn, as American.²⁷ As the social function of speech became even more prominent in the early twentieth century, divergent forms of speech threatened national unity and identity.²⁸ Moreover, while foreigners with speech defects were often denied immigration due to their likelihood of becoming a public charge,²⁹ speech experts worked to assimilate the accents of those who did immigrate.³⁰ Foreign accents were measured alongside other speech defects, and acquiring an American accent was a mark of citizenship and moral standing:

²⁶ E.M.H, “Editorial: The Speech Campaign. An Item for Explanation,” *The English Journal* 8, issue 7 (1919): 436.

²⁷ Cf. Angela G. Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-century United States* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2005).

²⁸ National fears, exacerbated by immigration, were shifting from invasion to infiltration (McWhorter 2009) and in this context, pure, unified, and distinctly American speech was often defined in contrast to the speech of immigrants and African Americans. For example, Claudia E. Crumpton, an educator and the secretary for the National Speech Association, blames much of her district’s “most embarrassing deficiency of speech” on “the influence of negro dialect, to the imitation of the negro just for fun, and to the children’s imitation of the nurse’s speech” (Claudia E. Crumpton, “Speech Betterment in Alabama,” *The English Journal* 6, issue 2 (1917): 96. The role of the speech correctionist here was not to purify the speech of black Americans, but to *contain* the spread of such speech to unsuspecting white children.

²⁹ Marion T. Bennett, *American Immigration Policies: A History* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1963), 339; Scripture, *Stuttering*, 2.

³⁰ It is worth noting that while ASHA stresses that accents are not speech and language disorders (ASHA 2015), a caveat that in itself raises a myriad of historical questions, they continue to accept “accent modification” as being within SLP’s scope of practice.

The very Americanization of the foreign citizen is involved in this matter of clear English speech. A good speech, unhampered by accent, is a requisite for the highest mental and moral development of the immigrant.³¹

Race and class form an indispensable part of the history of American speech correction, evident in the host of speech “experts” who emerged to adjudicate which speech patterns were the most fitting standard for the nation to embody, with the continued aim of protecting pure speech from the harms of laziness and infection by foreigners, racialized Americans, and speech defects alike.

In response to these manifold threats of deviant speech, speech clinics were established under the disciplinary umbrellas of medicine and education, and school curriculums increasingly emphasized spoken and “good” English. In 1896 G. Hudson Makuen founded the Philadelphia Polyclinic Hospital, the first recorded clinic for speech defects, and by 1920 many more clinics had been established in the east and midwest, not to mention in many parts of England and Europe.³² The educational imperative to address speech defects is summed up by the editor of the *English Journal*, who remarks in 1915:

The time has come . . . for the setting-up of standards and for improvement in actual performance. Certainly teachers, whatever others may do, have no excuse. They must learn to talk and to teach others to talk.³³

In 1916 these corrective efforts were bolstered by the “Better Speech Week” movement in the eastern United States, which would spread to various parts of the country and attract much attention by 1924. Better Speech Weeks were explicitly modeled after the eugenic “better baby contests” held at state fairs.³⁴ These school events were marked by the advent of WWI, and like so many initiatives in this time, were postured as part of the war effort. Recruitment testing—the famous Alpha and Beta tests—had shown that speech skills and literacy were lacking among thousands of Americans, and failures of “pure” spoken English were described as failures of citizenship and of the American

³¹ Dennis J. McDonald, “Speech Improvement,” *National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses* (1916): 864.

³² Eldridge, *A History*, 74; Of note also are the “commercial schools” of this period that treated stuttering for a fee. Benjamin Bogue, advertising his longstanding institute for stammerers, proclaims that “Our age demands perfect speech” (1912).

³³ Editor, *The English Journal* (1915): 126.

³⁴ Crumpton, “Speech Betterment,” 569; Better baby contests were eugenic initiatives that measured the physical and intellectual development of contestants. Better baby contests were the precursor to the “fitter family contests” of the 1920s. As the historian Molly Ladd-Taylor writes, “Both initiatives . . . helped to narrow the definition of a ‘healthy, normal’ baby to one that allowed little deviation from supposedly scientific norms. Fitter family contests appealed to a select group of families assumed to come from good ‘stock,’ with the aim of differentiating them from potential ‘losers’ who did not fit the norm” (2015).

spirit.³⁵ In schools, then, better speech became synonymous with a better nation and better soldiers. In 1919-20, posters for Better Speech Weeks included an American flag inscribed “One Flag! One Country! One Language!” with slogans such as “One Language Means a United People”³⁶ and “Use your speech for service.”³⁷ Depicting speech in nationalistic terms mirrors the colonial (not to mention eugenic) imperative to:

Make the ‘Better Speech’ movement one that will make its influence felt even on the future generations for if our nation is to lead all others in the triumph of democracy so must her language be a language fitting to help her in her task.³⁸

Better Speech Weeks show English speech to be an ever tenuous mark of citizenship, democracy, and American nationality.

These anxieties and the efforts to assuage them demonstrate that neither “good speech” nor the need for it were innate among the American people: both had to be taught. Even well into the 30s, educators and speech correctionists lamented that students and parents alike were overly content with defective voices.³⁹ While some parents were worried that their child’s stutter was impeding their education—demonstrating, again, the socio-economic valence of speech correction—“too many” parents would wait calmly for children to outgrow defects rather than seeking treatment.⁴⁰ New and innovative practices were required to enforce and regulate the growing social need for good speech.

Calculating Deviance

Following Foucault’s elaboration of “biopolitics,” we suggest that the deep-seated unease around speech in the early twentieth century is best understood as a symptom or correlate of technologies of calculation. That is, norms of proper speech emerge only in relation to a system of standardization: surveys, statistics, measurement, testing and other technologies employed to distill and order the life of the population. Foucault famously argues that beginning in the seventeenth century the sovereign rule over territory was increasingly replaced by what he terms “biopower” or “governmentality”: the practice of managing the life of human populations. This includes the biological processes and potentialities of a set of people like their capacity

³⁵ E.M.H., “Editorial”; Edward Charles Mabie, “Opportunities for Service in Departments of Speech,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech Education* 6, issue 1 (1920): 2.

³⁶ *The Racquet* 9, issue 7 (1919): 1.

³⁷ H. G. Paul, “A Report on Better Speech Week,” *The English Journal* 9, issue 4 (1920): 194.

³⁸ *The Racquet* 9, issue 7 (1919): 2.

³⁹ Clara B. Stoddard, “A Public School Approach to Treatment of Stuttering,” *Journal of Speech Disorders* 4, issue 3 (1939): 219-222; Charles Van Riper, “Ear Training in the Treatment of Articulation Disorders,” *Journal of Speech Disorders* 4, issue 2 (1939): 141.

⁴⁰ Cf. Paul Moore and Dorothy G. Kester, “Historical Notes on Speech Correction in the Pre-association Era,” *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorder* 18 (1953), 49.

to work and reproduce. Whereas previous methods of power subjugated people to the will of a sovereign (i.e. “don’t do this or you will be killed”), biopower operates quite differently by regulating and channeling the *productive* capacities of a people. To express this differently, biopower renders life itself a type of commodity that the state must protect and increase while maximizing its civil and economic use. Biopower operates both on the population and the individual and is thus manifest in two simultaneous modes: biopolitics and disciplinary power. The former entails the practices of calculating and regulating the population in terms of “normal” vs “abnormal,” while the latter entails practices that corral bodies towards an approximation of that norm.

By the early twentieth century, speech was tightly wound into the central operations of society, and the state needed a way to calculate and nourish this productive, biopolitical capacity. Compulsory education and child labor laws put more children in school in the early twentieth century⁴¹ and this in turn enabled vast amounts of data on speech differences to be produced using technologies like the survey, the evaluation, and the standardized test. Such data was organized and rendered meaningful by a statistical method that provided a norm, average, and equilibrium around which deviance could be calibrated.⁴² These technologies do not so much discover as *produce* deviance and disability. For example, comparing estimates by Ira S. Wile in 1916 and Smiley Blanton in 1936, the number of US school children with “serious defects of speech” balloons from 500,000 to 2,000,000 in the span of twenty years.⁴³ Increasingly “accurate” technologies could calculate speech variation with ever finer specification while classifying certain forms of variation as abnormal. In Foucault’s terms, statistical calculation is a biopolitical strategy of creating ever more deviance to be managed.

Such statistics targeted the population as a whole; however, calculation was also used to dissect the individual herself, calculating “normal” rates of fluency and dysfluency, specialized muscle movements, pitch, volume, distinctness, tone, and oral

⁴¹ Clarence T. Simon, “Development of Education in Speech and Hearing to 1920,” in *History of Speech Education in America*, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), 400.

⁴² The techniques of statistics—the “science of the state”—date back to the mid-eighteenth century. Disability theorist Lennard Davis highlights the connection established by statistics between the state and the production of the “average” body in the nineteenth century. By distributing the general population across a standard deviation, a statistically normal or average subject comes to represent an attainable social ideal. Galtonian eugenics was the logical extension of these biopolitical calculations, intended to carry out in the social and individual body the imperative of the norm, which is in turn “supplemented by the notion of progress, human perfectibility, and the elimination of deviance, to create a dominating, hegemonic vision of what the human body should be” (Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* (New York: Verso, 1995), 35). The line from a science of the state, to Galtonian eugenics, to the uptake of statistics by twentieth speech correction is thus not direct but significant nonetheless.

⁴³ Ira S. Wile, “The Economic Value of Speech Correction,” *National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses* (1916); Smiley Blanton, “Helping the Speech Handicapped School Student,” *Journal of Speech Disorders* 1, issue 4 (1936): 97-100.

reading speeds.⁴⁴ By making speech calculable within the individual and the social body, these technologies allowed correctionists and educators alike to separate the “normal” from the “abnormal” in ever more detail, to animate “the speech defect” out of this data, and thus materialize the urgent need for intervention in American speech with scientific and seemingly objective authority.

Put another way, the expert practice of *diagnosis* takes center stage within early twentieth century speech correction. Judy Duchan, a historian of Speech-Language Pathology, writes that the testing movement,

provided another framework for constructing diagnoses. Rather than just using the presence or absence of criterial symptoms as criteria for a diagnosis, diagnosticians began using test norms as a guide classifying people into diagnostic groups. Below average performance on standardized tests was taken as evidence of a problem.⁴⁵

Such practices of the science of speech constitute a new object of knowledge—the “speaking subject”—through which political authority could be mobilized in an even more pervasive manner.

As Duchan indicates above, diagnostic practices of speech defects did exist before the “testing movement,” but were based on biological classifications rather than statistical norms. Samuel Potter, a medical doctor who also stuttered, established perhaps the first American taxonomy of communication disabilities in 1882. Potter focuses primarily on “dyslalia” or stuttering within this work but also outlines “paralalia” or “defects of pronunciation” such as lispings, and “alalia” which is subdivided into the “paralytic impairment of articulation” and “psychical defects” like aphasia.⁴⁶ Armed with new biomedical diagnostic technologies, Samuel Robbins and Sara Stinchfield (both SLPs) update this taxonomy some forty years later with seven rather than four subtypes of speech defects. Yet more important than any specific diagnostic criteria is the diagnostic practice itself—the act of carving up speech variation according to a scientific-medical gaze. That is, problematizing speech in terms of normal/pathological enables the oral anxieties of class, race, and ability in the nineteenth century to be translated into a standard deviation and, though a series of knowledges and techniques, distributes speaking subjects hierarchically according to classifications. The “speech defective” thus becomes a concrete subject, a distinct target for strategies of normalization over which speech experts wield scientific and medical authority.

The utility of these technologies of calculation lies not simply in enabling interested parties to confirm the existence of speech defects, but in the correlations they

⁴⁴ Sara Stinchfield, “Practical Speech Measurements,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 9, issue 1 (1923), 77-84. doi: 10.1080/00335632309379412.

⁴⁵ Duchan, “The Diagnostic Practices of Speech-Language Pathologists in America over the Last Century,” in *Diagnosis as Cultural Practice*, eds. Felson Duchan, Judith and Dana Kovarsky (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton), 203.

⁴⁶ Samuel O Potter, *Speech and its Defects: Considered Physiologically, Pathologically, Historically, and Remedially*. Philadelphia: P. Blakiston, Son & Co., 1882), 30.

make possible between speech defects and other social factors. In 1916 Ira Wile, a physician and the commissioner of education in New York City, presented a paper entitled “The Economic Value of Speech Correction” to the National Education Association. Wile, like many others in his time, argued that speech defects threaten both individual and societal wellbeing.⁴⁷ Citing the calculated cost of educating deaf-mute people in American state institutions at approximately twelve million dollars per annum, Wile laments that speech defects—much more plentiful and, in his opinion, more curable—have received far less attention and funding.⁴⁸ Wile here invokes a simple yet forceful biopolitical calculus: the measurable benefit of addressing certain communication disorders far outweighs the economic cost. This calculation is restated many times in the decades that follow⁴⁹ and is, we suggest, a central reason why stuttering in particular is a main focus of speech correction in these early days.

It is hard to underestimate the purely economic value of making unruly speech calculable, treatable, and therefore profitable within a liberal-capitalist society progressively organized around communication. Wile highlights as part of his biopolitical calculation the reluctance of employers to hire people with speech disabilities, including for jobs that require minimal speaking, and even warns that speech disabilities contribute to costly industrial accidents. If “the economic cost of speech defects is registered in the limitations of occupations that are available for individuals who have speech deficiencies” then the fluent imperative is clear: “it is but natural that we should seek to preserve or secure their potential utility by restoring them to normal speech function.”⁵⁰ And as Van Riper will reiterate twenty years later: “unless these speech defectives can be retrained so that they will be able to fill an appropriate place in the industrial and professional world, society will continue to suffer an economic loss because of them.”⁵¹ At stake for speech correction here is not merely the rehabilitation of *disabled* speakers and their integration within flows of capital, but a standard of normalcy that can be generalized across the entire population.⁵²

⁴⁷ Wile, “Economic Value,” 584.

⁴⁸ Ibid.; cf. Lewis Madison Terman, *The Hygiene of the School Child* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914), 336.

⁴⁹ E.g. Van Riper, *Speech Correction: Principles and Methods, First Edition* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1939), 6.

⁵⁰ Wile, “The Economic Value,” 584.

⁵¹ Van Riper, *Speech Correction*, 5.

⁵² To put the point more bluntly: the bourgeoisie recognized the economic and political utility of speech improvement early on. Reviewing a 1916 symposium on speech, Louis Rapeer, a scholar of English at Pennsylvania State College, remarks that “A number of large business firms in this country have been so affected by the faulty speech of their employees that they have organized and experimentally carried on systematic training in speech” (“Review: A Speech Symposium,” *The English Journal* 5 issue, 7 (1916): 520). Rapeer turns to the example of telephone operators raised in the symposium, noting that the Chicago Telephone Company “uses six thousand operators, who carry on their great work of connecting up all parts of a city and surrounding towns by the use of forty-five million words a day. In their operators’ school, continuing about a month for each candidate, thirty

Yet alongside and fuelling economic considerations were the associations between defective speech and mental deficiency. Clarence Simon, an SLP, suggests that speech correction lagged (relative to deaf education) up until the twentieth century in part because educators had understood speech as a mere expression of the mind that did not aid its development.⁵³ Psychology, however, established a relation between speech and mental development that flows both ways such that uncorrected speech could in fact *cause* deficient minds and personalities. While there was (and continues to be) much disagreement, this reversal placed speech in the midst of the biopolitical struggle for life itself. The association between speech and mental abnormality demanded expert intervention since those without speech training were understood to be at risk of feeble-mindedness and “retardation.”⁵⁴ “In Germany,” writes Wile,

investigation has shown that of the 15,000 children in special schools for defectives, 6 per cent have associated speech defects. It is thus obvious that the economic importance of speech defects is bound up in considerations of the importance of such causative conditions as feeble-mindedness, deafness, and neuropathic manifestations.⁵⁵

While some disabilities like stuttering were eventually let off the intelligence hook, others were not so fortunate.⁵⁶ The ever-growing emphasis on measurement and testing revealed difficulties in charting mental capacity at all until “normal” speech was acquired.⁵⁷ Moreover, for many, even those skeptical of the influence of speech upon intelligence, the moral and social stakes of uncorrected speech were high. The growing focus on mental and emotional development in relation to speech was largely presented

minutes a day are given to speech training, and afterward constant supervision of speech is given those who enter the service” (ibid). This is something quite new. Telephone operators are a technological linchpin in the emerging industry of telecommunications. And in turn, “forty-five million words a day” is a metric of production and human capital, a metric that divorces speech of its embodied political and social character and turns it into an economic function to be maximized. The telephone operator herself is in turn rendered a biopolitical relay (or perhaps contagion) of speech improvement insofar as “this training of operators helps to improve by example and suggestion the speech of the public in general” (ibid). Biopower enabled “the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 140) such that voices and speakers could only exist as cogs in capitalist production within a system of calibration and regulation generalized across the entire population.

⁵³ Simon, “Development of Education,” 406.

⁵⁴ E.g. Wile, “Economic Value,” 583-584; Sara Stinchfield-Hawk, “Can a Child be Taught to Talk?” *Journal of Speech Disorders* 4, issue 2 (1939): 174.

⁵⁵ Wile, “Economic Value,” 584.

⁵⁶ Eldridge explains that “Virtually no progress [regarding cerebral palsy] was being made in the early years of the century. All too often children suffering from this disability were classified as mentally defective.” (64-5).

⁵⁷ Cf. Stinchfield-Hawk, “Can a Child be Taught.”

in terms of social necessity such that uncorrected speech deviants were linked with delinquents, criminals, prostitutes, and “general failures.”⁵⁸

The correlation between defective speech and personality is perhaps established most clearly by mental hygiene, a widespread psycho-social movement of the early twentieth century that sought to pre-empt costly social problems by fixing the private life of the child. Mental hygiene renders the private sphere—the mind, family, and emotions—a seemingly objective matter of political concern and public vigilance,⁵⁹ and thus perfectly embodies biopolitics. This is no more clear than in Terman’s introduction to *The Hygiene of the School Child*, where he states that “the prevention of [human] waste has become, in fact, the dominant issue of our entire political, industrial, and educational situation.”⁶⁰ “Speech hygiene” was accordingly prescribed to avoid “permanent defects of character”⁶¹ with the goal to preserve normalcy “not only for ourselves, but also for the generations that are to follow.”⁶²

The mental hygiene movement thus enabled—both conceptually and politically—speech correction to be taken up as a *social necessity*. It is worth considering that many pioneers of modern speech correction were either mental hygienists themselves (e.g. Blanton, Fletcher, Wile, Greene) or advocated mental hygiene as part of their therapy (e.g. Stinchfield-Hawk, Milisen, Van Riper). Moreover, these two institutions were intermingled. For example, speech correction was carried out in child guidance clinics⁶³ and the Iowa Child Research Station worked with the pioneering speech correction department at the University of Iowa.⁶⁴ This collaboration was not incidental. Biopolitical calculation made defective speech intelligible as a social problem, yet the apparatus of mental hygiene effectively bridges the public (the species body) and private (the individual body), and the medical and social, such that the danger of defective speech could be grasped at the root.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Greene, “The Mission,” 866; cf. Wile, “Economic Value.”

⁵⁹ Theresa R. Richardson, *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 178.

⁶⁰ Terman, *Hygiene*, 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 336.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶³ Stinchfield-Hawk, “The Speech Clinician and Community Service,” *Journal of Speech Disorders* 6, issue 4 (1941): 131-136.

⁶⁴ E.g. Dorothy M. Davis, “The Relation of Repetitions in the Speech of Young Children to Certain Measures of Language Maturity and Situational Factors: Part I,” *Journal of Speech Disorders* December 4 (1939): 303-318. doi:10.1044/jshd.0404.303

⁶⁵ It is worth highlighting the eugenic overtones of speech correction in the context of the para-eugenic institutions of child guidance clinics. While speech correction did not participate directly in the widespread eugenic horrors of the twentieth century that included sterilization and euthanasia, eugenics was never coextensive with such practices, which were, as disability theorist Rosemarie Garland-Thomson suggests, historically specific (though of course ongoing) means of controlling the composition of a particular, imagined, citizenry (“The Case for Conserving Disability,” *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* 9.3 (2012), 351). Garland-Thomson accordingly broadens the scope of eugenics, offering “eugenic logic” as the axiom that “disability is something to be avoided and that the world would be a better place if disability could be eliminated” (340). Within this register, SLP clearly abets

In sum, reading the speech anxieties of this time as correlates of technologies of calculation reformulates the orthodox narrative of SLP. The “growing awareness of the need” for speech correction⁶⁶ was unthinkable without the new categories of normal and pathological speech, which were capable of translating numerous social anxieties surrounding speech into an appropriately scientific discourse. Diagnostic technologies not only created the “speech defect,” but proliferated the problem of vocal deviancy in the attempt to contain it. This ultimately proved beneficial for speech correction since ever-more deviation consolidated both the discursive authority of speech correction and the need for it. Speech correction was commonly described as a matter of altruism and charity, yet as a biopolitical project and institution it could only succeed when framed as social necessity: an urgent response to the social danger of speech defects, and an intervention to create productive bourgeois subjects. It was in the midst of this social climate that the practices of speech correction could set to work disciplining the bodies and voices of “defective” speakers.

eugenics, reifying speech and language disabilities as sufferings to be, ultimately, eliminated. SLP’s continued and increased drive towards preventative technologies divulges their commitment to a semiotic optimization complicit with liberal-capitalism as well as the creation a “better” world without communication disability. Van Riper, for example, demonstrates that speech correction has, at its core, always been eliminativist when, at the end of his eminent career, he laments his fault in focusing on adults rather than children. As he writes, “While I had helped many adults to become reasonably fluent and to live satisfying lives, I had done little to stem the yearly appearance over the horizon of hordes of new stutterers” (“The Public School Specialist in Stuttering,” *ASHA* July (1977): 467). Today, eliminating speech defects from the human population is increasingly envisioned as being viable through, for example, promissory genetic studies (e.g. Raza, M.H., Gertz, E.M., Mundorff, J., Lukong, J., Kuster, J., Schäffer, A., Drayna, D. 2013. “Linkage Analysis of a Large African Family Segregating Stuttering Suggests Polygenic Inheritance and Assortative Mating.” *Human Genetics* 132: 385-396; Domingues, C.E., Olivera, C.M.C., Oliveira, B.V., Juste, F.S., Andrade, C.F., Giacheti, C.M., Moretti-Ferreira, D., Drayna, D. 2014. “A Genetic Linkage Study in Brazil Identifies a New Locus for Persistent Developmental Stuttering on Chromosome 10.” *Genetics and Molecular Research* 13: 2094-2101) and “more effective” preschool treatments such as the Lidcombe Program. A future without speech defects still remains beyond reach, but is greatly anticipated by many.

⁶⁶ Eldridge, *A History*, 110.

Disciplining the Tongue

The feat of constructing an articulate citizenry around a calculated norm was not easily achieved: it demanded that speaking bodies, for the first time in history, be made “docile.” That is, the productive *norms* of speech that were measured and defined needed to be enacted and maintained within the bodies of individual speakers. The earlier discipline and practice of elocution is useful to trace the beginning of this history, representing a central site where legible speech was cultivated in nineteenth-century America. Elocution was a formal discipline that trained both “normal” and “abnormal” speakers to speak legibly, clearly, and embody class respectability through the use of vocal and articulation exercises.⁶⁷ Elocution migrated from England where it had established itself in the mid-eighteenth century. One of its chief proponents in England, Thomas Sheridan, describes how easily the voice falls into error:

Amongst those who speak in the senate house, pulpit, or at the bar, as well as amongst men in private life, we find stammerers, lispers, a mumbling, indistinct utterance; ill management of the voice, by pitching it in too high or too low a key; speaking too loud, or too softly as not to be heard; and using discordant tones, and false cadences. These being, I say, common to all ranks and classes of men, have not any marks of disgrace put upon them, but, on the contrary, meet with general indulgence from a general corruption.⁶⁸

Elocutionists on both sides of the Atlantic thus took it upon themselves to improve the quality of spoken language both within public institutions and private practices. The latter offered some of the first curative programs for “speech defects” in the nineteenth century. Vocal drills and exercises, tongue and laryngeal gymnastics, slowing down speech or timing it to a steady rhythm were all methods used to remove speech defects.⁶⁹

However, it is important to recognize the political context in which elocution emerged as a popular expert on speech within nineteenth-century America. The historian Dwight Conquergood reads American elocution in particular from the perspective of racial tension and class struggle. “Elocution,” he writes, “expressed in another key the body-discipline so characteristic of industrial capitalism, but this was a discipline imposed on the bourgeoisie, a way for them to mark ‘distinction’ from the masses.”⁷⁰ The problem with the common word was precisely its commonality;

⁶⁷ Dwight Conquergood, “Rethinking Elocution: The Trope of the Talking Book and Other Figures of Speech,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 20.4 (2000): 326.

⁶⁸ Thomas Sheridan, “A Course of Lectures on Elocution” 1762, 32-33.

⁶⁹ Wingate, *Stuttering*, 44-56; Bobrick, *Knotted Tongues*, 91. While both English and American elocutionists were motivated by politics of citizenship, more work is needed to trace the migration of these practices across dissimilar racial and class contexts.

⁷⁰ Conquergood, “Rethinking Elocution,” 326. Conquergood reads elocution as an industrialist technology that regulated and in so doing recirculated the excess of orality, analogous to the work of the printer’s type within scribal culture (326). Indeed, Conquergood cites Anna Russell’s (1851) *The*

elocution was designed to recover the power of the spoken word from the masses and thus reinforce the privilege of white and literate property owners. Subjection is always in step with hierarchy, and becoming a refined subject of speech reifies oneself not only as human (not animal), but as white (not black), rich and educated (not poor). As Conquergood suggests above, elocution deploys a distinctly industrial capitalist set of biopolitical operations upon the bourgeois body in this attempt to standardize and replicate vocal norms of civility, class, and whiteness. The techniques and strategies of elocution that would eventually be adopted by SLP must be understood as intertwined with deep racial and class anxieties of speech.

Foucault offers a framework to understand the “disciplinary” techniques of elocution that stand as precursors to speech correction. For Foucault, “disciplinary power” is the series of techniques used to manage and control individual subjects (to make them docile or *manageable*) within a population and bring them in line with the norm.⁷¹ Relations of power do not act directly on individuals—using physical force, for example, to modify speech. Rather, a relationship of power for Foucault is a “conduct of conduct” that modifies one’s possible range of actions.⁷² Disciplinary power operates, in large part, at the micro-physical level to regulate the precise movements and behaviors of the individual body and thus develop and habituate new and productive capacities that are always evaluated in relation to the “normal.” This intimate level of power relations (what Foucault terms “anatomy-politics”) disciplines the dysfluent body to be more measured, rational, and efficient and is, we suggest, central to the very function of SLP as a biopolitical apparatus.

In the broadest strokes, elocution and later speech correction enact a series of disciplinary operations upon the body to break the speech-gesture into a series of discrete micro-physical actions that can be evaluated, controlled, and optimized. Citing as examples the mid-eighteenth century elaborations of marching, good handwriting, and firing a rifle, Foucault argues that discipline renders the body an efficient and compliant machine whose activity is meticulously controlled in relation to temporal and gestural norms. Disciplinary practices targeting speech resemble each of the above examples. Like the march, the proper speaking body is pierced by time such that all its movements are fastidiously assigned a duration and succession. Speech correction habituates the speaking body to move in standardized rhythms, to embody measured

Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader where the uncultivated voice is described as an error, a smudge: “It resembles, in its effect to the ear, that presented to the eye, when the sheet has been accidentally disturbed in the press, and there comes forth, instead of the clear, dark, well-defined letter, executed distinctly on the fair white page, a blur of half-shade” (15; cited in Conquergood 326). Vocal smudges exist only in relation to systems of standardization such that creating a social factory (albeit here in a nascent stage) that both cultivates and standardizes the capacity of speech can only serve to circulate and proliferate the problem of excess and its correlate: the vocal deviant.

⁷¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

⁷² Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 138.

time, and thus integrate into the ordered beat of capitalist machinery.⁷³ Proper speech, like good handwriting, is moreover a gesture, an entire anatomical routine that must be performed efficiently such that “nothing . . . remain[s] idle or useless.”⁷⁴

Foucault’s third example is perhaps the most salient: discipline optimizes the functions of the body in relation to an external object—fastening the body-object together as an efficient and cohesive machine. Foucault illustrates this power relation using the eighteenth-century maneuver of firing a rifle:

Bring the weapon forward. In three stages. . . . At the third stage, let go of the rifle with the left hand, which falls along the thigh, raising the rifle arm half flexed, the elbow close to the body, the thumb lying against the lock, resting against the first screw, the hammer resting on the first finger, the barrel perpendicular.⁷⁵

This example of discipline is now famous, but Foucault could just have easily cited the elaboration of the speaking act by Harvard elocution teacher Jonathan Barber in 1831:

In pronouncing the word MAN the lips are first intentionally brought together and pressed in a certain way against each other, and air being at the same time forcibly impelled from the throat, a sound is heard which somewhat resembles the lowing of an ox. The lips which before were held in somewhat forcible contact are now separated, the mouth is opened and its cavity is put into a particular shape; and air being again impelled from the throat during this position of the mouth, the sound A is heard as that letter is pronounced in the word *a-t*. Finally this last sound being completed, the tip of the tongue is carried upwards from the lower part of the mouth, and air issuing from the throat in a forcible manner during this state of the parts, the peculiar sound appropriate to the letter N is heard.⁷⁶

Disciplining the speaking body renders the voice itself a manipulable object. Barber is explicitly applying in the classroom the theory of James Rush, the first to identify, through a systematic taxonomy, the physiology of speech *production* in relation to mechanistic elements—force, pitch, quality, rhythm—of the voice.⁷⁷ Through Barber and Rush’s elocutionary technologies, speech is translated into a micro-physical maneuver that simultaneously fashions the voice while ob/jectifying it. Put otherwise, like the firing of a rifle, discipline meticulously loads the mouth, tongue, and lungs in order to expel the voice efficiently and correctly. So that the voice be pliable and correctable—so that the voice be a compliant target of biopolitical imperatives—the speaking body must be made docile in each minute movement.

⁷³ Cf. St. Pierre, “Distending Straight-Masculine Time.”

⁷⁴ Foucault, *Discipline*, 152.

⁷⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 153.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Barber, *Practical Treatise on Gesture* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Brown, 1931), 17-18; quoted in Mary Margaret Robb, “The Elocutionary Movement and its Chief Figures,” in *History of Speech Education*, 185-6.

⁷⁷ James Rush, *The Philosophy of the Human Voice* (Philadelphia, PA: J. Maxwell, 1872); Cf. Lester L. Hale, “Dr. James Rush,” in *History of Speech Education in America*, 226.

There is, by necessity, no linear path from these early disciplinary practices to speech correction: truth is always a matter of contestation. Rush was widely scorned in his time for rendering speech mechanical and Barber was similarly dismissed from Harvard in 1834 due to the unpopularity of his disciplinary methods.⁷⁸ By mid-century, elocution had largely fallen out of favor within the academy due not to a flagging interest in spoken language but the belief that elocution was too artificial, mechanical, and exhibitionary (that is, *too* rationalistic) to service a capacity like speech. In the remainder of the century, speech education was increasingly linked with English literature while elocution both dropped to an elective status and migrated from public to private institutions.

Twentieth-century speech correctionists regularly belittled elocutionists as “quacks and charlatans”⁷⁹ who employed archaic methods such as breathing exercises, rhythmic exercises, and vocal drills to “fix” speech defectives for a fee. Yet while SLPs decried these practices as quackery, they continued to wield them by divorcing in growing measure their etiological from their disciplinary functions. In the 1910s speech correctionists readily adopted anatomo-political methods such as tongue gymnastics and enunciating single words slowly and distinctly.⁸⁰ By the 30s speech correctionists no longer believed that stuttering was *caused* by, for instance, cramps in the larynx that needed to be overcome through exercises, yet practices that habituate slow, distinct, rhythmic, and smooth speech only intensified.

To take but a few examples, Irene Pool Davis proposed a speech program for elementary school curriculum built upon relaxation, rhythm, and articulation.⁸¹ Adult stutterers practiced “prolongations,” “the pull-out”⁸² and what Wendell Johnson termed “the bounce”⁸³: all micro-physical maneuvers that enable a correct and measured use of the body and a correct use of time.⁸⁴ In an exercise that would have been praised by Rush and Barber, Van Riper argues that the stutterer may need a good deal of practice in changing the configuration of words.⁸⁵ A stutterer who, for example, often stumbled on the word ‘rabbit’ may understand it as beginning not with an ‘r’ but a ‘b’: that is, ‘raa.BBit.’ Modifying one’s stuttering in this instance accordingly requires that the

⁷⁸ David H. Grover, “Elocution at Harvard: The Saga of Jonathan Barber,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 51, issue 1 (1965): 65. doi: 10.1080/00335636509382703

⁷⁹ e.g. Russell, “Section on Elementary, Popular, and Semi-popular Articles”; Van Riper, *Speech Correction*.

⁸⁰ E.g. Scripture, *Stuttering*; J. S. Gaylord, “Speech Improvement,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 5, issue 4 (1919): 358-367. doi: 10.1080/00335631909360762; Mrs. Frank A. Reed, “Speech Work in the Detroit Public Schools.” *National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses* (1916): 870; Blanton, “Stammering and the Voice Teacher.”

⁸¹ Irene Pool Davis, “A Speech Program for the Changing Elementary School Curriculum,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 22, issue 3 (1936): 454-457.

⁸² Van Riper, *Speech Correction*.

⁸³ Johnson, “Stuttering,” in *Speech Handicapped School Children* eds. Johnson et. al (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

⁸⁴ Foucault, *Discipline*, 152.

⁸⁵ Van Riper, *Speech Correction*, 383.

linguistic unit itself be broken down, rearranged, and reconnected according to more useful spatial and temporal linguistic configurations. The speaking body must then comport and discipline itself in relation to these norms such that the body-voice machine can eject words clearly and evenly. These practices were routinely psychologized and utilized for various, and often conflicting, reasons. What we wish to emphasize, however, is that such sustained practices used to discipline and mold the body were speech correction's very condition of possibility.

By the early twentieth century, the normalization of the speaking body had become a biopolitical necessity, developed and employed in service of productivity. As speech correction spread throughout society via public and private school systems, child guidance clinics, and hospital clinics throughout the 20s and 30s, it increasingly functioned as a social apparatus that enabled "speech defectives" to join the sphere of useful citizens. This shift aligns with what disability historian Henri-Jacques Stiker (1999) describes as the rehabilitative initiative, which took hold from the 1920s onward within Western societies. Previous to this period, disabled people were largely held up as different and segregated within such institutions as the household or the asylum. However, the rehabilitative turn establishes disabled people as "a category to be reintegrated and thus to be rehabilitated,"⁸⁶ to make them, as much as possible, "like the rest": like the statistical norm. Focusing on stuttering once again, stutterers haltingly came to be understood in the 30s as ontologically identical to non-stutterers. And, as Johnson argues, if stutterers *are* different in speech behavior, "nevertheless, they are alterable to the extent that one is justified in operating clinically on the assumption that they can become non-stutterers."⁸⁷ As *rehabilitatable*, disabled people, stutterers, can now come to take their place within "the machinery of production, consumption, work, and play in the day-to-day community."⁸⁸

In Foucauldian terms, rehabilitation seeks to circulate, rather than segregate, disabled speakers within the social milieu such that they become productive as the target of multiple discourses and practices. Segregation is a form of power that "concentrates, focuses, and encloses."⁸⁹ Segregation as a governing logic is epitomized in institutions such as the asylum or eugenic "training schools" for the so-called feeble-minded, an institutional logic that seeks to contain the threat of abnormality, of disability, within a bounded and totalized space *by letting nothing escape*. However, speech resists this type of closure, and its normalization must be mobilized by a different logic. Speech is public (in both ontology and function) and its unimpeded circulation had become essential to the exercise of power by the early twentieth century. Indeed, the need for always *more* speech is one reason SLP censured the "quacks and charlatans" who operated commercial and private clinics: speech correction is a

⁸⁶ Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability*, trans. William Sayers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 134.

⁸⁷ Johnson, "Treatment of Stuttering," 170.

⁸⁸ Stiker, *History of Disability*, 128.

⁸⁹ A mode of governance Foucault terms "discipline" in contrast to "security." *Security, Territory, Population*, 44.

necessarily public and circulatory apparatus. This imperative—that speech must circulate—places speech correction close to the form of governance Foucault terms “security,” where power operates in an open field, “organizing circulation, eliminating its dangerous elements, making a division between good and bad circulation, and maximizing the good circulation by diminishing the bad.”⁹⁰ The question for speech correction is not “how can we isolate the speech defect?” as much as “how can we regulate the circulation of speech and mitigate, if we cannot cancel out, its dangers?”⁹¹

The ability to regulate and make disabled speaking bodies socially and economically useful is thus basic to technologies that normalize the tongue. It is not coincidental that Van Riper prefaces his monumental 1939 *Speech Correction: Principles and Methods* by proclaiming the social and economic utility of disabled individuals, problematizing speech disability in distinctly biopolitical terms,⁹² nor that starting in the 30s Van Riper and Johnson, both highly influential speech correctionists, push to rehabilitate stuttering rather than curing it outright—a eugenic feat recognized as being more and more unattainable. The goal of speech correction in their estimation should be modifying stuttering to reduce its abnormality. As relayed by a former client, Van Riper claimed that “Some of his clients were able to control their speech to such a degree that for all practical purposes they were considered completely fluent, not cured, but with a controlled speech pattern. . . . This controlled speech let them join the world of the fluent.”⁹³ What we might today call “inclusion”⁹⁴ hinges on making dysfluent speech as socially acceptable as possible. “Joining the world of the fluent” is a thinly veiled analogue for normalization: in this instance, approximating the norm of “fluent” speech such that one can access, ever tenuously, a dominant linguistic society. And from the inverse perspective, “joining the world of the fluent” is shorthand for integrating dysfluency into (that is, *including* dysfluency within) productive flows of communication, affect, and sociability.

Yet however important the immediate output of economic productivity may be, speech correction filled the much larger role of consolidating and maintaining a system of normalizing control over speaking bodies. Biopower, as Foucault argues, has sought “an increasingly controlled, more rational, and economic process of adjustment . . . between productive activities, *communicative networks*, and the play of power

⁹⁰ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, *ibid.*

⁹¹ With this being said, it is important not to overlay the rehabilitative or circulatory function of speech correction. The performance of speech is always a thoroughly ableist marker and metric of human rationality, a dividing line that subhumanizes and justifies the institutionalization and exclusion of disabled people—especially autistic and intellectually disabled people. We must thus recognize speech correction to operate, as Deleuze and Guattari would say, as both a smoothing and striating machine.

⁹² Van Riper, *Speech Correction*, 5.

⁹³ George G. Helliesen, *Forty Years After Therapy: One Man's Story* (Newport, VA: Apollo Press, 2002), 27-8.

⁹⁴ David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *The Biopolitics of Disability* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2015).

relations.”⁹⁵ By communicative networks, Foucault means systems of transmitting signs (or other symbolic mediums) through which, for example, a teacher can give lessons and orders, ask questions, and thereby exercise disciplinary power. When communicative networks are understood to rely on a biopolitics of speech (and aurality more generally), dysfluency emerges as a destabilizing threat to the operations of power. Consider the classroom, an important institutional site of semiotic normalization. In 1912, Edward W. Scripture⁹⁶ represents stutterers and lispers as, respectively, an “irritating distraction to their teachers” and a “needless retardation to their classes.”⁹⁷ That same year, the psychologist, mental hygienist, and stutterer John Madison Fletcher stated the threat of defective speech in even more stark and industrial terms:

If I understand the great movement for efficiency in commercial lines as Dr. Taylor⁹⁸ and others have conceived it, the first point of attack is the sources of lost energies, misplaced efforts and neglected forces. In other words, the whole efficiency movement begins with the *stoppage of leaks, lost motions and costly frictions*. . . . If you should stand before a class in which there was a stuttering boy trying to recite, and watch this stumbling, halting, blushing and writhing embodiment of mental torture, and see the sympathy, worry, distraction of attention and anxiety of the teacher no less than the rest of the class, you could understand what I mean by this great leakage of energy.⁹⁹

From the perspective not simply of communicative networks, but the *interface* between production, communicative networks, and relations of power, fluency comes to be problematized in terms of systems, a lack of friction, and usable energy. And inversely, the apparatus of speech correction renders dysfluency a form of *entropy* or non-usable energy that can and must be managed — yet ironically, in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics, never destroyed.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 137; emphasis added.

⁹⁶ Scripture was an American physician, phonetician, and experimental psychologist who worked on speech science and pathology.

⁹⁷ Scripture, *Stuttering*, v.

⁹⁸ Frederick Winslow Taylor was a mechanical engineer who at the turn of the century developed a theory of management termed “scientific management,” metonymically referred to as Taylorization, used to increase industrial productivity through the mechanization and deskilling of labor.

⁹⁹ John Madison Fletcher, “Speech Defects in Children,” in *The American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children* January-June (1912): 148, 149; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁰ While true that speech correction presupposes and reproduces deviance through its technologies of normalization, this reproduction is nevertheless useful in generalizing and thus consolidating the discursive authority of speech correction across the social field. This movement follows Foucault’s insistence that “The bourgeoisie could not care less about delinquents, about their punishment and rehabilitation, which economically have little importance, but it is concerned with the complex mechanisms with which delinquency is controlled, pursued, punished and reformed” (“Two Lectures,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon (New

Reading speech correction as an apparatus that maximizes useable (communicative) energy through the generalized production of the capacity of speech on the one hand, and the stoppage of leaks, lost motions, and costly frictions on the other, returns us to the Foucauldian insight that rehabilitation must organize circulation, minimizing the bad circulation to maximize the good. Speech correction works both to free the circulation of speech within society and to maximally integrate dysfluent (as well as deaf, “non-verbal,” and neuro-diverse) subjects into the productive flows of communicative networks.¹⁰¹ The historian and philosopher François Ewald argues that technologies of normalization at the turn of the century sought to institute a “common language” across industrial, bureaucratic, political, and social spheres such that these differing elements could understand each other and form a productive and cohesive society.¹⁰² Docile communicative bodies are requisite for fluent communicative networks, and prior to SLP the state had no way to manage (the leakiness of) speech, to bring it under the fold of biopower in an ever more streamlined and rational communicative society. Van Riper could have hardly been more honest when he stated that, “In any society so dependent upon communication, the ‘teaching of talking’ must finally achieve an important place in education.”¹⁰³

Speaking the Truth

Some might gesture here to the altruistic aims of the founders of speech correction and insist our claim that speech correction is a normalizing apparatus serving biopolitical goals and values is altogether missing the point. Indeed, individual speech correctionists (many of whom, historically, are stutterers) have largely benevolent motives. It is moreover important to recognize that the early twentieth-century was not kind to people with speech disabilities. Consider, for example, Scripture’s depiction of the stutterer’s fate:

York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 102). In the context of a society where communication is being pushed to the fore, the vocal delinquent will have more economic importance than would the criminal delinquent, yet Foucault’s point stands. The technologies invented to curb the defective and reinforce class and race distinctions start to become economically and politically useful (“Two Lectures,” 101) which results in speech correction circulating more densely within the social field.

¹⁰¹ Wile, for example, makes no qualms about the biopolitical stakes: “The actual cost of speech defects to society cannot be estimated at the present time in dollars and cents. The limitations of self-expression is a loss to the individual and to the community. Speech defects which interfere with the fullest expansion of consciousness along the lines of culture and industry are anti-social. They decrease the social worth of the individual and rob the community of the full fruits of human mentality. They retard and pervert economic power” (585).

¹⁰² François Ewald, “Norms, Discipline, and the Law,” *Representations* 30, Spring (1990): 151.

¹⁰³ Van Riper, *Speech Correction*, vii.

Few persons realize how terrible life becomes to a stutterer. . . . Every time he tries to speak he is obliged to make a fool of himself in such a way as to make other people want to laugh at him. One religious but stuttering lady finally demanded to be “cured or chloroformed.” One boy often threw himself on the floor, begging his mother to tell him how to die. Another boy asked for a letter to his father, telling him to keep the other children from laughing at him. Many stutterers become so sensitive that they imagine everyone is constantly making fun of them. The life of a stutterer is usually so full of sorrow that it can hardly be said to be worth living.¹⁰⁴

Scripture no doubt sensationalizes the lived experience of stutterers in an appeal to pity and charity,¹⁰⁵ but autobiographies from this time¹⁰⁶ make it clear that people with speech disabilities sought therapy because of disability oppression—internalized and not. In turn, we readily acknowledge that speech correctionists were most often concerned with the well-being of their client; the normalizing and eugenic character of their practices well off the radar. Yet the therapeutic character of SLP is precisely the point. Not only does focusing on individual well-being obscure the *socio-political* structure and effects of SLP, but as the social theorist Nikolas Rose argues in the context of psychology, “to rule citizens democratically means ruling them *through* their freedoms, their choices, and their solidarities rather than despite these.”¹⁰⁷ We accordingly suggest that understanding SLP as a normalizing institution requires the issue be reframed in terms of governance and authority. That is, we must ask how SLP became what Foucault terms a “regime of truth.” How did modern speech correction gain the legitimacy and authority to speak the truth about dysfluent bodies and dysfluent people themselves such that these subjects willingly submitted themselves to disciplinary practices? How does benevolence mask and sustain disciplinary power?

Establishing authority over speaking bodies required that speech correction accredit its knowledge as truth and carefully position itself as a scientific discipline. This involved, in Foucault’s terms, a “game of truth,” a social process of exclusion “in which arguments, evidence, theories, and beliefs are thrust to the margins, not allowed to enter ‘the true’.”¹⁰⁸ Like many fledgling sciences of this time, speech correction faced an uphill battle of being recognized as a legitimate discipline, and this was accomplished over time by aligning itself with medical, phonological, and psychological discourses while expunging competing discourses from ‘the true’. Labelling elocutionists “quacks and

¹⁰⁴ Scripture, *Stuttering*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Note that while Scripture appeals to charity, as highlighted in the previous section, he also begins to problematize the speech defect in the biopolitical terms of economic cost and the good of society. The oscillation between these poles is an essential dynamic of the government of disability.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. Johnson, *Because I Stutter* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1930); Whitten, Ida E. 1990. *“The Face of all the World is Changed”*: An Autobiographical Study with the Focus on Stuttering. Cincinnati, OH: Scott Zoller.

¹⁰⁷ Rose, *Inventing*, 117; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

charlatans” and barring their knowledges from speech correction journals¹⁰⁹ enabled speech correction to sustain a myth of linear scientific progress. As Elmer Kenyon phrased it in a letter to the editor of the *Journal of Speech Disorders*, “The future of the American Speech Correction Association depends on its looking upward and forward rather than backward and downward.”¹¹⁰ The legitimacy of speech correction was established not simply by “looking forward” but by severing itself from its past. Van Riper, for example, claims that the profession of speech pathology was established in the 1930s,¹¹¹ boldly discounting a century of foundational knowledges and practices from which it draws. Speech correction thus ratifies the present through what Rose calls a “lapsed history” of “false paths, of errors and illusions, of prejudice and mystification—all those cul-de-sacs into which knowledge was drawn and which diverted it from the path of progress.”¹¹² Jostling for “the truth” of the speech defect was of course nothing new, yet it is important to note the ways in which the modern speech correction institution consolidated authority while spreading its roots into society, thus giving concrete expression and density to an ableist field of truth.¹¹³

Harnessing the social, political, and economic anxieties around speech required an appropriately scientific and objective language. Besides the delayed biopolitical “need,” one reason speech correction lagged behind other medico-disciplinary institutions was that it lacked the necessary instruments to objectify speech mechanisms and thus render them scientific objects. As Van Riper writes of the early period of SLP:

Back then we had no texts, no tools. We recorded our clients’ speech on wax phonograph cylinders. Our sound waves were scratched on a smoke kymograph drum. Using tuning forks of different frequencies, we calibrated hearing loss by marks on the office carpet. We had no standardized tests.¹¹⁴

Nineteenth century technologies such as the stethoscope, microscope, and x-rays were elevating the medical profession as a whole; doctors and scientists were now able to look inside the human body, suddenly privy to seemingly objective knowledges that even patients themselves could not access. Speech pathology likewise only began to mobilize the profound authority of this “medical gaze” through developing its own technologies such as the laryngoscope and kymographic tracings,¹¹⁵ offering the discipline verifiable positive knowledge and thus credibility by scientific standards. In

¹⁰⁹ E.g. Russell, “Section on Elementary”; Elmer Lawton Kenyon, “The Question of our Ethics and Standards,” *Journal of Speech Disorders* 4, issue 4 (1939): 302.

¹¹⁰ Kenyon, “The Question,” 302.

¹¹¹ Van Riper, “Where and Whither,” 483.

¹¹² Rose, *Inventing*, 42.

¹¹³ Cf. Josephine Hoegaerts, “‘Is it a Habit or is it a Disease?’ The Changing Social Meaning of Stammering in Nineteenth-Century Western Europe,” *Terrains & Travaux* 23 (2013): 17-37.

¹¹⁴ Van Riper, “Recollections from a Pioneer,” *ASHA* (1989): 72-73.

¹¹⁵ The former device enables a direct observation of the vocal cords and the latter is used to record graphically the vibrations of the voice.

the wake of a culture-wide “scientization of the social,”¹¹⁶ speech correction carefully positioned itself to speak the objective—read, pathologizing—truth of the stuttering body.¹¹⁷

In addition to medicalization, SLP flourished on the coattails of psychology. Since the late-nineteenth century, speech correction steadily aligned itself with psychological methodology and practice: allying with mental hygiene, flirting with psychoanalysis, and finally articulating their practice as “speech therapy.” Problematizing both the enigma of speech disability and the mode of their rehabilitation in psychological terms is significant for two reasons.

First, Rose suggests that psychology is best understood as an “intellectual technique” that renders the “human soul into thought in the form of calculable traces.”¹¹⁸ Psychology, put otherwise, transforms subjectivity into a scientific *object* that can be measured, ordered, and verified. These seemingly objective methods dissect the self and speak its truths from within. Under the guidance of psychology, SLP subsequently did not target the speech phenomenon but the stuttering individual as a whole.¹¹⁹ This strategy exposed the speech defect to an entirely new range of interventions: while elocutionary disciplinary practices could pick apart the stuttered voice and speech mechanisms, they were unable to calculate and normalize the attitudes, emotions, environment, and thoughts of the stutterer herself. Transformed by this vast array of positive knowledge, the discursive authority of SLP began to saturate the entire domain of the stuttering individual and consolidate the expert gaze.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, while psychology opened a vast epistemic and therefore disciplinary terrain within the stuttering individual, it transformed not only the sites but also the mode of discipline. Rose argues that psychology fundamentally changed the way political authority is mobilized, becoming “not so much a matter of ordering, controlling, commanding obedience and loyalty, but of improving the capacity of individuals to exercise authority over themselves.”¹²⁰ Psychology reorganized the biopolitical good of society around such individualizing principles as happiness, normality, quality of life, and self-improvement, while

¹¹⁶ Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters, and Kaat Wils, eds. *Scientists' Expertise as Performance: Between State and Society, 1860–1960* (Brookfield, VT: Pickering & Chatto Ltd, 2015).

¹¹⁷ It is noteworthy that Scripture grounds this fledgling science of speech on a normal/abnormal binary: “In most medical faculties, no place is accorded to speech defects; the same is true in schools of pedagogy. This was formerly justified on the ground that a scientific study of speech and its defects did not exist. In the last decade, however, the science of phonetics has extended itself to laboratory work and university teaching; moreover, speech clinics have been established in several of the foremost medical schools. The treatment of these defects thus stands upon an *entirely new basis*; namely, that of a carefully developed science of *normal and pathological speech* (*Stuttering*, v; emphases added).

¹¹⁸ Rose, *Inventing*, 74.

¹¹⁹ E.g. Charles Van Riper and Robert L. Milisen, “A study of the predicted duration of the stutterers blocks as related to their actual duration,” *Journal of Speech Disorders* 4, issue 4 (1939): 356; Simon, “Development of Education,” 407.

¹²⁰ Rose, *Inventing*, 64.

simultaneously making each self responsible for approximating these norms (foreshadowing the neoliberal “entrepreneur of the self”). The significance of the individual regulating not merely her own behavior but also her most fleeting thoughts and beliefs, convinced that this self-regulation is in her own best interest, can hardly be overstated. The psychologist—the Speech-Language Pathologist—becomes a mere facilitator of *self*-normalization.

While speech correction as a whole remained ambivalent regarding the etiological relation between stuttering and psychology, the effort of, for example, Johnson, Van Riper, and Bryngelson during the 30s to steer the practice of speech correction down rehabilitative and therapeutic lines was tremendously successful. The rehabilitative and normalizing imperative of SLP, while still retaining its political and socio-economic undertone, progressively appealed to individual happiness and self-improvement. Presented in terms of one’s own best interest *and* objective knowledge, the stutterer happily accepted the disciplinary reigns. As Ida Whitten, a client of Travis, Johnson, and Van Riper, remarked: “It was my speech problem, my future. I, I alone, had to accept responsibility for the outcome of my problem. . . . This was of the greatest importance to me, and it is of the very greatest importance in the rehabilitation of any stutterer.”¹²¹ Such beliefs, uncoincidentally resonant with the Protestant work ethic, were facilitated by a regime of truth with a “low epistemic profile,”¹²² existing for the most part out of sight. Speech correctionists did not stop taming the tongue but rather began to exercise their authority more diffusely. In the name of “ethics”¹²³ and beneficent self-improvement and happiness, the therapist assumes the role of assisting the stutterer’s internalization of the disciplinary apparatus. This new, ethical relationship with oneself and with one’s therapist enables normalization to be exercised to a degree impossible via external coercion. The biopolitical communicative subject was, in short, produced from the inside out.

To illustrate this infolding of the speaking subject, SLPs recognized early on that normalization required the stutterer to view herself as the therapist viewed her, to assess and intervene in her own speech at all times and places. Mirror work was a technique often used early in therapy, wherein a stutterer was forced to confront her own spectacle: view her face through blocks and grimaces, so as to appreciate the motions and tensions of her body and “find a way of helping [herself].”¹²⁴ Stutterers were given assignments to perform outside the clinic about which they would write detailed accounts to submit before the reviewing eye of the therapist: e.g. “Describe your dominant speech problems during an hour,” “Describe your dominant emotions of the

¹²¹ Ida E. Whitten, *“The Face of all the World is Changed”*: An Autobiographical Study with the Focus on Stuttering (Cincinnati, OH: Scott Zoller, 1990), 119.

¹²² Rose, *Inventing*.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹²⁴ Whitten, *Face of all the World*, 48.

day.”¹²⁵ Van Riper demanded “continual vigilance”¹²⁶ and in the words of his client, “The stutterer will relapse unless he continues to work *every day*, perhaps every waking hour, to keep his speech good.”¹²⁷

Speech correction thus emerged not as an isolated institution but as a totalizing methodology and discourse through which the stutterer came to view herself and her speech. For Foucault, such self-surveillance is akin to the panopticon: an enclosed tower invented for nineteenth century prison complexes which allowed guards to view all prisoners in their cells at any time, but did not reveal to the prisoners when they were on display.¹²⁸ The phenomenon of being open to the disciplining gaze at all times produces a culture of self-surveillance, wherein one learns to monitor and censor her own behaviour through the internalized gaze of the guard. By teaching stutterers to survey and correct not only their speech behavior but their most minute thoughts and emotions in accordance with the terms and goals of SLP, the disciplinary authority of speech correction travels with(in) the individual herself.¹²⁹ The stutterer becomes a compliant and confessing self-governing subject.

While such therapeutic practices had a totalizing authoritative effect on the speech of stutterers, it must be emphasized that self-surveillance was only accepted due to the medical and scientific objectivity by which these technologies of power were authorized. Making the individual a subject of this pathologizing discourse—teaching it as the objective *truth* of her condition—was the first and foundational step in normalizing control. This practice is described by Van Riper, Bryngelson, and others as the “objective attitude”: the “unemotional admission of [one’s] speech difference as a problem to be solved.”¹³⁰ Stuttered speech is here a problem rooted in one’s body that must be accepted realistically as an objective fact.¹³¹ In framing such a stance as objective, and requiring stutters to accept it without emotion or conflict, SLP grounds its own necessity, and the surveillance and discipline that will follow, as the naturalized truth of every stuttering body. The objective attitude—the medical gaze itself—is structured by a *compulsory* curative logic that is profoundly depoliticizing.

Here the full force of SLP can be felt. Internalizing the normalizing apparatus via the objective attitude is a manifestation of the individualizing power Foucault terms “subjection.” This mode of power “applies itself to immediate everyday life which

¹²⁵ Helliesen, *Forty Years*, 68-9.

¹²⁶ Van Riper, *The Nature of Stuttering, Second Edition* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982), 2.

¹²⁷ Whitten, *Face of all the World*, 166-7.

¹²⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228.

¹²⁹ Moreover, the totalizing character of SLP arises precisely from the fact that it is *not* a discrete institution, but a set of discontinuous practices generalized across the social field. As Van Riper puts it, “Educators are recognizing what professional speech pathologists have always known—that the work of the specialist must be supplemented by *intelligent classroom and home cooperation* if the millions of speech defectives are to have adequate help” (1939, vii; emphasis added).

¹³⁰ Van Riper, *Speech Correction*, 362.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him.”¹³² By disciplining oneself and confessing the “truth” of oneself in pathologized terms, the dysfluent individual is rendered a medicalized, psychologized, and deviant subject—“a stutterer.” Subjection imposes a law of truth that creates the dysfluent individual, a truth by which she is recognized and must recognize herself. It is thus not coincidental that Johnson opens his autobiography by proclaiming: “I am a stutterer. I am not like other people. I must think differently, act differently, live differently,”¹³³ and again, as Whitten acknowledges: “The stutterer should continually acknowledge that he is a stutterer.”¹³⁴ That these confessions are deliberate and a function of biopower is evidenced by Van Riper’s injunction that,

the stutterer should be required to admit his stuttering as a daily routine. Thus, whenever the author’s stutterers enter the door of the clinic, they are required to say to themselves, ‘for the time being, Mister---, you’re a stutterer. No use posing as something else. Better get to work on your problem if you want to get rid of the handicap’.¹³⁵

Being identified as a stutterer welded one to the logic and expertise of SLP.¹³⁶ The efficacy of normalization and thus the ability to access the world of the fluent hinges on abandoning oneself to the medicalized truth of speech correction *as* a subject of speech correction. Yet it must be remembered that while Van Riper’s instruction is telling, it was always only superfluous since “the stutterer” was created not by a speech act but through the sustained application of technologies of power upon oneself.

Conclusion

The advent of modern speech correction structured the experience of disabled speakers and their place within society in new and enduring ways. Statistical calculation and other diagnostic practices escalated not only the numbers but types of pathologized speakers, and cultural anxieties mobilized these differences into a matter of not only individual, but social, economic, and national concern. Treatment for speech disabilities became both more accessible and seemingly necessary within a modern world saturated with flows of information. Scientific and therapeutic understandings of speech and disability converged to internalize the practices and goals of speech correction within individuals, confirming both the objective truth of their problem and the need for its treatment. The early decades of speech correction worked to crystalize the threat of deviance and the promise of normalcy, both across the population and within the souls of individual disabled speakers.

¹³² Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 130.

¹³³ Johnson, *Because I Stutter*, 1.

¹³⁴ Whitten, *Face of all the World*, 160.

¹³⁵ Van Riper, *Speech Correction*, 364.

¹³⁶ Rose, *Inventing*, 96.

There is surely a need to stretch this analysis into the present, examining the transformation of speech correction in tandem with the privatization of the welfare state, the neoliberalization of eugenics, the emergence of post-industrial labor that subsists on and exploits communicative subjectivities, and the increased specialization of the profession. SLP has doubtlessly evolved. It is moreover important to demonstrate that for all speech correction has changed, constituted by practices of calculating deviance, disciplining the tongue, and speaking the truth, it has changed very little. Advancements in genetic research and “better” preschool therapies inch slowly closer to the original eugenic goal of eliminating speech defects—that is, forms of human variation. While “speech hygiene” has been re-coded in the more palatable discourse of enabling “effective communication,”¹³⁷ SLP remains a biopolitical apparatus of the (transnational) state. These essential features of SLP do not, of course, cancel out important work that the discipline does in helping speech disabled people survive in an ableist world. As Foucault writes, “My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do.”¹³⁸ The normalizing practice of SLP is not bad but dangerous, and must always be approached critically.

But most importantly for disabled people, a critical history allows us to question *why* dysfluency has so-often been excluded from our shared communicative practices, and in doing so allows us to imagine how speech, and therefore speaking people, might enter and habitate the world otherwise. The biopolitics of speech show modern communication to be at core a *problem*—a problem of blockage, leakage, breakdown, and solipsism. If, as is increasingly believed from the nineteenth-century onward, communication is welded to progress and social cohesion,¹³⁹ what is dysfluency but a threat to common meanings, economic development, and national unity? Indeed, in 1926 Charles Judd, an influential social and educational psychologist, argued that communication is a crucial national institution that gradually assimilates mind to mind and thus establishes social solidarity,¹⁴⁰ a point quickly reiterated (1929) by the Iowa Child Research Station in relation to disabled speech. The disabled speaker literally embodies the problem of communication, disclosing in dramatic form its impossibility yet seeming necessity. Under the constant threat of epistemic blockage and breakdown, dysfluency is nothing but a threat, a risk, entropy.

Yet what might happen in a world that regards communication not as a technical operation but an ethical relation? Rather than a wire strung tenuously between minds, might communication be a shared practice of codependent care and attention to bodies and meanings birthed together? The communication theorist John Durham Peters suggests that “thoughts derive their meaning from the ‘history of the body’; they need a

¹³⁷ ASHA, 2015.

¹³⁸ Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,” 104.

¹³⁹ Simonson 2013, 18-19

¹⁴⁰ p. 215

gestation.”¹⁴¹ If so, then perhaps the very crookedness of the dysfluent body, a body that ambles sideways leaning on others, can produce thick and multiple meanings. Perhaps we need dysfluent voices to rethink communication as a collaborative and crip effort. Questioning the social milieu and practices that have for over a century reified a frantic, ableist, and technocratic view of communication allows us not simply to challenge the discursive authority of SLP, but to imagine new possibilities opened by dysfluent voices.

Author bio

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¹⁴¹ Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), 184.

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