

# Mixed Methods Systematic Review of the ADA

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DISABILITY AND  
HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT  
COLLEGE OF  
APPLIED HEALTH  
SCIENCES

ADA 25 1990-2015  
AMERICANS WITH  
DISABILITIES ACT

**"INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT  
TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE."**

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*



# Overview and purpose

- Five year project funded as part of ADA-KT Center at the University of Washington
- Response to NIDILRR call: *“increase the use of available ADA-related research findings to inform behavior, practices, or policies that improve equal access in society for individuals with disabilities.”*
- Goal: Create a descriptive knowledge base of the current state of evidence informed by ADA stakeholder needs and research trends

# Methods

## Three Stages of Review

1. *Scoping Review*: how the ADA has been studied to map the literature landscape (Years 1-2).
2. *Rapid Evidence Review*: refine priorities and analyze selected topics for preliminary assessment of the research (Years 2-3).
3. *Systematic Reviews*: synthesize research and answer key questions based on stakeholder feedback (Years 3-5).

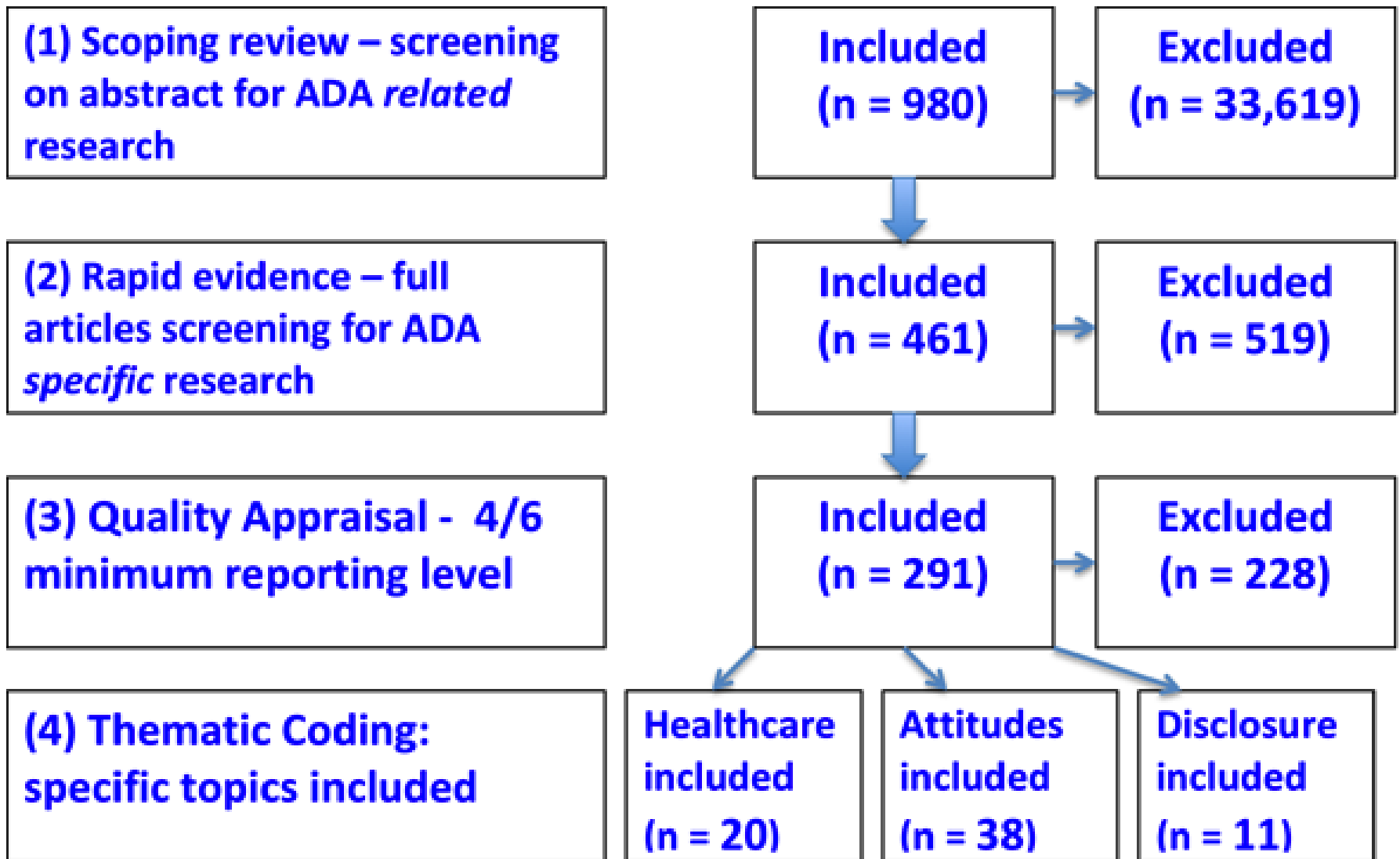
## Methodology

- Refine novel synthesis process to capture diversity, complexity and heterogeneity of ADA materials.
- Descriptive mapping and thematic synthesis using mixed methods meta-ethnography.

# Research questions

- Stage 1: Scoping review
  - *What English-language studies have been conducted and/or published from 1990 onwards that study the Americans with Disabilities Act?*
- Stage 2 : Rapid evidence reviews
  - *What evidence exists that the ADA has influenced knowledge, attitudes and perceptions about the employment of people with disabilities?*
- Stage 3: Systematic reviews
  - *What is the current state of knowledge about the ADA's influence on disclosure, health, and attitudinal change?*

# Decision Tree



# State of the evidence

## Sources

- Majority (67%) academic journals; remainder from conference proceedings, books, dissertations, reports.

## Topics

- Most common topics: employment (48%) and education (16%)
- Least common topics: emergency preparedness and voting
- Common Issues across research: attitudes, knowledge, implementation barriers, compliance rates, costs.

## Subgroups

- Very little research across different stakeholder groups
- Majority of research is either on people with disabilities or businesses representatives (e.g. 'employers').

## Methods

- About half of evidence base is quantitative.



# ***What do we know: Common themes across reviews***

- **Spirit versus letter** of the law: overstated and contradictory reports of compliance.
- Research and implementation gaps related to: program access, accommodation process, and more complex applications of the ADA.





# ***What do we know: Common themes across reviews (cont.)***

- Organizational culture:
  - Balancing perceptions of fairness vs. special treatment
  - Evidence of positive changes through “natural” supports and exposure



“If we believed that ADA is the power and we are the recipients of its strength, rather than we are the power and ADA is a tool for us to use, I fear we may still have a long way to go.” – Bob Kafka

# ***What do we know: Common themes across reviews (cont.)***

- **Attitudes**
    - Stigma and blame related to disability
    - Disability attitudes, ADA acceptance, contact theory
  - **Healthcare**
    - Evidence limited to physical access
    - Missing: experience from people with disabilities
  - **Employment**
    - Primary topics: employment rate, accommodation barriers, employer knowledge, attitudes
- Translation gap: knowledge, hiring decisions

# What don't we know

- Limited knowledge of ADA success stories, stigma, and implementation process.
- Experiential data: infrequent reporting from key disability stakeholders.
- Knowledge Translation Process: how are people using the ADA?

# Challenges, limitations, and lessons learned

- Too soon to see substantive evidence post ADA Amendments.
- “Partial picture” from included research: perception bias and ADA information.
- Heterogeneity: epistemologically challenging but an essential part of understanding discordant evidence.

# Next steps

To finalize project

- Complete remaining systematic reviews
- Dissemination and translation of results

Ongoing

- Expand, collate, consolidate evidence to inform KT
- Comparison and replication following ADAA
- Increase understanding of implementation process (e.g. how is knowledge of the ADA used?)