

NEW MEDIA, NEW IDOLS (?) TEENAGERS' ROLE MODELS IN EASTERN TRANSYLVANIA

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Abstract: Who could be a role model for the teenagers? Whose attitude, outer and inner values appear to the teenagers as an example to be followed? Has the media and media usage an impact on this? How can this be identified? We wanted to find out whether the pupils from our region have role models? If so, who their icons and role models are? Who are those persons, who have an exemplary behavior in their eyes? To whom they would like to compare themselves when they grow up? Have the age, the gender, and residence of the pupils any influence on the choice of the role model? Have a place among the teenagers' role models the professional sportsmen? Who are those sportsmen (and sports), for which the pupils are enthusiastic about? What kind of role do the football and football players? The paper aims to present the role model question among teenagers. The analysis is based on three important surveys conducted among teenagers from Romania (Covasna, Harghita and Mureş counties). The surveys took place in Spring 2012, 2014. More than two thousand of pupils in the 7th and 11th grades were involved each time. Can we conclude that the new media brought along the new idols? The media has definitely a strong impact on the young people's, children's lives, on their world-perception – can this be identified even here, regarding the role models? What kind of new possibility, new chance or new challenge have the parents, pedagogues, teachers, local communities?

Keywords: role model, media usage, media star, value, sport, football

1. About socialization and imitation

The issue of socialization is an important topic for several fields of science, such as pedagogy, psychology, sociology. Thanks to this in the last few decades several studies were written about the role of socialization, its duty, the actors and mechanisms that influence social development.

Thus it is already widely known that the nature of children's personality, their system of values, their moral ideas is influenced by three general socialization backgrounds. The first and most important is the family as a first social environment, the second is the schools, where the peer-group influence is dominating, and nowadays it has appeared next to these even the mass media as a socialization medium (László 1999, Berta 2009). The researches that have been carried out in this topic highlight the increased role of the media, which often de-emphasizes the role of family and school (Dubow et al. 2006: 405). This could mean that the social norms and rules, which are acquired through socialization, could or might be replaced or overwritten by the messages from the media.

According to scientific research, the observational learning, the model selection plays a very important role in the socialization process. Modelling means an accurate observation of others' behaviour and its be-likely imitation. By model-following, one can acquire new behaviour elements; may explore new combinations of personal behavioural repertoire and can recognize the consequences of others' action (Kósa 2005: 96). However, the observational learning is also a significant time-saving method: we do not always need personal empirical experimentation, it is enough if we learned a certain kind of knowledge from someone else. Even though we have never personally experienced a major part of what we know and of what we have learned, we still have the knowledge (Gerbner 2000, cit. Berta 2009). In a lot of cases the different kinds of stories that we heard, events that we saw, tales that we were told contribute to our gender-, peer-group, social, occupational and lifestyle roles. These stories, experiences shape and define our thinking, our actions and our way of life. But a growing media influence might also increase the probability of the non-physical „role model” choice, the subject of the imitation, the „idol” will not be chosen from the direct physical behavioural area, but from the virtual one. Models from the media could replace or take over the place and the role of persons from the physical, everyday life.

The thus acquired, with gender, age, social, occupational and lifestyle roles often heard, saw and told stories build up these stories, experiences shaped and defined our thinking, our actions and our way of life. However, if increasing the media's influence, then increasing to the probability that "the possible imitation", and the example choice and sample tracking is not direct physical environment in our living behaviour arises about, but the models obtained from the media, might replace or take over their places and role (Gergely 2014: 110, 2015: 66).

According to the literature, a person is considered as a role model for another person who would like to imitate that person, he or she would like to be similar to that person (Yancey 1998, cit. White Cross et. al., 2003). In terms of the cognitive psychology, having a role model is an important element of the socialization process. The social learning theory, also known as the social cognitive theory emphasises that the model giving or guiding has always been one of the most powerful means for transmitting values, for demonstrating and accentuating the expected attitudes, habits, thinking and behaviour (Bandura, 1986, cit. Crosswhite et. al., 2003). Several studies have shown that a role model, can motivate in positive way for example a teenager’s sporting habits and performance. They also found that the top athletes, those celebrities who appear frequently in the media can become role models. But not only the very those athletes can become role models, who have very good and high performance. The more common, “everyday people” also can become role models, especially if the pupils find commonalities, similarities to that person (Crosswhite et.al. 2003).

2. Methodology

In the spring of 2012 an important first survey research¹ took place among Hungarian pupils in the 7th and 11th grade, regarding the media use, knowledge about the media, user skills and so on. 2122 pupils were involved in our research from urban and rural areas from Covasna, Harghita and Mures counties. The pupil were answering to the self-completed questionnaires which contained 49 questions. In 2014 and 2016 we repeated the survey.

Sample	Year 2012	Year 2014	
Number of respondents	2122	2208	
No. of schools	63	72	
	13 years	1088	1165
Age	17 years	1034	1043

¹ The research was conducted by a research group formed by colleagues and students from the Sapientia University, Department of Social Science (Miercurea Ciuc), and was accomplished in partnership with the International Child’s Safety Service (Budapest). The survey took place during March and April 2012, 2014. During March-April 2016, another survey was conducted in the same area among teenagers in the 7th and 11th grade. Unfortunately at the time of the publication of this paper we have not the possibility to bring in the new results. Major part of the findings – regarding to the role model topic – were published in few academic papers (see: Gergely 2013, 2014, 2015a, 2015b).

	Rural	630	744
Type of residency	Urban	1492	1464
	Harghita	1240	1269
County	Covasna	725	793
	Mures	157	146

Table 1.: Presentation of the sample

3. To be like... who? – Empirical facts from the surveys

In this paper we present the data from 2012 and 2014 regarding to the “role model” issue. In the questionnaire there were included three questions about models and model-following: we wanted to find out whether the pupils from our region have a role model, and if so, who their idols and role models are, who are the ones that have an exemplary behaviour in their eyes, to whom they would like to be similar when they grow up. In 2012 a half of the 2122 respondents gave a serious answer and named a person, in 2014 more than two third. We were curious to find out what kind of pupils have a role model, and could we describe their group in socio-demographic terms? First of all we found out, that the younger boys (age 13) who live in urban areas have a more clear idea about who they want to be like, whose model they want to follow (Gergely 2014: 111). Regarding the educational level of the parents we could not identify such significant differences; there are only mild differences in cases of pupils whose parents have higher educational level. While in the case of all respondents 17.21% of the pupils have fathers with a higher educational level and 20.10% of the pupils have mothers with higher educational level, among those who have a role model these ratios are slightly higher: 18.88% in case of fathers and 22.16% in case of mothers with higher educational level. The survey from 2014 brought novelties only partly in this: the earlier statistical correlations got minimal by increasing the number of those who named a role model.

	2012				2014			
Has a role model? ²	NO	%³	YES	%	NO	%	YES	%

² These p significance value are thanks to Chi square test. The p1 in each case relates to the data from 2012 data, the p2 to data from 2014.

Form p1<0,001	VII.	300	27,6	788	72,4	306	26,3	859	73,7
			38,7		58,5		43,8		56,9
p2<0,001	XI.	475	45,9	559	54,1	393	37,7	650	62,3
			61,3		41,5		56,2		43,1
Gender p1<0,001	Male	290	31,5	630	68,5	351	29,9	737	70,1
			37,7		47,0		45,1		48,9
p2=0,1	Female	480	40,3	210	59,7	383	33,2	769	66,8
			62,3		53,0		54,9		51,1
Type of residency p1=0,002	Urban	514	34,5	978	65,5	486	33,2	978	66,8
			66,3		72,6		69,5		64,8
p2=0,03	Rural	261	41,4	369	58,6	213	28,6	531	71,4
			33,6		27,4		30,5		35,2
Father's educational level p1=0,002	Basic	369	33,3	594	66,7	313	32,6	648	67,4
			48,9		45,7		47,8		44,5
p2=0,021	Middle	273	37,6	453	62,4	249	32,0	528	68,0
			36,9		34,8		38,0		36,3
	High	98	27,9	253	72,1	93	25,0	279	75,0
			13,2		19,5		14,2		19,2
Mother's educational level p1<0,001	Basic	318	40,9	460	59,1	228	29,7	539	70,3
			35,5		35,1		35,2		36,7
p2=0,377	Middle	307	35,5	557	64,5	280	32,3	587	67,7
			66,3		42,6		43,2		40,0
	High	121	29,3	292	70,7	140	29,1	341	70,9
			33,6		22,3		21,6		23,2

Table 2.: Comparison of the whole sample with the group of those having a role model (Gergely 2015b: 71)

³ In the columns with percentages, those cells with *Italic* and **Bold** are showing percentages for crosstabs columns, the other (normal) for rows.

Based on the responses to the open questions: “*Who is this person you would like to be similar in adulthood*” we created 17 categories in 2012 according to what could be found out about this person. The list leaders are the parents: in 2012 more than one-third of the teenagers wants to become similar to their mothers, in 2014 even more: 44,5 %. There is a group of pupils, who want to be like their brothers or sisters, others want to be similar to their grandparents (in one case to a great-grandmother) or to some other relative, godfather or godmother (see Table 2.).

	2012	%	2014	%
1. Mother	249	20,1	342	23,2
2. Father	222	17,9	314	21,3
3. Sibling	70	5,6	88	6
4. Grandparent	31	2,5	33	2,2
5. Relative	90	7,2	100	6,8
6. Pedagogue, priest	65	5,2	44	3
7. Acquaintance	63	5,1	97	6,6
8. Best friend	26	2,1	13	0,9
9. Movie actor	107	8,6	72	4,9
10. Singer, musician	92	7,4	93	6,3
11. Football player	76	6,1	93	6,3
12. Sportsman	63	5,1	92	6,2
13. Formula 1 pilot	18	1,4	5	0,3
14. Media star	14	1,1	15	1
15. Movie character, superhero	14	1,1	13	0,9
16. Writer, theatre actor, artist	8	0,6	13	0,9
17. Other famous people	33	2,7	49	3,2
Total	1241	100	1476	100

Table 3: Idol-categories

4. Doing sport is exemplary?

The special, significant physical performance earned the attention and respect of the "masses" even since antiquity. The athletes and sports celebrities are often seen as role models. By the advances of the technology and in the era of the interactive media can watchable the achievements almost from anywhere (Jones-Schumann 2000, cit. Bush et al. 2004: 108): the sportsmen and their activity is "readable", and "traceable", their attitude and private lives is accessible to quasi anyone. We can say, that the mediatized sportsmen can become more easily role models for teenagers. Due to this, in this study we examine what kind of role are playing among role models the sportsmen? Who are those athletes, and what are those sports that our teenagers give special attention? The data tables reveals that many pupil have named an athlete as role model: one from eight students wants to look like a sportsman, and every seventeenth wants to be like a football player in adulthood. Of course, mainly the boys are those, who specified such role models. In 2012 12.65% of the 13 and 17 years old pupils chosen an athlete as role model, in 2014 12.87%.

	2012		2014	
		%		%
Football player	76	48,41	93	48,95
Forma 1 pilot	18	11,46	5	2,63
Other sportsman	63	40,13	92	48,42
Total	157	100,00	190	100,00

Table 4.: Choosing a sportsman as role model (Gergely 2015b: 75)

The group of those, whose role model is an athlete (other than football player or Forma 1 pilot) is almost the same in each survey: 5,1% in 2012 and 6,2% two years later (see Table 3). And here appear for the first time the national (Hungarian) sportsmen: in 2012 in very few mention, and in greater numbers 2014, especially the Olympians. While in the first survey appeared only one or two names from the Hungarian women's handball team (Gergely 2013: 61), in Krisztián Berki (gymnastic) and Dani Gyurta (swimming) has repeatedly been mentioned (Gergely 2015b: 75). While in 2012 only three names were mentioned from the Hungarian and

Romanian athletes from Romania, in the next survey this number increased a bit. In 2012, among the role model athletes there were included Éva Tófalvi (biatlonist from Miercurea Ciuc), Mátyás Lokod (basket ball player from Gheorgheni) and Katalin Ferencz (equestrian and horse riding coach as well, from Miercurea Ciuc). In 2014 there are a few more boys whose role model is Mátyás Lokodi, a girl's role model is Vass Ildikó, basketball player as well, who was the member of the Romanian national basketball team. Also in 2014 appear two Romanian boxers, Andrei Stoica and Daniel Ghiță among the role models. In the same time, girl named Gabriela Rotis-Nagy (handball player from Brasov) as her role model.

Sports	2012	Some examples	2014	Some examples
Table tennis	1	Timo Boll	2	Timo Boll
Athletics	-		4	Krisztián Berki
Biathlon	2	Éva Tófalvi	-	
Hockey	8	Sidney Crosby, Patrick Roy, Ilya Covalchuk	9	Árpád Mihály, Alexander Ovechkin, Patrick Polc
Cycling	6	Martin Soderstorm, Matt Macduff Dakota Roche	7	Steve Peat, Peter Sagan, Kris Holm
Handball	4	Anita Görbicz, Edit Józsa, Katalin Pálinger, Nicola Carabatic	15	Anita Görbicz, Gabriela R.Nagy, Luc Abalo, Mikkel Hansen, László Nagy, Eduarda Amorim, Mikler Roland, Nikola Carabatic, Gábor Császár
Basketball	13	LeBron James, Michael Jordan, Mátyás Lokodi, Scharnee Zoll-Normann, Candance Parker, Kobe Bryant, Derrick Rose	15	LeBron James, Mátyás Lokodi, Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan, Derrick Rose, Samantha Prahalis, Ildikó Vass
Combat sports	5	Badr Hari, Fedor Emelianenko,	9	Róbert Flórián Pap, Éva

		Yuri Boyka		Csernovicki, Teddy Riner, Andrei Stoica, Daniel Ghiță
Equestrian sport	2	Lajos Kassai, Katalin Ferencz	3	Ingrid Klimke, Reed Kesler, Katalin Ferencz
Tennis	2	Marija Sarapova Roger Federer	-	
Body building, fitness	6	John Cena, Frank Zane	13	Dexter Jackson, Jay Cutler, John Cena, Randy Orton, Lazar Angelov, Alexandra Béres, Réka Rubint, Alexandra Kocsis, Rich Froning, Ronnie Colemann, Lazar Novovic
Fishing	3	Gábor Döme	1	Gábor Döme
Swimming	-		4	Dani Gyurta
Others	13	Shaun White (snowboard) Nils Jansons (roller skate) Paul Moldovan (sport dancer)	10	Dominik Guers (skate board) Sofia Boutella (street dance)
Total	63		92	

Table 5.: Sports and sportsmen as role models

In 2012, 18 students, 17 boys and one girl, named as role model a Formula 1 pilot. Her favorite Vettel and she also wants to be a race car driver in adulthood. Five boys marked Michael Schumacher as their role model, for four people is Fernando Alonso an idol, three boy named Travis Pastrana, and two named Ken Block. There appeared the name of Jenson Button, Sebastian Vettel and Solberg too, each of them was named by one pupil. In 2014 only 5 pupil named a professional Forma 1 pilot as role model. All of them are boys, four of them lives in urban area. For the two 13 year old boys Adrian Newey és Kimi Raikönnen are the role models,

from the three 17 years old boy one marked Kimi Raikönen, the other two named Fernando Alonso és Sebastian Vettel as their role model.

5. Football-dream

For who is an example to follow a football player? Who would like to be like a well-known world class football player? The boys, of course. The smaller ones, that are more in the seventh form, age thirteen. And the townspeople? No, according to the data pupils living in villages can be more characterized by choosing a football player as role model, much more than the 13 and 17 years old boys from the town. We can conclude that the football players as a role model appear rather among the thirteen years old (seventh-grade) boys' choice (see table 6.).

		2012			2014		
			%	% ⁴		%	% ⁵
Gender	Male	72	97,3	47,49	90	96,7	48,84
	Female	2	2,7	52,51	3	3,3	51,16
Type of residency	Urban	51	68,9	71,23	38	40,9	64,81
	Rural	23	31,1	28,77	55	59,1	35,19
Form	VII.	45	60,8	58,40	71	76,3	56,93
	XI.	29	39,2	41,60	22	23,8	43,07

Table 6.: Proportion of those who named a football player as role model

Who are the most popular football players in our teenagers eyes (teenagers from our region)? As it turned out, two players' of the Spanish national team popularity was undiminished during this period two players of popularity was undiminished in this period. The football loving teenagers from our region choosen as role model Lionel Messi and Iker Casillas (whose name is linked to the Spanish Real Madrid team), these the players they are leading the idol-list (see.

⁴ Correlating with the number of those who have role model in 2012.

⁵ Correlating with the number of those who have role model in 2014.

table 7). Neither in 2012, nor in 2014 appeared a Hungarian or Romanian professional football player's name in this list.

2012	2014
1. Lionel Messi (23) ⁶	1. Lionel Messi (33)
2. Cristiano Ronaldo (22)	2. Cristiano Ronaldo (28)
3. David Beckham (5)	3. Iker Casillas (6)
4. David Villa (4)	3. Fernando Torres (6)
4. Iker Casillas (4)	4. Xavi Hernandez (4)
5. Fernando Torres (3)	5. Frank Lampard (3)
6. Ricardo Santos (2), Victor Valdes (2)	6. Ronaldinho (2), Neymar da Silva (2), Steven Gerrard (2)
7. Didier Drogba (1), Ryan Giggs (1), Miroslav Klose (1), Frank Lampard (1), Sergio Ramos (1), Wayne Rooney (1), Neymar da Silva (1), Marcelo Viera (1), Zinedine Zidane (1)	7. David Beckham (1), Angel di Maria (1), Andres Iniesta (1), Philipp Lahm (1), Robin van Persie (1), Sergio Ramos (1), Victor Valdes (1)

7. Table: Football players as role models

It can be observed, however, in 2012 apart from three exceptions, among the role models there are European football players, mainly from the a Western European countries: Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom or France. In 2014 as well, the football players who were chosen as role models are mostly European, most likely Spanish players.

Conclusions

More than a half of the 13 and 17 year old respondents named a role model at the first time (in 2012), however in 2014 already two-thirds said that they have a role model. The others did not have one or did not want to have a role model mostly because they did not want to in influence

⁶ Number of pupil who named the person as role model.

their “uniqueness”. (Gergely 2014: 117) Most of those who have a role model would like to become like their parents, siblings, grandparents, relatives or close friends. Among those who have an idol, every third teenager’s choice was influenced by the media, they have not met their chosen role model personally, they have not talked to him/her, they only know a little about the chosen role model, and there are no valid impressions available for them about the chosen idol (Gergely 2015b: 80).

Some of the respondents, mostly boys, named athletes as role models, the most popular group among them are the football-players. The most popular are Messi and Casillas, but all foreigners, mostly Western European players. Among the other, not football player athletes appear Michael Jordan, Marjie Sharapova, but also some Hungarian players, especially names from the Hungarian handball team members as Anita Görbicz, Katalin Pálinger. Also here appear – in a very small number – local sportsmans: in 2012 only Éva Tófalvi, Katalin Ferenc and Mátyás Lokodi, in 2014 this list was a bit longer (Gergely 2014: 117, 2015b: 80).

Can we conclude that with the new media, new idols have arrived? It is hard to answer this question, because the answer is multiple. (1.) On one hand, the answer can be *yes*, the teenagers choose a role model from their physical environment or from the media. Those local “heroes”, historical persons, contemporary talented but not mediated persons, who do not appear in the media, on the Internet, are not well-known. Because of the lack of their media appearance, they will not become popular, moreover they will not appear in the focus of the teenagers, they can not become a model for them. (2) However, the answer could also be: *partially yes*, the new icons are infiltrated in the teenagers' minds, since one third of them (among from those who have an idol) had chosen some iconic person known from the media, television or the Internet, perhaps from the newspaper. But only partially yes, because the role and impact of this new models is not as strong as we would expect knowing the practice of teenagers in using the new media. They know very little about these mediated persons, very often they do not even spell their names correctly, so we can say that the idolization, the role model following is not so strong. (3.) On the other hand, the answer could be even *partially no*: the teenagers can select. Even if the media has an important impact on their lives, two teenagers from three want to become like their mother, father, a relative or a friend. The media has a strong impact on their

life, on their world-perception, but even so they can select what kind of role model is more authentic for them.

Despite the undisputed media impact and influence on teenagers' everyday life we see – in relation to the issue – that two pupils from three choose as role model her/his mother, father, sister, grandmother, aunt, girlfriend, cousin, teacher, rather than a famous footballer or singer. And the famous, well known personalities and iconic persons from the media, these “everyday characters” however still seem more credible for the teenagers. This is in line with what is stated by the Hankiss: the too much information received by the media cause uncertainty, disorientation and confusion (Hankiss 2008, cit. László 2010), so the immediate environment is safer, more concrete.

If those persons who are original from a local community and have a very important sport, scientific or other achievement, and a high public esteem, but them and their realization are not known by young people, they will not be important for teenagers, and will be searching for role models “outside” of the community. Even if the life career of these local “heroes” are more close by habit to their world perception as the media stars'. That is, the local media, the local community and the pedagogues, the parents can play an important role in this case: who will appear in teenagers' radar. If they (parents, teachers, local media) contribute, the pupils will know by close the life of Zsolt Eröss⁷, the importance of scientific achievements of László Albert-Barabási⁸, the great realizations of Károly Eduárd Novák⁹. Or, if easier to "meet" them, they will prefer Lionel Messi, Steve Jobs or Selena Gomez.

⁷ Zsolt ERŐSS (1968 – 2013), was born in Miercurea Ciuc, Harghita County. He was the most successful Hungarian high-altitude mountaineer, summiting 10 out of the 14 eight-thousanders. He was also the first Hungarian citizen to have climbed Mount Everest. In 2010 he lost his right leg in an avalanche accident, requiring amputation below the knee. Soon after his recovery he returned to mountaineering, trying to summit the Cho Oyu in fall 2010. The expedition did not reach the top due to bad weather conditions, but later in May 2011 he successfully summited the Lhotse. After successfully scaling Kangchenjunga on May 20, 2013, he went missing in descent (source: www.en.wikipedia.org, www.hoparduc.hu). Although he lived in Hungary after 1988, he was very popular among the population of Szeklerland. After 2000, he every year he attended narrative presentation tours – among others – in almost every town of Covasna, Harghita, Maros County. Even so, the teenagers seem not to know about him and not to choose him as a role model.

⁸ László BARABÁSI-ALBERT (born in 1967 in Cârța, Harghita County) is a Hungarian-American physicist, best known for his work in the research of network theory. He was working at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA, and current Distinguished Professor and Director of Northeastern University's Center for Complex Network Research (CCNR) and an associate member of the Center of Cancer Systems Biology (CCSB) at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Harvard University. He introduced in 1999 the concept of scale-free networks and proposed the Barabási-Albert model to explain their widespread emergence in natural, technological and social systems, from the cellular telephone to the World Wide Web or online communities (source: www.en.wikipedia.org). He is

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appreciated and well known among Hungarian population from Romania, as in a popularity contest won a 3. place (source: <http://boxpopuli.transindex.ro>).

⁹ Károly Eduárd NOVÁK (born in 1976 in Miercurea Ciuc) is a road and track racing cyclist and Paralympic champion. Initially a speed skater, Novak lost one of his leg in a car accident in 1996. Subsequently he switched to cycling and emerged to a professional cyclist. He took part at his first Paralympics in 2004, followed by two more participations in 2008 and 2012. At the 2008 Paralympic Games won the silver medal in the individual time trial thus capturing Romania's first ever Paralympic medal. At the 2012 Games he reached further milestones by winning the gold medal in the 1 km track pursuit event – the first ever in the country's Paralympic history – and setting a new world record time en route to the final. Additionally, he collected a silver medal in the road time trial race. (source: www.en.wikipedia.org, www.tusnadcyclingteam.com).

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