



## Shaping Attitudes: The Association Between Prior Contact and Resistance to Enter Residential Aged Care

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### Introduction

Attitudes comprise a pattern of evaluative responses toward a person or thing expressed in manner and disposition according to cognitive and affective processes<sup>1</sup>. In his work on racism, Gordon Allport (1954), proposed that positive intergroup contact should improve intergroup attitudes, which should have positive downstream consequences<sup>2</sup>. This simple proposition is referred to as the contact hypothesis. In this work, the contact hypothesis is applied to understanding attitudes towards residential aged care. We propose and test the proposition that the more positive (and less negative) contact people have with those in residential aged care, the more positive their attitudes towards aged care should be.

### HYPOTHESES

1. That people who experience more frequent positive (and less negative) contact with those who live or work in residential aged care (RAC) should:
  1. Trust RAC organisations more
  2. Perceive greater freedom and autonomy available to RAC residents
  3. Be more positive towards RAC workers
2. The converse should be true for those who have more frequent negative interactions

### Results

USA reported higher negativity towards RAC relative to AUS participants. In line with hypotheses, those who reported frequent bad or negative interactions with RAC workers and residents reported more negativity towards RAC generally. They were also more likely to say that they would rather die personally than enter RAC. The reverse was true for positive contact, which was associated with more positive attitudes.

### METHOD

#### Participants

315 participants (167 USA & 148 Australian). Aged 19 – 80 years ( $m = 34.5$ ). Of which 179 were male & 136 were female.

#### Measures & Procedure

#### SCALES

- Positive & Negative Contact
- RAC Trust
- Independence in RAC
- Perceptions of RAC Workers

### Conclusion

**POSITIVE CONTACT** tempers negative EMOTIONAL REACTIONS to RAC whereas **NEGATIVE CONTACT** arouses unfavourable EMOTIONAL REACTIONS. Contact helps explain how people develop a set of beliefs about RAC and what might happen to them in RAC.