

**TITLE:** Interactions of College Students with individuals with disability

**AUTHOR(S):** Joseline S. Raja, Winston Kennedy, Nidhi S. Pai, Rachel A. Cohen, Samantha H. Ligman, Marie Wilkey, Kathleen R. Bogart, Samuel W. Logan

**PRESENTER(S):** Joseline Raja

**STUDENT SUBMISSION:** Yes

**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** Disability Interactions. This presentation will cater to the interest of researchers, students, faculty, staff, educators, policy makers and everyone who interacts with a person with disability.

**ABSTRACT:** The passing of laws such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, raised awareness of the rights of individuals with disabilities to gain access to equal opportunities in education and employment. This led to an improvement in the enrollment of students with disabilities in institutions of higher education. However, individuals with disabilities still face barriers in their college experience that results in greater degree-completion time. One barrier in the social environment of undergraduate students with disabilities may be how students without disabilities interact with them on campus and in the community. The purpose of this study was to evaluate how students (n = 612) describe their latest interaction with a person with a disability (PWD) via a qualitative content analysis of a single-item, open-ended survey. Major themes identified included the overall affect of the interaction, perspective of the interaction - self or PWD, identifying difficulties in the life of a PWD, and norm-comparison of the abilities of the PWD. Informed by the social ecological model, a feasible approach to enhancing the college experience for students with disabilities should encompass initiatives on the individual, interpersonal, community, organizational and policy levels.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** Evaluate interactions of college students with people with disabilities

Identify strategies to enhance college experience for students with disabilities

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