Defining Communication Disabilities in West Africa and the U.S. Midwest: Effects of Globalization

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Abstract

This ethnographic case study provides a macro-perspective analysis of the impact of globalization on definitions of communication disabilities and available supports for children with communication disabilities at two elementary schools, one in West Africa and one in the United States (US) Midwest. Critical Social Theory (CST) was used to frame the research and methods of this study. Ethnographic interviews were conducted with teachers, principals, and administrators at each school. The resulting themes indicate differences in how participating sites defined communication disabilities and how they supported children with communication disabilities. Unequal opportunities and lack of access to resources and support were common themes which emerged from schools in both West Africa and the US Midwest. These findings suggest that globalization and cultural differences may influence how educators in West Africa and the United States Midwest approach identifying and supporting children with communication disabilities.

Keywords

Access; communication disability; globalization; functional communication skills; Senegal; United States Midwest

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Positionality Statements

Positionality statements can be found at the end of the article.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in 2011 that about 15% of the world's population is living with some form of disability, though this may be an undercount of individuals with disabilities related to communication (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011; Wylie et al., 2013). Globalization and social structures such as economics, politics, and culture affect how disabilities are approached and treated worldwide and how individuals with disabilities are supported in their communities. Various barriers and challenges that individuals, especially children, may encounter influence their life opportunities. For example, in both majority and minority world countries, persons with disabilities are at a disadvantage in educational attainment and labor market outcomes, have decreased access to health care, and limited access to services (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). These barriers demonstrate traces of globalization that require a macro-perspective to be understood, that is, looking at interactions, beliefs, and practices from a global perspective (Hyter, 2014; Hyter & Salas-Provance, 2023).

Globalization can be defined as the connection among different regions of the world and their societal domains, which can have positive and negative influences on the individuals and communities in these areas (Amin, 2011; Hart-Landsberg, 2013; Hyter, 2014; Panitch & Gindin, 2013; Pillay & Kathard, 2018; McGrew, 2000; Steger, 2017). This process has an effect on the field of speech-language and hearing sciences. By approaching the effect of globalization on society, we can identify several of the cultural and societal structures that influence how communication is perceived and communication impairments are managed. The concept of disability, for example, has been found to be perceived differently in different countries in Africa and those perceptions determine the types of support that are accessible to people with disabilities (Eskay et al., 2012). In many of these countries, there is a mix of different beliefs influenced by different factors, including Western beliefs. Adopting Western beliefs about disabilities is a prime example of globalization and, as Pillay & Kathard (2018) would argue, the continuation of colonization.

Fanon (1965) and Rodney (1981) asserted that Western beliefs imposed on African societies through colonization do not serve African societies but Western ones. South African scholars and disability activists have centered the concept of Ubuntu an "African consciousness characterized by the interconnectedness of people, their communalism, solidarity, generosity, compassion, and care" (Kathard & Pillay, 2013, p. 86). Ubuntu, in other words, is a worldview where disability can be constructed as part of common humanity – a part of what makes humans, human. Dr. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, a philosopher from Senegal, West Africa, writes about the commonalities between the south African concept of Ubuntu and the west African (Wolof) proverb Nit nitay garabam (Man is the remedy for man), and its plural, Nit nitey garabam (the remedy for humans is to become – to manifest as – human) (Diagne, 2022). In the Ubuntu

schema, disability refers to what makes one human (Santiago-Valles, 2006).

Globalization impacts how communication disabilities are defined and supported inside and outside schools. A macro-perspective may fill knowledge gaps and provide preliminary solutions to some of the negative consequences of globalization. Identifying some cultural and societal structures that influence how communication is perceived and communication disabilities are managed across the world offers insight on how to provide the most effective, culturally-relevant support for those with communication disabilities.

Literature Review

Globalization and Coloniality

Steger (2017) defines *globalization* as the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world space. McGrew (2000) states that the consequences these interconnections have on individuals and communities vary in different areas of the world. Some of the positive influences of globalization include technological advances that allow information, as well as groups of people to transcend cultural and national boundaries, and more accessible travel across national borders (Hyter, 2014). Examples of the negative influences include inequality, dispossession of resources, and unequal distribution of wealth, which leads to limited access to resources such as healthcare and fresh food (Hyter, 2014). These negative influences more often affect majority world countries (countries or regions where the majority of the world's populations live, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean) than countries or regions within the

minority world (regions where a minority of the world's populations live, such as in north America, Australia, Europe, and Israel) (Hyter, 2014; Hyter & Salas-Provance, 2023; Hyter et al., 2017; Pillay & Kathard, 2018). Additionally, Pillay and Kathard (2018) compare globalization to colonialism, defining globalization as the blurring of cultural borderlands, which are the boundaries of social structures such as language, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation. Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) dependency theory suggests that social determinants (e.g., economics, politics, race) are the cause of unjust systems in majority world countries at the hands of minority world countries.

An important concept when identifying social structures and efforts to transform them is understanding the historical context. It is vital to comprehending the present and allows us to follow certain events and piece together how these events structure our current reality. For example, in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney (1981) discussed how African schools before European colonization were relevant/responsive to Africans and African culture. There was a focus on the close links of social life in reference to a material and spiritual sense of wellbeing, as well as a focus on nature's role in society. With European colonization, education was taken in a different direction and reflected primarily the European sensibilities and ideals. The main purpose of the new school system under colonialism was to "train" Africans to help local colonial administrations and staff the private capitalist companies owned and organized by Europeans. Rodney stated that "Colonial schooling was for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment" (p. 380). For decades, schools have had to work to overcome the coloniality (i.e., the remnants of colonization) of their education system, and

some African countries are still working to decolonize their schools and curricula to this today (Santiago-Valles, 2005).

Aimé Césaire (2000) defines colonialism as expanding on a "world scale of the competition of its antagonistic economies" (p. 33). This means that colonialism negatively affects the locations that were being colonized. These factors have a significant effect on the community of the school as well as the students and the structure of the school. Getye Abneh (n.d.) argued that African cultures and values were forced to assume Western values throughout colonization. Abneh emphasized the influence of Western colonialism on African academia and students. Using African philosophy, he proposed that those (e.g., countries, groups) in power should "consider ways of placing African students at the center of their own cultures and historical background capable of emancipating themselves from foreign influences" (Abneh, n.d.; p. 4) In other words, to restore African values and history in academia and within society, individuals must acknowledge imposed colonial ideas and challenge them with those derived from their people and ancestors.

Hyter (2022) stated that coloniality is a factor in the way the discipline and profession of speech, language, and hearing sciences was conceptualized, organized, and developed. Coloniality is a trace of colonialism that continues to exist in society, regardless of the current circumstances (Hyter, 2022; Pillay & Kathard, 2018). Coloniality transpires through attempts to maintain social structures (e.g., economic, political, racial) that were originally imposed by the colonists (Hyter, 2022; Richardson, 2020). "Ism's" are a set of ideas (e.g., ableism, linguism, racism) that are all supported by coloniality and continue to exist among societies (Liu et al., 2020). The profession of speech, language, and hearing sciences is governed by a set of standards and

policies that remain consistent with coloniality; there is an urgent need to challenge coloniality and highlight the importance of different thought processes about the profession in the current stage of globalization (Hyter, 2022; Pillay & Kathard, 2018; Yu et al., 2021).

Social Structures and Communication Disabilities

Hyter (2014) explains how the economic social structure of capitalism affects the access to resources that different individuals may have in the United States, including those with communication disabilities. Social structures are social norms and values that are embedded in the political and economic organization of society and include such processes as globalization, politics, capitalism, socioeconomic status, race, and gender (Farmer et al., 2006; Hyter, 2014; Hyter & Salas-Provance, 2019; 2023). Hyter states that capitalism influences which population groups can access valuable resources or supports, while others do not have the same opportunities. Exclusion of the groups that are unable to access resources occur because of this social structure. Socioeconomic status influences the quality of education that individuals have access to or the quality of healthcare they are eligible to receive (Jacobs et al., 2021). Impoverishment among other disadvantageous conditions (e.g., homes within a neighborhood being in disrepair or crime rates) may cause increased chronic stress among individuals, ultimately influencing the individual's overall health (Woolf & Braveman, 2011). The importance of a structural understanding of disability is highlighted by racial health disparities and COVID-19. Chowkwanyun and Reed (2020) argued that COVID-19 disparities must be situated in the context of material resource deprivation caused by low SES, chronic stress

brought on by racial discrimination, or place-based risk" (p. 203). They warned that failure to connect racial disparities and upstream societal forces can perpetuate racial stereotypes that racially minoritized people are more prone to COVID-19 due to supposed biological disposition or risky behavioral patterns.

The quality of one's health care or services received is dictated by social structures such as socioeconomic status, gender, race, and geographical location (Hyter, 2014; Pillay & Kathard, 2018). These imperative services for improving one's ability to participate fully in everyday life are referred to as social determinants of health according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). Social determinants of health are safe and healthy places in which people are able to live an enjoyable life. The five key areas of the social determinants of health as described by the CDC are listed in Table 1.

Wickenden (2013) found when individuals with disabilities were asked what would aid in improving their lives, many of the responses referred more to eliminating impoverishment, discrimination, and exclusion than about service provision. Wickenden suggests that access to imperative services to improve the functioning of everyday life is controlled or influenced by social structures such as those stated above. This type of socially-focused consideration of health stands in contrast to a Western approach to communication disabilities. For example, according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (1993), a *communication disorder* is when an individual demonstrates difficulties with the ability to receive, send, process, and comprehend concepts or verbal, nonverbal and graphic symbol systems. *Disorder* is a medical term meaning that the problem is within the person and that individual

remediation is warranted (Retief & Letšosa, 2018). Individuals who have communication disabilities in the United States would most likely be referred to a speech-language pathologist who would assess the individual's communication skills and then develop and implement a treatment plan for them if warranted. *Disability*, on the other hand, refers to an experience that arises in relationship to physical and sociocultural barriers, which requires engagement with the environment (Retief & Letšosa, 2018). Federal law in the US dictates that all who need specialized services should receive those services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004); yet, different social structures may impact access to suitable resources for individuals and their families.

Table 1

Social Determinants of Health Per Center for Disease Control

Social Determinant	Description
Healthcare Access and Quality	Includes access to healthcare, primary care, health insurance, and health literacy.
Education Access and Quality	Includes language, literacy, educational access
Social and Community Context	Includes ability to participate in governance, workplace conditions, levels of incarceration, and experiences of racism and other forms of systemic exclusion
Economic Stability	Includes impoverishment, access to a job, stable housing, and food security.
Neighborhood and Built Environment	Includes housing, transportation, air and water quality in neighborhoods, and community violence

Note: Chart created using information retrieved on September 15, 2023 from "Healthy People 2030: Social Determinants of Health" (https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health). Copyright by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

There has been little examination of the consequences of globalization on the ways that communication disabilities are defined and supported inside and outside of schools across the world. The current study draws on Critical Social Theory and critical ethnography to examine the ways of knowing and engagement around communication disabilities by educators and administrators in a school in a city in Senegal as compared to those in a school in a city in the United States Midwest. Specifically, our research questions are: (1) How does globalization influence the definition of communication disabilities in schools in Senegal and in the United States Midwest? and (2) How does globalization affect support provided for children with communication disabilities in each of these schools?

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

The premises of *Critical Social Theory* (CST) are a that a historical perspective and comparative analyses are essential for understanding the world, and that work emerges in the context of a commitment to social justice and equity (Abrahams et al., 2019; Hyter, 2014; Hyter & Salas-Provance, 2023). Comparative analysis refers to the comparison and contrasts of two (or more) different contexts. In this study, two countries' contexts were compared. *Social justice* refers to the principle of equal distribution of benefits and resources across socioeconomic, racial, cultural, gender, linguistic, ability levels, and national boundaries (Hyter & Salas-Provance, 2019; 2023). *Equity* encompasses strategies used to ensure that all participants in a society have what they need to participate fully in daily

life (Pillay & Kathard, 2018). These premises guide the methodology used to facilitate this study and comparative analysis with the goal to analyze the meaning that people make of their own reality (Neuman, 2006).

Participants

The participants were recruited from an elementary school in an urban Senegalese city, with a population of approximately 1.1 million people, and an elementary school in an urban city in Michigan with a population of approximately 76,000 people. Senegal is a majority world country that has just recently (i.e., within the last 68 years) gained their independence from French rule, and yet still experiences the impact of coloniality in its curriculum. These remnants of colonialism also impact their educational support system, such as psychological, speech and language, learning, and physical supports. Senegal is estimated to have more than 35,000 children with some form of disability. More than sixty percent of this population is not in an academic setting; though it is important to note that these statistics may not reflect verity as they account for the number of children recorded in the system (Disability Inclusion Starts with All of Us | UNICEF, n.d.).

There is limited to no published research regarding the state of speech-language pathology as a profession in Senegal specifically; however, the second, third, and fourth authors have worked in Senegal during each summer for almost 20 years. During their time in Senegal they learned that there were at least two speech-language clinicians working in the capital - one from Senegal who studied in France, and one from France. The Orthophonistes du Monde (OdM), which translates to English as "Speech-Language Pathologists of the World", created in 1992 also had a presence there as indicated by flyers located in schools and offices. Additionally, the fifth author, who lived in

Senegal at the time this study was completed, reported that there were students from a dental school in the capital who were training as speech-language clinicians. According to Topouzkhanian & Mijiyawa, 2013, the focus of OdM, which operates in West Africa generally, is to respect local cultures while providing initial professional training courses and provisions of other locally-based trainings (Topouzkhanian & Mijiyawa, 2013). The initial training centers are located in Lebanon and Togo, which in turn have facilitated the creation of a local speech- language pathology profession with adaptation to the needs of the countries and regions involved (Topouzkhanian & Mijiyawa, 2013).

The Senegalese school was a convenience sample that invited the researchers to be there. The principal and teachers of the school invited the researchers to conduct the study with an interest in learning about teacher responses to research questions posed. The elementary school in the United States Midwest is located in an impoverished area where most of the students received free or reduced lunches and are segregated from other schools in the district both racially and socioeconomically. This school was selected to participate in the study based on similar socioeconomic and racial characteristics to the participating school in Senegal and for their willingness to participate.

Participants of the study were based on a convenience sample using the criteria of being members of the focal schools, being willing to participate in the study, and holding similar roles in the academic setting. Individuals who participated in the study consisted of preschool, kindergarten and first grade teachers; as well as a principal of each participating school. In the Senegalese city, a curriculum specialist also participated in the study. Some of the participants from the school in Senegal spoke French, which required the

researchers to work with a volunteer interpreter from the local university to ensure the most accurate interpretation of questions and responses. Prior to data collection, interpreters were briefed to interpret as literally as possible to decrease the risk of misinterpretation. Participants who required interpretation were provided time to auditorily comprehend questions and/or responses and time to formulate a response for interpretation/translation. Table 2 shows a description of each participant.

Documentation from all participants was collected, stating that they understood the process of the study and consented for their responses to be published. Participants from each school were briefed about the goals of the study, asked a series of questions derived from similar themes, and asked to respond as they felt appropriate. Following the participant's responses, adapted questions then followed based on the context and flow of the conversation to more accurately depict the participants experiences and thoughts. During the study, human subject's ethical requirements were followed.

Researchers

This study was conducted and written with the efforts of a diverse group of researchers, both American and Senegalese, to provide a diverse and inclusive approach to the study. The intent of a diverse group of researchers aided in identifying personal biases or influences, addressing them, and providing a more macro perspective to gathering and interpreting responses and findings. While conducting this study, it is important to consider each researcher's role and influence. It is significant to address that the ethnicity of the lead researcher, a white westerner, could have potentially placed a pressure on Senegalese interviewees to

respond in a way in which they believed an American would react or respond. In order to address this barrier, the researchers identified potential biases prior to interviews, engaged interviewees in conversations and interviews with interpreters to facilitate a conversation in the participants native language and respect cultural differences/barriers. During transcription, researcher perception or assumptions were identified and bracketed to avoid bias in the interpretation of themes and data analysis. All interpretations were then confirmed with participants to avoid misinterpretation.

Table 2

Descriptions of Participants

Participant Role in the Setting	Location	Grade
Teacher	U. S. Midwest	Preschool
Teacher	Senegal	C1 (equivalent to preschool)*
Teacher	U.S. Midwest	Kindergarten
Teacher	Senegal	Kindergarten*
Teacher	U.S. Midwest	First Grade
Teacher	Senegal	First Grade*
Principal	U.S. Midwest	Administrator
Principal	Senegal	Administrator
Curriculum Director	Senegal	Administrator
Social Worker	Senegal	Administrator

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates which participants participated through an interpreter

Procedures

Critical Ethnography

Critical science includes a consideration of a historical and reflective critique of social structures, and uncovers unequal power relations, with the aim of creating more equitable and just social societies or processes (Abrahams et al., 2019; Hyter & Salas-Provance, 2023). Specifically, with critical perspectives one can challenge existing unequal power relations, identify who profits from those unequal relations of power for the purpose of reconstructing a more just and equitable society (Applebaum & Robinson, 2005). The procedures used through-out this study combined Critical Social Theory (CST) and critical ethnography (Madison, 2005). Critical ethnography originated to expose unequal relations of power. In this way, it is consistent with CST in that it takes us beneath surface appearances, deconstructing both neutrality and assumptions by bringing to light the underlying and operations of social structures (Madison, 2005).

Critical ethnography includes the use of ethnographic interviewing, which consists of guided interviews (softly structured), with open-ended questions, which allows for participants to share their experiences, thoughts, and perceptions. Critical ethnography was used in this study to help the researchers uncover ways of knowing and recognize the unequal power relation inherent in the research process (Mkandawire-Valhmu et al., 2009). Ethnographic interviewing emphasizes the idea of meaningful engagement and conversation bringing to light topics and experiences that the interviewee feels is substantially important to the topic at hand (Neuman, 2006). Critical ethnography then becomes the "doing" of critical social

theory, collecting data of customs and beliefs of individuals and cultures in society (e.g., ethnographic interviewing, document review, artifact analysis) to examine culture through the lens of power (Neuman, 2006).

Ethnographic interviews are a key piece to critical ethnography, they allow for study participants (i.e., interviewees) to guide the conversation to what they believe is important in challenging a specific social structure. Before interviews were conducted, participants were contacted and informed about the study and then invited to participate before consent was obtained. All the interviews were conducted in person and were typically 30-45 minutes long. The only differing factor between the two settings was that the interviews in the US were conducted in English while the interviews in Senegal were primarily conducted in French while working with an interpreter. Though some could argue that meaning and context could be lost through translations, the findings were verified at the end of the study with the participants in order to confirm the interviewer's understanding of their responses. The findings of these interviews were then used to respond to research questions as well as, confirm and support the findings of the literature review.

Before the interviews took place, a general theme was determined for the questions that were to be asked. The general theme consisted of how communication disabilities are defined by that individual and what supports are available or not available to aid those with communication disabilities. The interview began with descriptive questions, which allow for the interviewee to select information that is important to share, then enables the interviewer to discover what is important to that individual and construct questions based on the interviewees' responses (Westby, Burda, & Mehta, 2003). The general themes of the questions consisted

of these three primary topics: a) characteristics of a communication disability, b) access to supportive resources for students, and c) personal supports that teachers provide to their students individually.

Aside from interviews, in the United States Midwest, data were also collected via review of curriculum. Data collected in Senegal included classroom observations, review of the curriculum, and observations in the community. Classroom observations in the US Midwest were unable to be conducted due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts.

Data Coding and Analysis

Once the data were collected, a content analysis was employed to analyze data for recurring themes among the collective group of information gathered from each interview. Specifically, as responses were being analyzed, common themes were organized by common vocabulary and messages, and the researcher's personal assumptions were identified and bracketed. Then interpretations of the data were shared with participants to be validated as accurate or determined to be inaccurate interpretations and messages. If interpretations were inaccurate, the researcher changed the content to align with the interviewee's perceptions. Coding data gathered during the research process involves a series of steps described below.

The first step was *open coding*. During this first process the researcher reviewed the data collected, identifying generalized themes (Neuman, 2006). When executing this stage, a table was composed organizing the questions the interviewees were asked, and their responses, while including follow-up questions and responses. Once the table was composed, the questions and responses were printed and cut up, which allowed them to be moved around and organized into different categories.

During *open-coding* participant responses were read and then sorted into common categories, which allowed themes to be identified. In order to do this, participant responses were printed out and highlighted a specific color according to similar words and concepts. *Axial coding* is defined as the second step in the four-step process of coding, this is the time when researchers do a "second pass" through data collected and focus on preliminary concepts (which were identified through open-coding), more than the collected overall data (Neuman, 2006 pg. 462). In order to code the preliminary concepts, responses that were similar were identified and compared to other responses to look for an overall theme that could encompass all responses. For example, responses that best fit under the category of curriculum issues, in the US Midwest interviews, were from different teachers; all of which had mentioned that they have veered from the required curriculum within the classroom, to better support students' interests and success

The final step, *selective coding*, consisted of scanning all the data and condensed themes to identify cases within the responses that illustrate the themes and compare findings (Nuemann, 2006). During this time, themes from both Senegal and Michigan were compared to identify differences and similarities. The resulting final organization of all of the responses across both schools can be seen in the Appendix.

Verification of Findings

The findings of the data collected and analyzed were verified through multiple sources. The verification method of this study was between the interpreter, the interviewee and the lead researcher. If it was not possible to confirm the findings in person, the interviewee was contacted via email and verification was obtained. Questions asked to confirm the findings consisted of summarizing the interviewees' responses that were prominent during the interview and asking if there was anything they would like to add and concluded by thanking the individuals for their participation in the study. The findings were verified in person with the curriculum specialist and principal of the local elementary school in West Africa. The same guidelines were implemented when confirming findings via email and in person. Once all findings were confirmed, they were analyzed, and common themes began to emerge. When all common themes were identified, participants were contacted once again to indicate their agreement or disagreement followed by being asked if they had anything else they would like to add and being thanked for their participation in the study.

Results

The results section will discuss how the findings answer the two research questions that were proposed in this study. The questions focus on how globalization affects definitions of communication disabilities, and the support provided for children with communication disabilities inside and outside of schools in both Senegal and the United States Midwest

Conceptualizing Communication Disabilities

The findings from data analyses helped answer our first research question about how both countries defined communication disabilities, which varied immensely. The interpretation of responses from Senegal interviewees is that individuals with communication concerns are perceived to be "shy" or "introverted." This response was brought up by almost all the teachers

interviewed and was mentioned two to three times throughout the duration of their interviews. This interpretation, in turn, influences the way in which the students were supported. For example, when interviewing the Senegalese kindergarten teacher, they discussed a student who entered the classroom and did not speak any words even when prompted. The teacher stated that "If a student falls behind, we show them love and motivate them to start making progress and sometimes pray for the student." They also told the class to encourage their peer by clapping and cheering- this occurred after the student first spoke; after the teacher prayed for the student, and other students became supportive of them.

The first-grade teacher interview at the Michigan school defined a communication concern as "Something that affects your understanding of language or participation in conversation; a breakdown between to and from." Similar responses were collected from the remaining participants of the Michigan school, consisting of ideas about a child's comprehension or expression being affected in some way. This interpretation, in turn, influences the way in which the individual is supported and is guided by specific laws or acts that require intervention.

Both sites had a different perspective to identifying communication concerns, and what would be considered a communication disability. In Senegal, children with a communication disability were described as shy and just needing more guidance or support than other students. These interviewees' ontology of communication disability reflects a more cultural and religious approach in identifying "invisible" disabilities and providing appropriate supports in reference to African societal and cultural norms. Whereas in the United States Midwest, they were described as having a breakdown in communication.

Supports for Children with Communication Disabilities

The common theme among Senegalese respondents was that of *emotional support* and "love as a natural solution" for communication disability. An example during an interview with the principal from Senegal, the schools' mission is a "triangle of success" that focuses on intellectual, emotional, and social wellbeing in the life of the student, as well as their academics, was discussed. The principal also stated that "Teachers are very close with students for emotional support." The interview in which the kindergarten teacher expressed that they had prayed for a student who was not speaking and had peers aid in providing extra encouragement to the child, supports the statements the Senegalese principal offered during his interview. It appears that in the Senegalese culture supporting student success and wellbeing begins with creating an emotional connection. Thus, the Senegalese culture takes more of a holistic approach to support children who might have communication disabilities, or disabilities in general.

Another theme identified among Senegalese interviewees was *using a student's primary language to learn the official language (French)*, which is the required language of instruction among Senegalese schools because the government requires schools to follow the French curriculum. Teachers expressed that almost all of the students spoke Wolof or Pulaar as their first language, and some students did not know French at all. They explained that if a child spoke a different language other than the official language (French), the students' success in the classroom was affected and they would provide ways to support the student learning the language. For example, the kindergarten teacher in the CI classroom (a "bridge" class between kindergarten and 1ˢᵗ

grade) talked about a student who only spoke English and who struggled to understand the curriculum being taught in French. They called a teacher who spoke the same language as the student and had that teacher explain the French words/definitions in English to promote the student's understanding of French. The teacher reported doing the same with students who speak only Wolof or Pulaar. If this does not work, they described a game that they would play with students. This game is along the lines of role play and tends to apply real life examples that students could encounter outside of school. The example that the teacher shared was that the classroom would be set up like a market; there would be a "seller" and a "buyer"- the interactions would be in French but allowed students to pair terms (e.g., *jerejef* [thank you in Wolof] paired with *merci* [thank you in French]) with the interactions.

A theme identified among the Michigan teachers' responses was *unequal opportunities.* Each teacher discussed that their students have been defined by the context-in which their school is located. In other words, most of the students have experienced trauma, are living in a state of impoverishment or both. Several of the traumas described in the interviews included students who had witnessed domestic abuse, armed robberies, and/or experienced physical abuse. The principal of this school explained that the school is a magnet school, meaning that students can be bused from anywhere in the county and because of this, and its location, the school is considered segregated, both racially and socioeconomically, from other schools in the district. One teacher expressed that community members negatively label the school and defines them by the context in which the school is located. With many of the students experiencing trauma, the Midwest teachers interviewed expressed that they have

had to alter the ways in which they structure their lessons.

For example, the first-grade teacher discussed that they have multiple students who are considered "behavioral". When the children begin to act out in class, such as "throwing a tantrum, throwing objects, or yelling", and the teacher has the rest of the students put on their "blinders" (the students raise both hands to the sides of their face, near their eyes, so that they can look straight forward) and "ignore" the student to the best of their ability, while they continue to teach. This teacher stated that students are asked to ignore or "use their blinders" because if teaching needed to stop to handle the situation, one "would never get through a lesson plan and that is unfair to the students who are behaving and engaging in the lesson."

Another example of *unequal opportunities/lack of access* was expressed during the interview with the principal of the Midwest school. The principal conveyed that, because the school is in an impoverished area, there are not enough resources for success, so the school needs to be creative in providing programs or opportunities (such as assemblies or field trips) for the students. The faculty compared their school with another in the district and talked about how other schools send their fifth graders to an overnight camp where they get to experience different activities that promote learning and engagement. In the US public schools are largely funded by property taxes within a school district, often resulting in inequities in school funding (Allegretto et al., 2022). Because of the funds and the impoverishment of families in the school district, the school interviewed is unable to provide students with opportunities, such as educational field trips, and teachers with training centered around trauma-informed approaches to teaching. When asked what one thing they would like to see change, the

principal expressed that one would "want to level the playing field." The principal talked about creating equal opportunities and activities for students and said: "unfortunately with the society that we live in, money is the key."

The final theme in the findings was common among both the Senegalese and Midwest interviews – *a lack of access to resources and supports*. Though the type of support differs based on the geographical location of the schools and cultural differences - the idea is still the same. Social structures in both areas have an influence on opportunities available for the schoolteachers, administrators, and their students. Studies have shown that a child's academic success is likely to be impacted by both their family's socioeconomic status and their school's socioeconomic status (Neuman et al., 2018). Therefore, these two factors have an influence on the student's access to supports and learning resources (Neuman et al., 2018).

The Senegalese interviewees expressed that they have a lack of funding for schools based on how the money to the educational system is distributed by the government and the socioeconomic status of the nation overall, which in turn affects student success rates. The curriculum director of the school mentioned that the dropout rate of students in the Senegalese school systems was extremely high and that most students did not make it past elementary school. They also said that their school in particular was very active in promoting the success of the students by actively seeking ways to improve teacher training and knowledge so that they can better support students. Senegalese teachers all receive the same education and skills, but their school works to further expand those skills and knowledge to specifically support the type of school in which they are working. During the interviews it was explained that persons going

to school to be a teacher in Senegal, receive the same training and learn the same skills; and that there is no specialization of teaching. Thus, there is no specialization in how to work with children that may have special needs such as a communication disability or hearing loss. Upon completing their education and obtaining a teaching career they can be placed in different school settings (i.e., special education vs. general education). Some of the ways in which the school works to expand Senegalese teachers' skills and knowledge are providing in-services (when possible) and professional development seminars on an annual (and sometimes monthly) basis.

In the Midwest, the principal explained that they receive more funding than most schools in the area because they are located in such an impoverished area, but it still is not enough to provide what the students need to reach maximum success. The principal explained that the school has three or four students who qualify for advanced placement classes, but they are not able to provide those advanced courses for them to flourish to their full potential because there are so few students, they cannot create a specialized class specifically for them.

These responses suggest that participants in Senegal and the United States Midwest have different ways in which they support students with communication disabilities. In Senegal they have a more holistic/humanistic approach, they focus on the child and supporting them. They have the student's peers assist in encouraging the child, such as cheering and clapping for the child when they are participating in a class activity. Another common support was praying for the child and showing them "extra love". In the US Midwest the supports are more of a positivist approach. If a child presented with concerns of a communication disability, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) would be contacted, and a

screening would take place. Based on the SLP's observations, a child could possibly require therapy and would continue working with the SLP during the school year. Each site had different cultural approaches and demographics but had one thing in common, they wanted to help promote the success of children with communication disabilities.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that there is a difference in how educators in West Africa and the United States Midwest approach identifying and supporting communication disabilities. Each group is influenced by one's own culture and globalization. For example, Senegal (a majority world country) utilizes a more holistic humanistic approach to identifying communication disabilities. Interviewees stated that when students had a shy persona, or spoke minimally, they approached and supported the student with sympathy and support, as well as prayed for the child. While systematic supports are not available for students with communication disabilities, Senegalese teachers go above and beyond to support the wellbeing and success of a child using cultural and religious beliefs and practices to provide a more holistic approach for support. If this were to occur in the US Midwest, this child would be "flagged" and referred to a school speech-language pathologist to be screened for a communication disability; this is more a positivist approach.

Individuals from schools, both in West Africa and the United States Midwest, shared a similar perception that the students had unequal opportunities, or access to supports. In Senegal, the principal and curriculum specialist discussed that they are working on building relationships with supports or services provided for children with intellectual disabilities, and the overall student population. One of these identified relationships was with the local dentistry school, where there are speech-language clinicians training and going to school. Using a critical science approach, the Senegalese teachers and faculty are determining their own sense of power by partnering with higher education facilities and providing services to the students in any way they can to support student success. In the United States Midwest, the principal of the participating school stated that they wished the students could benefit from equal opportunities that the surrounding schools have, such as field trips and equal funding. Other teachers interviewed here stated that they would like to have more consistent access to the school assigned SLP. As stated in previous sections, a child's family and school socioeconomic status influence the access and supports that the child receives. Globalization has had an influence on the socioeconomic status and political standing of West Africa, therefore having an impact on the Senegalese school in which interviews were conducted and data were gathered. Political factors have had an impact on the access and socioeconomic status of the school in which interviews were conducted and data were gathered in the US Midwest.

A major theme identified among the Senegalese interviews uphold Steger's (2017) discussion of the globalization of languages. The Senegalese teacher participants talked about using the students' primary language to learn the official language of Senegal, which is French. As stated in a prior section, the Senegalese school system still mirrors the French curriculum; the government is also still heavily influenced by French colonialism. The French influence affects the way in which students learn in the Senegalese school systems because many do not speak the official language of the country. Less than 30%

of the Senegalese population speak French (World Atlas, 2017). French - the official language of the country - impacts the way in which individuals communicate in communities and schools because some individuals may be fluent and understand French, while others are fluent in and only understand the primary languages of the area (e.g., Wolof, Pulaar). The teachers at the participating Senegalese school, described taking power in making decisions in the interest of the child in their classroom by utilizing the strongest language of the child to support the development of the language of schooling instilled by the colonization of the French.

The implications of these findings are important because they allow us to understand the cultural differences between these countries and their approaches to communication disabilities, which then allows us to be better informed clinicians. As a clinician in the field of speech-language and hearing, it is crucial to understand a client's cultural background and their upbringing to provide the most effective and beneficial service. For our research and findings to have cross-cultural reference, we need to first understand historical contexts and perceptions of disabilities. Because what may be effective in one country, may not be in another.

Themes identified in West Africa highlight the importance of a social/holistic approach and focusing on the overall well-being of a child while supporting communication abilities. During interviews in West Africa, the children with communication disabilities were approached with love and compassion from teachers and peers while still receiving services to address their abilities and showed improvement. To support patients competently and ethically, we must understand their culture and lifestyle and alter our approach as a speech-language scholars, educators, and clinicians to best support the

individual's cultural communication preferences.

Conclusion

It is important to keep in mind while reviewing the results of the current study the researchers position in the collection and analysis of data collected. There are factors that may have impacted the reliability of the data presented in this study. First, the language differences when interviewing individuals in West Africa may have caused some of the context to have been lost in translation. As well as the absence of audio-recording during the translation process may have impacted the overall ability to quote participants verbatim. Nevertheless, the information presented in this article was confirmed by the individuals interviewed, either in person, or via email. Another limitation in this study could have been the presence of American researchers in a predominantly African population. Some researchers could have been perceived as out of place while observing in the classrooms of the participating school in West Africa. Additionally, since the U. S. is a colonial power, Americans from the US in Senegalese settings may have been perceived as an unequal relationship of power; therefore, influencing or impacting the responses of those interviewed. A final limitation is that the researchers did not examine policy changes needed in educational contexts to better support children with communication disabilities and what obstacles should be addressed to make these policy changes.

Many of the themes that emerged throughout this study emphasized that for speech-language clinicians to provide the most effective and successful services to our clients globally, we must first take a macro-perspective approach. It is imperative to be

culturally responsive in the field and understand social structures that may affect the lives of the families and individuals with whom we work. Some countries may take more of a holistic or cultural approach when it comes to identifying and supporting communication disabilities, while other countries may take more of a positivist approach while using a medical model.

The findings also demonstrate the contributions of a macro-perspective in research, one that considers historical context and social structures that influence everyday life of participating individuals. There is a lack of research that discusses the impact of globalization on the field of speech-language and hearing sciences, and the individuals that we support. It is our hope that this study promotes discussions in this direction.

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Positionality Statements

Hannah Cluley, M.A., CCC-SLP

I was raised in a small town in the Midwest with minimal diversity or exposure to differing perspectives or experiences of others. I then attended a large university which opened the door to various opportunities for learning and growth as an individual while shaping my experiences and relationships with others who challenged and supported me. I feel that my skills and knowledge have been influenced by supervisors, professors, colleagues, and peers throughout the years who have guided me. My research, work, and interactions are influenced by my desire to learn from and help others. I believe that success for ourselves and others is measured by shared knowledge, experiences, and new opportunities.

Yvette Hyter, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

I approach my work through the frame of critical theory that recognizes that life is inherently conflictual between those with power and those without. Sometimes, I am in positions of power and privilege by being a cisgender, retired full-professor in my mid-60s. At other times I am in positions of marginalization by being a Black qualitative scholar, focused on critical science and concerned with equity and social justice in a discipline that is a majority of white women and focused on the medical model and positivist science. In all of my roles (scholar, educator, clinician, team member) I strive to be aware of inequities and injustices, and in collaboration with others, strive to dismantle inequitable structures in speech-language and hearing sciences that exclude, exploit, and dispossess.

Sarah Summy, Ed.D.

I was raised in a Midwest university community and from a very young age I was privileged to be surrounded by scholars. Asking questions and debating multiple perspectives on the same issue occurred frequently. Throughout my twenty-five plus years in higher education, my teaching, research and service continues to be influenced by this thirst for knowledge. However, my work has been heavily influenced by the many students I have interacted with and by colleagues who have challenged my thinking. My work is not "my work", it is the work that has been completed with individual students and colleagues together. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is currently the most influential framework influencing my professional life. It allows me to be open to new ideas and perspectives and most importantly, to listen and tell every participant's story in the most truthful way possible.

W. F. Santiago-Valles, Ph.D.

The social-causal relations of inequality influencing my thinking, research, teaching, and political commitments include being: (a) born in an American Empire colony where racialized and gendered exploitation organize daily-life conflicts between military occupation and the colonized; (b) raised/educated among self-emancipated Maroons, descendants of free Afro-descendant Creoles

from French-speaking islands who had been teachers for the last 200 years; (c) subjected to a missionary school system's attempts to submit the colonized; (d) extensive travel across the Caribbean archipelago and the African Continent; (e) having been a Ph.D. student of some of the most important scholars in political economy (e.g., Marini) and cultural history (e.g., Freire); (f) injecting tensions using direct participation field research, forcing the State to use repressive force; and (g) using comparative analysis of similar conjunctural situations explaining how social movements produced critical analysis informed by resistance to colonial capitalism and empire.

Thula Norton Lambert, Ph.D.

Based on my personal background and lived experience, I acknowledge that my research is framed through the lens of intersectionality. I view the research process through a postcolonial, critical, constructivist lens. I am conscious that research participants may have themselves experienced gender, race, or class-based oppression, discrimination and marginalization. I have embraced engaging in decolonizing qualitative research, ever conscious of the harmful, oppressive role that research has historically played in perpetuating negative racial, ethnic, sexist or cultural stereotypes. As a social constructivist, I view research participants as co-creators of knowledge, and I utilize participatory research methods which aim to give participants a voice and an active role in the research process.

Jean Eudes Boukal, B. A.

I was born and raised in one of the poorest cities of Senegal. Growing up in that far rural area, I never imagined there could be so much inequality in the world. When I moved to the capital city for university and got in touch with people from all over the world, I was shocked with the big societal gaps between the place and people I grew up in from those I am now in. That awakened, I now approach education with more consideration. I do believe that education can be a means to equal opportunities for all those, notwithstanding their origin, who intentionally and diligently work to improve their situation and that of others around them. I now dedicate myself to teaching, educating learners from all backgrounds to improve their social status through education, to make equity and social justice a reality in individuals' lives.

Janice Bedrosian, Ph.D.

I was born in California and identify as Armenian. My father and his parents and siblings escaped the Armenian genocide from 1915 to 1917 with the help of Mr. Leslie Davis, American Consul to Harpoot at that time. My teaching was influenced by this history with my attempt to promote equity and inclusion in the classroom.

Appendix

Table A1

Kindergarten/C1 Teacher Responses in the U.S. and Senegal

	Country	Communication Disorders	Supports Provided	Access to Supports	Language
Kindergarten/C1 in Senegal & Preschool /Kindergarten in the U.S.	Senegal		"If a student falls behind, we show them love which motivates them to start making progress. We also pray for the student."	"We do trainings in and outside of the school if we have the means"	One student only spoke English. Another teacher that speaks English and French came to explain and promote understanding of French.
	United States Midwest	"Anything that would hinder someone from communicating with someone"	Does research on her own to learn new ways to better student success in the classroom after trauma	"Access to SLP services are limited and out of the teachers hands once parents are informed that a screening is recommended and is ultimately up to the parents."	
	United States Midwest		"Our access to the school SLP is limited because his sessions vary with times and dates and are very sporadic"	"Unfortunately, the community/district labels schools and defines them by where they are located which is unfair" "Because the population is one in need, there are not enough resources for success, and we have to get creative"	

Table A2

First Grade Teacher Responses in the U.S. and Senegal

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3" style="writing-mode:vertical">First Grade Teacher in Senegal and the United States Midwest</td><td>Country</td><td>Communication Disorders</td><td>Supports Provided</td><td>Access to Supports</td><td>Language</td></tr>
<tr><td>Senegal</td><td></td><td>"Make sure a student feels loved first"</td><td></td><td>"If the child does not understand French gestures are used with Wolof to support progress with leaning the primary language of the classroom"</td></tr>
<tr><td>United States Midwest</td><td>"Something that affects your understanding of language or participating in conversation; a breakdown between to and from"</td><td>"There is so much support from the outside community as well as a school psychologist, social worker and full-time counseling interns"

"Give students extra time, restate questions and encourage them to slow down when speaking"</td><td>"Every student does and EZ screening and if they don't pass, they qualify for an eval from the school SLP"</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Table A3

Administer Responses in the U.S. and Senegal

	Country	Communication Disorders	Supports Provided	Access to Supports	Language
Principal Senegal and United States Midwest	Senegal		"Teachers are very close with students for emotional support" The school mission is the triangle of success focusing on intellectual, emotional and social wellbeing in the life of the student.	"Teachers go to school board trainings on certain subjects" (CAPAP) à for this, teachers are interviewed to see what the most relevant trainings for that year will be.	
	United States Midwest	"An impairment in how a child is able to express themselves verbally"	Described the number of students he had when he first started (400) and how many he has now (286). He stated that "less students means less funding"	When asked what change he would like to see for the school he said he would want a way to "level the playing field" by providing equal opportunities for the students	
Curriculum Director	Senegal		"The government has set up a system that is not equal access causing a lack of resources and no services are provided." Talked about wanting to do health screening for students but nothing is in place because fundraising for resources is difficult.	"The government has set up a system that is not equal access and there is so much ground to make up"	

Confronting Pathology by Revealing a Critical Landscape in Communication Sciences and Disorders: A Scoping Review Protocol

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Article Information

Abstract

Systemic oppression impacts equitable access to resources and life opportunities. There has not yet been a published systematic account of how Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) is identifying and challenging systemic oppression. This is a protocol for a scoping review, which aims to map a critical landscape in CSD by identifying literature that applies a critical analysis. This scoping review protocol is informed by PRISMA-P (2015), which will be used for the scoping review to systematically map peer-reviewed literature as per PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (2018) from six electronic databases. This scoping review protocol explains that the scoping review will analyze eligible literature to better understand peer-reviewed scholarship that identifies and aims to confront systemic oppression to inform equitable CSD training, practice, and research.

Keywords

Communication sciences and disorders; critical analysis; disability justice; power imbalances; social justice.

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