

A STUDY OF INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY: USING STORYTELLING TO
INCREASE AWARENESS OF LESBIAN AND GAY OLDER ADULTS IN LONG-TERM
CARE SETTINGS

Michael D Pelts

Dr. Colleen Galambos, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Among the growing aging population are a large number of people who identify as lesbian or gay (LG). Due to societal imposed discrimination and stigmatization, LG older adults fear and prolong accessing long-term care. Less likely to be partnered, married or to have children and disparities in health that may result in increased health needs suggest older LG adults may be vulnerable and at high risk for neglect and being underserved. Even though in greater need, LG older adults avoid long-term care (LTC) services in fear of stigmatization and discrimination. The development of interventions that increase awareness of LG older adults among LTC staff is a first step in addressing this problem.

Guided by intergroup contact theory, this mixed-method study explored the influence of storytelling on LTC staff attitudes towards older LG adults. Results show that storytelling had a significant and positive impact on LTC staff attitudes toward LG. The differences between male and female participant's attitudes' toward LG were not statistically significant. Religiosity was not a scientifically statistically significant predictor of negative attitudes toward LG but had clinical significance. Implications for social work are identified.