

FROM THE STATE HONORED TEXTILE WORKERS TO THE PALMISTRY: THE HUNGARIAN WOMEN'S MAGAZINE, *NŐK LAPJA* FROM 1989 TILL 1999*

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Abstract: The paper presents the changes of the fifty year-old Hungarian women's magazine, *Nők Lapja* as they have occurred during the past decade. Not only the inner structure of the magazine but also the role models, presented by the reports, were analysed. In the late eighties and early nineties *Nők Lapja* was the only popular women's magazine. It had a culture-oriented structure. The ratio of advertisements was low, and articles of interview-type made up one-third of the pages. By the end of the nineties the relative importance of interviews decreased to one-fifth, while advertisements took up one-fourth of the pages. Esoteric materials, horoscopes and palmistry became very important columns of the magazine. The role models presented by *Nők Lapja* have also changed. In 1989 70.5 percent of women presented in the reports were common people. In 1999 the ratio of such common people dropped to 42 percent. At the same time the ratio of famous women (models, actresses, pop stars) increased. Work and politics were pushed into the background by the end of the period, while traditional family life and the tricks of beauty and fitness acquired greater importance. The gender roles presented have been very much of a stereotype, and feminism is given a negative connotation in *Nők Lapja*.

Keywords: women, media, role-models, contentanalysis

Of the many different functions of mass communication this paper discusses its model-setting function. Although television is the most generally used medium, magazines and especially women's magazines are also on the market in large circulation. It seems that one of the least risky publishing activities is to start a new women's magazine. Besides *Nők Lapja*, which is 52 years old now, a number of new weekly and monthly magazines are published for women. Some of these publications are Hungarian editions of well-known western magazines (e.g., *Cosmopolitan*), while others are real Hungarian products. It would be interesting to compare the structure and content of these different publications. But in this paper I undertake only the analysis of structure and model-setting interviews of *Nők Lapja* and present the image

* This work was supported by the Open Society Support Foundation Research Support Scheme, No. 428/1998

of women constructed in these interviews. The paper describes the changes in *Nők Lapja* in the 1990s and, when possible, discusses the image of women in the 1970s as well.

I have done an analysis of *Nők Lapja* and other newspapers and weeklies in the 1970s.¹ In this paper I tried to use the same principles for the analysis of the articles of 1990s. The above mentioned content analysis in the 1970s concerned the interviews in the magazine. I argued that picking a person to be interviewed and the special information provided about her is a model-setting activity itself. This is true especially for such an entertainment-oriented weekly magazine as *Nők Lapja*. It is obvious that choosing a person for an interview and presenting her to the readers does not mean that this person is described accurately. I do not want to discuss the true characteristics of the persons presented in the interviews only to present the image of a model and the features regarded as important in the eyes of the journalists. In the analysis of the magazine in the 1990s I also analysed in detail the interviews and the image of women in these interviews. In addition, I analysed the structure of *Nők Lapja*, as its change also bears information about the model setting and as well as the image of women.

In the process of forming the categories I also followed the logic of the 1970s analysis. In that work I used a double category-method. First I coded the main message of the article. Then I coded the additional information too, as this information provided a more nuanced picture. In the analysis of articles in the 1990s I also used a double category-method although I had to make a new category set as the old one was not adequate for current articles. For the purpose of the analysis I randomly chose one issue in every months between 1989–1999. Altogether 132 issues were analysed. It is also important to stress that this work is not an analysis of the communicator. Of course, the interests of the owner of the magazine, the political ideas of the main editor and the views of the journalists can strongly influence the message of the magazine. But this analysis was done from the viewpoint of the reader. For a reader the “menu” is of interest and not the consideration of the people who created it for her/him.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MAGAZINE

The character of a magazine is determined essentially by the nature of articles published and the relative weight of the different types of articles. For the first step of the analysis I classified all the articles of the chosen issues into the categories in *Appendix A*. This makes it possible to present the topics and types of articles which became important or lost their importance during the 1990s.² We may divide the categories into four larger groups.

1 Olga Tóth: Kísérlet néhány heti- és napilapból kirajzolódó nő-kép tartomelemzés útján való megragadására (An attempt to describe the image of women in a few weekly magazines and newspapers using content analysis). Diplom work, MKKE, Budapest, 1997.

2 The illustration of the articles was treated as the organic part of the given article. Another analysis can be done to reveal how the illustration fits the tematics of the given article and Hungarian reality.

Table 1. The length of the articles of *Nők Lapja* by main types and years

	TYPE OF ARTICLE (Percentage)			
	CURRENT	SERVICE	EDUCATION	INTERVIEW
1989	8.1	32.0	29.5	30.4
1990	10.3	34.0	25.9	29.8
1991	16.7	36.8	21.1	25.4
1992	24.7	37.8	21.5	16.0
1993	22.9	37.6	17.5	22.0
1994	24.5	35.2	17.0	23.3
1995	23.5	31.6	24.0	20.9
1996	23.4	30.8	17.0	28.8
1997	27.9	31.6	19.2	21.3
1998	27.5	28.9	21.2	22.4
1999	29.0	28.9	19.8	22.3

As Table 1 and Figure 1 show during the 11 years the structure of *Nők Lapja* went through a characteristic change. The most obvious sign is the increasing ratio of articles in the *Current* category. The articles in this category made up 8 percent of the total number of pages in 1989 and 29 percent in 1999. This category contains advertisements, news lines, front-page and contents. As the length of the last two categories did not change, the increasing ratio of the *Current* category results from the rapid increase of the ratio of advertisements and short feature stories. The ratio of short feature stories was only 0.75 pages per issue in 1989 but it reached 4.7 pages per issue in 1999. The content of these short news stories also changed. At the beginning of the period usually funny pictures and news made up this category but by the end of the period most of the articles were news stories and gossips from the life of western stars. The changes in advertising space are more striking. In the beginning of the period, at the time of the last Kádár-regime advertisements could be found on only 1 page per issue. Later, as the pages of magazine grew we find more and more advertisements in the magazine. By 1999, 21 percent of the average page number of *Nők Lapja* were taken up by advertisements, which meant on average 18.5 pages per issue.

The ratio of *Service* type articles does not show such a great change. In 1989 the ratio of this category was 39 percent and after a slow increasing it reached a peak in 1993 at 37.8 percent. In 1999 this ratio was 28.9 percent. Of course, parallel to the increase in the number of pages of *Nők Lapja* this ratio means more pages here too. The weight of regular columns *For Children*, *Crosswords* and *Letters from the readers* was the same during the whole period. In some issues we can find a *Debate* column occupying 1–2 pages, but it is not a regular column. We also find *Classifieds* at a relatively constant length, but the length of the TV guide (0–7 pages) depends on whether the actual owner of *Nők Lapja* publishes a TV guide or not. I put the articles about *Food* and *Household* into the *Service* category. During the 11 years analysed these types or articles were always present in the magazine suggesting that a “real” women’s weekly is unimaginable without household and food. The length of these

types of articles moved between 1 to 8 pages, in some cases 10 percent of the whole issue was of the household type. *Fashion* was also present in every issue taking up 1–5 pages. One of the typical *Service* type articles is the *Consultation* column. It provides a direct connection for the readers to the magazine. We find consultation type articles on a very broad scale: medicine, gardening, childcare, psychology, legal etc. The length of this category was 0.5–3.5 pages per issue. It is interesting to note that at the very beginning of the 1990s, when *Nők Lapja* was trying to establish a its new style, consultation types articles made up 10 percent of the whole issues.

Fitness, health and esoteric issues, horoscopes are the new, emerging *Service* type articles in the 1990s. *Nők Lapja* follows the example of women's magazines published in western countries and introduced in the Hungarian market. Health and fitness appeared in *Nők Lapja* in the past too, but because of the new fitness culture and the supposed younger age of the readers these columns became permanent. The introduction of a Horoscope and other esoteric topics is a characteristic feature of the magazine. Editors of *Nők Lapja* like to claim that it is a serious magazine. However, they feel that their readers would not buy the magazine without esoteric content. The Horoscope was first time published in 1991 in less than half a page. Later other esoteric topics, such as palmistry, card-reading and psychological quizzes also appeared. By the end of the decade these types of articles reached 5 pages on average in one issue.

The third main group of articles belong to the *Education* category. Their main aim is to educate the readers. At the beginning of the decade this type of articles made up 29.5 percent of the total length. Later the ratio of these articles decreased, and by the end of the 1990s it reached a constant 19–20 percent level. However, the content of the articles in the *Education* category was transformed during the period.

Table 2. The distribution of articles in the Education group by years

	Percentage			
	Arts	Direct educational	Travel	Sex
1989	48	39	13	0
1990	51	36	13	0
1991	58	22	20	0
1992	42	51	7	0
1993	26	70	4	0
1994	26	57	15	2
1995	33	54	11	2
1996	41	42	11	6
1997	34	49	10	7
1998	29	52	11	8
1999	24	59	9	8

At the beginning of the analysed period, *Nők Lapja* showed a strong cultural orientation. Articles dealing with different types of arts made up half of the educational type articles. Most of these articles were extracts of classical literature. It

was not unique to find reviews on ballet or other performances. At the beginning of the period 10 percent of the whole length was taken up by these types of articles. Parallel with the increasing length of the magazine, the relative and absolute growth of articles about the arts decreased. While in 1992 these types of articles occupied 4.9 pages on average in one issue, in 1994 they only took up 2.8 pages. By the end of the 1990s *Nõk Lapja* gave up its cultural orientation. This can be seen not only in the fact that the length of these types of articles decreased, but also in that we can hardly find high quality literature in the magazine any more.

The ratio of *directly educational* articles increased within the educational articles category. In 1991 only 1.83 pages per issue contained such materials. This ratio has been increasing and it reached 10 pages on average per issue by 1999. I did not analyse the inner structure of these educational articles. Only one topic, *sexual education* was highlighted. This type of article was not present in *Nõk Lapja* until the middle of the 1990s. By this time it became possible to eliminate the one-sided, prudish image of women which characterised the magazine in the previous decades. During the 1990s the ratio of articles on sex increased continuously as the magazine tried to recruit younger and more solvent readers.

Travel and other cultural issues were always present in *Nõk Lapja* during the previous decades. Most of the travel articles were written about foreign countries. Most of these articles are, in fact, advertisements as a travel agency or other institution financed the journey of the journalist. Articles on travel have a very different function in a period when the vast majority of readers have no opportunity to travel abroad themselves (for political reason in the 1970 or for financial reason in the 1990s) compared to when they themselves can also travel. In the previous periods travel articles had the function of showing the world to people without any chance to visit these places.

The fourth main type of articles was labelled as "*Interviews*" These are the articles where the personal opinion of the journalist is displayed, and where the intention of model setting is the strongest. The number and composition of this type of articles show great fluctuation during the period analysed. Traditionally a high number of interviews characterised *Nõk Lapja* in the past decades. The last wave can be seen in 1989 when one-third of the total length was classified into *Interview* type articles. In 1992 this ratio was only 15 percent, and by the end of 1990s it was 21–22 percent. It is important to note that the total length of the magazine increased during the period; it was only 32 pages in 1989 and 84 pages in 1999.

THE COMPOSITION OF INTERVIEW TYPE ARTICLES

The inner structure of Interview type articles has changed a lot. By the end of the decade the length of the Editorial duplicated. Of course this type of article is not a real interview, it reflects only the opinion of the editor. Although the role of model setting is important I did not analyse these. I found that both in the 1990s and in the previous periods this article had the strongest connection to politics, prevalent ideology and the attitudes of the editor-in-chief. Instead, I wanted to focus on the indirect model-

setting messages in the magazine. The length of real interviews varied during the period, from 8 pages at the beginning of 1990s to the lowest point in 1992 (5.2 pages on average) till the end of 1990s when it takes up 11 pages.

During the decade I analysed two new, previously unknown interview types appeared in *Nők Lapja*. I labelled *Pseudo-interviews* the kind of article in which the journalist pretends to conduct an interview with a lot of very different people, but it is obvious that she/he did not move from her/his table. Pseudo-interviews try to discuss a complex topic, but they usually talk in clichés only. To present the thematic of pseudo-interviews let see some titles.

How we divorce (1)

School of emotions: the green-eyed monster – jealousy (2)

Everyday triangle (3)

Daughters without father (4)

Loving till going mad? (5)

Who is the treasurer in the family? (6)

Real stories about lies (7)

Mother-in-law stories (8)

Pseudo-interviews follow the same pattern – they tend to use pre-fabricated elements. A little direct education, some data, the brief opinion of an expert (typically a psychologist) and a few words from interviews with people. People are identified by first name only, and their answers are really just illustrations of the complexity of the topic. We may regard them as types and not real people. Let us suppose that the topic is Jealousy, what is more, the *green-eyed monster*. Éva is jealous – she is right, she has many reasons. Mari is not jealous – what a bright idea. Gábor is jealous – although it is baseless. Lajos is not jealous – although he would have a lot of reasons. The expert says a few words about the personality of jealous people, the reasons for and consequences of jealousy – that is the content of pseudo-interviews. The length of this type of article is longer than that of other articles as it describes very different types of people. It may be a good educational article but readers have no opportunity to find out about the real life of people in these interviews.

I will call the second new type of interview a *thesis-interview*. In these interviews some – usually famous – people are asked about a very peripheral topic and he/she simply gives a few clichés about it. The only reason for asking them is to hear them say yes or no. We can find *pseudo-interviews* and *thesis-interviews* very seldom at the beginning of the 1990s. By the end of the 1990s together with the general move of the magazine toward a decrease in the level of intellectual content, the number and proportion of these interviews increased gradually.

The number of interviews per issues shows a big fluctuation. Comparing to the first years of 1990s we find a significant increase by the middle of the decade, when we find more than 8 interviews on average in an issue. By this time Pseudo-interviews and Thesis-interviews also emerged, so the high number of interviews does not mean that a lot of real people can be found in the magazine. By the end of the 1990s, the interviews are getting pretty long and the men interviewed are usually famous. In the analysis below I dealt with only women who were interviewed.

Table 3. Average number of interviews in *Nök Lapja* by issue*

	Number of interviews together	Proportion of interviews written about women	Average number of pseudo-interviews
1989	4.8	80.4	.
1990	4.7	75.8	.
1991	4.4	76.0	0.3
1992	4.4	79.1	0.9
1993	7.2	75.9	0.8
1994	7.7	72.2	0.8
1995	6.2	71.8	1.2
1996	8.6	74.3	1.8
1997	5.0	76.0	1.3
1998	7.0	65.7	1.5
1999	6.8	69.6	1.5
average of 11 years	6.0	74.3	0.9

* In this table we find the number of Interviews, Pseudo-interviews and Thesis-interviews together.

REAL PERSONS IN INTERVIEW TYPE ARTICLES

In the 132 issues I analysed chosen randomly from 11 volumes of *Nök Lapja*, 803 real women were found in the interviews. This means that 6.1 on average per issues. I regarded someone to be a real person if her name (sometimes together with a photo) could be found in the article, and if she could potentially be contacted. In some articles journalist claimed that an interviewee asked to remain anonymous. It is imaginable that a real person was asked in these cases but for the interest of uniform coding I did not code these as real ones. Real persons could be coded into three categories.

Table 4. Division of real women in the interviews by years

	Famous persons		Experts		Ordinary people		Together	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1989	10	16.4	8	13.1	43	70.5	61	100
1990	23	38.3	3	5.0	34	56.7	60	100
1991	22	38.6	6	10.5	29	50.9	57	100
1992	23	37.7	10	16.4	28	45.9	61	100
1993	50	54.9	1	1.1	40	44.0	91	100
1994	64	67.4	5	5.3	26	27.3	95	100
1995	17	25.8	12	18.2	37	56.0	66	100
1996	42	46.2	14	15.4	35	38.4	91	100
1997	24	34.8	22	31.9	23	33.3	69	100
1998	32	47.1	19	27.9	17	25.0	68	100
1999	41	48.8	18	21.4	25	29.8	84	100
Total	348	43.3	118	14.7	337	42.0	803	100

At the beginning of the period – just like in the 1970s and 1980s – two-third of real persons in the interviews were ordinary people. Experts and famous people showed up in interviews in a similar number (13–16 percent). In the beginning of the 1990s we experience a significant change in this respect. The ratio of famous people amongst real persons enormously increased, and by the end of the 1990s it reached 48 percent. This means that at the beginning of the period every sixths and by the end of the period every second real person introduced in the interviews were famous. The number of experts was also on the rise. Parallel to these processes, the number and ratio of ordinary people drastically decreased. Nowadays less than one-third of real life interviews is conducted with ordinary people. The above mentioned change in structure is connected to the spread of pseudo-interviews as journalist may think that people there can be substituted for real life meetings. However the pseudo- interviews because of their superficial and didactic nature can not fulfil this task. Readers of *Nők Lapja* have fewer and fewer opportunities to find out about the lives and difficulties of real women. Instead they are showered with the wisdom of experts and phantom lives.

FAMOUS PEOPLE

In the 132 issues of 11 years I analysed we found altogether 348 famous women. 30 amongst them were the wives of some famous men; this was the main reason for introducing them. The famous husbands came from the world of media, film and seldom from politics. 43 percent of the 318 who were famous in her own right were actresses. The second biggest category was females from show business (24 percent), they were pop singers, media stars, models etc. The third biggest category was the group of females from the world of sports (11 percent). The rest of the famous women were writers, other artists or aristocrats. Two-thirds of famous women who appeared in the magazine were Hungarian, and one third were from a Western country. We can hardly find any famous women from Eastern Europe or countries outside the Western world. Choosing a famous person for an interview seems to be quite random. In the case of western stars the material comes from the international press or from other women' magazines. In the case of Hungarian celebrities obviously the friends and acquaintances of journalists of *Nők Lapja* are the source. There is a Hungarian actress who was interviewed five times in the randomly chosen issues. We can catch *Nők Lapja* in the process of making a star using the interview format.

Famous people appear in interviews in two ways. The first type is when we get acquainted with their ideas, career, and opinion. It is remarkable that leading intellectual women (such as Susan Sonntag – 1989/27 for instance) appear in very few interviews in the 1990s. Their ideas and opinion about the world would be really important to know but in the second part of the decade the number of these types of women is very low. During the 1990s most of the leading intellectuals in the interviews of *Nők Lapja* are men (such as Tamás Vekerdy – 1997/4, or Miklós Mészöly – 1997/13). This phenomenon reinforces the stereotype that bright and deep ideas can come only from men.

The other way of introducing famous women in *Nök Lapja* is the Thesis-interview. These types of interviews appeared in the magazine in 1993 with establishing the *Weekly poll* column.

What is your favourite superstition? (9)

What do you collect? (10)

What do you think about fidelity? (11)

What makes you angry? (12) – such topics are amongst the questions of the “weekly poll”. A few examples from thesis-interviews: Reading is very important for actress F. P. (13), or a famous woman wants to get marry but another one do not want to (14). In these interviews the famous person was really asked about the given topic, but about nothing else. The length of the article is typically very short, which means that the interviewee can say a few superficial sentences only. Her personality, her thoughts are not important in general, only on the peripheral topic, and it is her status that legitimates her participation. Reading these articles, reader may feel that famous women are similar to them as they also have superstitions or mascot, etc. These interviews demand very little intellectual or emotional activity from the reader, so we may say that these articles move *Nök Lapja* from a high quality magazine towards a tabloid.

EXPERTS

The favourite interviewee of the 1990s is the expert. We can find 118 women experts in the randomly chosen 132 issues. Experts of directly educational articles are not counted here. 25 percent of experts are psychologists, 17 percent are physicians, 13 percent are civil servants and 10 percent are teachers. Others come from a variety of professions, such as librarians, policewomen, sociologists, etc. It is also important to mention the growing number of expert on transcendental issues. The expert has an educational function in the interviews. Her task is to highlight the main topic of the (pseudo)-interview. An expert is worthy of introducing in the magazine because of her position and knowledge. She is a real person with a special knowledge but usually without a personality. At least the reader has no opportunity to know the personal opinion or experience of the expert. The introduction of female experts has an indirect model-setting function as readers may realise that women can be important experts on an issue.

ORDINARY PEOPLE

As *Table 4* shows I found 337 ordinary women in the issues I analysed. They are real people, they have names and, in many cases, faces too. They are ordinary people in the sense that the readers normally do not know them, although there are young politicians, scientists or artists amongst them. The point of doing an interview with them is to send a message to the readers. The interviews shows a few of the important features of their personality, some of the turning points in their lives – all of which

may be interesting for the readers. I am sure that these interviews mean a real model setting for the readers. They can identify themselves with these people, and they can compare their lives to that of the person described. These kinds of interviews indirectly but very effectively shape the views of the readers on women.

Table 5. The reasons for introducing ordinary people in interviews, number and percentages

	Number	Percentage
Work	76	22.6
Family	73	21.7
Some sociological type information	30	8.9
Politics	26	7.7
Health, illness	25	7.4
Poverty, shortage of income	24	7.1
Other reason	83	24.6

I coded ordinary people in appearing in the interviews primarily by the reason for their introduction, and secondly by the other additional information presented. The *world of work* was the most frequent main information in the interviews. It is fitting to the tradition of magazine, as in the issues of 1970s we can find the same situation. However, during the last decade a special change happened in *Nők Lapja* concerning work and its importance in women's lives. Not only in the 1970s but also in the last years of 1980s, paid work was presented in the magazine as an elevating, noble part of life. In 1988 a series of interviews was published by the title "Joy of work" about female workers who were honoured with state prizes. In 1989 a interview was published about "Lenin Ironworks" (one of the biggest heavy industrial plant in Hungary) in a similar tone. "...she keeps track of who works in the Iron Plant amongst her relatives. Everybody who counts. Erika works in the computer centre of the plant, and she is very proud that she may do useful work in the most modern part of the factory." (15) Introducing the world of work changed a lot during the year of 1989 simultaneously with the changes of the political system. From here on, the meaning of work is associated with the concepts of burden, fatigue and exploitation. "Female faces from another Hungary" is the title of the article. "They are always in hurry, they are always fatigued, and their legs are swollen at a young age. If they nod off on a Sunday afternoon, they dream about easier days." (16) – a journalist writes. The previous picture was false but so is this one. In the second part of 1990s *Nők Lapja* could not handle the problem of work, therefore most of the interviews (50 from total 76) written about work was an article about a woman with a special job. Most of the job-interviews were written about women in typically male-jobs, as soldiers, bodyguards or policewomen. In these interviews we can read about two-four females in these jobs, this is the reason why work is the most numerous in the reason for the interview category. Another type of work-related interview is one when a woman in a typical female job is introduced. In some cases the stereotypical and non-stereotypical approaches are mixed. Just like in the interview about a female

professional soldier. "What will your task be?" "I will type letters, orders, I will do office work. These are female jobs and are not far from my previous activity." (17) While we meet a woman in a non-stereotypical job, the content of her job is totally stereotypical. We can find only 5 interviews about unemployment and its effect on women or the family. I did not find any interviews with women who escaped from unemployment to early retirement, although in the 1990s this strategy was very common among Hungarian women. Neither can we find any woman who likes her job and can get satisfaction from it. There were only 9 self-employed women and 12 career-oriented women in the 132 issues I analysed. Only one interview series was found in which work appeared in its complexity, together with burdens, hardness and joy. "We jumped into the middle. Most of our readers write that they found a reflection to their everyday concerns when they have read our tenth issue. ...Compromises and forces form our decisions (18) – writes the journalist in the series "Family or career?". It seems the journalists of *Nők Lapja* are fully aware of complexity of work, but they do not want to discuss it. In addition, there was only one interview in which work was regarded as the part of a fulfilling life, not as a burden and not as a substitute in place of everything else. "Without my work I would not be balanced. For the entire life I need both family and work." (19) Consequently, if we analyse the model-setting function of *Nők Lapja* concerning the world of paid work, we find a one-sided picture far from the reality of everyday life.

The second most common category – just like in the past decades – was *family life*. Half of the family interviews presented harmonious family life or joyful family events, the other half presented conflicts in the family. The family life of the interviewee is either harmonious or full of conflicts, the real life situation, when joy and conflicts come together, is very unique in the interviews. If the article is written about grandmothers, it is absolutely full of harmony, even the title is very poetic (20). Children are always a source of joy. If the interviewee has not "enough" children, journalist sometimes reproaches her, and the interviewee has to provide an excuse. "In this house there would be enough room for a third child too." "It is true. My husband would like to have a third one, a boy. I feel this moment that I have enough patience for two children only." (21) In these interviews, women are responsible for the unity of the family, even wives of famous men appear in stereotypical roles. The families in other interviews are full of conflicts and problems. Although readers are not overloaded by stories of women in the process of divorce or of abandoned, abused women, as we find only 36 interviews about these problems in all of the 132 issues. It seems that the new image of *Nők Lapja* is full of esoteric pages, and the starlight can not coexist with the darker sides of life. It is interesting as the editor almost apologises to the readers when the magazine publishes such a story. "We were thinking a lot about the next story in the editorial staff whether we should present such a tragic life to our readers. As a lot of our readers asked us not to deal too much with misery, it is enough for them to survive the sorrow what they have to bear in their own lives." (22) However, I think to reveal impartially the shadowed side of family and private life must be part of a high standard women's magazine. Especially because of readers in similar situations may feel that they are not alone, and they may find a way out from their hard situation with the help provided. I find the one-sided

picture of family in the magazine problematic. Family is also an area of life where reality is usually quite complex.

The presence or lack thereof, of *politics* in the articles is also remarkable. We find very few politician women among the famous people interviewed. Only 24 ordinary women have some connections to politics. Twelve of these 24 persons appear in a humorous interview (23) so only 12 women count in this category. The number of politician women is extremely low during the analysed period, especially knowing that there was a change in the political system, three free elections and thousands of NGOs were founded in Hungary. The importance of politician women in *Nők Lapja* matches the general tendency in Hungarian society, where politics is regarded as men's business.

Poverty and hardship in a changing society appear in the articles first at the beginning of the 1990s. By the end of the decade, *Nők Lapja* has lost its traditional interest and sensitivity towards social problems. It is obvious that some readers (maybe the younger and richer ones) do not need articles on the darker side of life, but it is obvious that others would like to read about it. It is a clear choice of values on the part of the editors. Poverty and other financial problems appear in the magazine only in letters from readers and the consultation type articles. A detailed analysis of the letters from readers would help show that two different worlds co-exist in the magazine.

I coded not only the main points of each interview but *additional themes* mentioned as well. This additional information presents a more complex picture about the image of women in the magazine. The average number additional information presented for each person was 3.5. Most people in the articles are Hungarians. It is remarkable that I did not find any famous person or expert who is an ethnic Roma in the 132 issues. Only three ordinary Roma females were found in the interviews, two of them were mentioned in a negative and one in a positive context. The openly racist tone of the next interview is especially remarkable. "Four percent of the population are of Gypsy origin. In contrast they get 23 percent of the social benefits distributed in our village. During the office hours in the local authority all of the rooms are full of gypsies, and they come for financial support. We can only very rarely see Hungarians among them." (24) Most of the other additional information were sociological type variables, just like marital status (typically married), age (typically young adult between age 20–40) and number of children (1, 2 or more children). This means that the articles of *Nők Lapja* in the 1990s were not very complex, just like in the 1970s.

STEREOTYPE GENDER ROLES

As I mentioned when I analysed the main information of the interviews, *Nők Lapja* presents a stereotypical picture about gender roles. The real man is strong, experienced and clever, and he is able to explain the meaning of life to women. (25) He wants to decide about the name of his wife after getting married. (26) Besides these virtues, it is absolutely unimportant to be handsome. "We have really lower

expectation for men. There is no such thing as an ugly man – if they have any good qualities, they are marketable even if they are dumpy or fat. They can be regarded as »fine guys« if they can support the family, have a sense of humour or present themselves swell... If we, women admire them, make them be aware of their masculinity, they will wear clothes which express it” – a designer advises as she gives us the most stereotypical possible gender roles. (27) In contrast, “real” women can keep the apartment cleans without any help, she serves her man, because she finds it natural (28) and does not butt into men’s discussions. “At the very beginning I tried to take part in the discussions but I always blundered. Then my husband embraced me and told me: just shut up, my silly little wife!” (29)

SUMMARY

Although new rivals emerge year by year, *Nők Lapja* is one of the most important women’s magazine today. It was founded in 1949, so its past and the fact that it is widely read make it suitable for this position. In the meantime it has to struggle with the rivals who aim younger and more solvent women’s groups. *Nők Lapja* tries to stick to its standards, but by the end of the 1990s it gravitated away from quality. We can see this in the structure of the magazine (in the rapid increase of the ratio of advertisements, and short feature stories), in the new columns (esoteric issues, fitness etc.), in the increasing number of pseudo-interviews and interviews on the life of stars instead of ordinary people. Altogether these changes mean the adoption of a consumption-oriented approach.

Moreover, the interviews on ordinary people have an obvious message too. This message together with the general impression of the magazine stresses the most important features of the “real” female. *Nők Lapja*, as an important medium has moved into two new directions during the 1990s.

1. First, it considers the importance of family and the individual greater; and
2. secondly, it tries to push paid work and politics in life of men into the background.

This duality, reinforcing the family and the individual, and at the same time de-emphasising work and politics characterise all Hungarian women’s magazine. Some magazines have different themes, like *Cosmopolitan* dedicated to individual young females, or *Meglepetés* dedicated to housewives. Other magazines, among them *Nők Lapja*, try to balance between two opposite territories. They want to present a better picture of women who live for their families, and simultaneously the individualistic women who tries to fulfil her life on the world of beauty and fashion but not in the world of work or public life. We may find a strangely mixed solution of it too. A typical example is the so-called “Makeover” column, in which a hairdresser and a make-up specialist work on housewives to make them look glamorous. We can find the opposite type of this too when a famous and successful woman (an actress, or a media star etc.) emphasises the importance of her family and argues that the meaning of life for a real woman is to serve her husband and children. “The ESSENCE remained unchanged. THE REAL WOMAN is soft, she depends on the love of men,

and she expects to be supported.” Or: “»I am surprised by your calm in the middle of this permanent bustle. You seem to be so strong. It is not a feminine feature. If I were a man, I would be frightened and would not want to marry you.« The answer is a smile. »My marriage is perfect. At home I relax. I love cooking and I serve my husband. I enjoy the traditional female role.«” (30)

The above-cited sentences prove that the magazine in its model-setting interviews wants to discourage women from doing paid work. “In my opinion everything went wrong when we started to go to work guided by our self-consciousness” – says an actress in *Nők Lapja*. (31) Here is another example, in which the journalist writes the following: “Recently I heard two women talking. One of them said proudly that she was successful in winning a scholarship, and she is travelling to the USA. The other answered, laughing, that she was too stupid to do these kinds of things. »I only have enough brain« – she added – »to make my husband take me there. And last year he did «” (32) Without considering the truth content of these points, I want to stress the message to the reader: do not get involved in paid work! Paid work is not a feminine thing. It means that *Nők Lapja* does not really want to provide a Cosmo-type girl alternative, whose time is taken up by their beauty regimen and their horoscopes, *Nők Lapja* only want to make women feel guilt and remorse.

As I pointed out above, politics seldom appears on the pages of *Nők Lapja*. Not only politicians on national level but local politicians and volunteers of NGOs are missing from the magazine. I paid extra attention to one expression during the content analysis. It was *feminism*. This word appeared in the analysed 132 issues 15 times. Five of them had a negative and 10 of them had a positive connotation. It is important to mention that the entire occurrence of feminism was at the beginning of the 1990s, by the end of the decade I did not find it. “Almost every woman and man has a strong aversion towards the word feminism. Quite frankly, I myself postponed the writing of this article. All of the acquaintances asked: You’re not really a feminist, are you? No, I am not” – writes the journalist, setting the tone for the topic. (33.) The actress gives a similar answer to the question: “Do you consider yourself an emancipated woman? – No, I am not, and do not have the desire to be one either.” (34)

If feminism and generally dealing with the interests of women are treated with such disgust, it is not a surprise that women in politics and public life do not fit the profile of magazine. While a few feminists also offered testimonies in *Nők Lapja*. “I believe in feminism and do not mind if many people despise me for it. I cannot accept the prevailing discrimination between genders.” (35) This is no compensation. I think *Nők Lapja* was successful enough to move from the ideology of socialism, which characterised it before 1989 but its new image again carries a one-sided and deformed message about gender roles.

APPENDIX A

Structure of articles of Nők Lapja

1. CURRENT information

1.1. Advertisements

- 1.2. Short feature stories
- 1.3. Front page
- 1.4. Content
2. SERVICE type articles
 - 2.1. Classified and TV guide
 - 2.2. Articles for children
 - 2.3. Household, meals
 - 2.4. Horoscope, esoteric issues, etc.
 - 2.5. Consultation (gardening, legal, childcare etc.)
 - 2.6. Fashion
 - 2.7. Beauty, fitness, healthy foods
 - 2.8. Letters from the readers
 - 2.9. Puzzle, crosswords
 - 2.10. Debate
3. EDUCATION type articles
 - 3.1. Arts (literature, film, books etc.)
 - 3.2. Direct educational (history, politics, psychology etc.)
 - 3.3. Travel, other cultures
 - 3.4. Sex
4. INTERVIEW type articles
 - 4.1. Editorial
 - 4.2. Interview
 - 4.3. Pseudo-interview
 - 4.4. Thesis-interview

APPENDIX B

List of quoted articles

1. How we divorce (1997/14)
2. School of emotions: the Monster is green eyed – jealousy (1992/11)
3. Everyday triangle (1993/11)
4. Daughters without father (1993/17)
5. Loving up till going mad? (1993/34 and 1995/38)
6. Who is the treasurer in the family? (1994/42)
7. Real stories about lies (1995/12)
8. Mother-in-law stories (1997/52)
9. What is your favourite superstition? (1993/8)
10. What do you collect? (1993/3)
11. What do you think about fidelity? (1993/17)
12. What does make you angry? (1993/25)
13. The wonder of reading (1999/36)
14. Why do you want to get married? (1996/20)
15. Silent revolution (1989/4)
16. Portraits from another Hungary – workers in two shifts (1989/5)

17. Peace-making volunteers (1996/2)
18. Family or career? (1998/28)
19. Once again others decide what is good for women (1990/21)
20. Flying off white aprons (1991/9)
21. We are still alive (1990/4)
22. They, me and the disease (1996/8)
23. God created the MP (1992/2)
24. Hungarian fate at Kerepestarcsa (1990/5)
25. Inside stories (1991/6)
26. Just to have a name for the child (1998/17)
27. Happiness beautifies (1999/18)
28. Get married with us! (1993/34)
29. Destinies (1992/2)
30. Successful women. Self-employment with a baby (1991/32)
31. Where have all the men gone? (1995/3)
32. I do not like clever women (1999/14)
33. Feminism is beneficial for men too (1989/45)
34. Do you consider yourself an emancipated female/male? (1999/23)
35. Successful women (1990/42)

APPENDIX C

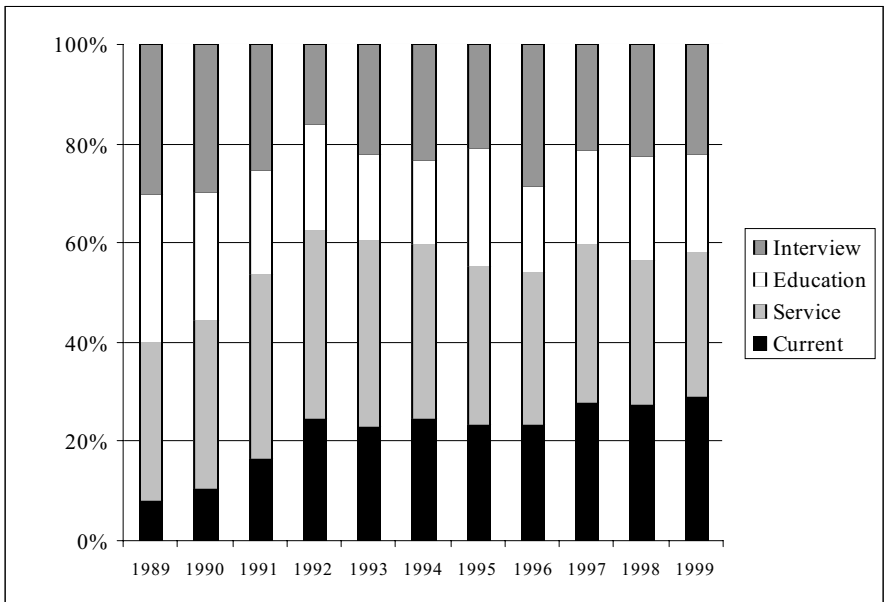


Figure 1. The structure of *Nők Lapja*

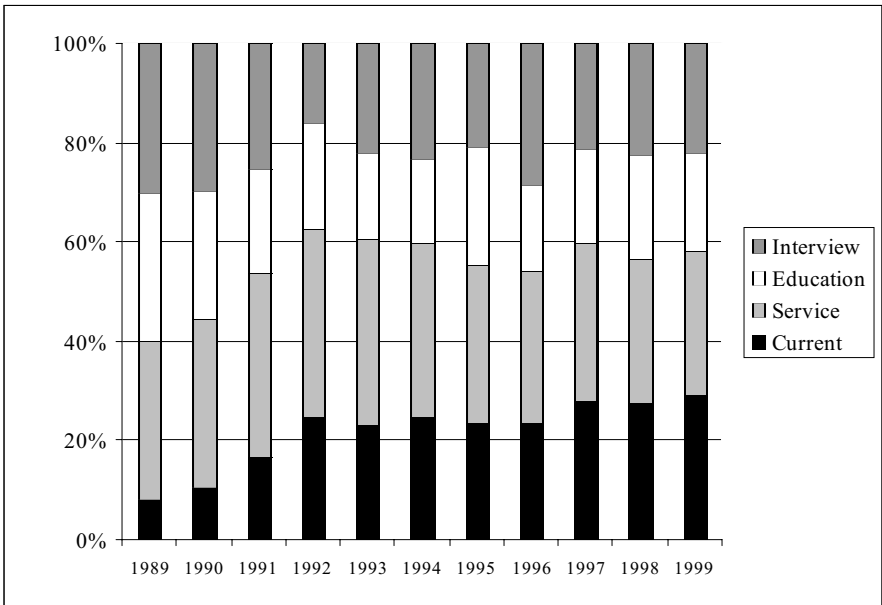


Figure 2. The distribution of articles in the Education group by years

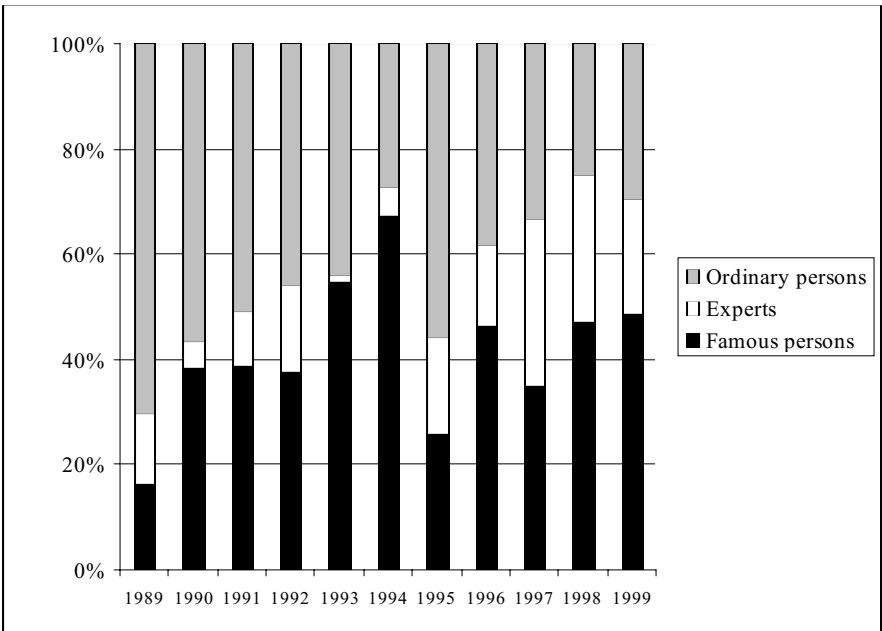


Figure 3. Division of real women in the interviews by years

