

## Don't judge a living book by its cover: effectiveness of the living library intervention in reducing prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people

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### Abstract

In Hungary, prejudices toward Roma and the LGBT community are highly salient and explicit in public opinion, the media, and in the political discourse. The present study examined the effectiveness of the Living Library prejudice reduction intervention—in which participants as “Readers” have engaging contact with living “Books” who are trained volunteers from the Roma and LGBT communities. In a pre-post intervention study with high school students ( $N = 105$ ), results suggest that the Living Library intervention reduced participants' scores on multiple measures of prejudice. The Living Library intervention appeared to be effective among both those participants whose friends endorsed prejudice or more tolerant attitudes toward Roma and LGBT people. In sum, Living Library appears to be a useful method for reducing prejudice in contexts which are characterized by strong negative attitudes toward these different groups.

### Introduction

Prejudices toward Roma and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are highly salient in Hungary. According to a nationally representative study, 60% of Hungarians believe that “The inclination toward criminality is in the blood of gypsies” and 42% agreed that “It is only right that there are still bars, clubs, and discos where gypsies are not let in” (Bernát, Juhász, Krekó, & Molnár, 2013). Similarly, national surveys of Hungarians indicate that only 45% agree that “gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish” (Lipka, 2013) and one fifth of Hungarians believe that “homosexuality is a sin against God or society” (Takács, 2011).

Anti-Roma and anti-gay prejudice are further reinforced through prevailing norms expressed through social and political discourse (Bernáth & Messing, 2013). For example, a well-known journalist and co-founder of the ruling right wing party (Fidesz) has stated that “A significant portion of the Gypsies are unfit for co-existence, not fit to live among human beings... these people are animals and behave like animals...” (European Commission against Racism and

Intolerance, 2015). As reported in a respected Hungarian political journal, another right wing politician indicated that he would punish homosexual people with “several years of imprisonment, fines or seclusion” (hvg.hu, 2012).

A number of methods have been proposed to reduce prejudice, including several based in learning about others through intergroup contact, exposure to media (e.g., stories, books, radio), and reflections on peer influence (Paluck & Green, 2009). Many efforts have been made to reduce prejudice against Roma and LGBT people in Hungary, among them the Living Library program; this program is supported by the European Youth Centre Budapest under the umbrella of the Council of Europe. The goal of the Living Library is to challenge prejudice by facilitating a conversation (“Reading”) between volunteers and participants who are assigned different roles: as “Books” or as “Readers”, respectively. The Living “Books” are volunteers who have suffered from discrimination, stigma or prejudice due to their group membership, and who are willing to share personal experiences of social exclusion with “Readers”. In the Living Library program, “Books” give “Readers” permission to ask questions and

enter into dialogue with them, which can enhance learning and challenge commonly held perceptions of and attitudes toward targeted groups. In the present study, we sought to assess the effectiveness of the Living Library approach, as it provides opportunities for people to have close contact with Roma and LGBT people and to learn from the personal stories they share.

Decades of theory and research support the notion that contact between members of different groups can be a useful strategy for reducing intergroup prejudice (Allport, 1954; Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). A recent meta-analysis also shows that contact-based interventions are generally effective in reducing prejudice and tensions between societal groups; contact-based interventions lead not only to more positive attitudes toward the individual outgroup members with whom one had contact, but they generalize to more positive attitudes toward the outgroup as a whole (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). Contact is especially likely to reduce prejudice when the different groups interact cooperatively with support of institutional norms and authorities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), such that people are able to build affective ties across group lines as they learn more about each other (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

Living Library accomplishes these goals by providing opportunities for “Readers” to interact cooperatively with “Books” through a program structured to support their interaction, during which “Readers” can learn about and connect with “Books” who share their personal experiences. Thus, based in models that employ intergroup contact as an effective tool for prejudice reduction (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), the Living Library intervention was designed to facilitate interaction between “Readers” and “Books” in ways that make conversation meaningful and engaging between groups (Little, Nemutlu, Magic, & Molnár, 2011).

At the same time, the Living Library intervention is distinct from other kinds of contact situations in which members of different groups are merely brought together to interact with each other. First, “Books” are trained volunteers who have amassed a great deal of prior contact experience and are prepared to respond to questions that may be regarded as potentially aggressive or highly sensitive. Second, “Readers” are asked to prepare for these contact situations by reflecting on what they wish to learn and developing sets of questions to be presented to the “Books” during their interaction; these questions are collected in advance and asked of the “Books” without attribution to specific “Readers” to facilitate meaningful conversation while easing anxiety among “Reader” participants. Third, as representatives of their groups, “Books” can share their personal stories and experiences with “Readers” in ways that both enhance intimacy and maintain the salience of group boundaries (Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

Due to this structured contact between “Readers” and “Books,” we anticipate that Living Library can be an effective way to reduce “Reader” prejudices toward Roma and LGBT people. Although the framework of Living Library has been used with thousands of individuals in more than 60 countries (Little et al., 2011), no prior quantitative study has examined the effectiveness of the Living Library prejudice reduction interventions. Therefore, a primary goal of the present research was to test the effectiveness of the Living Library approach as a strategy to reduce prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people. Compared to scores before the intervention, we expected that participants who interacted with a Roma “Book” would report lower levels of prejudice toward Roma people more generally following the interaction; similarly, we expected that participants who interacted with an LGBT “Book” would report lower levels of prejudice toward LGBT people more generally following the interaction.

Additionally, to our knowledge, there have been no prior quantitative studies in Hungary that test the effectiveness of prejudice reduction interventions toward such explicitly stigmatized groups as Roma and LGBT people. Thus, beyond testing its general effectiveness, we also examined the effectiveness of the Living Library intervention in relation to the degree to which participants perceived higher or lower levels of anti-Roma and anti-LGBT prejudice in their social environments. Specifically, we examine the effectiveness of the Living Library program among participants whose friends are perceived to endorse more prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people (more prejudicial peers) versus those participants who see their friends as more tolerant toward these groups (less prejudicial peers). Social relationships are important in the formation of attitudes, as ingroup peers can have a significant influence on the attitudes of fellow ingroup members (Smith & Louis, 2008). Particularly among adolescents, peer influences are highly important in relation to prejudice (e.g., Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Poteat, 2007; Váradi, 2014), yet little is known regarding the extent to which peer prejudices might undermine the effectiveness of prejudice reduction interventions. This study addresses this issue by examining whether perceiving prejudiced attitudes among one’s peers inhibits the effectiveness of the Living Library program. In sum, with a sample of Hungarian adolescents, the present research assesses the effectiveness of the Living Library intervention and tests whether and how perceived peer prejudices moderate its effectiveness in reducing prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people.

## Method

### Participants and procedure

A total of 105 Hungarian public high school students (46 female, 43.8%) participated in this study in spring 2013.

These students were recruited from seven high schools and were between the ages of 14 and 20 ( $M_{\text{age}} = 16.87$ ;  $SD_{\text{age}} = .92$ ). To ensure the ethical treatment of human participants, this study was carried out with the approval of the local university's ethical board. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and the consent of both students and parents were obtained in advance of participation. None of the participants had heard about the Living Library program before participation in the study. Of the 115 students who were approached about participating in the study, 111 chose to participate and among them 105 completed both the pre- and post-test measures.

Three to five days before any contact experiences, the student participants completed measures of prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people; then, following the guidelines of the Living Library program, students participated in a conversation with the intervention leader to clarify terminology associated with prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, and to review some case examples, after which they began to choose topics and draft questions in preparation for contact sessions with "Books" during the following week.

Students were informed that they could select a stigmatized community on which to focus for their contact sessions, and then small groups of 2–3 students were matched with a "Book" from that community for a 20-minute conversation. The first two sets of "Books" included representatives from our primary target groups (Roma and LGBT); a third set of "Books" included representatives from a comparison "control" group (Homeless). Altogether, 30 students selected only one "Book," 46 students selected two "Books," and 29 students selected all three "Books." Of these students, 42 had contact with both Roma and LGBT "Books." The "Books" were adults aged between 30 and 55 years old who had received training and who had experience with student "Readers" through the Living Library program for at least one year.

Students could ask "Books" whatever questions they wished, and through responding to questions, the "Books" were able to share their stories and experiences of prejudice, discrimination, and social exclusion. Immediately after the conversation, participants again filled out the prejudice measures in relation to Roma and LGBT people. On the pre- and post-intervention surveys, participants were also asked to provide a unique code word to identify their responses, so that scores on the pre- and post-contact surveys could be compared while maintaining anonymity of the respondents.

## Measures

Measures of social distance and modern racism were translated into Hungarian from the original scales (Beaton et al., 2000), modified to be used in relation to Roma and LGBT people, and these were presented to participants in a

randomized order. In addition, a measure of perceived peer norms concerning prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people was also included in the surveys distributed to participants.

### Social distance

We adapted a shortened, four-item scale (Bogardus, 1933; Norman, Sorrentino, Windell, & Manchanda, 2008) to assess the degree to which respondents would be willing to accept and engage in contact with a member of each outgroup (e.g., Roma, LGBT) across several domains, including as a desk mate at school, as a friend, as a neighbor, and as a relative. This scale had good internal consistencies concerning both Roma ( $\alpha_{\text{pre}} = .84$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{post}} = .93$ ) and LGBT ( $\alpha_{\text{pre}} = .90$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{post}} = .94$ ) groups. Higher scores on this scale indicate larger social distance between the individual and the members of the outgroup.

### Modern racism

We used an adapted, six-item version of the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986) to assess prejudiced attitudes toward Roma and LGBT people (e.g., "Over the past few years, [Gypsies/Homosexuals] have gotten more economically than they deserve"). Respondents indicated their level of agreement using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), with higher scores indicating higher levels of prejudice. This scale had good internal consistencies concerning both Roma ( $\alpha_{\text{pre}} = .77$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{post}} = .81$ ) and LGBT ( $\alpha_{\text{pre}} = .79$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{post}} = .85$ ) groups.

### Perceived peer prejudice

In addition, we adapted the same sets of four items used to estimate participants' social distance scores, in order to ask participants about the extent to which they perceived that their friends would be willing to accept and engage in contact with Roma and LGBT people across domains (as a desk mate at school, as a friend, as a neighbor, and as a relative). Responses to these items ranged from 1 (They certainly would not) to 5 (They certainly would), such that higher scores corresponded with lower perceptions of prejudiced norms among their friends. This scale had good internal consistencies concerning both Roma ( $\alpha_{\text{pre}} = .92$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{post}} = .96$ ) and LGBT ( $\alpha_{\text{pre}} = .95$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{post}} = .97$ ) groups.

## Results

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 22. Means and standard deviations for the prejudice measures among participants who did or did not have contact with Roma and LGBT "Books" are provided in Table 1. To test our hypothesis that the Living Library intervention would change

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistencies of Measures in Relation to Each Target Group

Scale	Type of contact group	Existence of contact	Mean		SD		Observed range		Cronbach's alpha	
			Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Social distance	LGBT	No contact ( <i>N</i> = 36)	9.58	12.08	3.93	4.54	4–20	4–20	.90	.94
		Contact ( <i>N</i> = 69)	9.16	8.25	4.44	4.30				
	Roma	No contact ( <i>N</i> = 47)	10.45	12.06	3.88	3.93	4–20	4–20	.84	.93
		Contact ( <i>N</i> = 58)	10.26	9.47	4.10	4.30				
Modern racism	LGBT	No contact ( <i>N</i> = 36)	18.25	19.58	3.94	3.85	8–30	10–30	.79	.85
		Contact ( <i>N</i> = 69)	17.35	16.71	4.46	3.99				
	Roma	No contact ( <i>N</i> = 47)	20.81	20.83	4.26	4.50	6–30	6–30	.77	.81
		Contact ( <i>N</i> = 58)	21.31	18.72	4.41	3.79				

prejudiced attitudes, we performed 2 × 2 mixed model analyses of variance (ANOVA) with CONTACT (had contact or did not have contact with a member of the group) as a between-subjects factor, and TIME (pre-intervention and post-intervention) as a within-subjects factor.

First, we tested whether the Living Library intervention changed attitudes toward Roma people, by conducting pre-post comparisons on each prejudice measure (social distance, modern prejudice) among participants who did or did not have contact with Roma “Books.” Second, we tested whether the Living Library intervention changed attitudes toward LGBT people by conducting pre-post comparisons on each prejudice measure (social distance, modern prejudice) among participants who did or did not have contact with LGBT “Books.” Finally, we tested whether participants’ normative perceptions of anti-Roma or anti-LGBT prejudice among their friends moderated the effectiveness of the Living Library interventions.

**Effectiveness of living library Roma intervention**

The CONTACT × TIME ANOVA predicting social distance did not reveal significant main effects of TIME,  $F(1, 103) = 3.14, p = .079, \eta_p^2 = .03, \text{power} = .42$ ; or CONTACT,  $F(1, 103) = 3.32, p = .071, \eta_p^2 = .03, \text{power} = .44$ . However, the interaction of CONTACT × TIME was significant,  $F(1, 103) = 26.85, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .21, \text{power} = 1$ . Although social distance scores did not significantly differ between the Roma contact and no-Roma contact groups at baseline ( $p = .81$ ), social distance decreased significantly from pre-test to post-test among participants who had contact with a Roma “Book” as compared to those who did not have contact with a Roma “Book” (Figure 1a). Pairwise comparisons revealed that participants who had contact with a Roma “Book” reported significantly lower social distance over time ( $p < .021$ ), while those in the no-Roma contact group

showed significantly greater social distance over time ( $p < .001$ ).<sup>1</sup>

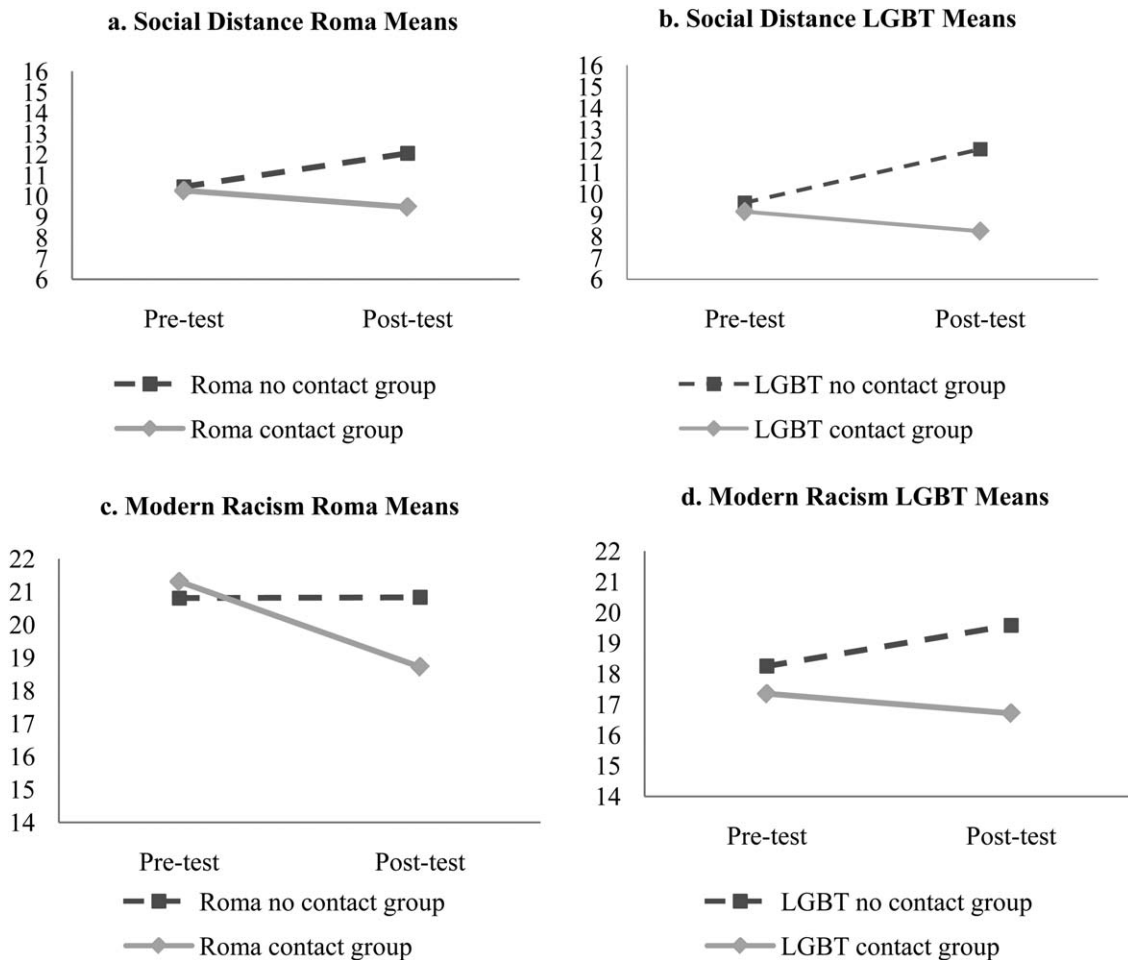
The CONTACT × TIME ANOVA predicting modern racism revealed a significant main effect of TIME,  $F(1, 103) = 11.77, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10, \text{power} = .93$ ; but not in the case of CONTACT,  $F(1, 103) = 1.17, p = .282, \eta_p^2 = .01, \text{power} = .18$ , and a significant CONTACT × TIME interaction,  $F(1, 103) = 12.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .11, \text{power} = .93$ . Although modern racism scores did not significantly differ between the Roma contact and no-Roma contact groups at baseline ( $p = .56$ ), modern racism decreased significantly from pre-test to post-test among participants who had contact with a Roma “Book” as compared to those who did not have contact with a Roma “Book” (Figure 1b). Pairwise comparisons revealed that participants who had contact with a Roma “Book” reported significantly lower modern racism over time ( $p < .001$ ), while those in the no-Roma contact group did not significantly in modern racism scores over time ( $p = .972$ ).<sup>2</sup>

**Effectiveness of living library LGBT intervention**

The CONTACT × TIME ANOVA predicting social distance revealed significant main effects of TIME,  $F(1, 103) = 12.12, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .11, \text{power} = .93$ , and CONTACT,  $F(1, 103) = 6.13, p = .015, \eta_p^2 = .06, \text{power} = .69$ . The interaction of CONTACT × TIME was also significant,  $F(1, 103) = 56.04, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .35, \text{power} = 1$ . Although social distance scores did not significantly differ between the LGBT contact and no-LGBT contact groups at baseline ( $p = .63$ ), social distance decreased significantly from pre-test to post-test

<sup>1</sup>The baseline social distance of the contact vs. no contact groups were not different ( $p = .811$ ), but the post test scores differed from each other ( $p = .002$ ) (Figure 1a)

<sup>2</sup>The baseline MRS scores of the contact vs. no contact groups were not different ( $p = .557$ ), but the post-test MRS scores were significantly different ( $p = .011$ ) (Figure 1b)



**Figure 1** Repeated measures ANOVA results predicting social distance and modern racism.

among participants who had contact with an LGBT “Book” as compared to those who did not have contact with an LGBT “Book” (Figure 1c). Pairwise comparisons revealed that participants who had contact with an LGBT “Book” reported significantly lower social distance over time ( $p < .002$ ), while those in the no-LGBT contact group showed significantly greater social distance over time ( $p < .001$ ).<sup>3</sup>

The CONTACT  $\times$  TIME ANOVA predicting modern racism revealed no significant main effect of TIME,  $F(1, 103) = 1.10$ ,  $p = .296$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ , power = .18; but there was a significant main effect in the case of CONTACT,  $F(1, 103) = 5.86$ ,  $p = .017$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ , power = .67. The interaction of CONTACT  $\times$  TIME was also significant,  $F(1, 103) = 8.86$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .08$ , power = .84. Although modern racism scores did not significantly differ between the LGBT contact and no-LGBT contact groups at baseline ( $p = .31$ ), modern

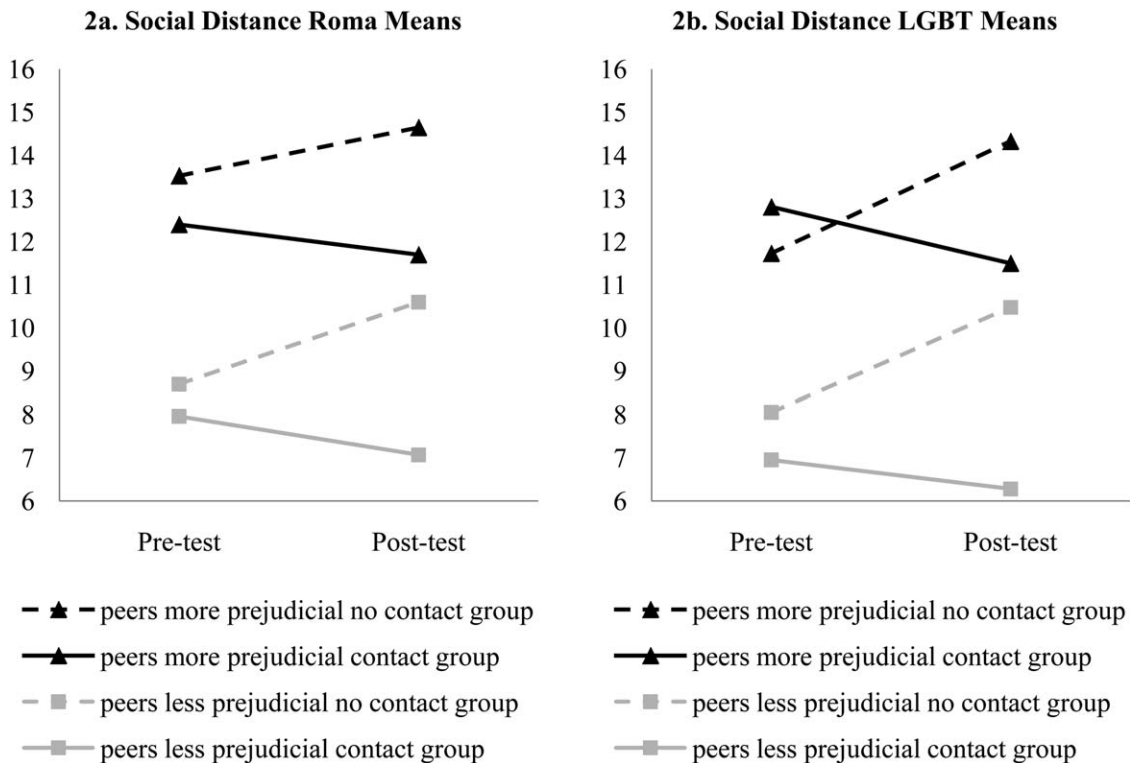
racism decreased significantly from pre-test to post-test among participants who had contact with an LGBT “Book” as compared to those who did not have contact with an LGBT “Book” (Figure 1d). Pairwise comparisons revealed that participants who had contact with an LGBT “Book” reported significantly lower modern racism over time ( $p < .05$ ), while those in the no-LGBT contact group tended to report greater modern racism over time ( $p = .06$ ),<sup>4</sup> however, this difference was not significant at the .05 level of significance.

### Perceived peer prejudice as a moderator of living library effects

Finally, we examined whether participants’ perceptions of prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people would moderate the effectiveness of the Living Library interventions.

<sup>3</sup>The baseline social distance scores of the contact vs. no contact groups were not different ( $p = .631$ ), but they were different in the post-test ( $p < .001$ ) (Figure 1c)

<sup>4</sup>Modern racism scores of the contact and no contact groups were not significantly different at pre-test ( $p = .309$ ), however, modern racism scores were significantly different between these groups at post-test ( $p = .001$ ) (see Figure 1d).



**Figure 2** Repeated measures ANOVA results of Living Library effects while testing perceived peer prejudice as a moderator.

**Perceived peer prejudice toward Roma**

Based on social distance scores measuring perceived peers' attitudes toward Roma ( $M = 12.47$ ;  $SD = 3.41$ ;  $\alpha = .82$ ), the sample was split into two groups (median split) to distinguish between participants who perceived lower prejudice toward Roma among their peers ( $M \leq 12$ ) and those who perceived higher prejudice toward Roma among their peers ( $M > 12$ ). We then conducted a 2 (CONTACT)  $\times$  2 (TIME)  $\times$  2 (PEER PREJUDICE: High/Low) ANOVA to predict participants' own social distance scores in relation to Roma people.

Beyond the effects for CONTACT and TIME reported above, this analysis revealed only a significant main effect for PEER PREJUDICE,  $F(1, 101) = 47.96$ ,  $p < .001$ , such that participants' Roma social distance scores were higher among those who perceived greater prejudice toward Roma among their peers (Figure 2a). PEER PREJUDICE did not significantly interact with either CONTACT,  $F(1, 101) = .01$ ,  $p = .94$ , or TIME,  $F(1, 101) = .38$ ,  $p = .55$ , and the three-way interaction between CONTACT, TIME, and PEER PREJUDICE was also not significant,  $F(1, 101) = 1.04$ ,  $p = .31$ . These results indicate that the Living Library Intervention can be similarly effective regardless of the extent to which participants perceived prejudice toward Roma among their peers.

**Perceived peer prejudice toward LGBT**

Using social distance scores measuring perceived peer attitudes toward LGBT people ( $M = 11.69$ ;  $SD = 3.69$ ;  $\alpha = .89$ ), the sample was once again split into two groups (median split) to distinguish between participants who perceived lower prejudice toward LGBT people among their peers ( $M \leq 12$ ) and those who perceived higher prejudice toward LGBT people among their peers ( $M > 12$ ). We then conducted a 2 (CONTACT)  $\times$  2 (TIME)  $\times$  2 (PEER PREJUDICE: High/Low) ANOVA to predict participants' own social distance scores in relation to LGBT people.

Beyond the effects of CONTACT and TIME reported above, this analysis revealed only a significant main effect for PEER PREJUDICE,  $F(1, 101) = 42.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , such that participants' LGBT social distance scores were higher among those who perceived greater prejudice toward LGBT people among their peers (Figure 2b). PEER PREJUDICE did not significantly interact with either CONTACT,  $F(1, 101) = 1.51$ ,  $p = .22$ , or TIME,  $F(1, 101) = .25$ ,  $p = .62$ , and the three-way interaction between CONTACT, TIME, and PEER PREJUDICE was also not significant,  $F(1, 101) = 0.74$ ,  $p = .39$ . These results indicate that the Living Library Intervention can be similarly effective regardless of the extent to which participants perceived prejudice toward LGBT people among their peers.

## Discussion

The goal of the present study was to measure the effectiveness of the Living Library reducing prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people in the Hungarian context, where these groups are subject to highly salient and explicit forms of prejudice and discrimination. The results suggest that prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people decreases significantly as a consequence of the intergroup contact participants experienced through the Living Library intervention. We consistently observed lower levels of prejudice on two separate prejudice measures (social distance, modern racism) and in relation to two distinct target groups. As such, it appears that Living Library is an effective method for reducing prejudice toward targeted groups such as the Roma and LGBT communities in Hungary.

Here, it is particularly important to highlight how the Hungarian societal context is quite distinct from contexts such as the United States that largely endorse norms of tolerance following extensive movements in support of civil rights (see Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978; Fiske, 2000; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). In Hungary, the media, politicians, and the general public explicitly express prejudice toward Roma people (Bernát et al., 2013; Bernáth & Messing, 2013) and LGBT people (Takács, 2011), and it is necessary to employ strategies and interventions that can counter this prevailing societal narrative. Results from this research suggest that the Living Library intervention can serve as a useful weapon in this fight. Moreover, the present findings indicate that it might be fruitful to examine the effectiveness of the Living Library approach with a broader array of groups both within and beyond the Hungarian context.

While the Living Library intervention produced lower prejudice scores at post-test for both prejudice measures, close inspection of the effect sizes reveals that the intervention had a somewhat stronger impact on social distance scores (reflecting a willingness to engage in close contact with the outgroup) than on modern racism scores (concerning societal beliefs about the outgroup). These patterns of results are consistent with the Living Library focus on sharing personal stories, which are likely to elicit greater feelings of intergroup closeness and intimacy; these results are also consistent with other work showing that contact typically yields stronger effects on more affectively-based dimensions of prejudice as compared to its effects on cognitively-based dimensions of prejudice (see Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Further studies might examine whether similar patterns of results might be observed with other prejudice measures, including implicit measures which have been associated with positive contact effects in prior research (e.g., Aberson, Shoemaker, & Tomolillo, 2004).

Importantly, we also observed that perceived prejudice of one's peers did not fundamentally alter the effectiveness of

the Living Library intervention. Although peers can play an important role in the development of prejudicial attitudes (Poteat, 2007; Smith & Louis, 2008; Váradi, 2014), and participants who perceived higher levels of peer prejudice showed higher mean prejudice scores themselves, peer prejudice had little influence on the effectiveness of Roma and LGBT prejudice reduction interventions. These results have important implications for fostering prejudice reduction in contexts where prejudices toward targeted groups are widespread and consensual. Further research is needed to test the effectiveness of the Living Library approach in relation to other broad-scale social influences, such as in relation to attitudes expressed through media and community leaders, alongside the potential influence of prejudice among one's peers.

While our findings offer clear support for contact-based interventions such as the Living Library program, we must acknowledge some limitations associated with the research.

Our study only assessed pre- and post-intervention responses from participants, as we were only able to include a comparison group in our research design rather than a true control group. We also did not randomly assign participants to different experimental conditions. We did not pursue random assignment in the present study because (a) we wished to replicate the procedures typically used in the Living Library program, in order to test its effectiveness; and (b) we wished to allow participants to have the opportunity to interact with "Books" from more than one outgroup in the event that they chose to do so. Even without random assignment, we observe no significant differences in prejudice scores toward Roma or LGBT people among those who did or did not choose to interact with "Books" from these groups, suggesting that the positive contact effects we observed cannot be attributed to initial differences in prejudice. Still, future studies should test the effects of the Living Library with random assignment of participants to different experimental conditions, to test whether assigning participants to interact with "Books" from different groups may yield even larger contact effects, as other experimental studies have shown (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Additionally, future studies should include more assessments of prejudice reduction following the contact intervention, to examine the potential long-term effects of the Living Library program. Nonetheless, despite these methodological limitations, the present research shows the Living Library program to be an effective contact-based intervention for combating prejudice against Roma and LGBT people in a societal context where prejudices against these groups is salient and explicit in the public discourse.

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