

**DON'T ASK AND YOU SHALL NOT RECEIVE:
WHY FUTURE AMERICAN WORKERS WITH
DISABILITIES ARE RELUCTANT TO DEMAND
LEGALLY REQUIRED ACCOMMODATIONS***

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ABSTRACT

Although the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted nearly two decades ago, it has not provided many of the expected benefits to disabled individuals, and it appears that reluctance to request accommodations is part of the problem (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). Baldrige and Veiga (2001) provided a framework for examining the reasons why individuals with disabilities might fail to request needed accommodations. The current study tested a model based on this framework, examining the factors that affect whether individuals with disabilities request needed accommodations. The results indicate that personal assessments (i.e., concerns about requesting

*Portions of this manuscript were presented at the 2005 Southern Management Association Annual Meetings in Charleston, SC, and they appeared in the conference proceedings. The pilot study was conducted as part of the honors thesis completed by Jennifer Schlosberg at the University of Hartford.

accommodations) mediate the relationship between perceptions of university culture and the likelihood of requesting future accommodations. Importantly, past accommodation request was the strongest predictor of future accommodation request likelihood and also predicted perceptions of university culture, indicating that past experiences in requesting accommodations directly and indirectly shape individuals' likelihood of requesting accommodations in the future. Additionally, certain personality traits (e.g., emotional stability, agreeableness) as well as knowledge of the ADA may indirectly influence accommodation request likelihood. Strategies for increasing the likelihood of requests for accommodations, including approaches to use when requesting accommodations from employers, are provided.

INTRODUCTION

On July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in employment (Title I), state and local government (Title II), public accommodations (Title III), and telecommunications (Title IV). This legislation not only prohibited discrimination against individuals with disabilities but also outlined obligations for greater accessibility in all areas and was intended to pave the way for the end of discrimination against disabled individuals (Becker, 1999).

With regard to employment, the ADA prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities who can perform the essential functions of the job *with or without reasonable accommodation*. Thus, if an individual with a physical or mental disability (or an individual who is regarded as having a disability) meets the job requirements (e.g., education, experience) and is able to perform the primary duties of the job for which he or she is applying, then the employer cannot discriminate against that individual on the basis of the disability. However, what constitutes a "reasonable accommodation" (i.e., an alteration to the selection process, job tasks, or work environment that can enable the disabled individual to perform the essential functions of the job) has been a source of confusion for employers. For example, what is considered "reasonable" can differ depending on the size of the employer, the structure of the organization, and so forth. A further complication is that employers are not permitted to ask whether an individual has a disability, or to ask about the nature and severity of a disability. If an employer is aware of the disability (e.g., the disability is obvious, as in the case of an individual in a wheelchair), the employer can ask if the disabled individual would need reasonable accommodation, or ask how the individual would perform certain job tasks (EEOC, 2009b). However, if the employer is unaware of the disability (e.g., the disability is not obvious and the individual has not informed the employer of the disability), then accommodations need not be provided (EEOC, 2009a).

Research suggests that the ADA has not increased the employment levels of disabled individuals (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). Part of this problem may be

due to the lack of specificity in the terms used in the ADA (e.g., “disability,” “reasonable accommodation”), which may lead to employer confusion or rejection of necessary accommodations. The recently enacted ADA Amendments Act was intended in part to clarify some of the terms, particularly what constitutes a disability (EEOC, 2009c). However, as Baldrige and Veiga (2001) pointed out, one reason for the ADA’s limited effectiveness could be that people with disabilities (PWDs) are unwilling to request needed accommodations from their employers. Given that it is generally incumbent on PWDs to make a request for accommodation (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001), the ADA may be failing to have its intended effect if individuals who would benefit from accommodations fail to request them.

The issue of why a qualified PWD would fail to request a needed accommodation is complex, involving perceptions of the organization (e.g., its culture) as well as the nature of the accommodation and the disability. In their detailed framework, Baldrige and Veiga (2001) suggested that situational characteristics influence the formulation of the potential requester’s beliefs, which then subsequently influence the likelihood of requesting an accommodation. In the current study, we investigate some of these situational characteristics and beliefs that may influence accommodation requests, using a sample of college students. College students were selected because many will enter the workforce upon graduation, and we wished to investigate the concerns that college students have about requesting accommodations, which will likely carry over into their future employment. Prior to describing our study, we provide details of Baldrige and Veiga’s (2001) framework.

Situational Characteristics

In Baldrige and Veiga’s (2001) framework, situational characteristics are proposed to indirectly affect the likelihood of requesting accommodations, by influencing the requester’s personal and normative assessments. First, organizational culture is hypothesized to influence help-seeking, such that PWDs in organizations with more supportive cultures will have more positive assessments (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). Supporting this proposition, Balser and Harris (2008) showed that if employers are proactive about asking for input from PWDs in the accommodation process, employees are more likely to be satisfied with the accommodation, in part because they are more likely to receive the accommodation they want.

Other workplace attributes may also affect accommodation requests. PWDs working for impersonal, bureaucratic organizations will have greater difficulties requesting accommodations than they would in organizations that value personalization and flexibility (Stone & Colella, 1996). Moreover, organizations are struggling to learn how to manage workplace accommodations, and may not have appropriate infrastructures for supporting PWDs or may only be making

a surface commitment to them (Wooten & James, 2005). Thus, many employers may be reluctant to hire PWDs, or may fail to accommodate them on the job, and PWDs may be reluctant to request accommodations when faced with such unaccommodating cultures.

The nature of the accommodation and the nature of the disability are also likely to influence beliefs about how a request will be received. Florey and Harrison (2000) found that larger requests (i.e., requests that cost more, required more time and effort, or led to greater changes in work flow) yielded less compliance than smaller ones. In essence, larger requests appear more likely to be viewed as “unreasonable” by employers. Further, Baldrige and Veiga (2001) proposed that the larger the accommodation, the less likely PWDs would be to request accommodations due to concerns that others would react negatively. Disability attributes, including the type of disability and its onset controllability, are also likely to affect accommodation requests. Lee (1997) indicated that there is a “hierarchy” of disabilities, with physical disabilities more accepted in organizations than psychological disabilities, such as attention deficit disorder and depression (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997). Further, individuals who have greater control over the onset of their disabilities are seen more negatively because they are in part responsible for being disabled (Bordieri & Drehmer, 1988; Stone & Colella, 1996).

Requester’s Formulation of Salient Beliefs

In Baldrige and Veiga’s (2001) framework, situational characteristics influence personal and normative assessments, which are predicted to impact intentions to request accommodations. *Personal assessments* include evaluations of whether the accommodation is perceived as useful, whether requesting an accommodation will have an image cost, whether the accommodation is perceived as fair, and whether compliance with the request is anticipated (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). Specifically, PWDs may be reluctant to request accommodations that they perceive will not address their needs (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). This perception might be due to a lack of awareness of possible solutions or to the failure of accommodations to provide relief in the past. For example, employers might provide accommodations that are less beneficial, because such accommodations are easier and less expensive than those that might allow an individual full participation in the workplace.

In addition, PWDs might not request accommodations because they are concerned about how others will perceive them. As noted earlier, different disabilities are likely to be perceived differently, with some viewed more positively than others. Nonetheless, Stone and Colella (1996) noted that coworkers may feel that PWDs are unable to perform, interact with others, or comply with organizational norms, and that they are generally unqualified, unpredictable, and perhaps even threatening and contagious. Also, employers may view requesting

accommodations as taking legal action (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001) and may view a PWD as a litigious “troublemaker.” Thus, when the anticipated image cost (i.e., damage to a PWD’s public image) is high, the likelihood of requesting an accommodation is low (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). Supporting this, Coble-Temple, Mona, and Bleecker (2003) found that some PWDs questioned whether they should even ask for accommodations, because of the potentially damaging effects of such requests and of discrimination in their organizations. Further, Madaus (2008) found that many individuals with learning disabilities never disclosed their disability in an employment setting because of concerns that disclosure would negatively affect relationships with supervisors and coworkers.

PWDs may also fail to request accommodations because of concerns about how their coworkers or supervisors will perceive the fairness of their requests. For example, an accommodation might be seen as a fair way to “level the playing field” (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001: 90), if PWDs are seen as having a greater need for assistance than other workers. Indeed, Hunzecker and Kottke (2008) found that when coworkers believed that a PWD had a need for an accommodation, they viewed the accommodation as fair. However, if the accommodation is seen by others as making the requestor’s work easier or coworkers’ work more difficult, or it is seen as a reward, then the accommodation will likely be viewed as unfair (Colella, 2001). Thus, whether an accommodation is viewed as fair may rest in part on whether others (e.g., coworkers) are negatively affected by it.

A PWD may also be concerned that the organization will not comply with the request. If, for example, the organization believes that the accommodation would be viewed by co-workers as unfair, then management would be less likely to comply (Florey & Harrison, 2000). Further, if a PWD perceives that the employer is resistant to the ADA (McFarlin, Song, & Sonntag, 1991), perhaps because it is seen as hindering management’s performance (Cleveland, Barnes-Farrell, & Ratz, 1997), then the PWD will be unlikely to make the request. Also, during tough economic times, employers may view accommodation requests (even inexpensive ones) as unreasonable, and thus PWDs may be reluctant to request accommodations that will not only be refused but may also lead to negative employment consequences (e.g., denial of a job).

PWDs are also likely to be concerned about what others think they should do (see Cleveland et al., 1997). Baldrige and Veiga (2001) refer to the perceived appropriateness of help-seeking and perceived social obligation as *normative assessments*. To the extent that norms suggest that seeking help is appropriate, PWDs are expected to be more likely to request accommodations. Baldrige and Veiga (2001) also suggest that PWDs will be more likely to ask for accommodations if they perceive that others support requestors who advocate for their rights. However, it is also possible that PWDs will not request accommodations because utilizing the ADA implies that they are taking legal action. Employers may feel *socially* obligated to provide an accommodation, but the ADA *legally*

requires them to do so. Requesting an accommodation by invoking the ADA may appear threatening and litigious to employers and create mistrust between PWDs and their supervisors (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001).

Summary and Purpose of the Current Study

Little research to date has examined Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) framework. Recently, Baldrige and Veiga (2006) published a study that investigated the actual decision processes of disabled individuals, focusing on the accommodation attributes (monetary and imposition costs) and the anticipated social consequences (supervisory compliance, personal cost, and perceived normative appropriateness) as affecting accommodation request likelihood. Specifically, they proposed a partial mediation model consistent with their earlier framework, in which the anticipation of social consequences of requesting an accommodation mediates the relationship between the accommodation attributes and the likelihood of requesting a recurring accommodation. They generally found support for their partial mediation model, and importantly, they found that all three anticipated social consequences had strong and significant effects on accommodation request likelihood.

The current study supplements these findings by examining Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) framework further in a university setting with college students. Here we focus on the perceived accommodation culture within the university, as well as on personal assessments (i.e., the perceived usefulness of the accommodation, anticipated image costs, fairness of the request, and beliefs about compliance). Thus, our study goes beyond Baldrige and Veiga's 2006 study, which did not examine the perceptions of accommodation culture, usefulness of the accommodation, or fairness of the request. The purpose of the current study, then, was to investigate empirically the experiences and concerns of students with disabilities who have and have not requested accommodations, and to propose and test a mediation model based on Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) framework. Specifically, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Personal assessments will mediate the relationship between perceived accommodation culture and accommodation request likelihood.

In addition to testing Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) framework, we have incorporated other variables that are expected to influence the likelihood of accommodation requests. First, past experiences with accommodation requests are expected to influence future accommodation requests. As a great deal of research has noted, past behaviors are one of the best predictors of future behaviors (see e.g., Gatewood, Feild, & Barrick, 2008). Thus, an individual who has requested accommodations in the past is expected to do so in the future.

Hypothesis 2: Past accommodation requests will be positively related to future accommodation request likelihood.

Experiences with requesting accommodations in the past are also likely to give the requestor an indication of the organization's accommodation culture, for example, whether the organization is willing to provide accommodations. Thus, we propose that past accommodation requests will be related to perceptions of accommodation culture.

Hypothesis 3: Past accommodation requests will be related to perceptions of accommodation culture.

Also, knowledge of the ADA is likely to influence whether PWDs will request accommodations. Baldrige and Veiga (2001) noted that although it was not included in their model, awareness of sources of assistance (i.e., knowledge of one's coverage under the ADA) is a prerequisite for requesting accommodations. Further, Madaus (2008) found that PWDs were unsure whether they had sufficient knowledge of the ADA, and suggested that this was one reason for failure to disclose their disabilities in employment settings. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 4: Knowledge of the ADA will be positively related to future accommodation request likelihood.

Finally, because one of the main purposes of the current study is to investigate why PWDs fail to request needed accommodations, it is important to demonstrate that individuals *do indeed* fail to request these accommodations. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5a: The majority of disabled individuals have not requested accommodations in the past.

Hypothesis 5b: Disabled individuals will be unlikely to request accommodations in the future.

Because research has suggested that disability can affect personality (see Stone-Romero, Stone, & Lukaszewski, 2006), we included several individual difference measures (i.e., the Big Five personality factors) to examine whether certain personality variables were related to personal assessments as well as the likelihood of making an accommodation request. In order to test the above hypotheses, we developed a survey examining the perceived accommodation culture and the personal assessments. We did not intend this to be a traditional scale development study, but rather an initial investigation into the reasons for failing to request accommodations.

In this study, we focused for several reasons on college students' experiences in asking for accommodations from their university. Studying the perceptions of college students with disabilities can be helpful for understanding trends in the employment of PWDs, given statistics that indicate that the most significant declines in employment since the ADA was enacted have occurred among workers 21–39 years old (Acemoglu & Angrist, 2001). Because college students will

become part of this worker group after graduation (if they are not so already), they face diminished employment opportunities, even more so in tough economic times. Further, this lack of employment opportunity is magnified for PWDs who need accommodations but may be reluctant to request them, leading to a lower likelihood of graduation, lower test scores, and/or worse job performance, which can reduce employment opportunities (see Feldman, 2004). Thus, research on the perceptions of college students with disabilities can be useful for understanding whether they will request accommodations in their future employment.

In addition, college students appear more likely to disclose disabilities and request accommodations in university settings than in employment settings (Greenbaum, Graham, & Scales, 1996; Madaus, 2006; Madaus et al., 2002; Witte, Phillips, & Kakela, 1998). One possible reason for this is that the process in university settings is more straightforward (Madaus, 2008), as many schools provide information on the procedures for requesting accommodations (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Also, the student provides his or her paperwork to the relevant administrative department dealing with disabilities, whose administrators typically know how to address the student's needs and can even intervene directly with instructors on behalf of the student. Further, school administrators may have greater understanding or acceptance of certain disabilities, such as learning disabilities (Gerber, 1997), than employers or managers have, and faculty and other students may also be more sensitive to the needs of PWDs (Houck et al., 1992). In contrast, many managers have limited knowledge of how to deal with PWDs, and damage to PWDs' image and outright discrimination against them are quite possible. Indeed, as Reiff (1998: 314) has noted, PWDs are relatively sheltered and protected in the school setting, whereas "[n]egative perceptions and misinformation are rampant" in the employment setting.

Another reason for the lower rate of disclosure of disabilities in the employment setting than in the university setting is that PWDs, in particular those with learning disabilities, may come to believe they are no longer disabled, due to the support services they have received over the years (Gerber & Price, 2003). This is important, as there may be many individuals who would be covered by the ADA but do not realize that there are accommodations available to them. Another reason for the difference in disclosure may be the difference between the employee-employer relationship and the student-university relationship. Because students pay for services, they may be considered clients (see Armstrong, 2003) and thus expect to receive certain services in return. In contrast, as organizations are typically profit-making enterprises, PWDs may be concerned that employers will not want to expend funds on accommodations.

In sum, although PWDs are more likely to disclose their disability status and request accommodations in school settings than in work settings, many students still have concerns about disclosing their disability status in school settings, and these concerns are likely to be magnified when they reach the workforce. Consequently, if a disabled student has negative experiences in college, he or she

may also perceive more barriers against PWDs in organizational settings and fail to request needed accommodations at work. Therefore, by investigating the perceptions of college students in asking for accommodations in the current study, we hope to gain insight into the barriers that PWD perceive in the university setting, perceptions that will likely shape their future accommodation requests as they transition from school to the workforce.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 273 undergraduate ($N = 220$, 81%) and graduate students ($N = 53$, 19%) at a mid-sized southeastern public university. The respondents were mostly female ($N = 213$, 78%) and white ($N = 228$, 83.5%). The mean age was 24.9 years, with a median age of 22 years.

Procedure

The participants were recruited using an e-mail message distributed to all students registered at the university. In addition, the Office for Students with Disabilities distributed the e-mail directly to students registered with their office. The e-mail directed participants to the study Web site. Participation was strictly voluntary and was not tied to either extra credit in class or any monetary incentive, and informed consent was implied when participants entered the Web site. Upon completion of the survey, participants viewed a short debriefing message.

Measures

Pilot Study

In order to develop the scales used in this study, a pilot study was conducted, involving extensive, open-ended interviews with 20 disabled students at a different university. In these interviews, students were asked about their disabilities, their concerns when asking for accommodations, the university culture toward individuals with disabilities, how supportive the university was of diversity, and so on. Based on these interviews, the questionnaire used to determine disability status and to assess perceptions of university culture and personal assessments was developed and refined for use in the current study.

Disability Status

Participants were presented with a list of 31 physical, mental, and psychological conditions, such as panic disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and migraines, which could be considered disabilities or impairments of a major

life activity. Participants were asked to indicate which conditions they had, if any, and to list any “other conditions” they had. We used the term “condition” rather than “disability” to reduce the likelihood that participants would become aware of the purpose of the study. In addition, by providing a list of conditions and asking about the severity of students’ conditions, we intended to determine whether individuals would be considered disabled under the ADA, rather than relying on their perceptions of themselves as disabled. Thus, it is possible that some of these students did not consider themselves disabled. However, by including them in our sample of “disabled students” we believe we may have also identified individuals who would be covered by the ADA but who may not have exercised their rights under the ADA.

Participants also were asked to indicate which one of their conditions was the most severe and the extent to which that condition affected their daily life. This information was used to determine whether individuals had a condition that would be considered a covered disability under the ADA. Individuals who did not have a condition or whose condition did not affect their life or affected it only slightly were not considered to be disabled. In total, 89 individuals were considered disabled, and only the data from these 89 participants were included in the analyses that examined relationships with accommodation requests, and in the subsequent mediation analyses that were used to test the hypotheses.

Perceived Accommodation Culture

The situational characteristic of perceived accommodation culture was assessed by asking all participants to indicate their perceptions of university culture on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Initially, 11 items were written to reflect the diversity and helpfulness culture of the university. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on these 11 items, with the result that three factors were extracted and two items dropped due to high cross-loadings. The final set of nine items, along with the full results of the EFA, can be obtained from the first author of this article upon request. Four of the items dealt with perceptions of the university’s support of diversity: these included, for example, “Professors at this university are supportive of diversity programs.” Three items focused on the helpfulness of university employees (i.e., faculty and staff), including, for example, “Administrators at this university are very helpful to students.” Finally, two items addressed the helpfulness of students at the university, including, for example, “Students here are willing to help each other.” An overall score for each scale was calculated as the mean of the ratings for the items retained for that scale. The coefficient alpha reliabilities for employee helpfulness, student helpfulness, and diversity were .75, .85, and .82, respectively, and all of these scales were positively and significantly correlated (see Table 1), suggesting that cultures that are more helpful are also more supportive of diversity.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations for Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Fairness Concerns	.66														
2. Image Cost Concerns	.45**	.74													
3. Usefulness Concerns	.14	.22*	.68												
4. Compliance Concerns	.42**	.40**	.10	.76											
5. University Helpfulness (Employees)	-.21 [†]	-.13	-.10	-.40**	.75										
6. University Helpfulness (Students)	-.17	-.08	-.03	-.19 [†]	.36**	.85									
7. University Supports Diversity	-.12	-.17	-.09	-.34**	.54**	.24*	.82								
8. Knowledge of the ADA	-.14	-.03	.04	-.01	-.17	-.20 [†]	-.25*	—							
9. Extraversion	-.06	-.14	.05	-.07	-.07	.21 [†]	.09	.22*	.90						
10. Agreeableness	-.21 [†]	-.03	-.11	-.12	.15	.30**	.20 [†]	.07	.31**	.87					
11. Conscientiousness	-.05	-.13	-.12	-.07	.10	.29**	.09	.14	.11	.23*	.77				
12. Emotional Stability	-.22*	-.38**	-.12	-.29**	.12	.24*	.16	.30**	.26*	.16	.39**	.90			
13. Openness to Experience	.01	.05	.07	.09	.07	.14	.02	.16	.28**	.30**	.25*	.14	.84		
14. Requested Past Accommodation	-.09	-.18 [†]	-.20 [†]	.23*	-.21*	-.13	-.19 [†]	.03	-.08	.05	-.01	-.02	.01	—	
15. Future Accommodation Request Likelihood	-.19 [†]	-.31**	-.37**	.04	.00	-.01	.01	-.04	-.07	-.01	.00	-.03	.03	.52**	—
<i>M</i>	2.93	3.58	2.83	2.97	3.31	3.49	3.45	3.25	3.17	4.12	3.61	2.66	3.96	1.24	2.13
<i>SD</i>	.93	1.01	.87	.87	.86	.75	.74	2.74	.89	.63	.62	.92	.62	.43	1.26

Note: *N* ranges from 85 to 89. Also, pairwise deletion was used in calculating correlations. Coefficient alpha reliabilities are shown in bold and italics on the diagonal.
[†]*p* < .10; **p* < .05; ***p* < .01.

Personal Assessments

To measure personal assessments, the 89 participants considered to have disabilities were asked to imagine a situation in which they wanted to ask for help because of their condition, and then to indicate whether or not they would have certain concerns when asking for help. They then responded to statements about their concerns on a Likert-type scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These statements were written to reflect the four categories of concerns or personal assessments (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001) that would affect whether someone requested an accommodation or not. Initially, 16 items were written to reflect Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) categories. An EFA was conducted on these 16 items, with four factors extracted and two items dropped due to high cross-loadings. The final set of 14 items, along with the full results of the EFA, can be obtained from the first author upon request. The first category (3 items) included concerns about one's *image* (i.e., anticipated image cost), for example, "I would look incompetent." A second category (3 items) included concerns about the *fairness* of the accommodation (i.e., perceived fairness), for example, "If I got help and others didn't, it wouldn't be fair to them." The third category (4 items) addressed the ways in which an accommodation might not be *useful* (i.e., perceived accommodation usefulness), for example, "I would still not do as well as I should." The last category (4 items) was related to *compliance* with the request (i.e., concerns with anticipated compliance), for example, "Any help or modifications would cost too much money." An overall score for each scale was calculated as the mean of the ratings for the items retained for that scale. The coefficient alpha reliabilities for fairness concerns, image cost, usefulness, and anticipated compliance concerns were .66, .74, .68, and .76, respectively, and all of these scales were positively and significantly correlated (see Table 1).

Accommodation Requests

To assess accommodation request likelihood, the 89 participants considered to have disabilities indicated whether they would be likely to request an accommodation in response to the following item: "In the future, how likely are you to request help for your condition?" Participants responded using a Likert-type scale from 1 (Very Unlikely) to 5 (Very Likely). In addition, these 89 participants indicated whether they had asked for an accommodation in the past on the following item: "Have you ever asked anyone at this university (e.g., a professor or administrator) for assistance or some kind of modification to help you perform a task such as class work, homework, tests, etc. because the condition you listed above limited your ability to perform the task?" Participants responded using 1 (No) or 2 (Yes).

Individual Difference Measures

In order to examine possible individual difference variables that could be related to personal assessments as well as to accommodation request likelihood, we included a 50-item measure of the Big Five personality factors (Goldberg, 1999) of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Participants indicated how accurately each statement described them, using a Likert-type scale from 1 (Very Inaccurate) to 5 (Very Accurate). An overall score for each of the personality scales was calculated as the mean of the ratings of the 10 items on that scale. The coefficient alpha reliabilities for the extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience scales were .90, .87, .77, .90, and .84, respectively.

Demographics and Knowledge of the ADA

Participants were asked to provide their year in school, gender, age, and race/ethnicity. They were also asked to what extent they were familiar with the ADA, using a Likert-type scale from 1 (“Know nothing about the ADA”) to 5 (“Know a substantial amount about the ADA”).

RESULTS

Of the 273 respondents, 148 reported having some kind of condition. The mean number of conditions reported across the respondents was 1.28 ($SD = 1.69$), with a range from 0 to 8. The most frequently reported conditions included migraines ($N = 50$), depression ($N = 49$), injury to feet or legs ($N = 24$), visual impairment ($N = 23$), sleep disorder ($N = 18$), and attention deficit disorder ($N = 17$). Depression ($N = 31$) and migraines ($N = 34$) were marked as the most severe conditions, and the mean for the extent to which the most severe condition affected daily life was 2.96 ($SD = 1.22$), indicating that this condition affected daily life to a moderate extent on average.

Despite the prevalence of conditions that affected respondents' lives to a *moderate* extent, of the 89 individuals who responded to questions about requesting assistance or modifications, and thus were considered disabled for the purposes of this study, only 21 (24%) indicated that they had ever requested accommodations. Furthermore, 58 respondents (66%) indicated that they were *somewhat unlikely* or *very unlikely* to request help in the future (i.e., future accommodation request likelihood was small). Thus, participants generally appeared reluctant to request accommodations for their conditions, providing support for Hypotheses 5a and 5b.

In addition, the mean level of knowledge of the ADA reported by all participants was 3.02, indicating that participants, on average, knew only a little about the ADA. Further, there was no significant difference in knowledge about the ADA ($t = -1.02, p = .31$) between those individuals who had a condition that

at least moderately affected their life and those who had no condition or had one that affected their life only slightly or not at all. Thus, individuals both with and without disabilities appeared to have little knowledge of the ADA.

Scale Intercorrelations

The correlations of the scales assessing concerns (i.e., personal assessments) with the perceptions of helpfulness and support for diversity scales (i.e., accommodation culture) were all negative, as would be expected, although not all reached statistical significance. The strongest correlations of the culture scales were with the anticipated compliance concerns scale, indicating that the accommodation culture may be most likely to affect whether an individual is concerned about compliance when requesting an accommodation. These results provide initial support for Hypothesis 1.

The past accommodation requests scale was strongly and positively correlated with future accommodation request likelihood: individuals who had requested accommodations in the past were more likely to indicate they would request accommodations in the future, which supports Hypothesis 2. Also, the past accommodation requests scale was negatively correlated with perceptions of helpfulness by employees and with perceptions of the university's support for diversity, which provides initial support for Hypothesis 3. These negative correlations suggest that individuals who have requested accommodations in the past may have found the university to be unsupportive and unhelpful, and thus they may have more negative perceptions of the university culture. However, there was no relationship between willingness to ask for an accommodation in the future and perceptions of the university as being helpful and supportive of diversity.

Three personal assessment scales (concerns about fairness, image, and usefulness) were significantly and negatively correlated with whether the respondent had requested an accommodation in the past. Respondents who had not requested accommodations in the past were more likely to have concerns about image cost and usefulness. Also, participants who had concerns about image cost and usefulness indicated they were less willing to ask for help in the future. However, participants who had asked for accommodations in the past were *more* likely to have concerns about compliance. We can speculate that the fact that they have asked for accommodations in the past and perhaps have had such requests turned down *increases* concerns about compliance.

Knowledge of the ADA was uncorrelated with the personal assessment scales, but it did have significant negative correlations with perceptions of student helpfulness and university support of diversity, and the correlation with university helpfulness was also negative though nonsignificant. These findings suggest that individuals who have more knowledge of the ADA, and thus a greater understanding of what they are entitled to under the ADA, see the university as less helpful and accommodating of their needs. However, knowledge of the

ADA was unrelated to past or future accommodation requests, a finding that fails to support Hypothesis 4.

The correlations of the three accommodation culture scales and the four personal assessment scales with the Big Five are also shown in Table 1. The perceived accommodation culture scales all had positive correlations with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, although not all of these correlations were statistically significant. These findings suggest that individuals who get along well with others, have positive interactions with others, and generally see the world more positively also find the university to be more helpful and supportive. With regard to the personal assessment scales, no clear pattern of correlation with the Big Five appears, except for the correlations with emotional stability. All four personal assessment scales had negative correlations with emotional stability, indicating that individuals who are less emotionally stable tend to have greater concerns about requesting accommodations. However, none of the Big Five scales correlated significantly with past or future accommodation request likelihood (r 's ranged from $-.08$ to $.05$, $p > .10$). Thus, these individual differences do not appear to directly impact accommodation requests; instead they may influence only the precursors to request likelihood.

Test of Hypotheses in SEM

Hypothesis 1 predicted that personal assessments would mediate the relationship between perceived accommodation culture and future accommodation request likelihood. In order to test Hypothesis 1, along with Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4, structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS 16.0 was used, as various researchers (e.g., Bing et al., 2007; James, Mulaik, & Brett, 2006; LeBreton, Wu, & Bing, 2009) have noted the advantages of using SEM over regression-based approaches (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986) for testing mediation models. In this mediation model, a latent personal assessments construct (composed of the four personal assessments manifest variables) served as the mediator between a latent perceived accommodation culture construct (composed of the three perceived accommodation culture manifest variables) and future accommodation request likelihood (a manifest variable). A direct path between the latent perceived accommodation culture construct and future accommodation request likelihood was also included, to test the possibility of partial mediation. Requested past accommodation was included as an exogenous variable with direct paths leading to perceived accommodation culture, personal assessments, and future accommodation request likelihood. Knowledge of the ADA was also included as an exogenous variable, with direct paths to perceived accommodation culture, personal assessments, and future accommodation request likelihood.

Several nested models were tested, and a full mediation model was found to fit the data well ($\chi^2_{[22]} = 44.45$, $p = .09$, $\chi^2/df = 1.35$; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .063), and as it did not have a significantly worse fit than less parsimonious partial

mediation models, the more parsimonious full mediation model was preferred over the partial mediation models. This preferred full mediation model with standardized estimates for structural relationships is depicted in Figure 1. Another model was tested, which added the Big Five personality factors to the model shown in Figure 1. This model had worse fit indices (i.e., χ^2 , CFI, RMSEA) than the model displayed in Figure 1. Detailed results of this model test are available from the first author upon request.

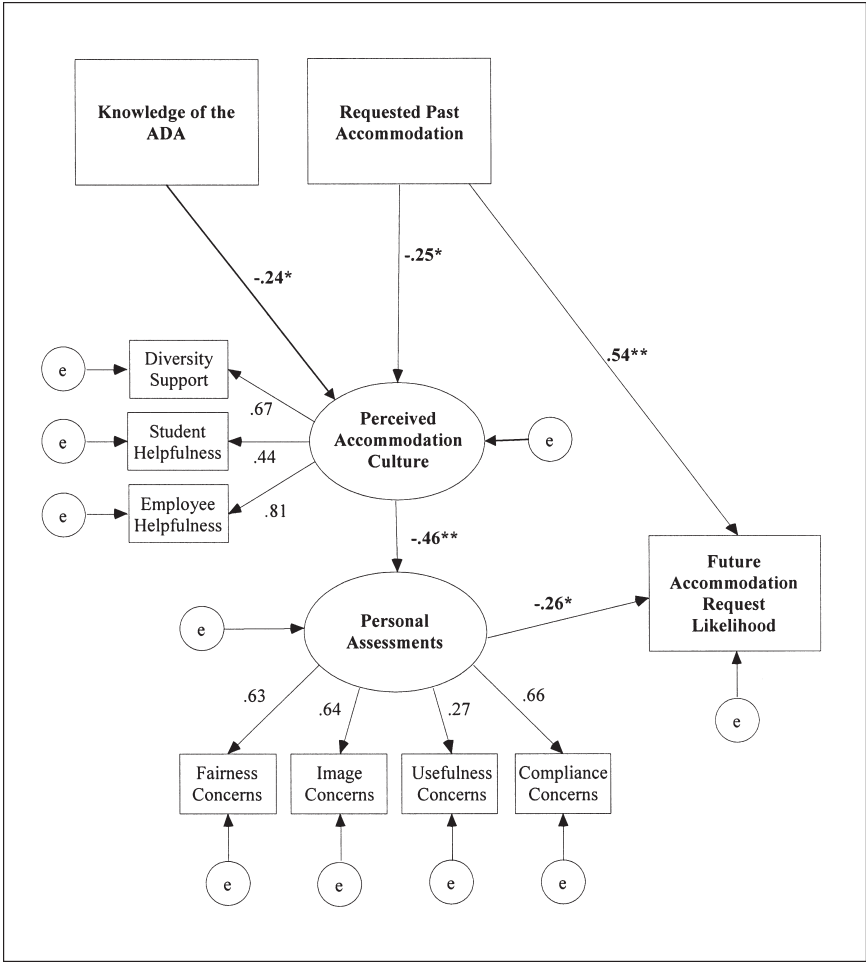


Figure 1. Full mediation model showing the relationship between perceptions of accommodation culture and future accommodation request likelihood, mediated by personal assessments. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$.

As the figure shows, perceived accommodation culture was negatively related to personal assessments, indicating that the more helpful and supportive the university culture was perceived to be, the less concerned individuals were about requesting accommodations. Personal assessments, in turn, were negatively related to future accommodation request likelihood, as expected. The more concerned individuals were about requesting accommodations, the less likely they were to consider requesting an accommodation in the future. Also, as there was no direct path between perceived accommodation culture and future accommodation request likelihood, full mediation was obtained. Together these results provide support for Hypothesis 1.

Further, requested past accommodation was found to be related to perceived accommodation culture and future accommodation request likelihood. Specifically, individuals who had requested an accommodation in the past *were less likely* to view the university culture in a favorable light, a finding that supports Hypothesis 3. This suggests that individuals who have requested accommodations in the past may have encountered a lack of support from the university with regard to their accommodation request. However, the positive relationship between requested past accommodation and future accommodation request likelihood indicates that individuals who have made requests in the past are more likely to make requests in the future, regardless of their perceptions of the university culture or their concerns, a finding that supports Hypothesis 2. Thus, it appears that some individuals are more likely to request accommodations, regardless of the situation.

Finally, knowledge of the ADA was not significantly directly related to future request likelihood, a finding that, again, failed to support Hypothesis 4. However, it was negatively related to perceptions of organizational culture, a finding that indicated that individuals who have more knowledge of their rights under the ADA appear less likely to find that the university has fulfilled their expectations under the ADA.

DISCUSSION

Although the ADA was intended to protect the rights of PWDs in various domains, there has been concern that the ADA has not improved their lives as much as anticipated. Although discrimination against PWDs may certainly be part of the problem (Stone & Colella, 1996), the limited effectiveness of the ADA may also possibly be due to a reluctance on the part of PWDs to request needed accommodations (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). As the ADA is written in such a manner as to place the burden of requesting an accommodation on the PWDs, individuals' reluctance to request accommodations represents a serious problem for them, as well as for managers trying to improve the performance of their workforce. If PWDs fail to disclose their disabilities and request

accommodations from their employers, then they are unlikely to receive the help they need to be more productive and successful employees.

Baldrige and Veiga (2001) proposed a framework for understanding the reasons why PWDs might refrain from requesting accommodations. The current study involved an initial investigation of several of the propositions presented in Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) framework. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the SEM results clearly showed that the organization's culture has a strong relationship with personal assessments, such that the more the university was viewed as helpful and supportive of diversity, the fewer concerns PWDs had about requesting accommodations. The university's helpfulness and supportiveness of diversity were most strongly and significantly related to concerns about compliance (indicated by the zero-order correlations in Table 1), as might be expected. As the organization is the final determinant of whether an accommodation is provided, a supportive culture should engender fewer concerns about compliance.

The relationships between the personal assessments and the likelihood of asking for help in the future also provided support for Hypothesis 1. The SEM results clearly indicate that personal assessments relate to future accommodation request likelihood. In particular, individuals who had more concerns about fairness, image cost, and usefulness were less likely to state that they would request help in the future. However, anticipated compliance concerns did not correlate significantly with the likelihood of requesting future help. It is possible that compliance concerns do not influence the likelihood of asking, but would instead influence a subsequent evaluation of the accommodation request experience. This speculation is supported by the significant positive correlation between anticipated compliance concerns and requests for accommodations in the past; someone who has requested an accommodation in the past may have encountered resistance from the organization and as a consequence may have more concerns about compliance than someone who has not made such a request.

Importantly, the SEM results also found the strongest relationship between requesting accommodations in the past and the likelihood of requesting accommodations in the future: individuals who had requested accommodations in the past stated that they were more likely to request accommodations in the future, a finding that supports Hypothesis 2. This finding occurred even though requests for accommodations in the past can lead individuals to have more negative perceptions of the university culture. Thus, individuals who have requested accommodations in the past may have legitimate concerns about compliance and hold a different view of the accommodation culture than those who have not made such requests. Such a possibility should be investigated further in future research. Nonetheless, individuals who have requested accommodations before are still more likely to do so in the future, despite often having had negative experiences in the past. This suggests that there may be other characteristics that affect the likelihood of requesting accommodations. For example, self-confidence might prove to be an important predictor, insofar as individuals who are more

confident in their abilities may be more willing to ask organizational representatives for needed accommodations, as rejection of the request might not present a threat to their self-esteem. Enhancing such characteristics in PWDs through training or personalized development activities may help to improve the employment situations of individuals with disabilities. For example, Rumrill (1999) describes a social competence training program that led to larger numbers of accommodation requests. Future research should certainly explore whether such characteristics might be useful predictors of accommodation request likelihood, and whether such characteristics can be enhanced in PWDs through training.

Although knowledge of the ADA was not related to either past or future accommodation requests, it did have significant negative relationships with perceptions of university culture and personal assessments. Individuals who had more knowledge of the ADA had worse perceptions of university helpfulness and supportiveness of diversity, suggesting that their greater knowledge of the obligations of organizations with respect to PWDs may have led them to have higher expectations, which in turn led to greater disappointment at the lack of helpfulness and supportiveness they found.

In sum, the results obtained here provide initial support for Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) model of why PWDs fail to request accommodations. Because it is incumbent upon PWDs to request accommodations, individuals must feel that it is worthwhile for them to request an accommodation (which often involves disclosure of the disability). Taken together, our results suggest that getting PWDs to make an initial accommodation request is the first step; after making an initial request, they will be more likely to make future accommodation requests. And although individual differences are likely to be involved in the decision whether or not to request an accommodation, in order to encourage accommodation requests, individuals must believe that the organization's culture is welcoming to such requests: this, in turn, affects whether individuals believe that requesting an accommodation will be fair to others, will be useful to themselves, will be complied with, and will not involve substantial image cost.

We must acknowledge that it is possible that our results may not generalize to other settings, given that the study sampled college students and that the issues faced by students at this particular university may differ from the issues faced at other universities as well as in the work setting. Thus, it is possible that the unique characteristics of the university or organization (as with any study) may affect the results. However, we have heard anecdotes from students at other universities showing that they also faced opposition from faculty when requesting accommodations. We realize that these anecdotes do not provide a definitive answer to the question of how common it is for colleges to fail to address the needs of students with disabilities. Nonetheless, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education (2008: 3) has indicated that disability discrimination remains a major problem:

Inaccessible schools, postsecondary institutions and programs still exist, and disability discrimination still continues. At OCR, each year complaints of disability discrimination comprise the largest percentage of civil rights complaints filed with our office—to date in fiscal year 2008 (from October 1, 2007 to present) we have received more than 2800 complaints alleging disability discrimination, approximately 50 percent of all complaints filed with OCR.

We should also note that the scales used in the study (including the scales regarding concerns) were developed based on in-depth interviews with disabled students at a *different* university than the one used in our study. Thus, we have provided some evidence that disabled students at different universities have some of the same concerns when asking for accommodations. Also, our results were generally consistent with the propositions in Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) framework, and we believe the results obtained in this study have practical implications both for college as well as employment settings. It is possible that the recommendations based on our findings may be more useful in university settings than in the workplace, but because many college students will eventually become employees, we believe that the concerns of college students with disabilities will be relevant as they enter the workforce.

Practical Implications

The first implication of this research is the need to educate individuals, both with and without disabilities, on the ADA. The participants in our study on average knew only a little about the ADA, and there was no significant difference in knowledge between those individuals who had requested accommodations and those who had not, or between those individuals who had a disability and those who did not. This finding is consistent with other research indicating a lack of knowledge about the ADA among PWDs (Madaus, 2008; Madaus, Gerber, & Price, 2008). If PWDs obtained greater knowledge of their rights under the ADA, this could increase the numbers of accommodation requests. For example, Conyers and Boomer (2005) found that professional and managerial employees were more knowledgeable about their rights to accommodation and were also more likely to disclose their disability status to employers. Thus, educating students, who will someday be employees, on their ADA rights may be a first step in increasing the accommodation requests of PWDs.

The results of the current study also suggest that PWDs may want to proactively educate employers about the ADA, given that having a more receptive occupational group can reduce perceptions of barriers to employment for PWDs (Feldman, 2004). A great deal of research has already provided suggestions on how employers can improve receptivity to PWDs (e.g., Colella, Paetzold, & Belliveau, 2004; Feldman, 2004; Moore, Moore, & Moore, 2007), but, as noted earlier, it is still the responsibility of the PWD to inform the employer of a need for

accommodation (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). Thus, PWDs may need to take the initiative in terms of educating employers about the ADA, including suggesting accommodations and explaining how accommodating PWDs can benefit the organization (see Coble-Temple et al., 2003; Gerber & Price, 2003). This may be particularly important, given that organizations have struggled to learn how to establish inclusive workplaces for PWDs (Wooten & James, 2005) and that employers' confusion about the requirements of the ADA and reluctance to provide accommodations remain prevalent (Gerber & Price, 2003; Moore et al., 2007).

One approach involves providing employers with information about the cost-effectiveness of accommodations, in order to reduce the perceptions of accommodations as costly. For example, many accommodations are relatively easy and inexpensive (e.g., a majority cost less than \$500 [Job Accommodation Network, 2009]). In addition, PWDs could increase compliance by advocating for their rights in ways that appeal to employers. PWDs might emphasize that disabled employees are typically dependable and hard working when given the necessary accommodations (Cascio, 2006), and thus employers may obtain substantial benefits, such as reduced turnover, from hiring them. PWDs might also point out to employers that providing accommodations such as wheelchair ramps, sign-language training, or large-print materials could benefit customers as well. Employers who see that compliance with the ADA could help them to open a new market or expand their existing customer base are more receptive to accommodations (Moore et al., 2007). PWDs might suggest that compliance with the ADA is a sound business decision for other reasons as well (e.g., tax credits, lower turnover). Certainly the attempt to educate employers carries risks for PWDs, in terms of image cost and possible retaliation by employers, but we believe that providing information on the return-on-investment from providing accommodations can increase employer receptivity.

Fairness concerns could also be addressed by showing supervisors and coworkers that accommodations are intended to "level the playing field." Such initiatives might involve illustrating how accommodations have helped PWDs perform their jobs more effectively. Also, providing coworkers and supervisors with information about the history of the ADA as a civil rights initiative could increase the perception of accommodations as fair and as a social obligation (Stone & Colella, 1996). PWDs could also advocate in conjunction with other affected groups in their workplaces for certain initiatives (e.g., greater flexibility in scheduling) that would be advantageous to multiple constituencies (e.g., disabled employees, employees with young children, employees caring for ailing relatives). These suggestions are consistent with Colella et al.'s (2004) propositions that coworkers would be more favorable to accommodations if they were concerned about social justice and had contact with PWDs.

To reduce concerns about the usefulness of accommodations, PWDs may consider the reasons why past accommodations were effective or not

(Madaus et al., 2008). An analysis of circumstances in which certain accommodations are more effective or less so could help ensure that individuals have the knowledge to work with organizations to identify the most useful accommodations. Further, PWDs and the disability community in general could identify organizational best practices and advocate for their use (Smits, 2004). Such practices could focus on how employers can provide services for PWDs, as well as on what types of accommodations are most helpful in addressing particular kinds of disabilities. Although each case should be considered on an individual basis, some guidance in terms of best practices could aid employer decision making on accommodations.

Alleviation of concerns about image is likely to be one of the most difficult issues for employees. In the current study, individuals who had lower emotional stability scores had higher levels of concern about their image. Madaus et al. (2008) suggest that it is very important for PWDs to learn self-determination skills. Self-determination includes self-awareness as well as skills in decision making, self-advocacy, independent performance, and self-adjustment (Field & Hoffman, 1994; Valenzuela & Martin, 2005). The development of such skills would likely enhance self-image and perhaps increase the level of self-efficacy and emotional stability. Feldman (2004) also suggests developing "impression management" skills and learning how to address issues related to one's disability with supervisors in a constructive manner.

Perhaps most important for increasing the number of future accommodation requests is getting PWDs to begin making these requests. In the relatively "forgiving" setting of college, students can become accustomed to requesting accommodations, perhaps with individualized training provided by the college administration or disability advocacy groups. Thus, when students enter the workforce, they will have experience making requests in ways that protect their image and are likely to lead to compliance, which should reduce concerns about requesting accommodations.

The current study has provided a test of portions of Baldrige and Veiga's (2001) accommodation request likelihood framework. The study has provided initial support for aspects of the framework, and future investigations, particularly with organizational samples, may identify further relationships that allow us to understand and explain why PWDs might be reluctant to request needed accommodations. An understanding of the factors that affect accommodation requests can help both organizations and disability advocates identify strategies for increasing employees' likelihood of making such requests, which will help PWDs participate more fully and successfully in the workforce. Importantly, this article has also addressed Feldman's (2004: 266) call for the collection of "more data directly from those with disabilities." As we continue to investigate the failure of the ADA to assist those it was intended to protect, we may have the opportunity to produce individual, organizational, and societal initiatives that will improve the quality of the work life and the status of PWDs in our society.

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