



**Measuring Athletic Facility Managers' Knowledge Of Access
And The Americans With Disabilities Act: A Pilot Study**

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory research was measuring facility managers' knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and it may assist in decreasing the gap in knowledge between facility managers and the needs of people with physical disabilities. An existing survey examining ADA knowledge was slightly modified and used for this study. Four athletic facility managers from universities in a large Bowl Championship Series conference participated in the study. Results provided a preliminary sketch of who athletic facility managers may be, and how athletic facility managers may be educating themselves and others about accessibility. This exploratory study shows that facility managers may be knowledgeable of specific ADA requirements but may not have a firm grasp on more general issues patrons with physical disabilities face and that have often been the point of contention in the courts such as parking, entranceways, seating, and sightlines. Additionally, athletic facility managers may not be seeking to expand their education on ADA-related matters or educate others on the topics, which could be a missed opportunity to position themselves as a topic expert in the field of ADA compliance for athletic facilities.

Keywords: athletic facilities; Americans with disabilities act; accessibility

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Introduction

Athletic facility managers must be knowledgeable of accessibility and the legal requirements set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The ADA was adopted to prevent discrimination against persons with physical disabilities, and it is separated into four titles that address discrimination with regard to different topics. Title II of the ADA covers public entities such as state schools while Title III covers public accommodations. This study focused on Title II and Title III in regards to collegiate athletic facilities and their compliance with ADA standards. More specifically, this study focused on collegiate athletic facility managers at the administrative and operations level and their knowledge of the ADA. The purpose of this exploratory study was to gauge the knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) among a small sample of collegiate athletic facility managers.

Ensuring an athletic facility is accessible and that individuals with physical disabilities are able to attend relates to attendance concerns faced in intercollegiate athletics. Attendance at sporting events is one of the most critical aspects for a sport manager as spectators have various reasons for attending (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Snipes & Ingram, 2007). Both professional and college sport teams in the United States and internationally depend on game attendance as a stream of revenue that comes from having a consumer on site, and access to and comfort of the facility is among the leading factors in attendance (Hall, O'Mahony, & Vieceli, 2010; Rosner & Shropshire, 2004). Intercollegiate athletics faces attendance plateaus due to television rights deals that have taken sport into people's homes at a greater rate (Fort, 2010). One segment of patrons that is not attending sporting events and has decreased expectations of attendance is individuals with physical disabilities.

Expected attendance at sporting events for individuals with physical disabilities decreases because those individuals struggle to establish social relations and experience social isolation (Bramston, Bruggerman, & Pretty, 2002; Coleman, 1971; Faris, 1934; Louis Harris and Associates, 1986; Rimmer, Rowland, & Yamaki, 2007). Social disconnect occurs beginning with ticket purchase, when accessible ticketing or seating options are not marketed to patrons and therefore often go unknown (Grady,

Pate, & Mirabito, 2011). Such disconnect may continue with regard to physical barriers presented on site such as parking, entranceways, access to seating, sight lines, and facility features such as walkways, elevators, and aisles (Burgdorf, 1991; Hirst, 1989; Obst & Stafurik, 2010).

To address such physical barriers, the ADA was adopted to prevent discrimination against persons with physical disabilities. Accessibility problems continue to exist despite ADA regulations, and they may be brought to light at athletic events when individuals with physical disabilities experience accessibility problems. Therefore, it is essential that athletic facility managers be knowledgeable of the ADA regulations and accessibility to address the needs of individuals with physical disabilities who attending sporting events. This study was modeled after a study by Redick, McClain, and Brown (2000) that explored ADA Title III knowledge among occupational therapists. Adaptations to the survey used by Redick et al. (2000) were made to focus the survey toward sport facility managers rather than occupational therapists, and face and content validity were used to test the modified survey. The survey was presented to a facility manager in the Southeastern Conference, who confirmed it was appropriate to seek his peers' knowledge of the ADA.

Review of Literature

Prior to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), accessibility codes were adopted in the 1960s with the Specifications for Making Buildings and Facilities Accessible to, and Usable by, the Physically Handicapped (Salmen, 2001). Governance and enforcement of accessibility to facilities evolved and culminated with the adoption of the ADA. The ADA was designed to ensure people with disabilities have access to and can enjoy a diverse array of accommodations (Mazumdar & Geis, 2003). The ADA defines a disability with respect to an individual as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual," or if an individual displays a record of such an impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990, §12102). More specifically, the ADA is divided into four titles that elaborate on the specific parts of the act, although this study is concerned only with Title II and Title III. Title II covers public services, protecting individuals' participation and benefits of services, programs, or activities of a public entity. Title III covers public accommodations and services operated by private entities, ensuring equal enjoyment of "goods, services, facilities, privileges,

advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation” (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990, §12182).

Accessibility has received more focus in recent years with the implementation and enforcement of the ADA, and the issue could receive further attention in the future as the U.S. population grows older (McMillen & Mahoney, 2011). According to population forecasts, citizens age 65 and older comprised 12.4% of the U.S. population in 2000 and it was predicted to reach 20.7% by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). As the Baby Boomer generation ages with disposable income to spend on recreational activities such as sport attendance, interpretation and enforcement of the ADA with regard to facilities is likely to have greater emphasis.

The areas of emphasis with which this paper is concerned are stadiums, gymnasiums, and other venues of entertainment, exercise, or recreation (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990, §12181; Mayer & Scammon, 1995). More specifically, this paper focuses on college athletic facilities. In regards to access, state and local governmental programs such as public university athletic arenas and city- or county-operated stadiums and arenas are subject to Title II of the ADA (Grady & Ohlin, 2004; Rothstein, 2000). Programs in private facilities such as movie theaters and privately owned and operated sports arenas are subject to Title III requirements of the ADA (Grady & Ohlin, 2004; Rothstein, 2000). College athletic facilities on campus and operated by the university fall under Title II enforcement while the professional athletic facilities fall under Title III enforcement.

Persons with physical disabilities acknowledge that physical barriers deter them from full participation in society despite legal mandates of accessibility from the ADA (McClain, Medrano, Marcum, & Schukar, 2000; Obst & Stafurik, 2010). Those physical barriers such as parking lot design, entranceways, seating, or physical aspects of a facility oftentimes are blamed on the facility's design team, and the legal battles have concurred (Mazumdar & Geis, 2003). ADA-related lawsuits in the 1990s addressed issues such as accessible seating locations as facilities began adhering to the ADA guidelines and navigating new territory of making existing facilities accessible while ensuring new builds were compliant (Mayer & Scammon, 1995). Lawsuits in the late-1990s addressed visible sight lines from accessible seating (Carlson, 1998; Conrad, 1998; *Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects*, 1996), a time when accessibility was not so much a part of the battle but rather proper accommodation of accessibility. These legal battles ensured facilities were not simply sticking accessible

seats and entranceways into their design to be compliant, but rather were incorporating accessibility into the design with regard to equality.

Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects (1996) was the first major case related to ADA Title III for sports arenas. The Paralyzed Veterans of America sued the architects of Washington, D.C.'s MCI Center for failing to provide unobstructed lines of sight for accessible seating and failure to provide the required number of accessible seats in appropriate locations. Designers of the MCI Center followed ADA standards (Salmen, 2001), yet were sued for an issue not previously interpreted by the courts with regards to ADA law. In other words, while the architects included accessible seating into the design, they failed to provide a sufficient amount of accessible seats and placed them in improper locations for optimal sight. The court approved substantial compliance for the MCI Center, stating that a revised design would be compliant with an overwhelming majority (78%) of accessible seats having unobstructed lines of sight (*Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects*, 1996). This compromise set a standard of architects not meeting ADA regulations to the fullest extent. Case law has addressed the compromise architects claim to face with regards to accessible seating integration, dispersal, and enhanced sightlines. The court in *Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects* (1996) ruled that integration of spectators, dispersal of accessible seating throughout arenas and stadiums, and enhanced sightlines may not all be feasible, and therefore a designer may seek substantial compliance in meeting two of the three guidelines.

Integration, dispersal, and unobstructed lines of sight became the focus of ADA legal interpretation addressing the accessibility of movie theaters shortly after 1990. Movie theaters began adopting stadium-style seating where rows of seats are inclined to provide better viewing for patrons. Accessible seating for moviegoers, however, was initially placed at the front of theaters due to the ease of access and level plane (Ellsworth, 2004; McKibbin, 2004). The U.S. Department of Justice made clear that such separation of accessible seating not only segregated people with physical disabilities from the majority of other patrons, but also resulted in poor sightlines (Ellsworth, 2004; McKibbin, 2004). The Justice Department noted that Standard 4.33.3 of the ADA Accessibility Guidelines required accessible seating to be located where the majority of members usually choose to sit (Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities, 2002; Ellsworth, 2004), and that the ADA requires "full and equal enjoyment of ... services" to people with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities

Act, 1990, §12182; Ellsworth, 2004). Therefore, the Justice Department and ADA reinforced that providing equal opportunity for seat selection was an important aspect to accessibility.

Case law, however, did not respond directly to the Justice Department's mandate as courts disagreed in their interpretations. The court in *Lara v. Cinemark USA, Inc.* (2000) said placing accessible seating at the front of theaters did not violate ADA requirements because the line of sight would not be obstructed by standing patrons. Like *Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects* (1996), the facility in question in *Lara v. Cinemark USA, Inc.* (2000) was designed to ADA standards, but comparable lines of sight were a new issue up for interpretation by the courts (Salmen, 2001). Conversely, *United States v. Hoyts Cinemas Corporation* (2004) agreed with the Justice Department and stated that accessible seating at the front of theaters violated viewing-angle requirements of the ADA Accessibility Guidelines' Standard 4.33.3 (Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities, 2002). Such contradiction resulted in courts, ADA advocates, people with disabilities, and facility designers questioning which was more important: comparable viewing angles or unobstructed sightlines. Ambiguity of language in the accessibility guidelines left it difficult for courts to consistently rule on ADA issues (Beard, 2005). The courts began trending toward comparable viewing angles among able-bodied patrons and patrons with physical disabilities seated in accessible seating areas (Ellsworth, 2004; *Oregon Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Regal Cinemas Inc.*, 2003; *United States v. Cinemark USA, Inc.*, 2003).

Case law has shown that interpretation of the ADA, particularly regarding Title II and Title III regulations, has been unclear at times, and the U.S. Department of Justice has failed to provide interpretation of the ADA unless legal matters were in question (McArdle, 2008; Salmen, 2001). These cases are brought into consideration to show that interpretation of accessibility and what is best for all people with physical disabilities proves difficult to answer. Therefore, for an athletic facility manager to be knowledgeable of ADA standards and accessibility issues to serve the majority of a facility's patrons may be unattainable, particularly if the courts have not done so. While accessibility is positive for people with physical disabilities, there remains a disconnection between corporate missions, the ADA knowledge of facility managers, and accessibility practice (Saito, 2006). As noted in case law, facility access issues often lie at the doorstep of designers and architects, yet it is the administration that must answer access questions for patrons.

Little research has been conducted measuring athletic facility management's knowledge of the ADA at either the administrative or operational level. Interpretation of ADA standards and regulations has been inconsistent in the courts (Beard, 2005; Ellsworth, 2004; *Lara v. Cinemark USA, Inc.*, 2000; *Oregon Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Regal Cinemas Inc.*, 2003; *United States v. Hoyts Cinemas Corporation*, 2004), and it previously has been noted that facility management employees have various levels of understanding accessibility needs for people with physical disabilities (Salmen, 2001). Therefore, the need to explore athletic facility managers' knowledge of accessibility and ADA standards is presented due to the inconsistent interpretation of the issue itself.

Accessibility issues are viewed differently among facility employees. Administration may be knowledgeable of ADA standards and how to answer general customer service questions, but, for example, may inadvertently violate those standards by blocking an accessible entrance for loading and unloading. With this study, the researchers aimed to present an initial gauge of how well athletic facility managers may understand what barriers exist for people with physical disabilities with the hopes of polling a wider audience of athletic facility managers.

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted through the theoretical framework of leisure constraints theory, which states that leisure constraints are perceived or experienced reasons why a person does not participate in leisure activity (Hawkins, Peng, Hsieh, & Eklund, 1999; Jackson, 1997). Crawford and Godbey (1987) identified three categories of constraints: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Intrapersonal constraints come from within and are perceptions of one's self that shape expression of preferences (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Interpersonal constraints result from relationships with others, while structural constraints come from resources that prevent participation such as transportation, facility accessibility, and opportunity (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991; Raymore, Godbey, Crawford, & von Eye, 1993). Under leisure constraints theory, individuals process the three kinds of barriers and then progress through the constraints with sequential negotiation of each (Hawkins et al., 1999). In many instances the self-efficacy of the individual plays a major role in negotiating structural constraints to participation (Loucks-Atkinson & Mannell, 2007). Current research also conveys the fact that structural constraints are not insurmountable but require a greater level of intentional planning on the part of the participant to

negotiate potential constraints (Loucks-Atkinson & Mannell, 2007; Tsai & Coleman, 2009; White, 2008).

Despite the underutilization of this theoretical framework by sport management, marketing, and sociology researchers it is becoming more popular among scholars conducting research in sport-related areas. For example, Trail, Robinson, and Kim (2008) imparted a tri-fold rationale for the use of leisure constraints theory in sport-related research that includes the following: (1) the lack of research on any type of constraint within spectating sport; (2) the lack of an empirically supported model of constraints; and (3) structural constraints may be the type of constraints that most sport managers and marketers have some control over through management practices and policy (p. 191).

Leisure constraints theory was chosen for this study because it provides reasoning as to why people do not participate in leisure activities. The theory was incorporated into this study in regards to why people with physical disabilities do not attend sporting events held at stadiums and arenas. Geographical factors contribute to this (Hinch, Jackson, Hudson, & Walker, 2005), and may include facility design and access. The sport tourism industry has its own unique idiosyncrasies, which include but are not limited to a desire to be at live events to have the full experience (Bernthal & Graham, 2003; Kahle, Kambara, & Rose, 1996; Hinch et al., 2005). Moreover, Gibson (2005) argued that the sport tourism industry must be prepared to remove the constraints to leisure and sport participation if it is going to meaningfully accommodate consumers. A segment of the population, however, may feel socially isolated from sporting event attendance if the facility is not what they perceive to be fully accessible or accommodating.

One constraint in leisure constraints theory is that of structural issues, which for people with physical disabilities may include parking, seating, entranceways, unobstructed lines of sight, and logistical features within the facility such as walkways, elevators, and aisles. It is well established that physical barriers like these prevent this population from participating in social activities such as attending sporting events (Burgdorf, 1991; Hirst, 1989; McClain et al., 2000; Mazumdar & Geis, 2000; Mazumdar & Geis, 2003; Obst & Stafurik, 2010). This study used leisure constraints theory as a lens, particularly in regards to structural constraints, and aimed to discover a preliminary sketch of facility managers' knowledge of ADA requirements to have an accessible sports facility. The researchers sought to better understand facility managers' perceptions of accessibility before exploring the issue at greater depths.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- RQ1: What is the demographic makeup of college athletic department facility managers?
- RQ2: What do college athletic department facility managers know about the ADA?
- RQ3: What are the activities in which college athletic department facility managers are involved to educate others of accessibility?
- RQ4: What resources are used by college athletic department facility managers to educate them of accessibility?

Methodology

This pilot study was modeled after a study conducted by Redick et al. (2000) in which the researchers sought to determine ADA Title III knowledge of occupational therapists. This study's focus was similar in that it sought to measure ADA knowledge of athletic facility managers, particularly focusing on accessibility. Therefore, this study employed a modified version of the survey from Redick et al. (2000). Modifications were made to transform the survey into one where participants were athletic facility managers at the administrative and operational levels rather than occupational therapists.

Sample

A convenience sample of athletic facility management professionals at 12 universities in a major Bowl Championship Series (BCS) athletic conference in the United States were contacted via e-mail and invited to participate in a pilot study about the ADA. Athletic facility managers were identified through online athletic department directories. Position titles included director of athletic facilities, associate athletic director of facilities, assistant director of facility management, and director of facilities. Each facility manager listed on athletic department directories was invited to participate in the study with an e-mail sent to their e-mail address listed in the online directory. Between one and three athletic facility managers from each university's athletic department were invited for a total of 28 potential participants. Six individuals responded to the e-mail invitation and agreed to take the survey. The six individuals were e-mailed the pilot study survey link with a request to provide feedback about the survey at the end. Their job titles ranged from manager to senior associate athletic director and included positions at

both the administrative and operations levels. Four participants completed the survey for a 14.3% response rate.

Questionnaire

Redick et al. (2000) developed a 36-question survey divided into four sections. The survey included a demographics section, as well as a six-question section on attitudes about the ADA, a 10-question section about knowledge of ADA, an eight-question section about activities in providing ADA education, and a four-question section on exploring ADA resources used (Redick et al., 2000). The survey was pilot-tested with five occupational therapists who met the criteria of the researchers' targeted sample, and revisions were made to clarify the survey based on feedback from the pilot (Redick et al., 2000). By pilot testing the instrument, face and content validity was established (Vaske, 2008; Andrew, Pederson, & McEvoy, 2011). Despite the utility of the questionnaire, evidence of efforts to statistically test the validity and reliability of the instrument was not revealed in the original study.

For the current study, the six-question section on attitudes toward the ADA was kept intact with the exception of changing occupational therapy terminology to athletic facility manager terminology. The 10-question section on knowledge about ADA was slightly altered, as this study added a question about the percentage of required accessible seats in arenas and stadiums. The addition brought the knowledge section to 11 questions for this study. The authors posit that adding one item to the battery of questions would not radically alter reliability or validity in light of the relatedness of the statement. Niemi, Carmines, and McIver (1986), after mathematically testing the supposition that adding additional items to a scale altered reliability and validity, concluded that, "in most instances adding items does increase reliability since we would typically not add items that correlate poorly with the original set" (p. 372). Moreover, the same researchers surmised that a single item does not necessarily alter the external validity of a scale if reliability increases (p. 374). Relatedly, Keller and Dansereau (2001) argued that adding items to a scale to increase reliability must be carefully considered. The eight-question section about activities in providing ADA education was kept intact with the exception of altered language, while the four-question section on exploring ADA resources used was modified to one question asking participants to check those resources they use among a list of 12 options. Face and content validity were used to determine the practical use of the survey. The researchers acknowledge that face and content validity are the weakest types of validity because they rely upon the appearance

of accuracy (Berg & Latin, 2008). However, for this exploratory research the modified survey was given to an expert in the field to complete and feedback was solicited to seek validity (Berg & Latin, 2008; Vogt, 2005).

Demographic questions were included in the modified survey, as well as questions about the facility manager's employment and his or her relationship with people with physical disabilities. The purpose of asking about employment, using questions such as whether the individual works with a single facility, provided insight on the typical job the participant holds. Asking about the individuals' relationship with other people with physical disabilities provided insight as to how well the facility managers could personally relate to the segment of the population in question. The final product was a 37-question survey for the pilot study.

Results

Four athletic facility managers completed the pilot study survey and offered suggestions at the conclusion of the survey for seeking facility managers' knowledge of the ADA and accessibility. While these results cannot indicate the ADA knowledge of athletic facility managers in the pilot study's conference or nationally, they can scratch the surface in providing limited insight of how knowledgeable facility managers are of the ADA and accessibility while also providing guidance toward a larger study.

Demographics

RQ1: What is the demographic makeup of college athletic department facility managers?

Participants ranged from 32 to 56 years old ($n=4$, $M=47.75$ years). Two worked at their place of employment between five and 10 years, and two worked at their place of employment 10 years or more. Three males and one female completed the survey, and all four participants held a college degree. Three of the facility managers indicated they know a person with a disability through their employment. Regarding their job, three indicated they worked with multiple facilities ranging in seating capacity and sports.

Knowledge

RQ2: What do college athletic department facility managers know about the ADA?

In regard to knowledge of the ADA, all four participants agreed that people with physical disabilities should have equal access to public accommodations and that facility managers should provide ADA information to customers. Yet the participants were split regarding their role in providing knowledge to others such as being an ADA advocate for customers or providing information to colleagues and customers.

Participants were knowledgeable of minimum ADA requirements in regards to specific measurements such as doorway width and toilet seat height. All participants correctly answered that the ADA-required width of doorways was 32 inches, and three participants correctly answered that the ADA-required height of a toilet seat was 17 inches. One participant correctly answered that one entrance to a facility was required to be accessible, although the other three participants overestimated that half of the entrances must be accessible.

Seating and parking were areas in which the participants had difficulty in their knowledge. The ADA-required number of accessible seats for a facility is 1% of all seats. Half of the participants indicated knowledge of the requirement. One participant indicated each facility has different requirements, which is accurate, yet the participant did not indicate that 1% was the method of measurement. One participant stressed his or her athletic facilities met ADA requirements but failed to divulge those requirements. Our facilities all have more than the required number of accessible seats for patrons using wheelchairs. We accommodate by area so that a comparable ticket is traded to someone who needs to switch a general ticket for an accessible ticket.

In regards to parking, one participant correctly indicated that, on average, one accessible space was required for every 25 spaces. The other three participants were incorrect or did not answer the question, with one stating that accessible spaces should equal 1% of facility capacity and another indicating that "parking is a separate department." A fourth participant did not answer. A similar trend was seen in regards to knowledge of floor space to approach a pay telephone where two participants correctly answered 30x48 inches or more, one participant did not answer, and a fourth participant stated "No clue, we do not have pay phones in our facilities ..."

Two knowledge questions were problematic for the participants. Participants were asked to identify public accommodations not covered by ADA, meaning to identify areas of their facility that were not protected or addressed by the act. Responses were "all facilities are ADA compliant"; "none"; "can spot them very easily" because of research conducted for facility improvement; and "most accommodations in my facility are subject to aspects of the ADA."

Finally, participants were asked where ADA complaints were to be filed. Responses ranged with regard to governance size from "athletic department or university" to "campus office of compliance" to "Department of Justice." One participant did not respond.

Activities

RQ3: What are the activities in which college athletic department facility managers are involved to educate others of accessibility?

Participants indicated little activity in regard to distribution of ADA knowledge to others or gaining knowledge themselves. Three participants indicated ADA compliance assessments were conducted at their facilities less than twice during their tenure, which according to demographics was between 5-10 years or more than 10 years. Education of customers regarding ADA-related issues did not occur often among these participants: two indicated customers were educated on ADA provisions one time or less; three said they never taught customers self-advocacy skills; and two said they never referred customers to resources or advocacy groups. The participants also indicated they rarely served as ADA resources to the community. Yet the participants often distributed ADA-related printed material to customers as all indicated doing so five or more times since being in their position at the time of the study. Parking-related issues also called the participants into action as two participants indicated they attempted to educate people who inappropriately use accessible parking.

Resources

RQ4: What resources are used by college athletic department facility managers to educate them of accessibility?

Participants indicated seeking ADA-related information through multiple means, primarily through Internet, work, and other resources. Three of the four participants said they used Internet and work for their resources on ADA regulations. Those who chose "other" as their ADA resource indicated they retrieved information from a department on campus that specialized in ADA compliance, a consultant, and a professional organization. Participants also indicated using school ($n=2$), workshop or seminar ($n=1$), or none ($n=1$) as resources.

Feedback

Participants were asked to provide suggestions or feedback regarding the online survey and its attempt to measure athletic facility managers' knowledge of the ADA. Three of the four participants provided suggestions that may formulate a comprehensive survey to send to a national audience of athletic facility managers, suggesting clarity in the questions would improve the survey. Face validity also revealed areas of improvement for measuring ADA knowledge of athletic facility managers:

- seek participants' job title;
- seek participants' duration in the current job;
- consolidate wording;
- provide an option such as "this question would be directed to another specific staff member" and provide the option to list that staff member's title;
- provide print capability for the participant to maintain a copy of the survey; and
- provide links at the conclusion of the survey for more information on specifics of the ADA.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory research was to measure facility managers' knowledge of the ADA, and it may assist in decreasing the gap in knowledge between facility managers and the needs of people with physical disabilities. This study was conducted through the theoretical framework of leisure constraints theory, particularly in the structural realm (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford et al., 1991; Hawkins et al., 1999; Jackson, 1997; Raymore et al., 1993). Physical barriers prevent people with physical disabilities from participating in social activities such as attending sporting events, and disconnect exists between facility managers' knowledge and interpretation of accessibility versus the knowledge of a person with a disability (Burgdorf, 1991; Hirst, 1989; McClain et al., 2000; Mazumdar & Geis, 2003; Saito, 2006).

Based on the limited data from this exploratory study, it is surprising that disconnect may exist between facility managers and the needs of people with physical disabilities. Participants from the small sample in this study were middle-aged employees who had been employed more than five years at their current position. The longevity of these employees suggests they would likely be fluent in ADA-related issues, with longer-tenured employees having experienced increased ADA regulations over their years of employment. Additionally, the majority of the participants indicated they knew a person with a disability through their employment, which shows they are exposed to the needs of people with physical disabilities and have that exposure due to their employment. The demographic makeup of this small sample indicates that college athletic department facility managers may have personal experience with physical disabilities either from fellow employees or potentially through first-person experiences considering the age of respondents in this pilot study. Such exposure can be beneficial

for patrons with physical disabilities if the athletic facility managers, whether at the administrative or operational level, can relate with the needs of the patrons.

One explanation of a potential disconnect between athletic facility managers and people with physical disabilities lies in the issues. Participants in this study indicated they knew measurable requirements for accessibility such as doorway widths and toilet seat heights, but they lacked knowledge in larger issues that have been addressed in the courts such as seating and parking. Some participants knew parking lot requirements for accessible spaces and the percentage of accessible entrances and seating options required, yet others over-estimated their answer or provided a blanket statement of how their facilities are in compliance. The consistency in knowledge of measurable details of doorway widths and toilet seat heights could be due to a “torchbearer” effect where if one person is in need of an accessible toilet seat or entranceway, it must be installed. Thus, the facility manager is knowledgeable that his or her facility meets those requirements and why. In essence, these issues are of greater detail and may prevent a large number of people with physical disabilities from using an athletic facility.

However, with regard to the lack of knowledge in parking and seating issues, multiple accessible parking spaces and accessible seats may already be available at an athletic facility. Yet the number or location of those parking spaces and seats may not be in full compliance or may not address specific needs. In other words, compliance with ADA standards may not always meet the needs of people with physical disabilities. Still, that accessible parking spaces and accessible seats are available does not prevent all people with physical disabilities from facility use; it just may prevent some people from use. This may explain why athletic facility managers could have difficulty knowing more generic issues of accessibility such as the number of parking spaces and seats. A facility may be in compliance with ADA standards, as was the case with the MCI Center in *Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects* (1996), but still not be accessible.

In such instances when a patron has a complaint about accessibility, the researchers inquired whether athletic facility managers knew where to file complaints if patrons took issues with accessibility. Responses had a broad range with regard to level of governance. One response focused on a low governance level such as the athletic department. A second response was a mid-range governance level such as the university. A third response was the highest level of governance such as the U.S. Department of Justice. The discrepancy in responses sends the message that athletic

facility managers may not understand where accessibility complaints should be filed, which is problematic should there be noncompliance.

Understanding the issue of accessibility and how patrons may be able to file a complaint may benefit facility managers in educating others about ADA-related matters. Participants in this exploratory study took few steps to educate others about ADA-related matters or increase their own education. Educating the patron on ADA-related issues may assist in long-term solving of issues, and ultimately provide patrons with better guest services in repeat visits to a facility while also empowering the customer for future issues they may face. Printed material, which participants identified as having distributed in the past, may assist in the education process, but with a hands-off approach. Engaging with the patron about accessibility needs is time consuming, but has the potential to build repeat customers as well as strengthen word-of-mouth advertising for events at an athletic facility.

Participants also sought little resources to educate themselves, doing so primarily through Internet and work resources. Self-education means through Internet resources and work-related outlets send messages of either searching for a quick fix (Internet) or being forced to learn accessibility compliance (work). Participants acknowledged they were rarely serving the community as a resource on ADA-related topics, likely due to their own lack of knowledge. Serving as an ADA resource has marketing and customer retention potential, in addition to providing added value to the employee who serves. Participants identified Internet, work, and other work-related resources for educating themselves on ADA-related issues. This list of resources could be expanded to include workshops and certifications, which would also develop the employee as a niche expert in ADA compliance within the community.

Athletic facility managers' lack of expertise may also present itself as a constraint on why people with physical disabilities do not attend sporting events. Leisure constraints are perceived or experienced reasons why a person does not participate in leisure activity (Hawkins et al., 1999; Jackson, 1997). This study focuses on structural constraints, which prevent participation such as transportation, facility accessibility, and opportunity (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford et al., 1991; Raymore et al., 1993). As previously stated, structural constraints are not insurmountable but require intentional planning to negotiate those constraints (Loucks-Atkinson & Mannell, 2007; Tsai & Coleman, 2009; White, 2008). Structural constraints may include accessibility issues such as parking, seating, entranceways, unobstructed lines of sight, and logistical

features within the facility such as walkways, elevators, and aisles. Physical barriers like these may prevent people with physical disabilities from attending sporting events (Burgdorf, 1991; Hirst, 1989; McClain et al., 2000; Mazumdar & Geis, 2000; Mazumdar & Geis, 2003).

Proactive planning by people with physical disabilities to counter structural constraints may seem logical for individuals who are not constrained by structural characteristics of facilities, yet it has great potential to reinforce social isolation by sending a message that people with physical disabilities are not welcome, whether true or perceived. Therein lays the notion that facility managers must be knowledgeable of ADA requirements and accessibility standards to be qualified to address concerns brought forth by people with physical disabilities. Lack of knowledge in this area creates the perception that the issue is of little importance, and therefore sends the message that a facility is unwelcoming of people with physical disabilities.

A reason athletic facility managers at the operations and administration levels may need to be knowledgeable of ADA compliance and accepting of the role of sharing ADA knowledge with others is simply due to immediate concern. For immediate concerns at athletic events, patrons rely on facility management, thus having operations and administration personnel who are knowledgeable of ADA compliance issues, is imperative for customer service needs. While it certainly cannot be generalized to a greater population of facility managers, this exploratory study indicated that facility managers may not fully grasp the two most important issues people with physical disabilities face in regards to attending a sporting event: parking and seating. Parking and seating have been argued in the courts since the ADA's 1990 inception, yet facility managers in this pilot study were not fully confident of ADA standards in these areas. In fact, deflection of the problem to another employee or department, as suggested by multiple participants in a response to parking, does not address the needs on game day if the patron with a disability cannot find parking, cannot enter the facility, and cannot access his or her seat for which a ticket was purchased.

This pilot study has its limitations in that predictions or assumptions of athletic facility managers' ADA knowledge may be inaccurate based on pilot data. Unforeseen problems may occur on a larger-scale study, as this pilot study has no statistical basis and cannot guarantee a successful national study. Still, this pilot study makes it clear that future research in this area is needed both quantitatively and qualitatively. A national quantitative study of facility managers' knowledge of ADA compliance and public

accommodations will be a step toward bridging the knowledge gap between athletic facility administration and people with physical disabilities, while qualitative work on this topic can provide deeper insight and discovery to gain a true essence of ADA knowledge and complaint issues brought forth by people with physical disabilities.

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