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How Do Bulgarians Understand the Experience of Interpersonal Arguing?

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ABSTRACT: The paper reports the results from a study of how Bulgarians understand the experience of interpersonal arguing. The study was conducted among 287 Bulgarians (39% male, 61% female), having an average age of 37 years. We assessed their motivations, understandings and emotional reactions related to interpersonal arguing, as well as their tolerance of status inequalities in society, and their willingness to argue at work. Poland and Ukraine were natural comparisons because of their shared political histories in the last several generations. We also did a comparison with the U.S., as a general standard of comparison because our theories and measures originated in the U.S. We found that: 1) there were very few sex differences between the male and female Bulgarian respondents; and 2) on the whole, Bulgarians were less concerned with any relational consequences from interpersonal arguing. These results were interpreted in relation to certain specifics of Bulgarian culture such as the high gender inequality index and the low level of interpersonal trust.

KEYWORDS: argument frames, Bulgaria, emotional reactions, interpersonal arguing, interpersonal trust, motivations

1. INTRODUCTION

In the present text, we report results from the first systematic investigation of predispositions and understandings of interpersonal arguing conducted in Bulgaria. The study is part of a larger project aimed at describing how people from different cultures and nations understand and react to interpersonal arguing (see Hample, 2018, for a summary of early work). The process of offering, testing, and perhaps agreeing on reasons is a fundamental social experience. People argue in order to decide what to cook, what route to drive, and whether to buy a house. This can go well or badly, the latter leading to the possibility that people might experience a punishing interaction. An extensive history of punishment can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, resulting in defensive or welcoming starts to future disagreements. This should affect people's motivations, comprehensions, and feelings about arguing.

More particularly, we were interested in investigating the following research questions.

RQ1: What are the motivations, understandings and emotional reactions of Bulgarians as regards interpersonal arguing?

RQ2: Are these motivations, understandings and emotional reactions associated with respondents' sex or age?¹

RQ3: How are the measures of motivations, understandings, and emotional reactions associated with power distance?

The text is divided into five sections. In the second section, we present some relevant specifics of Bulgarian culture; the third section is concerned with methodology – we describe the instrumentation we used, as well as the way this instrumentation was employed in order to gather empirical data from Bulgaria; in the fourth section, we report the results from our study; and in the fifth section, we provide discussion of these results.

2. SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

2.1 *General introduction*

Bulgaria is a country in Southeast Europe with a population of around 7 million people. Its modern history began in 1878 when it gained independence from the Ottoman empire. From 1878 to 1944 the country was a monarchy, but it had a constitution that was quite liberal for its time. There were many different political parties in parliament and they engaged in public debates on a variety of topics. After 1944, the country became a part of the Soviet-led Eastern bloc, which curtailed the expression of many political views, especially any critical of the Bulgarian Communist Party. These restrictions were largely removed after the revolutions of 1989, when the country transitioned to liberal democracy and market-based economy. Currently, Bulgaria is a member of both NATO and the EU. Public debates are broadcasted daily on national television and freely discussed in other media. As in other modern cultures, face-to-face arguing is a normal fact of life.

2.2 *Lack of interpersonal trust*

An important characteristic of interpersonal communication in Bulgaria is the low level of interpersonal trust (also called “social trust”), reflected in psychological research, folk tales and sayings.² This evidence can be divided into direct and indirect. The country's level of interpersonal trust has been measured directly as a part of the European Social Survey (ESS). The following item has served as a measurement tool: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?” Different waves of the ESS have consistently shown Bulgaria to be the country

¹ Sex differences are among the most inconsistent results we have uncovered world-wide (see Hampe, 2018, for a summary of about a dozen countries).

² Simple stories and proverbs are resources for socializing children into their cultures (Goodwin & Wenzel, 1979).

with lowest level of interpersonal trust in Europe (See Clench-Aas & Holte 2021; Tilkidjiev 2011). Furthermore, a lack of interpersonal trust is expressed directly by some Bulgarian sayings, including for example: “I don’t trust my father, let alone you” (“Аз баща си не вярвам, че тебе ли?”); “God, protect me from my friends, I will protect myself from my enemies” (“Да ме опази Господ от приятелите ми, а от враговете си сам ще се пазя”); “An eye must see, a hand must touch” (“Око да види, ръка да пипне”; meaning: “I don’t believe until I see and touch”). Indirect evidence includes findings that the use of deception is widespread in Bulgarian culture. The more people deceive, the less they do and should trust each other.

Other indirect evidence may be found in a study conducted by Jonason et al. (2020) comparing the Dark Triad traits (narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism) in 49 countries, including Bulgaria. Bulgarian levels of Narcissism and Psychopathy were below average for the set, but Machiavellianism was the second highest. Machiavellianism is a personality trait marked by a calculating attitude toward human relationships and a belief that ends justify means, however ruthless. Thus, a Machiavellian is one who views other people more or less as objects to be manipulated in pursuit of his or her goals and this manipulation can include deception. The original scale for measuring Machiavellianism (the Mach IV scale; Christie and Geis 1970) includes of 20 items, including a measure of interpersonal deceit. Furthermore, research on the Bulgarian political scene (see Nedelcheva 2018), as well as the low Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of the country³ can be interpreted as suggesting that Machiavellianism is widespread among Bulgarian politicians in particular. Machiavellianism and lack of interpersonal trust are associated (see Blötner and Bergold 2021).

Other indirect evidence concerns trickery, which is featured in many Bulgarian folk tales. Two of the most well-known folk characters are associated with trickery – the fox and Tricky Peter. The fox is portrayed as a tricky and cunning animal modeling such a person, whereas Tricky Peter often engages in intellectual duels known as “надхитряване” ([nadhitrjavane]) or “надлъгване” ([nadlagvane]). Both words can be translated as “outwitting”, the later being etymologically related to the verb “лъжа”, which means “to lie” (i.e., “to tell a lie”). Finally, many sayings describe dishonest people. They can be divided into two groups – sayings that describe people who are lying and those that describe people who have put on some kind of a mask. The former include for example: “Lying to you in your eyes” (“Лъже те в очите”); “Lying like an old gypsy” (“Лъже като дърт циганин”); “We are lying that we are working, they are lying that they’re paying us” (“Ние ги лъжем, че работим, те ни лъжат, че ни плащат”; a saying that appeared during the time of socialism.). The latter include “Having neither heard nor seen” (“Ни чул, ни видял”); “Having neither eaten nor smelled onion” (“Ни лук ял, ни лук мирисал”); “The thief says: catch the thief!” (“Крадецът вика: дръжте крадеца!”).

³ The CPI of the country is only 43, which is close to the average for the set of 180 countries that the CPI ranks, but seems low considering the fact that special measures have been implemented in an attempt to reduce the corruption in the country as a part of its integration into the EU. Since its EU accession in 2007, Bulgaria has remained the EU member state with lowest CPI.

2.3 Sex differences

Sex differences are interesting in the global project, in part because they are inconsistent from one nation to another. Jonason et al. (2020) found a negative correlation between the level of Machiavellianism in a country and its level of gender inequality. Bulgaria, however, seems to be an outlier in this respect. Despite the high level of Machiavellianism, Bulgaria's Gender Equality Index is 0.206, among the highest levels of gender inequality in Europe. The ESS data also indicate that the Bulgarian people ascribe rather low importance to the value of equality – both relative to the importance they ascribe to other values and relative to the importance other European peoples assign.⁴ These findings are also reflected in the 2018 public debate about the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention' on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (better known as “the Istanbul convention”). The debate displayed friction between the values of equality and respect for tradition (Valchev 2022). One possible reason why the convention was not ratified in Bulgaria is because Bulgarians valued respect for tradition more than equality (Valchev 2022, 198).

3. METHOD

3.1 Instrumentation

The global project uses an inventory of self-report instruments that allow people to tell us directly what they think about face-to-face arguing.⁵ The instruments are in three broad categories – motivations, argument frames, and personalization of conflict. We also use a measure of power-distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), which is not argument-specific. This measures the degree to which people expect and respect status differentials in society. Those who do have high levels of such expectation have high scores on power distance. They are less likely to have egalitarian views about elders, supervisors, pastors, political leaders, and so forth. This cultural view has obvious implications for who is entitled to disagree with whom, and whether reason exchanges are supposed to be more important than status differentials when arguments occur. Power distance has been strongly associated with many of our argument-specific measures (e.g., Debowska-Kozłowska & Hample, 2022; Hample, Leal, & Suro, 2021; Khomenko, Hample, & Santibáñez, 2022; Mambert & Hample, 2022).

The category “motivations” contains two traditional and two newly developed instruments. The two traditional instruments measure argumentativeness (people's eagerness to argue on the merits of an issue, examining reasons, evidence, and the quality of conclusions; see Infante & Rancer, 1982) and verbal aggressiveness (the inclination to engage in ad hominem attacks: rather than contesting the other person's case, the individual

⁴ ESS measures the importance ascribed to the value of equality by asking respondents about the extent to which they are like the person from the following description: “He thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. He believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life.”

⁵ All of the measurements in use have substantial international literatures, providing leads for further investigation of interesting results (Hample, 2005, 2018; Hample & Cionea, 2010; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Rancer & Avtgis, 2014).

instead attacks the other's character, history, family, and so forth; Infante & Wigley, 1986), whereas the two newly developed instruments measure one's willingness to argue with one's supervisor and one's willingness to argue with a co-worker (Khomenko, Hample, & Santibáñez, 2022; Mamberti & Hample, 2022). Furthermore, the items from each of the two traditional instruments are divided into two subclasses. Argumentativeness includes argumentativeness-approach and argumentativeness-avoid, whereas verbal aggressiveness is measures prosocial and antisocial impulses.

The category "argument frames" contains eight instruments that can be divided into three groups (see Hample 2005, 2018). The instruments from the first group are self-oriented.⁶ They measure utility (getting or preserving some valued thing), dominance (arguing to display that one is more important than the other person), identity display (giving reasons that the arguer deserves to be regarded in some desirable way, e.g., as a generous sister), and play (arguing for the entertainment of it) respectively. The instruments from the second group are other-oriented. They measure blurting (people who self-report that they blurt a lot are not genuinely connecting to or respecting the other person), cooperation (whether one argues competitively or cooperatively) and civility (whether the respondent believes that arguments are pleasant, mutually helpful interactions or the reverse) respectively. The third group contains only one instrument, professional contrast (here, people indicate whether they agree with argument scholars about the nature of argument, or take common but less sophisticated views; for instance, they say whether arguing causes violence or is an alternative to it, whether arguing is relationship-damaging or can be relationally constructive, and so forth).

The category "personalization of conflict" contains six instruments. Four items are self-reports of emotions one has experienced in situation of interpersonal conflict. They measure direct personalization (clearly reporting that they take conflicts personally), persecution feelings (saying that they believe that other people start conflicts just to pick on the respondent), stress reactions (reporting both physical and psychological symptoms of stress), and positive conflict valence (saying whether they enjoy or dislike being in an argument) respectively. The other two scales are cognitive in nature, although emotional connections are obvious. They measure positive and negative relational projections respectively (people can say that conflicts are destructive to relationships, helpful, both or neither).

All instruments described above contain multiple item self-report scales. Many are in the Appendix of Hample (2018). The others are in Infante and Rancer (1982; argumentativeness), Infante and Wigley (1986; verbal aggression), Yoo et al. (2011; power distance), and Hample (2022; arguing with boss and coworker). Internal consistency is in Table 1. Only stress reactions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$) fell below the standard minimum of .70.

⁶ These scales ask people to self-report impulses that lead themselves and others to argue (previous work indicates that respondents do not clearly distinguish between why they argue and why others do, at least on these instruments; e.g., Hample, Han, & Payne, 2010).

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, Male and Female Means for Bulgaria

	N	Alpha	Mean	SD	Male	Female	t	d
Power Dist	261	.79	3.24	1.87	3.49	3.08	1.68	
Argue Boss	259	.90	6.61	2.12	6.77	6.51	0.95	
Argue Cowrk	258	.87	6.91	1.90	7.15	6.76	1.64	
Arg Avoid	255	.84	5.55	1.82	5.57	5.54	0.12	
Arg Approach	260	.82	6.02	1.60	6.11	5.95	0.76	
VA Antisocial	250	.83	4.57	1.71	4.70	4.51	0.89	
VA Prosocial	257	.80	6.32	1.55	6.23	6.34	-0.52	
Utility	258	.85	5.37	1.90	5.72	5.20	2.19*	.28
Identity	264	.75	5.85	1.54	5.96	5.78	0.91	
Dominance	261	.82	4.46	2.06	4.98	4.21	2.93**	.38
Play	267	.79	4.37	2.22	4.75	4.11	2.30**	.29
Blurting	258	.84	5.30	1.76	5.54	5.17	1.68	
Cooperation	258	.76	7.10	1.61	7.05	7.11	-0.30	
Civility	257	.71	6.05	1.33	5.84	6.19	-2.01*	-.26
Prof Contrast	263	.89	6.75	2.19	6.48	6.93	-1.58	
Direct Personl	250	.77	5.52	1.71	5.68	5.42	1.19	
Stress	250	.69	5.56	1.89	5.46	5.63	-0.71	
Persecution	254	.75	4.92	1.79	5.17	4.77	1.79	
Pos Relatnl	252	.83	5.40	1.78	5.46	5.35	0.48	
Neg Relatnl	252	.73	6.64	1.65	6.65	6.64	0.02	
Pos Valence	253	.83	4.20	1.95	4.44	4.02	1.65	

Notes. Means are on a scale of 1 - 10. The final item from the Cooperation scale was dropped to improve reliability. Typical sex subsamples were 95 males and 150 females. Welch's t tests were used. Alpha refers to Cronbach's alpha, and d is Cohen's d.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

3.2 The Bulgarian Study

All instruments were translated and back-translated into Bulgarian (translations are available from the authors). Since most of the ideas and measures were developed in the U.S., we aimed to evaluate whether the U.S. ideas and vocabulary have clear parallels in Bulgaria. The noun "argumentation" exists in the Bulgarian language as a loan word (from Latin) and practically has the same meaning as in English, the verb for arguing belongs to the same morphological family ("аргументирам (се)" [argumentiram (se)]) and has a meaning more precise than the English verb "to argue". It means to put forward reasons in support of a thesis and is not directly related to interpersonal conflicts. The noun "argument" is also not directly related to interpersonal conflicts. It only refers to a set of premises and a conclusion that these premises entail. The English words "to argue" and "argument" were eventually translated as "споря" [sporja] and "спор" [spor] respectively. The survey was conducted online. It was completed by 287 Bulgarians, a convenience sample recruited in several ways by the first author. A commercial agency was used for 100 respondents, half male and half female. Other respondents were recruited

in a Bulgarian high school, and some of their parents also completed the survey. Finally, the first author's personal contacts were used to supply the remaining responses. Overall, 38% of respondents were male, and 61% were female. Their average age was 36.7 years ($SD = 15.5$). Since we report some age analyses, we have included a histogram of the age distribution in Figure 1. That figure shows a concentration of college-aged respondents, and then another between the ages of 40 and 60.

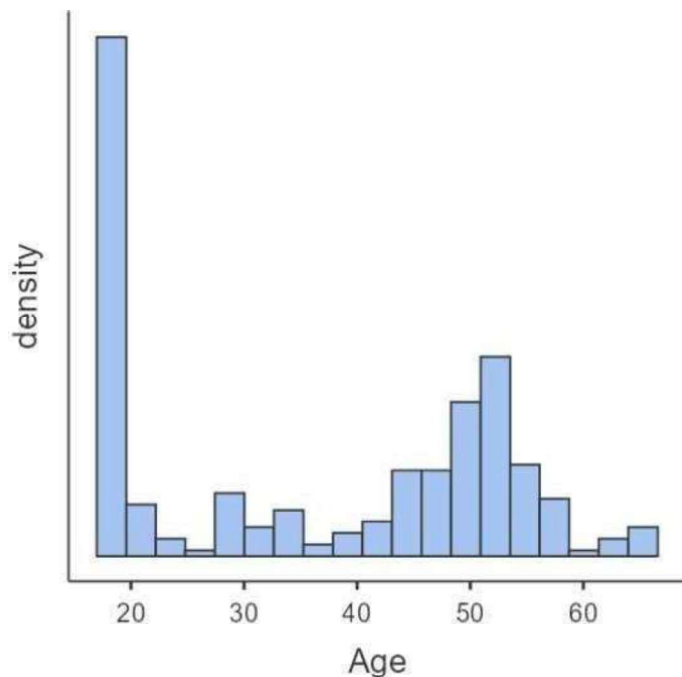


Figure 1: Distribution of Ages in Bulgarian Sample

4. RESULTS

4.1 Bulgarian mean scores

In order to answer our first research question, we looked into the Bulgarian mean scores. For comparison we have also reported scores from other nations, and these are reported in Table 2. In the case of the Ukrainian data, we prefer to report our first study (Khomenko & Hample, 2019) rather than the later Ukraine study, which collected data from a nation more immediately facing war. Polish data are from Debowska-Kozłowska and Hample (2022) and the U.S. data are from Hample and Irions (2015).

Table 2: Comparison of Bulgarian, Polish, Ukrainian, and US Mean Scores

	Bulgaria	Poland	Ukraine	US	F	post hoc
Power Dist	3.24	1.95	–	–	84.80***	B>P
Arg Avoid	5.55	5.96	5.35	5.77	8.31***	U<P,S
Arg Approach	6.02	6.04	6.09	5.76	4.28**	U>S
VA Antisocial	4.57	3.74	4.37	4.58	17.34***	B>P; P<U,S
VA Prosocial	6.32	6.71	6.74	6.36	7.72***	B<P; S<P,U
Utility	5.37	5.14	5.17	5.32	1.48	
Identity	5.85	7.62	6.26	6.57	72.61***	B<P,U,S; P>U,S
Dominance	4.46	4.48	4.68	4.44	1.20	
Play	4.37	4.03	4.73	4.44	5.06**	P<U
Blurting	5.30	5.16	5.17	5.11	0.75	
Cooperation	7.10	7.38	7.28	6.83	9.64***	S<P,U
Civility	6.05	6.61	3.83	6.26	197.14***	B<P; B>U; U<PS
Prof Contrast	6.75	6.48	5.56	6.29	17.24***	B>U; U<P,S
Direct Personl	5.52	6.67	5.86	5.82	16.47***	B<P; P>S,U
Stress	5.56	6.43	5.26	5.70	16.33***	B<P; P>S,U
Persecution	4.92	5.32	4.76	4.59	9.36***	P>S,U
Pos Relatnl	5.40	5.92	5.13	6.02	23.80***	B<P,S; U<P,S
Neg Relatnl	6.64	7.03	6.75	6.06	26.69***	B<P,S; P>S; U>S
Pos Valence	4.20	3.43	3.91	4.12	8.35***	B>P; S>P

Notes. Means are on a scale of 1 - 10. Typical *df* for the Welch's *F* test were (3, 620). For Games-Howell post hoc tests, the U.S. data are identified by S, with first letters for the other nations; only significant post tests are noted. Bulgarian (B) differences are reported first.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

As the post hoc tests in Table 2 indicate, Bulgaria often produced significantly different scores than the other nations, especially Poland. Bulgarian respondents were more comfortable with status inequalities than Polish respondents, they were more antisocial, less interested in identity displays or civility, less worried about negative emotional reactions to conflict, and less concerned about relational consequences of either sort following on disagreements. Naturally, these remarks bear as much on Polish results as on Bulgarian ones, but we see evidence that residents of those nations do not experience interpersonal argument in quite the same ways. In contrast, Bulgaria and Ukraine generated similar responses.

U.S. data are sometimes used as a baseline in this program of studies. Bulgaria and the U.S. contrasted in only a few instances. Bulgarians were less concerned about identity demonstration than U.S. respondents, were less optimistic that disagreements could improve personal relationships, were also less likely to worry about negative relational effects, and generally enjoyed interpersonal disagreement more. The main theme of these differences seems to be that Bulgarians see arguing as a less consequential sort of interaction than U.S. respondents.

Bulgarians have less orientation (awareness? interest?) toward the possibility of using one's arguments to forward or defend desired elements on one's own public identity. But they have fairly similar scores on other measures that reflect social awareness (e.g., prosociality, cooperation, civility, and professional contrast), so this identity result may be specific to how Bulgarians present self in interaction (Goffman, 1959).

4.2 Sex and age

Our second research question concerned sex and age. The results for self-reported sex are in Table 1. A first approach to this question is simply the percentage of sex differences. Omitting power distance, which is not specifically an argumentation variable, Bulgarians showed significant differences in 20% of the comparisons (4 of 20). Internationally, this figure is fairly low in our investigations, which have returned results from 0% to about 80%.

The significant sex differences were these. Bulgarian males had higher scores for utility, dominance, and play, and a lower score for civility, compared to women. Where we have found sex differences in other nations, the pattern has generally been that men were more aggressive and women more worried and socially careful. The Bulgarian differences fit this description where there were contrasts. However, the more salient result is that Bulgarian men and women seemed to have essentially the same orientations and understandings of interpersonal arguing in most respects.

We evaluate age differences as correlations with the other variables. Those results are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5. These tables show correlations among each main group of measures – motivations, frames, and emotional reactions.

Table 3 shows how age correlates with the motivation instruments. With the exception of a positive relationship between age and the motivation to be prosocial in interaction, age had little to do with motivations. The one significant result, however, was consistent with our findings other nations that arguing aggressiveness seems to decline with age.

Table 3: Correlations among Age, Power Distance, and Motivation Measures

	Age	PowDis
Power Distance	-.08	
ArguBoss	.14	-.21***
ArguCoworker	.10	-.12
Argument Avoid	.13	.19**
Argument Approach	.00	.03
VA-Antisocial	-.07	.25***
VA-Prosocial	.24***	-.01

Note. Sample sizes were between 232 and 255.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

In Table 4 we see the relationships between age and the frames variables. Older respondents were more focused on utility as a reason for arguing and were less likely to

see argumentation as entertainment. They were less likely to blurt, and had a more cooperative orientation to interpersonal disagreement.

Table 4: Correlations among Age, Power Distance, and Argument Frames

	Age	PowDis
Power Distance	-.08	
Utility	.14*	.24***
Identity	.06	.52***
Dominance	.00	.40***
Play	-.22***	.18**
Blurring	-.13*	.22***
Cooperation	.33***	-.09
Civility	.10	-.14*
Prof Contrast	.07	-.19**

Note. Sample sizes ranged from 247 to 260.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Finally, Table 5 shows whether or not age was associated with feelings and emotion-connected cognitions about disagreement. These were clearly connected. Older people took conflicts more personally, were more stressed by them, saw fewer chances of improving a relationship by means of conflict, worried more about harming relationships via disagreement, and were generally more negative about the opportunity to engage in arguing. These emotional registrations are, of course, quite consistent with older people being less eager to argue.

Table 5: Correlations among Age, Power Distance, and Personalization of Conflict

	Age	PowDis
Power Distance	-.08	
Direct Personal	.29***	.22***
Stress Reactions	.24***	.09
Persecution	.05	.36***
Pos Relatnl Effects	-.16*	.09
Neg Relatnl Effects	.30***	.01
Positive Valence	-.37***	.12

Note. Sample sizes ranged from 242 to 254.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

We can summarize our findings about the connections between sex and age and Bulgarian orientations to arguing in a few words. Men were slightly more aggressive about arguing than women were, but not to a marked degree. While age was not clearly associated

with our motivation measures, in other respects we found a consistently negative attitude toward arguing throughout many measures that operationalized understandings and feelings about interpersonal arguing.

4.3 Correlations Among Power Distance, Motivations, Frames, and Personalization

Our final research question inquired about the associations between each general category of measures and power distance, the willingness to accept status inequalities in society. These results are also in Tables 3-5. These tables show substantial patterns of connection between power distance and orientations to interpersonal arguing.

Table 3 shows that power distance had significant correlations with arguing with one's supervisor, general argument avoidance, and making ad hominem arguments. Bulgarians who were most likely to endorse and respect status inequality were disinclined to argue with superiors at work. Perhaps because of the inevitable presence of higher status people in life, these same respondents reported that they had a noticeable tendency to avoid arguing at all. However, when they did engage, they report that they behaved in an aggressive person-centered way. This coarseness, which we have noticed before, may result from less practice in arguing or might just reflect an unsubtle understanding of how social interactions should operate.

Table 4 shows that power distance consistently predicted people's understandings of interpersonal arguing. Those with higher power distance scores were more sensitive to arguing's relevance to self-oriented goals: utilitarian aims, identity displays, dominance moves, and arguing for fun. These same people were more willing to blurt, and were less civil and less sophisticated in their overall understanding of social disagreement. This is a pattern of aggression by people especially tolerant of social inequality.

Finally, Table 5 indicates that people who were more acquiescent to social disparity took conflict more personally and were more likely to feel persecuted when others disagreed with them. Altogether, these results (and the others just mentioned) suggest that high tolerance for power distance is associated with an aggressive unhappiness with interpersonal arguing. These people may be expecting disagreements to be settled by status assertion rather than by reasoning.

Thus, investigation of our final research question has again shown power distance to be a key consideration in understanding how different nations and cultures orient to interpersonal arguing.

5. DISCUSSION

Our investigation, which we believe to be the first of its kind to focus on Bulgaria, had several general results. We found that Bulgarians had general orientations to interpersonal arguing that were comparable to those we have found in Ukraine and the U.S., but differed noticeably from Polish respondents in many respects. Our results indicated that Bulgarian orientations were not very sex-typed, with only a few apparent differences between male and female respondents. Older Bulgarian respondents showed less aggressive impulses regarding conflict, and were more sensitive to its emotional possibilities. Power distance

was again predictive of many of our variables, showing a mix of aggression once the argument is joined, but a reluctance to argue freely in many contexts.

As we reviewed earlier in the paper, a low level of interpersonal trust is a typical characteristic of Bulgarian culture. This reserve might explain why Bulgarian respondents were less concerned than Polish and U.S. respondents with any positive or negative relational consequences from interpersonal disagreement, or with identity display. Presumably, if one does not trust others, one is less likely to rely on them and if one does not rely on others, one is not concerned with any positive or negative relational consequences or with identity display. As far as a low level of interpersonal trust can lead to increased aggression (see Tzafrir et al. 2018), the supposed lack of interpersonal trust in Bulgarian culture can also be interpreted as a possible explanation of the fact that Bulgarian respondents were more antisocial and less civil than Polish respondents.

We propose two possible explanations of our finding of few sex differences among our respondents.

On the one hand, we thought that it may be related to Bulgaria's economic underdevelopment, compared to its psychologically accessible partners in the EU. In earlier work, we have found some evidence for a pattern like that (Hample, 2018). In nations where women are aggressively trying to break "glass ceilings" and participate in the economy as freely as men, women and men take on similar values, and in such countries, we found little sex typing on our argumentation measures. When women have come closer to achieving equality, however, they sometimes relax into what are thought to be more feminine attitudes and interests (Charles, 2017; Charles & Bradley, 2009). This might explain the pattern we have found in Bulgaria, which was essentially that men and women regarded interpersonal arguing similarly. However, as we indicated in section two, Bulgaria has a high level of gender inequality, and values surveys suggest that Bulgarians are comfortable with this circumstance. These findings complicate the Charles-Bradley hypothesis considerably, insofar as Bulgaria is concerned. These issues need to be explored, both in Bulgaria and elsewhere, possibly in qualitative investigations headed by women.

An alternative explanation of the rarity of sex differences might be to a cohort effect, due to older respondents having had more direct experience with pre-1989 control of public discourse. Dividing our sample at the median age (40), we did two-factor ANOVAs, but still found few sex differences. The differences in Table 1 still appeared, as well as new significant results for sex on the variables verbal aggressiveness-prosocial (partial $\eta^2 = .04$ for sex, partial $\eta^2 = .02$ for the sex by median age interaction, with older women having higher scores than younger men), and for positive valence (partial $\eta^2 = .03$, with men having higher scores). These two additional findings do not suggest to us that an important cohort effect was occurring, and we still consider that sex differences were minor in our data set.

6. CONCLUSION

We reported the results from a study assessing Bulgarians' motivations, understandings and emotional reactions related to interpersonal arguing, as well as their tolerance of status inequalities in society, and their willingness to argue at work. On the whole, Bulgaria has

been an interesting site for exploration of interpersonal arguing. The assertiveness of its general interpersonal climate, particularly featuring its reluctance to extend automatic trust to others, seems to have had (or perhaps reflected) some interesting patterns in attitudes toward arguing. In other respects, however, the dynamics of our measures for interpersonal argumentation have appeared recognizably.

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