Life is a Battlefield: Conceptualizations of Life among Hungarian Adults

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This study attempts to investigate how Hungarians think about life. By applying a nationwide representative survey of Hungarian adults, we wished to answer the following two research questions: a) what are the major metaphorical conceptualizations of life among Hungarians?; and b) what factors, such as socio-economic status and basic value orientations, might influence the prevalence for the metaphors used to talk about life? Our results suggest that there are considerable generational differences: while the negative mindset (in the form of more negative metaphors) is still common within the older generation, there is a shift towards a more positive and more "American" conceptualization of life among younger people in Hungary.

Keywords: Hungarian, life, metaphor, American English, conceptualization, cultural history

JEL-codes: A13, Z13

"What's up with you, my dear Pista?"

"Well, we're all fighting on life's battlefield…"

(Overheard on a tram in Budapest, March 8, 2017)[1]

1. Introduction

What is the meaning of life? The question is age-old, and many possible answers have been offered in philosophy, art or literature for that matter. The Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, in his poem "Ithaka," compared life to the long journey of Odysseus to his home, the island of Ithaka: "As you set out for Ithaka / hope the voyage is a long one, / full of adventure, full of discovery" (Cavafy 1992). The poem depicts life as a purposeful journey, in which the traveler – Odysseus – tries to reach his destination, Ithaka. The adventures that Odysseus has along the journey are the adventures that we experience in life, and which make life interesting and exciting. The end of the journey, Ithaka, is death. Cavafy's understanding of life, therefore, is

[1] Hungarian original: "Na mi van veled Pistám?" "Hát, küzdünk az élet küzdőterén…" (translation by the authors).

based on a very specific narrative—that of the journey of Odysseus. However, the understanding of life as a journey is by no means particular to Cavafy or even literature for that matter. It is a very common, possibly ubiquitous metaphor that is pervasive in everyday language and thought (Lakoff – Johnson 1980). As laid out by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) in what has become known as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), abstract concepts, such as life, can only be understood or made sense of by relying on more concrete concepts, resulting in conceptual metaphors—such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY[2]—that serve as the "principal vehicles for understanding" (Lakoff – Johnson 1997: 133). These conceptual metaphors are manifested in language, in linguistic metaphorical expressions; the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is made evident in everyday expressions such as "as life taking *an unexpected direction*," "knowing where one's *going* in life," doing things in a *roundabout way*," "be at a *crossroads*," etc. The reason why Cavafy's poem makes sense to us and resonates with our own experiences is because LIFE IS A JOURNEY is a basic and conventionalized metaphor (which is then elaborated on in an original and creative manner by Cavafy).

Yet life as a journey is but one possible conceptualization for understanding life. George Lakoff and Mark Turner (1989) note that there are a number of different source concepts through which we can make sense of life, all of which focus on different aspects, thus resulting in different inferences. Such concepts include BURDEN, BUILDING, GAMBLING GAME, STORY, ADVENTURE, PLAY, etc. As explained by Zoltán Kövecses (2010 [2002]), the reason why a target concept is understood through a number of different source domains is because a single source concept is unable to cater to all aspects of a target concept. Given the fact that a target concept such as life can be conceptualized by a host of source domains, the question necessarily arises what motivates speakers to choose one metaphor over the other? This question was elaborated on in detail in Kövecses' (2015) most recent monograph, *Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor*, in which it is claimed that metaphorical conceptualizations arise from an interplay of contexts, such as the immediate physical environment, the social setting, the cultural setting, differential memory, and differential concerns and interests. These motivational forces, taken together, are referred to by Kövecses as "contextual influence" (2015: 71), and constantly mold our metaphorical conceptualizations.

Which of these motivational forces, however, plays a more significant role in making sense of life? Previous cognitive linguistic research (Kövecses 2005; Schmidt – Brdar 2009) on the metaphorical conceptualizations of American English and Hungarian speakers does indicate that cultural history (also referred to as "differential memory" by Kövecses 2015) plays a crucial factor. While American (US) English speakers tend to have a more positive, active and engaged approach to life, Hungarians tend to take a more negative, passive, fatalistic perspective. This difference has been accounted for by Kövecses (2005) as a result of the challenging and often difficult path that Hungary has had to follow throughout its 1,100-year-old history, due to the constant battles with other nations for survival. Thus, Hungarians have a strong cultural bias to think more negatively about life (as, for example, a constant battle—as indicated by the quote at the beginning of the paper) than, for example, Americans. Yet the research that formed the basis of this observation was carried out nearly 15 years ago; further, it was highly limited in the number of respondents (see section 2 for a detailed elaboration). 15 years is a sufficiently long period to re-evaluate past results and to investigate the validity of Kövecses' (2005) observation about the potentially more negative mind-set of Hungarians.

[2] As is customary in cognitive linguistic literature, we will use small caps for the conceptual metaphors and source concepts. Conceptual metaphor theory has now become the dominant view of metaphor – for an overview of its evolution and applications, see Kövecses (2010 [2002]). Nevertheless, over the decades CMT has also been widely criticized within a number of disciplines – see, for example, Cameron (2007), Haser (2005), Kertész and Rákosi (2009), Leezenberg (2001), McGlone (2006), and Rakova (2002).

The paper is structured in the following way: after the Introduction, in section 2 we discuss previous cognitive linguistic studies on the conceptualization of life in Hungarian, as opposed to American English. This section also includes some insights from cross-national surveys showing divergent trends in life satisfaction and happiness in Hungary and in the US. In section 3 we describe the methodology of the research, while in section 4 we analyze the results. In the last, fifth, section we sum up the main findings.

2. Previous research on the metaphorical conceptualization of life in Hungarian

As far as we are aware, the only available study on Hungarian metaphorical conceptualizations of life comes from Köves (2002; cited in Kövecses 2005), who asked twenty Hungarians and twenty Americans (living in Hungary) to write a one-to-two page essay on life. Despite the fact that the word *metaphor* did not appear in the instructions, and the participants were not asked to express their thoughts by resorting to metaphor, the study was a success in the sense that all of the essays drew on metaphors either implicitly (via figurative expressions) or explicitly (by explaining life through the use of an analogy). Köves then analyzed the individual texts by identifying the conceptual metaphors underlying the metaphorical linguistic expressions and drew up a list of the ten most frequently occurring conceptual metaphors in the Hungarian and American essays. These metaphors are depicted in *Table 1*.

Table 1. The 10 most frequent Hungarian and American English conceptualizations of life.
Life is a(n)…

	Hungarian	**American English**
1	struggle/war	precious possession
2	compromise	game
3	journey	journey
4	gift	container
5	possibility	gamble
6	puzzle	compromise
7	labyrinth	experiment
8	game	test
9	freedom	war
10	challenge	play

Source: Kövecses (2005).

Some of the metaphors are shared in both Hungarian and English: thus, LIFE IS A COMPROMISE, LIFE IS A GAME, LIFE IS A JOURNEY and LIFE IS A STRUGGLE/WAR showed up on both lists (Kövecses 2005). Furthermore, the American source domain of PRECIOUS POSSESSION is very close in meaning to the Hungarian GIFT, further increasing the number of common source domains. However, these shared metaphors ranked quite differently in the lists – GIFT ranked only fourth on the Hungarian list, while it was the second prevalent metaphor in the American essays. As for GAME, it figured as only the eighth most popular source domain in the Hungarian essays, while it was the third most frequently used metaphor in the American

conceptualizations. Further, COMPROMISE was only sixth on the American list, while it was the second item on the Hungarian one.

The top three Hungarian source domains were STRUGGLE/WAR, COMPROMISE, and JOURNEY, as opposed to the American PRECIOUS POSSESSION, GAME, and JOURNEY. Accordingly, Hungarians wrote about life as *battles that have to be won*, people *having to fight* throughout life, and people always having to *prove and fight*, which is *exhausting and tiring* most of the time. At the same time, Americans wrote about *life as the most precious commodity*, *something that we have to cherish and take care of*, and something *precious underestimated by others*. Regarding the second most frequently used metaphors on the respective lists, Hungarians wrote about *accepting life* as it is given to them, as opposed to the Americans, who wrote about the *stakes being high* and making their life as good as possible *within the limits and rules of this game*. As for the JOURNEY metaphor, which appears as the third most frequently used conceptualization on both of the lists, the emphases were different in the two languages under comparison. Americans mentioned its goal-orientedness (e.g., *striving to reach our destination* in life), whereas Hungarians focused on the obstacles along the way (e.g., *the road sometimes being bumpy*). What the table suggests is that while the metaphors that are available to both linguistic communities might be more-or-less similar, the differences in attitude towards life arise from which of these metaphors get to be used more often by the respective linguistic communities and thus which become more established and more entrenched in speakers' minds (Kövecses 2005).

Yet how do these different conceptualizations of life arise? Kövecses (2005) claims that the difference can be accounted for by cultural history – in the course of the 1,100 year-long history of Hungary, the country had to wage constant battles for survival, wedged between Germanic-speaking peoples in the West, and Slavic-speaking peoples in the East. Such historical experiences, transmitted through language, arts (e.g., historical paintings and literature), or even school curricula, etc. had an imprint on Hungarian cultural and social history, prompting contemporary Hungarians to think of life in terms of struggle and compromise. On the other hand, one of the foundational metaphors of American culture is LIFE IS ENTERTAINMENT, which originated in the consumption-oriented culture of twentieth-century America. GAME, which surfaced as second on the American list, can be considered as a manifestation of the LIFE IS ENTERTAINMENT metaphor, which is a central metaphor of American culture (Kövecses 2006).

It might be argued that these subtle differences in outlook between Hungarian and American English speakers is in no way revealing, as the results come from a single study with a very limited number of participants. However, another case study that focused on the translatability of linguistic metaphorical expressions of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor from English to Hungarian provide further interesting data. Kövecses (2005) simply took the idiomatic expressions of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor that were provided by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and had these then translated into Hungarian by his students. Most of the (American) English expressions did have a Hungarian counterpart; yet, when these were compared to one another by focusing on the lexical and grammatical differences, subtle yet significant differences could be observed between the two languages, pointing to more general differences in outlook towards love – these are summed up in *Table 2*.

Table 2. Differences in attitude towards love in American English and Hungarian

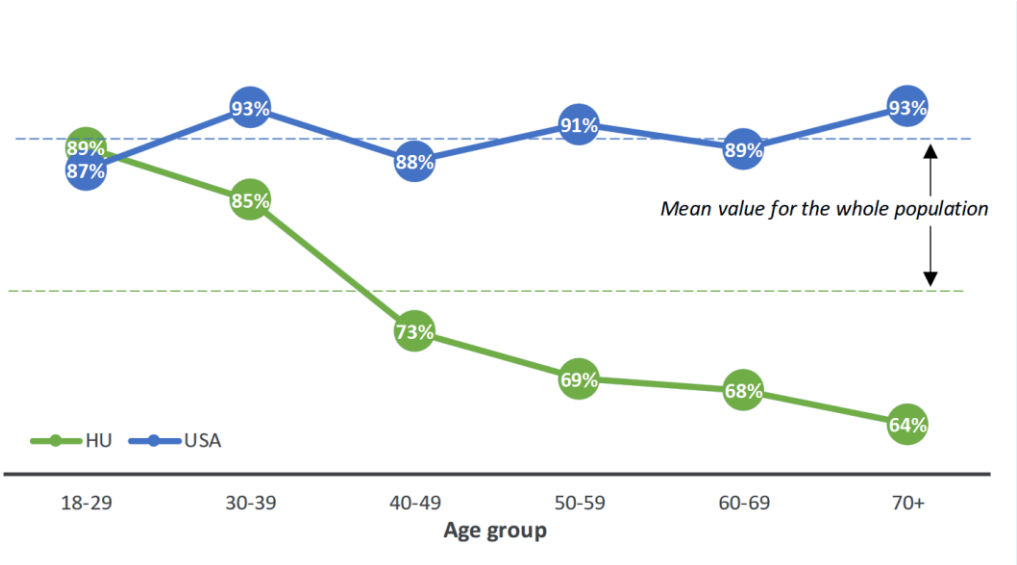
American English	**Hungarian**

more **action-oriented** approach to love	more **passive** attitude to love
more **individualistic, self-controlled** attitude to love	more **fatalistic** attitude to love
more success-oriented attitude to problematic situations in love	**less success-oriented** attitude to problematic situations in love
more extroverted attitude to success in love	**less extroverted** attitude to success in love

Source: Kövecses (2005).

Basically, what Kövecses (2005) found was that while both languages share the LOVE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor, a close inspection of the linguistic metaphorical expressions reveals a significant difference in outlook. It seems that the Hungarian data suggest a more passive, fatalistic, insecure and introverted attitude to love in general, as opposed to the American data, which imply a more active, individualistic, success-oriented and extroverted attitude.[3]

While there is no clear-cut evidence for the psychological reality of the Hungarian mindset outlined above, there are some tentative results from sociology in the form of cross-national value surveys (on their history and application see e.g. Bjørnskov 2006; Hofstede 2001; Inglehart 1997; Knack – Keefer 1997; Pryor 2005), such as the World Values Survey, that do corroborate some of these findings. One of the questions of the WVS is concerned with the feeling of happiness and general satisfaction with life. As *Figures 1a* and *1b* show, the Hungarian and the American responses show quite different trends with respect to these questions. The percentage of those who claim themselves to be happy is basically the same both in Hungary and in the US among those aged between 18 and 29 (87% and 89%, respectively), and their general satisfaction with life is also relatively the same (the difference being only 0.5 percentage points).



[3] Somewhat similar results emerged in a study by Schmidt and Brdar (2009), who analyzed the universality of the LIFE IS A (GAMBLING) GAME metaphor in American English, Croatian and Hungarian.

Figure 1a. Percentage of those who consider themselves to be "very" or "rather" happy.

Source: authors, based on data from the World Values Survey, 5th wave (Hungary: 2009; USA: 2011).

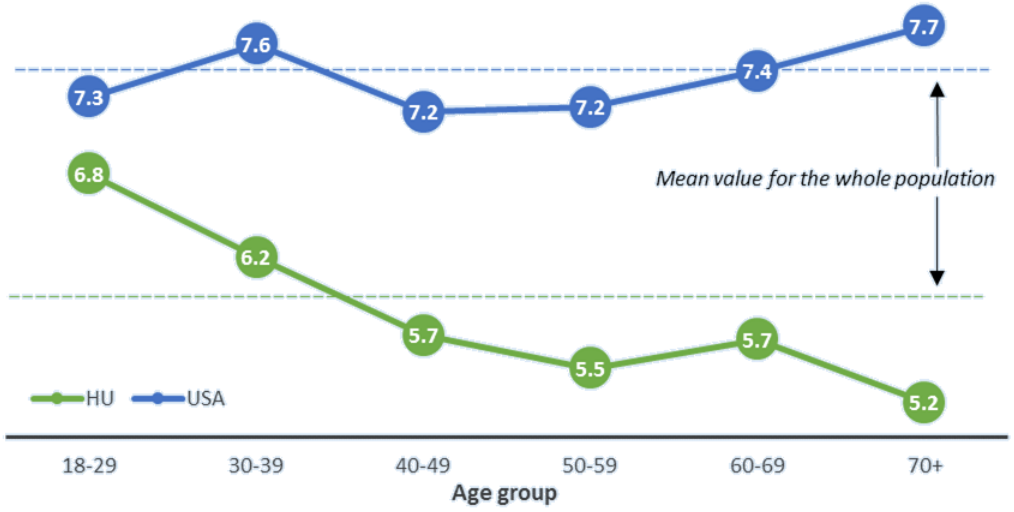


Figure 1b. Average life satisfaction values on a 1–10 scale. 1: completely dissatisfied; 10: completely satisfied.

Source: authors, based on data from the World Values Survey, 5th wave (Hungary: 2009; USA: 2011).

The American data reflect a remarkably stable and even trend, implying that the level of happiness and satisfaction with life remains constant over all the age groups. Nevertheless, the Hungarian data show a somewhat different trend, with figures declining sharply in every single age group. As a result, over the age of 50, the two nations show very different patterns, which do support to some degree the findings reported by Kövecses (2005) regarding the more negative mindset of Hungarians as opposed to the more positive one of Americans. Yet the WVS results also draw attention to the remarkably similar trends found in the younger generations. In a recent paper on the results of a nationwide survey on Hungarian teenagers' conceptualizations of life (Benczes – Ságvári 2018), we argue that this similarity can be accounted for by the effect of a largely American-influenced global youth culture, possibly decreasing the effect of more idiosyncratic and nationally constructed contexts embedded in cultural history, as defined by Kövecses (2005). However, the more negative outlook of the older generations could be explained by both period and cohort effects, namely current negative experiences (such as economic difficulties and social isolation), as well as the impact of early adulthood socialization under socialism. Participants belonging to the over 50 age group were born before 1960, which meant that they spent at least half of their life in an authoritarian regime.

Such results, taken together with the conceptualizations of life and love described above, paint a somewhat dark picture of the Hungarian mentality. Two questions arise immediately:

1) Is it possible for Hungarians to change their outlook?; and 2) Is this outlook still predominant – especially among older generations – today? Kövecses (2005; 2015) emphasized the significance of cultural history in how we metaphorically conceptualize life, explaining the more negative Hungarian mindset by the troubled history of the nation. Yet is this cultural factor still as significant in motivating our metaphorical conceptualizations as it has been nearly fifteen years ago?

In order to understand current attitudes towards life among Hungarians and fill in a substantial gap in the available research, we surveyed Hungarian adults on how they conceptualized LIFE by asking them the simple question: "*What would you compare life with and why?*" (Methodological details are provided in the next section.) We carried out the survey with the aim of answering the following two main questions:

1) What conceptual preferences do Hungarian adults have for life and how similar or how different are these to the results of previous studies?
2) What contexts—social and/or cultural—can be identified as being influential in the emergence of metaphorical conceptualizations?

3. Methodology of research

In order to acquire as much data as possible, we collaborated with a nationwide (omnibus) research carried out in 2016 on attitudes to migration.[4] The total sample size consisted of 995 individuals representing Hungarian adult society based on gender, age, level of education, and type of settlement. The survey contained a variety of additional questions to be used as potential explanatory variables for the identified metaphors. These were the following: items measuring (1) basic personal values; (2) basic work values; (3) frequency of playing traditional (board and card) games; and (4) frequency of playing online games. Importantly, we also included the following two open-ended questions in the survey—with the explicit aim of collecting source domains for life: (1) "*People think about life in very different ways. What would you compare life with and why? Please complete the following sentence. Life is like…*" Right after this question we also asked for a short explanation: (2) "*Please give us a short explanation for your answer!*" The responses were not limited in terms of content and length, and everything that was mentioned by the respondent was written down by the interviewer. With regard to the first question (which asked for a life metaphor), 73 per cent (n=723) of the respondents provided information. For the second question the response rate was somewhat lower: 64 per cent (n=637) of the respondents formulated a short explanation for their respective metaphor.

Needless to say, we are aware of the limitations that this particular method entails. The questionnaires elicited from the participants only a single concept (as an analogy for life), and only a short elaboration was further required from them. For some respondents, a question requiring such level of abstraction might have been unexpected as part of a general survey focusing on more practical issues. Furthermore, a face-to-face interview situation is not "intimate" enough to deliberate on such a complex question, and there was an obvious time pressure on the respondents to come forward with an answer. Such an approach implies that some of the answers might be spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment responses, and not the result of a conscious, deliberated reflection on what life is and how it is understood. Thus, our method is in stark contrast to studies where the subjects had to write an essay, and had definitely more time and space to think and write about life in general.

[4] The fieldwork was administered in October 2016 by TÁRKI Zrt.

Nevertheless, in spite of the limitations of our study, we believe that they are compensated for by two significant factors. First, as far as we know, never before has such a large-scale, nation-wide research been carried out on metaphorical conceptualization among adults (including life for that matter). Further, the survey is representative, which means that the patterns that we were able to identify in the questionnaires are generalizable and can thus be considered as providing a relatively accurate picture of contemporary Hungarian conceptualizations of life. This cannot be said for any of the previous studies, which were either extremely limited in their number of subjects (Köves 2002; cited in Kövecses 2005), or the identified metaphorical conceptualizations were based on linguistic introspection and/or limited corpus data (Kövecses 2005; Schmidt – Brdar 2009). Second, the questionnaire also contained standard demographic questions and those related to socio-economic status (SES), household composition, and value orientations, which implies that we could investigate the correlations (if any existed) between preferences for source domains and sociological variables, and accordingly tease out the socio-contextual factors that can motivate or influence metaphorical conceptualizations.

4. Discussion of the results

As a first step of the analysis and to answer our first research question—"What conceptual preferences do Hungarians have for life and how similar or how different are these to the results of previous studies?"—, we examined the major metaphorical conceptualizations of life in the responses. To prepare the dataset for evaluation and coding, we first had to filter out a number of responses; these included answers that were either too vague or obscure, or were not related to the question at all. In the end, we had a final set of 644 responses that could be unambiguously coded as a valid metaphor for life. Before moving on to the actual list of metaphors, it is worth looking at the differences between those who were able and those who were not able to provide an answer that could be coded as a valid life metaphor. A simple analysis of the most basic socio-demographic variables/factors suggests that age and level of education might influence somebody's ability and/or inclination toward the verbalization of metaphorical conceptualizations. Simply put, our results indicate that those who were less than sixty years old and had a higher than primary level of education were more inclined to provide a valid response (see *Table 3*).

Table 3. Presence of valid metaphors according to basic socio-demographic variables.

Socio-demographic variable	Category	% of those with a valid metaphor
Age	18-24	71.9%
	25-39	70.6%
	40-59	67.4%
	60+	53.7%
Level of education	Primary	59.0%
	Secondary	71.2%
	Tertiary	69.6%

Source: authors.

At this point we do not have the necessary data to identify the exact relationship between age and the inclination to provide a valid life metaphor. However, with regard to level of education, it can be hypothesized that a higher level of education leads to better linguistic skills,

and which then might help in the verbalization of metaphorical thinking. Despite the fact that metaphor is primarily a conceptual device and not just a matter of language, it is nevertheless manifested most evidently in language. A greater competence in language (ranging across vocabulary, grammar, communicative skills, etc.) might provide a wider range of linguistic experience that can be utilized for analysis and reflection (see also Hoff 2006), which can then serve as a basis for the expression of metaphorical source domains. Interestingly, similar results emerged in our survey among Hungarian teenagers (Benczes – Ságvári 2018), where studying in either a secondary vocational or grammar school increased the likelihood of providing a valid life metaphor, as compared to students in primary and vocational schools. Altogether we were able to identify and code 137 unique metaphors among our adult respondents—the (partial) results are provided in *Table 4* (the table shows only those metaphors that had at a minimum of 10 occurrence in the dataset).

Table 4. Hungarian adults' responses: Life is a(n)…

Metaphor		**No. of occurrences**	**% (out of total sample, n=641)**
1	Rollercoaster	59	8.9%
2	Struggle/war	54	8.4%
3	Game	33	5.1%
4	Adventure	32	5.0%
5	Challenge	28	4.4%
6	Treadwheel	27	4.2%
7	Journey	26	4.1%
8	Theater	20	3.1%
9	Weather	18	2.8%
10	Cake	17	2.7%
11	Gift	16	2.5%
12	Movie	15	2.3%
13	Cycle	11	1.7%
	Opportunity	11	1.7%
	Train	11	1.7%

Source: authors.

A quick glance at *Table 4* makes it immediately evident that the metaphorical conceptualizations of Hungarians today fall somewhere in between the results of Hungarian and American English, as reported by Köves (2002; cited in Kövecses 2005) fourteen years ago. Interestingly, STRUGGLE/WAR still features as a prevalent metaphorical theme among Hungarian adults (accounting for 8.4% of the data), just as it did back in 2002. The reasons that the respondents gave for selecting STRUGGLE/WAR paint a rather dire picture of past experiences and future expectations: "I went through a lot of difficulties," "nothing's for free; you have to fight for everything," "today's youth must fight to survive," "everything gets worse by the day," etc. The prevalence of the STRUGGLE/WAR metaphor is amplified by the CHALLENGE metaphor, where many of the explanations that we received fell more rather in line with conceptualizing life as a struggle ("each day we must struggle with life's difficulties," "struggles and difficulties," "you must fight," etc.). This prevailing pessimistic streak does seem to corroborate Kövecses' (2005) claim regarding the more negative mindset of Hungarians as compared to that of Americans.

The pessimistic attitude of the STRUGGLE/WAR and CHALLENGE conceptualizations seems to be counterbalanced to some degree by the LIFE IS A GAME metaphor, which appeared as the third most frequent conceptualization on our list, as compared to 2002, when it was only the eighth. It was, however, the third most common source domain on the American English list fourteen years ago, which might be explained by the fact that according to Kövecses (2006), one of the foundational metaphors of American culture is LIFE IS ENTERTAINMENT, and the LIFE IS A GAME metaphor is one its manifestations. Note that the LIFE IS A PLAY metaphor, which is also a manifestation of the LIFE IS ENTERTAINMENT metaphor, also featured on the American English list in 2002 (as the tenth most common choice); the somewhat similar LIFE IS A THEATER and LIFE IS A MOVIE emerged on our list as well, as the eighth and the twelfth most popular answers, respectively. It seems that contemporary Hungarian conceptualizations do reflect a more American-oriented outlook by adopting the LIFE IS ENTERTAINMENT metaphor in some form or another (game, theater, movie, etc. – note that there were also two occurrences of the LIFE IS A SOAP OPERA metaphor in our data).

Unpredictability also appeared as a recurrent theme in the answers of many of our respondents, who compared life to a rollercoaster ride (which was the most frequent metaphor on our list), emphasizing its unpredictable nature ("once you're up, once you're down"). Unpredictably showed up as a main meaning focus in other metaphors as well, such as WIND, SEESAW, WEATHER, and even ADVENTURE, which appeared fourth on our list (though in the latter case this unpredictability was construed as something exciting: "you never know what's going to happen," "so many things can happen," "lots of interesting things happen"). These conceptualizations do seem to tie in with the observations made by both Kövecses (2005) and Schmidt and Brdar (2009) with regard to the more fatalistic outlook of Hungarians (as compared to Americans)—things happen to them, and not by them. This fatalism was echoed in the explanations given for the TREADWHEEL metaphor as well, according to which life is "monotonous and you can't get out of it." Here, however, respondents also emphasized life's predictability and considered it as a very negative feature.

There were also a couple of metaphors on the 2002 Hungarian list that were less popular in 2016 – most notably the JOURNEY metaphor, which was the third most common fourteen years ago in *both* the Hungarian and the American English data, and which appeared only as the seventh most popular choice on our list. At the same time, COMPROMISE, which was the second most frequent conceptualization in 2002 in the Hungarian data, had only three occurrences in our dataset (and thus did not even make it into *Table 4*).

What possible factors, however, drive these shifts in subjects' preferences for metaphorical conceptualizations? In order to answer our second research question ("What contexts—social and/or cultural—can be identified as being influential in the emergence of metaphorical conceptualizations?"), we next analyzed the relationship between metaphors and individual characteristics by looking at socio-economic status and various other factors. Since our sample in terms of its size is insufficient for an in-depth statistical analysis, we will highlight our findings for the top five metaphors (ROLLERCOASTER, STRUGGLE/WAR, GAME, ADVENTURE, CHALLENGE).

In terms of gender, the only source domain that shows a significant difference in its occurrence between men and women is GAME, which seems to be more common in the former group. Similarly, this metaphor's "popularity" is in a linear relationship with age: it is overrepresented among youth (the 18 to 24 age group) and particularly among young adults (the 25 to 39 age group), while it is underrepresented among the older generation. A further metaphor that shows a statistically significant correlation with age is the STRUGGLE/WAR metaphor, which is basically non-existent in the youngest generation in our sample (the 18 to 24 age group), and is underrepresented among young adults (the 25 to 39 age group), while it

was the most frequently verbalized metaphor for those aged over 60. This confirms the prevailing phenomenon that the negative mindset of Hungarians reflected both in general life satisfaction (as shown earlier) and in metaphorical conceptualization is strongly age-dependent. Two further metaphors also show a statistically weak, but apparent relation with age. Life conceptualized as an ADVENTURE or JOURNEY were articulated in the youngest age group (the 18 to 24 age group) by an above-average probability, and in parallel, these metaphors were less likely to appear among those above the age of 60. The level of education, as our third key socio-demographic variable, does not show any unambiguous, well-interpretable, and statistically reliable relationship with any of the top metaphors.

A few interesting findings also appear in the relationship between the personal value orientations of the subjects and their chosen life metaphors.[5] In brief, preference for the STRUGGLE/WAR metaphor on the one hand and for both the ADVENTURE and GAME metaphors on the other hand form two (more-or-less) opposite poles. Those who verbalized STRUGGLE/WAR show a stronger attachment for the values of security, conformity, traditions, and universalism, and a weaker attachment for the values of self-direction, hedonism, and achievement. By contrast, the source domains of ADVENTURE and GAME were more connected to the values of self-direction, hedonism, and achievement, and showed less attachment to conformity and traditions.

5. Conclusions

Due to the different methodologies that have been applied in previous studies on Hungarian life metaphors, a direct comparison of the results of our study with past research is not quite possible, but some tentative generalizations can nevertheless be made. First and foremost, the 2016 data seem to lie somewhere in-between the Hungarian and American English conceptualizations of 2002. While STRUGGLE and WAR (also in the form of a difficult CHALLENGE) are still prevalent metaphorical themes among all the age groups of our survey, the typically American-oriented LIFE IS ENTERTAINMENT metaphor seems to have taken root in Hungarian conceptualizations, in the forms of LIFE IS A GAME (which was the third most popular answer in our data), LIFE IS A MOVIE, or LIFE IS A THEATER.

The results of our study also suggest that age and certain basic values (that might also be age-related) seem to be a major factor in interpreting the occurrence of metaphors among different social groups. In other words, our data point to the fact that metaphorical conceptualizations for life are not necessarily stable in time, and both generational and cohort effects might have an impact on which metaphor proves to be dominant in certain age groups. Since our research can provide only a snapshot of the current situation in Hungary, it remains a question for future researches to investigate whether a shift from the older generations' overly negative mindset to the more positive and probably more "American" conceptualization of younger generations does in fact signal a real transformation in Hungarians' metaphorical thinking about life, or is this just a "normal" or usual behavior of young people that inevitably changes as they get old(er) and life does indeed become a battlefield.

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[5] We used the short version of the Human Values Scale developed by Shalom Schwartz with 10 items, each measuring the importance of a specific human value. The 10 basic human values are the following: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. For more information on the theoretical foundations and practical usage of this survey tool, see Schwartz (2007).

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