

When Dignity and Honor Cultures Negotiate: Finding Common Ground

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Abstract

Dignity and honor cultures are thought to yield dramatically different processes and outcomes in cross-cultural negotiations. We challenge this conceptual dichotomy through the qualitative analysis of negotiation accounts by practitioners and graduate students. Drawing on self-worth theory, we reexamine the delineation and contrast of dignity and honor cultures as they manifest in negotiations between French and Latin American people. According to our set of interviews and written narratives, negotiators on the two sides share a large set of perceptions of French negotiating behavior, coalescing into three main components—conventionality, pride in historical legacy, and conflict proneness. This French behavior falls into neither cultural category, but rather demonstrates the possibility of hybrids between them. We discuss implications for theory, practice, and teaching of cross-cultural understanding, and, specifically, of the French negotiating style.

The globalization of business transactions has dramatically increased the scope, frequency, and magnitude of interactions between individuals from different cultures and nations. As nations and cultural backgrounds become increasingly influential, cultures collide, especially during negotiations (Adair, Taylor, & Tinsley, 2009; De Dreu, Kluwer, Euwema, & Van der Vegt, 2017).

Observing this trend, negotiation scholars have called for more research on cross-cultural negotiations (e.g., Brett, 2000; Brett & Crotty, 2008; Brett & Thompson, 2016). Studies have shed light on intercultural factors including consensus building (Liu, Friedman, Barry, Gelfand, & Zhang, 2012), emotion and affect (Kumar, 2004; Ogliastri & Quintanilla, 2016), conflict resolution (Tinsley, 2004), cognitive biases (Morris & Gelfand, 2004), and motivational orientations (Lügger, Geiger, Neun, & Backhaus, 2015). This burgeoning body of research has improved our understanding of how cultural differences influence processes and outcomes of negotiations.

One important factor in negotiations that varies across cultures is self-worth—a person's view of his/her value in relation to others (Ayers, 1985). The source of self-worth (whether internal or external) is extremely important in social interactions such as negotiations; for instance, if self-worth is intrinsic, rebuffing by the counterpart will not damage one's sense of worth (cf. Brett, 2007, p. 31). As Leung and

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Cohen (2011) explain, self-worth theory implies that cultures fall into three ideal types. In *dignity* cultures, individuals define themselves primarily by what they think of themselves, emphasizing independence and achievement (i.e., intrinsic self-worth); in *face* cultures, individuals mostly care about what others think of them, emphasizing the fulfillment of social roles (i.e., society-based self-worth); and in *honor* cultures, individuals care about both what they think of themselves and what others think of them, emphasizing reputation (i.e., intrinsic and society-based self-worth) (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Accordingly, negotiation scholars increasingly view cultural influences as oriented to either dignity, honor, or face (e.g., Aslani et al., 2016; Brett & Thompson, 2016; Harinck, Shafa, Ellemers, & Beersma, 2013). While some scholars (e.g., Aslani et al., 2016; Harinck et al., 2013) have insightfully associated these ideal types with divergent processes and outcomes in cross-cultural negotiations, whether the categories are fully mutually exclusive remains an unanswered and important question.

In this article, we focus on a culture that has been described as a mix of “universalism and exceptionalism” (Castel, Deneire, Kurc, Lacassagne, & Leeds, 2007, p. 547), of “crisis and contradiction” (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993b, p. 333)—in sum, “a bit of a cultural enigma” (Brett et al., 1998, p. 64): French culture. While typically classified as a *dignity* culture (Aslani, Ramirez-Marín, Semnani-Azad, Brett, & Tinsley, 2015, p. 251), French culture bears, we argue in this article, an orientation toward honor (d’Iribarne, 1994) that helps explain its paradoxical traits. We confront the French culture with a culture whose honor orientation is widely acknowledged but underexplored—the Latin American culture; indeed, researchers have lamented that “there has been little research or theorizing concerning the nature of negotiations in Latino and Middle Eastern [honor] cultures” (Aslani et al., 2015, p. 249).

In this project, to integrate teaching, research, practice, and theorizing, we engaged negotiation students to develop their skills through the systematic analysis of past negotiation experiences and also invited practitioners to reflect on specific negotiation events. To develop theory on cross-cultural negotiations, we use a case study approach (Yin, 2009) that relies on pattern matching (Trochim, 1989; Yin, 2009, pp. 136–137). This analytic technique compares an empirical pattern with a predicted one.

We analyze 89 interviews with, and narratives by, French and Latin American students and executives about their experiences of French negotiation behavior, mostly in organizational contexts. We aim to contribute, at the macrolevel, to understanding of cross-cultural interactions, and, at the local level, to understanding the French negotiating style. With respect to the macrolevel, our inquiry provides evidence, in a negotiation context, of intercultural commonality between two cultures that have long been presented as mutually exclusive: honor and dignity. According to our data, the French cultural logic for negotiation, as perceived by French insiders and Latin American outsiders, does not fit the ideal type of either dignity or honor, but rather represents a hybrid of both, whose dimensions are described and illustrated in this article. Subsidiarily, with respect to the local level, we provide a theory-based qualitative description of French negotiating behavior, which has hitherto been studied in a mostly fragmented and quantitative way.

Self-worth and French Culture

In this section, we build on self-worth theory (Ayers, 1985) and specifically on the dignity/honor/face taxonomy of cultures (Kim & Cohen, 2010; Leung & Cohen, 2011) to predict whether and how individuals coming from (French) dignity and (Latin American) honor cultures may develop a shared set of perceptions of the French negotiation behavior during their cross-cultural negotiations.

Western (North American and European) and Latin American cultures have been considered to be cognitively quite different. Specifically, cognitive structures that provide patterns of interpersonal relatedness or relational schemas (Baldwin, 1992; Fiske & Haslam, 1996) are expected to differ between European/North American and Latin American. Practically, while European/North American people strongly separate business and social activities (Kimmel, 1994), Latin Americans emphasize, even at work, harmony and respect toward others (“*simpatía*”) (Triandis, Marín, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984).

Accordingly, European/North American (including French) and Latin American cultures exhibit drastically different relational styles (Sanchez-Burks, Nisbett, & Ybarra, 2000, p. 175).

Further, according to recent studies on dignity/honor/face cultures (Leung & Cohen, 2011, p. 509), Western (North American and European) cultures are dignity oriented—and hence so should French culture be. Brett (2014, p. 42), summarizing cultural influences on negotiations, also sees the French culture as dignity oriented. By contrast, the Latin American culture is thought to be honor oriented (Aslani et al., 2015, p. 251, 2016, p. 1179; Leung & Cohen, 2011, pp. 509–510).

Yet the “honor principle” was introduced by Montesquieu (1750), and d’Iribarne’s in-depth comparative ethnographic studies of plants in France, the United States, Scandinavian countries, and the Netherlands (1994, 2003) suggest that in French culture, roles are still heavily influenced by this tradition. d’Iribarne (1994, p. 85, 2003) contrasts the French “logic of *honor*,” a mix of duty, protocol, and resistance, with the *contract* approach in the United States and the *consensus* approach of Scandinavian countries or the Netherlands. As the following subsections explain, this logic connects clearly with “intrinsic” self-worth but also with (social) traditions and hence, to some degree, connects dignity with honor. As we show below in analyzing our respondents’ accounts, d’Iribarne’s work on the logic of honor also helps make sense of our own findings about French negotiating behavior.

Building on the dignity/honor/face taxonomy, Aslani et al. (2015, p. 255) describe four categories in which culture influences negotiation processes: *power and status*, *sensitivity to insults*, *confrontation style*, and *warmth*. We suggest that *sensitivity to insults* and *confrontation style* are both related to conflict; the former relates to conflict reactivity, and the latter to the nature of conflict. Thus, we integrate them into a category of *conflict style*.

These three categories of *power and status*, *conflict style*, and *warmth* (which come from the dignity/honor/face framework) overlay onto d’Iribarne’s three honor-related components of *protocol*, *resistance*, and *duty*. Table 1 summarizes how these two sets of categories fit together.

Power and Status—Protocol

In etic (i.e., universal) comparative models of cultures, Latin America is generally associated with hierarchy (Aslani et al., 2015, p. 255). Hierarchy is much less clearly associated with the French culture, which is both “hierarchical and egalitarian” (Brett et al., 1998, p. 64). According to the emic (i.e.,

Table 1
Cultural Influences on Negotiation: (Extended from Aslani et al., 2015; d’Iribarne, 1994)

Ideal types of culture Dignity versus honor (Aslani et al., 2015)		French honor principle (d’Iribarne, 1994)	
	Dignity culture	Honor culture (Latin American)	French culture
Power & status	Egalitarian	Hierarchical	Protocol. Egalitarian <i>and</i> hierarchical
Conflict style	Low sensitivity to insults Direct and calculation-based confrontation style	High sensitivity to insults Both direct and indirect style, expressing emotions	Resistance. High sensitivity when duty to oneself (“honor”) is threatened.
Warmth	Emotionally neutral, but willing to trust all persons initially	Warmth; socially oriented	Duty. Loyalty to standards; trust oriented toward in-group members

particularistic) logic of honor, French business culture is characterized by an emphasis on *protocol*—that is, “sharp distinctions between more or less noble estates” (d’Iribarne, 1994, p. 86); by acting in accord with standards that derive from one’s “estate” (status), a French person demonstrates not only his/her intrinsic worth but also his/her “nobility” or membership in a higher-status group (d’Iribarne, 1994, p. 85). It follows that any violation of protocol may put a French negotiator’s personal status at stake. Symmetrically, (hierarchy oriented) Latin American negotiators are likely to be highly sensitive to social distinctions. Therefore, French negotiating behavior is likely to be perceived by both Latin American and French negotiators as highly formal.

Conflict Style—Resistance

Unlike honor cultures, dignity cultures are mostly associated with confrontations that are direct and based on cost–benefit calculus rather than emotions (d’Iribarne, 1994, p. 85). Further, according to self-worth theory (Aslani et al., 2015), dignity cultures are associated with a low sensitivity to insults, honor cultures with high sensitivity. That is, in theory, a member of the French (dignity) culture should emphasize direct and calculation-based (rather than emotional) confrontation, rather than care about social phenomena such as insults or about the notion of rank.

Nevertheless, the French logic of honor (Cohen, Bowdle, Nisbett, & Schwarz, 1996; Kim & Cohen, 2010) involves a strong reaction to situations of dependence—that is, of being under command: a member of a higher-status group (which is presumed to have better ethics, stricter rationality, more acute esthetic sensibilities, etc.) would be disgraced to have his/her actions controlled by a person who is less “noble.” Indeed, such dependence potentially undermines the duty to act (explained below) that is the basis of one’s own nobility. This situation of dependence usually elicits vigorous *resistance* (d’Iribarne, 1994), which is characterized by tension and ambivalence:

The often strongly emotional character of hierarchical relationships in France is intriguing. There is an extreme diversity of feelings towards superiors: They may be either adored or despised with equal intensity. (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 104; translating and citing d’Iribarne [1989, p. 59])

Thus, both Latin American and French negotiators are likely to perceive French negotiating behavior as generally prone to conflict.

Warmth—Duty

Aslani et al. (2015, pp. 260–262) contrast the relational style of honor and dignity cultures. Honor cultures emphasize altruism toward people in the circle of close relations, and value warmth (friendliness, the opposite of conflict) as an expression of that altruism. By contrast, dignity cultures tend to take an instrumental approach to relations, although they stipulate that others deserve to be trusted at first. This provisional trust is a matter of practical assumptions; emotionally, it is neutral. The culture-specific French logic of honor connects relational style with self-worth and status in a rather complex way. It associates individual worth with the *duty* to act in certain ways—which is not a duty to other persons, but a duty to one’s own identity and abstract standards, determined by specific traditions: “It is not so much what one owes to others as what one owes to oneself” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 104, translating and citing d’Iribarne [1989, p. 59]). In a business context, this “duty to standards” is likely to be translated into a somewhat abstract duty to company, where friendliness may be perceived as a conflict of interest; therefore, French negotiators’ initial and provisional trust (and even more warmth) should be mostly focused toward in-group members (i.e., alter egos). Hence, both Latin American and French negotiators are likely to perceive relationships during negotiations as favoring in-group members—rather than as universally warm or trustworthy.

In sum, research on dignity and honor cultures, and, on the other hand, the French principle of honor and its facets of duty, protocol, and resistance, suggest that the French cultural influence on negotiators may share some similarities with both the cultures of dignity and of honor. In the remainder of this article, we describe and compare the perceptions of individuals engaged in actual negotiations that confront the French culture of dignity and the Latin American culture of honor.

Method

In this article, we adopt a middle-ground approach “that situates the researcher within a given context while avoiding a specialized focus” (Doerfel & Gibbs, 2014, p. 230)—as, for instance, Tracy, Myers, and Scott (2006, p. 290) used “etic-level categories based on extant literature and more specific emic issues, that emerged from the data and participants’ voice.” We use Weiss and Stripp’s (1985) etic model to explore emic reports of negotiation behaviors; specifically, we apply a thematic approach to 89 interviews and narratives about real experiences of negotiation with French people, leading to a description of their negotiation-related norms and behaviors: the French negotiation style. We chose the pattern matching approach and more specifically the “explanation building” technique, whose goal is to “analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case” (Yin, 2009, p. 141).

Data Collection and Analysis

Our study examines French negotiating behavior as seen by both Latin American outsiders and French insiders. The choice of our sample was driven by the purpose of our research (to identify a common ground between honor and dignity cultures in the context of negotiations) and the method of explanation building, which involves confronting rival explanations (Yin, 2009, p. 141).

Researchers’ Background

Bhagat, Kedia, Perez, and Leonard (2004, p. 204) identify two key requirements for cross-cultural management scholars: “spend the necessary time investigating the emic aspects of the phenomenon in the cultures of interest” and “collaborate with a team of researchers from the cultures under investigation.” The leader of the project taught in Latin America and in France and collected data for this project during 1 year; his French coauthor collaborated in the analysis and writing during a period that included a 1-year academic stay in Latin America; the last author, a Latin American, spent several months in France to conduct interviews for the project, as a requirement for her master’s thesis, under the direction of the project leader.

Sampling

During the data collection and initial analysis, the project leader supervised the work of two research assistants. This study relies on interviews and narratives (written answers to open questionnaires) describing negotiations between Latin American and French people, from either an in-group or an out-group perspective. The interviews integrated into this study were conducted by the third author with managers from either French or Latin American cultures, who were questioned about their past experiences of negotiation with the other culture (for the interview guide, see Appendix A). The narratives used in this study were either self-reported or collected by the project leader from Master of Business Administration students with professional experience. In regard to the latter, individuals were asked (as a term paper assignment) to report their own and another manager’s (collected through an interview or a written answer) negotiation experience in foreign countries, to compare and contrast their own negotiation patterns with those of the other person, and, finally, to reflect on their differences and similarities with people from other cultures (using the same interview guide; see Appendix A). The three researchers collected and analyzed the data independently. Tables 2 and 3 describe the 89 informants by cultural

background (French vs. Latin American) and occupation and specify the type of data collected (interviews vs. narratives).

Applying the rule of theoretical saturation of categories (Eisenhardt, 2002, p. 27), we collected data up to the point where collecting additional data no longer provided any conceptual refinement.

Following the methodological guidelines of Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), among others, we first delineated first-order codes (during open coding) and then identified, for those of the first-order codes that allow contrast and comparisons between French and Latin American views, theoretical subcategories and categories (during axial coding). Figure 1 describes the structure of our data.

Open Coding: First-Order Codes

As Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend, our first data analysis stage began with breaking apart data related to the research question. Following previous cross-cultural approaches to negotiation (e.g., Campbell, Graham, Jolibert, & Meissner, 1988; Metcalf, Bird, Peterson, Shankarmahesh, & Lituchy, 2007; Ogliastri, 1997), we built on Weiss and Stripp’s (1985) framework of negotiations, extended from twelve to twenty culturally sensitive variables by Ogliastri (1997) and Van Hoof, Ogliastri, Bernal, and García (2005). We classified sentences considered separately into one of these twenty categories through a coding book (see Appendix B). Qualitatively capturing negotiation behavior involves knowledge of contexts and individuals; thus, data were open coded by the same researcher who collected them.

Axial Coding: Theoretical Subcategories and Categories

In the second stage, we engaged in relating each of these first-order concepts to more abstract descriptions that apply over numerous categories: *axial coding* (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through a recursive process, we identified a correspondence between the content of the twenty first-order categories and the deep-level “honor principle” (d’Iribarne, 1994), capturing, in our analyses, the negotiation process used by French individuals. We also found a strong convergence between (French) insiders’ and (Latin

Table 2
Cultural Origins of Informants and Source of Data

French informants	38	
Interview		26
Narrative		12
Latin American* informants	51	
Interview		30
Narrative		21
Total	89	

N = 89 informants.

*From Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico.

Table 3
Informants’ Occupations

Diplomat	3
Executive	55
Graduate student	11
University professor	11
Other	9
Total	89

N = 89 informants.

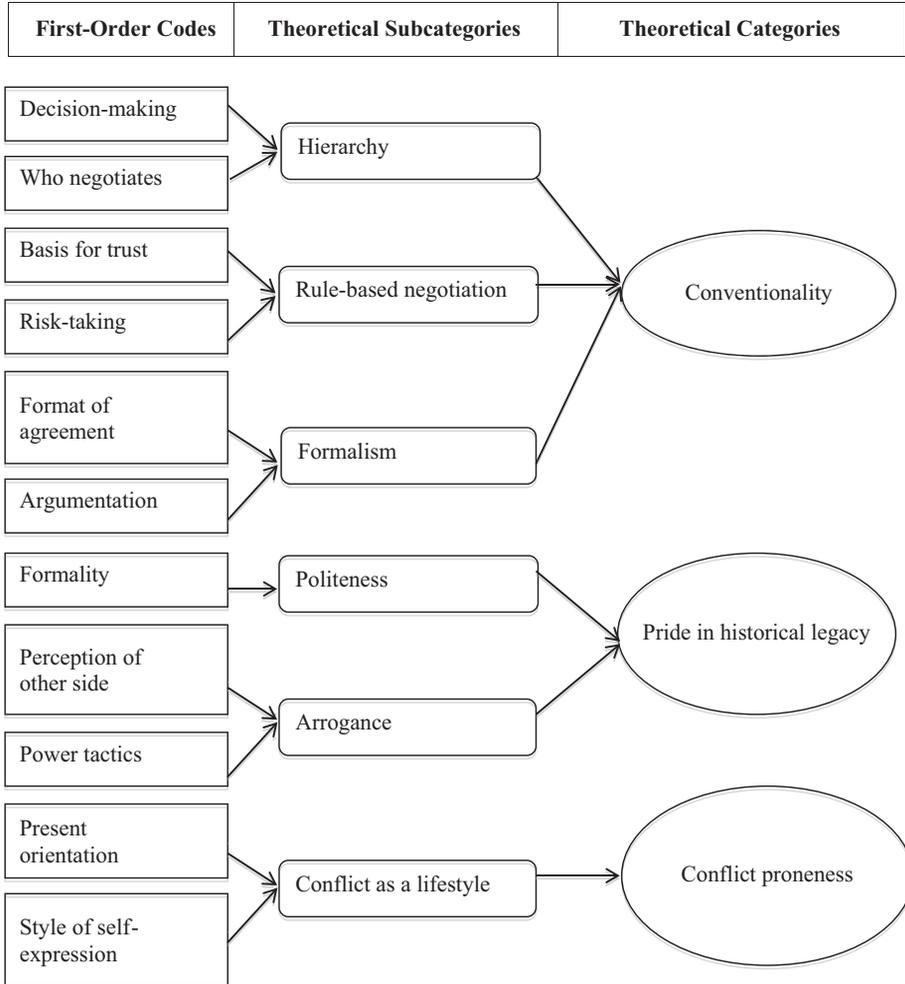


Figure 1. Data structure overview.

American) outsiders’ views of French negotiation specificities. Table 4 shows how the axial coding process was applied to a few sample quotations.

Findings

Our findings suggest that, in a negotiation context, the French “honor principle” and its three facets of duty, protocol, and resistance translate into three main behaviors: conventionality, pride in historical legacy, and conflict proneness. This section describes each of these three subdimensions.

Conventionality

Duty, the first pillar of the French logic of honor, involves the “dedicated fulfillment of obligations that *traditionally* fall to the particular occupational category to which each individual belongs” (d’Iribarne, 1994, p. 85; emphasis added). Our data suggest that French negotiating culture is highly *conventional*, emphasizing hierarchy, rule-based negotiation, and formalism.

Table 4
Additional Quotations

Exemplar quotations	First-order code	Theoretical subcategory	Theoretical category
"[The Frenchman] was very distant, emphasizing his hierarchical position." (LA-213)	Decision-making	Hierarchy	Conventionality
"The manager [of the French negotiator] stepped in the negotiation and contradicted his subordinate." (LA-222)	Who negotiates	Hierarchy	Conventionality
"French use to say things in a franker manner [than LA]." (FR-247)	Basis for trust	Rule-based negotiation	Conventionality
"You make a proposal, a second one, and possibly a last one. No more." (FR-227)	Risk-taking	Rule-based negotiation	Conventionality
"[For French], it is necessary in any case to keep things formal... to write down what has been said during meetings." (LA-217)	Format of agreement	Formalism	Conventionality
"Arguing, with a lot of comments: it fascinates [French negotiators]." (LA-201)	Arguing	Formalism	Conventionality
"We [French] were very punctual in regard to the protocol." (FR-240)	Formality	Politeness	Pride in historical legacy
"[French] are very hierarchical, remember that they come from a monarchy, and there are social classes, elites, and also things earned by performance, work, readings, personal effort." (LA-201)	Perception of other side	Arrogance	Pride in historical legacy
"I am going to demonstrate that I am right... In other cultures this doesn't work. It is only perceived as a kind of arrogance." (FR-251)	Power tactics	Arrogance	Pride in historical legacy
"In France they are probably more impatient, they would not be happy if things don't go as fast as they want." (FR-235)	Present orientation	Conflict as a life style	Conflict proneness
"The French very quickly make you feel bad for many things"(LA-201)	Way to express themselves	Conflict as a life style	Conflict proneness

Hierarchy

Our data reflect how hierarchy imprints the style of French negotiators, as the task of speaking for the organization is assigned to the person at the top—rather than, for instance, the company’s lawyer. According to a French executive, CEO of a subsidiary of a French multinational operating in Colombia,

Normally there is only one spokesperson, but possibly with advisors.(FR-228)

(In our identifying tags, FR signals a French informant and LA a Latin American one.)

This echoes the in-group judgment of a French diplomat, lobbying for a French–Colombian project, about

a hierarchical rationality of saying this is so because I am the boss, and this is so.(FR-230)

Similarly, the (Colombian) CEO of a North American company states,

The finance officer, the sales officer, and the president (to close the deal) attended the last negotiation. But the spokesperson was the president, and this was clear.(LA-202)

A Brazilian executive working in the Paris headquarters of a French company summarized this point:

[The French] are much hierarchy-oriented... They consult their superior and colleagues... Their typical communication flow is top-down(LA-220)

Rule-Based Negotiation

According to scholars committed to the problem-solving approach (e.g., Fisher & Ury, 1991), good negotiators build on shared interests to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. Instead, Latin Americans report the predominance of rule-driven behaviors among French negotiators:

Small conflicts here [in Colombia] are negotiable because you face the person. There [in France], they aren't because you face a rule.(LA-231)

This perception is consistent with the point of view of French people as they contrast French and Latin American approaches to negotiations:

I think they [Latin American people] strongly emphasize the relationship—rather than rules.(FR-236)

More broadly, this French rule-based approach raises the issue of formalism.

Formalism

“*Disserter*,” that is, formally organizing and discussing ideas, is an exercise practiced in universities since the Middle Ages (Le Goff, 1992). French people learn to handle the principles of argumentation in high school, using a thesis–antithesis–synthesis model; French graduates are trained to reason deductively, from the general to the particular. French negotiators are quite conscious of this influence:

And it is true that, yes indeed, we have a kind of very specific way of thinking. Because when you were a French boy you are going to school and then you are trained in that way. You are trained to organize papers in a very logical way, and step by step; of course it changes your mind.(FR-MR-251)

French culture is a rational one; it's not about concrete facts. . . they organize the world rationally, try to understand it, to take advantage of their knowledge.(FR-MR-252)

Since French secondary education stresses rationality, historically, by demonstrating rationality one proved oneself an “educated person.” Now that secondary education is much more widespread, to the extent that French people are aware that their secondary-school training in argument is distinctively French, the sense of social superiority then transfers to the nation as a whole:

[French negotiators] stress the importance of the form, of the meaning of acts and facts, of written communication, of words and concepts.(FR-229)

The French negotiation style is based on a legal system, written contracts, and formal rules that guarantee compliance with agreements. These agreements are supported by the legal system or are formalized officially so that contracts cover all topics negotiated and do not leave out anything. Both the French negotiators and their Latin American counterparts emphasize French formalism:

We check that things are written and specified in a detailed manner before signing contracts.(FR-355)

[Latin-American] people do not refer to the law as much as French do.(FR-245)

That means that there is a contract and that we should stick to it, I will not change it, I will not change the rules on one or on another side.(FR-226)

The negotiation was very formal(LA-202)

Pride in Historical Legacy

From a French perspective, French culture has universal value. This pretension to universality has historical connections to imperialism that trace back to the use of Roman law during the Roman occupation

of Gaul, an influence espoused systematically (and again imperialistically) eighteen centuries later by the Code Napoléon (Sahlins, 2004). Politically, since the end of the eighteenth century, the French Revolution has been presented as a universal symbol of the French aspiration to spread the Enlightenment values of reason, democracy, and freedom throughout the world—despite the Reign of Terror’s persecution of citizens who were reluctant to follow the new “Goddess of Reason” (Furet, 1997; Roche, 2000). Colonial expansion under the Third Republic (1870–1940) was, in part, based on the country’s ideological ambition to propagate its own civilization (Chafer & Sackur, 2002). In sum, French national values are thought to supersede other values (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993a, p. 338); not surprisingly, this belief tends to be perceived by outsiders as an irrational attitude of superiority in intergroup encounters, including negotiations.

Protocol, the second pillar of the French logic of honor, assumes “sharp distinctions between more or less noble estates” (d’Iribarne, 1994, p. 86); historically, this mix of courtesy, diplomacy, eloquence, charm, and elegance can be traced back to Ancien Régime court culture (Revel, 1997), and it was an important aspect of French cultural dominance over other European nations. In a context of negotiations, pride in this historical legacy can manifest as both politeness and arrogance.

Politeness

Politeness, in the French culture, involves a concern for preserving and developing a positive image. Latin American negotiators observe,

French people are generally well-mannered and more respectful of standards.(LA-354)

First, use all formalities: hello, *bonjour monsieur, ça va?* [in French in the text].(LA-215)

As French negotiators say about their own style of negotiation:

We have this tradition; we count on “*politesse*” [politeness].(FR-236)

This concern for good manners translates into food-related behavior:

Offer a good dinner at an expensive place; the form—if you will—is more important than the content. You should respect the way they do things... I am not so much interested in creating an atmosphere of trust, but I want you to think that I am treating you well.(FR-237)

This invitation to dinner may be indeed perceived by the counterpart as an act of generosity; yet as revealed by this French woman, *politesse* does not imply per se any emotional or moral commitment. Such a decoupling is likely to disappoint Latin American people since they tend to conflate social orientation with warmth (along the self-worth framework summarized in Table 1, last line).

As expressed by a Colombian engineer who lives and works in Paris, describing a negotiation abruptly derailed by her counterpart:

...[French negotiators] stick to *politesse*, washing their hands like Pilate, trying to look at things from afar.(LA-222)

Arrogance

But outside negotiators perceive the cultural pride of French negotiators as excessive, and it seems to be part of the stereotype about French negotiators. Cogan (2003, p. 1) described such feelings of superiority as part of the negotiation culture of the “Grande Nation,” as did our respondents.

I think that the French need to feel more powerful than others in order to feel good.(LA-212)

Arrogance. They are arrogant. What does it mean? . . . they have a huge ego and being confronted by these egos is not easy. Moreover, they represent a powerful company. . . . They feel that they have privileges because they are part of it.(LA-202)

It often happens that someone repeats to you several times what you are saying as if he could not understand, but actually he repeats to show you the correct pronunciation in French of what you have just said.(LA-221)

Do not be intimidated by the French arrogance.(LA-349)

Surprisingly, this feeling of superiority is also mentioned by the French themselves:

We think that our systems are the best, which gives us a feeling of superiority. (FR-237)

We have this belief that our system is the best and will evaluate everything from this perspective . . . still in a part of you is this belief, which makes you, I think, arrogant and pretentious.(FR-243)

Conflict as Lifestyle

The universalizing ambitions described above are not very compatible with the flexibility required in negotiations. In French culture, revolution is often preferred to negotiation in resolving conflicts (Zeldin, 1979), and in French history, most political changes have been triggered by sudden strife (Zeldin, 1979). Many French people can remember the May 1968 general movement, with hundreds of thousands of people in the streets; most can remember the mass national strikes of 1995 and the suburban riots of 2005 (Crumley, 2009; Reuters, 2016). While France is one of the least unionized European countries (Rubin, 2016), its workers follow a leftist-driven tradition of politicized insurgency. In 2013, the number of days lost to strikes in France was double the European Union average (Reuters, 2016).

Cross-national conflict has been especially costly for the French, although their losses have not made them less conflict prone. The Franco-Prussian and World Wars, with bloody and humiliating occupations, have had long-lasting effects on conflict-solving attitudes and behavior (Bloch, 1999), and decolonization brought two more unsuccessful wars: Indochina (1946–1954) and Algeria (1958–1962) (Clayton, 1994). These territorial losses, allied with disturbing internal signals such as high youth unemployment (Stephens, 2017) and rampant devitalization of urban centers (Nossiter, 2017a), fuel a national obsession with decline and loss (Donadio, 2017).

This pervasive feeling of loss (possibly exacerbated by the above-mentioned dimension “pride in historical legacy”) may be associated, we suggest, with a new, interpersonal form of “revanchism”—an aggressive desire to regain territory (from the French “revanche”) (Romano, 2014). This French “revanchism” may explain how a Colombian physician (doing an internship in a Paris hospital) made sense of her relationship with a French newcomer—taking over her professional responsibilities:

“I felt that that much of her resistance arouse because I was a foreigner—it meant a lot for her.”(LA-204)

That is, when French people confront other cultures, they may unconsciously try to compensate for national losses of status—even, we suggest, when they are simply negotiating business deals.

Resistance, the third pillar of the French logic of honor, entails expressing conflicts in an extremely open way, to the point where “verbal aggressions are mentioned as something very normal” (d’Iribarne, 1994, p. 84). And indeed, our Latin American negotiators perceive that conflict—even in its violent forms and at the expense of one’s own interests—is a routine situation for French people.

[The French] coexist with conflict gracefully. They just don’t care.(LA-201)

I do think the French are more violent. . . . Violent in the way they confront people . . . they use a stronger vocabulary.(LA-231)

In my opinion, the French have a culture that makes them live excessively in the present. They rarely think about the benefits of long-term relationships, they are overly individualistic, and they seek victory in every conflict. They have a need to feel like winners, and therefore they deal with conflict quite directly, like battles, instead of looking for mutual benefits.(LA-363)

An element that may increase the prevalence of conflicts in these cross-cultural negotiations is that French language, at least in the eyes of outsiders, conveys subtle and implicit nuances:

French people use quite a lot of verbal language, purposely using subtle arcades of French language. . . Sometimes you don't really understand what they are telling you, whether they mean yes or no.(LA-204)

By contrast, our interviews with French negotiators do not suggest any conscious propensity to conflict nor a perception of Latin American ones as unrealistically avoiding or denying conflict, but rather what the French themselves perceive as a legitimate emphasis on winning—as a French diplomat commented,

[Compared to Latin American people], French people emphasize more being right, definitively persuading the counterpart with argumentation.(FR-252)

Taken together, however, our findings about the three characteristics of the French style of negotiation (conventionality, pride in historical legacy, and conflict proneness) appear largely shared by French insiders (supposedly of a culture of dignity) and Latin American outsiders (of a culture of honor).

Furthermore, our analyses and conclusions are supported by a solid body of quotations, of which Table 4 provides a sample.

These qualitative findings show that—as we predicted from theories of cultural differences in sources of self-worth and from d'Iribarne's work on the logic of honor—the French cultural logic of negotiation does not fall into either the honor or the dignity category, but stands alone, thus demonstrating the possibility of hybrid forms.

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy

At the macrolevel of understanding between negotiators with diverging cultural logics, and at the local level of the French negotiation style, our findings, we believe, have important implications for theory, practice, and pedagogy.

Implications for Theory

Complementing Available Cultural Categories

The categories of face, dignity, and honor cultures (Brett, 2014, p. 39) hold considerable potential for the study of cross-cultural negotiations. For instance, U.S. negotiators (from a dignity culture) have been shown to care less about relationship conflicts than their East Asian counterparts (from an honor culture) (Leung & Cohen, 2011). But our study has shown evidence that these categories may be insufficient to account for some specific negotiation contexts, where either party (or both) may present idiosyncratic traits just as idiosyncratic as those we have identified here.

Illuminating the French Negotiating Style

Mundane observations suggest that idiosyncratic cultural schemata of the world's largest economies—including France (World Bank, 2014)—influence processes and outcomes of international negotiations. Our article joins a broadening stream of research that explores the influence on negotiations of various cultures, including China (Zhu, McKenna, & Sun, 2007), Brazil (Pearson & Stephan, 1998), Finland, Mexico, and Turkey (Metcalf et al., 2007). Specifically, our article adds to the available literature on French negotiating behavior. While useful, this literature tends to a purely deductive, etic approach (Hall

& Hall, 1990) or, at the other extreme, a metaphorical and descriptive one (e.g., Gannon & Pillai, 2012). The few available pictures of French negotiating behavior, to the best of our knowledge, have used deductive and quantitative approaches (Brett et al., 1998; Graham, Mintu, & Rodgers, 1994; Rojot, Le Flanchec, & Landrieux-Kartochian, 2005), anecdotal evidence (Cogan, 2003; Morrison & Conaway, 2006; Newson-Balle, 1996), or even fiction (Walder, 1958). Our comparison of insiders' and outsiders' perceptions adds, we believe, validity and rigor to the available descriptions.

Implications for Practice

Overall, for Latin Americans negotiating with the French, our findings point toward the importance of argumentation, clarity of objectives, careful preparation with thorough data and arguments (and basic knowledge of French history), flexibility, and good manners. In this section, we comment more specifically on how our findings contribute to the three key benefits of research on cross-cultural negotiation (Brett, 2014, p. 39): (a) reducing cultural misunderstandings, (b) increasing tolerance of frustrating behavior, and (c) using appropriate negotiation strategies.

Reducing Cultural Misunderstandings

Recent articles and books on cultural differences in negotiations (e.g., Brett, 2014; Brett & Thompson, 2016) have made cultural obstacles, in general, less challenging for international negotiators who care about cultural differences. However, while Western executives may routinely update their mental models before dealing with their Chinese or Japanese counterparts (e.g., Graham & Lam, 2003), when it comes to a European culture, the need for circumspection may appear less evident. According to our data, individuals from honor cultures negotiating with the French would do well to avoid seeming to devalue their counterparts or triggering collective memories of defeat, still a sensitive issue (e.g., Nossiter, 2017b); this might require special effort from negotiators who are proud of their own emancipation from colonialism (cultural as well as economic and political). Further, French politeness, an important component of French formalism, may contribute to cross-cultural misunderstanding between French and novice Latin American negotiators; for instance, receiving an invitation to an expensive dinner may be interpreted by the Latin American negotiator as a clear signal of deep trust and even friendliness, while—in the mind of her French counterpart, it only reflects superficial regard (see our quotes on politesse).

Increasing Tolerance of Conflict

Of the three categories that emerge from our analyses, the one on which there is least consensus between Latin American and French negotiators is the orientation toward conflict. French negotiators seem hardly aware that they are perceived by their Latin American counterparts as rather conflict prone. This tendency to sudden and counterproductive conflicts may represent a major source of frustration for Latin American negotiators. But Latin American negotiators aware of the French logic of honor may understand that it translates into a “need to win.” Individuals with high honor orientation are thought to react more negatively to perceived transgressions (Shafa, Harinck, Ellemers, & Beersma, 2014) and so do both French and Latin American negotiators.

Here, French emphasis on formalization and conventions (e.g., by preparing written agenda and minutes of meetings) may contribute to keep negotiations between French and Latin American on track. Also, while the insistence on protocol may be a minefield (as conveyed by our earlier quotes), drawing on the French emphasis on politeness may also be helpful for both parties.

That said, French negotiators would be well advised to tone down their attachment to abstraction and principles and also to consider more pragmatic tactics. For instance, when they feel that a commitment has been broken, rather than leave the negotiation table or let the conflict escalate in the long term until it derails the negotiations, French negotiators would do well use more moderate retaliation tactics.

Using Appropriate Strategies

A key success factor in negotiations is to ensure that “both sides perceive that the pattern of interactions makes sense” (Weiss, 1994, p. 52). Together, our cross-observations indicate an optimal strategy for the two parties. Earlier research on cross-cultural negotiations suggested that the party that should adapt is the one most familiar with the other’s culture (Weiss, 1994) or indicated alternative criteria, like power (the less powerful party should adapt; see Brett, 2000). But our cross-observations suggest that cultural pride and revanchism make the French likely to stick with their own culture’s perspective. Thus, Latin American negotiators should be willing to develop not only their *knowledge* of French culture but also their *ability* to use it in social interactions (for the crucial distinction between knowledge and ability, see Weiss, 1994).

Philosopher André Glucksmann entitled one of his essays “Descartes, c’est la France” (1987), meaning that Descartes’s statement “Cogito ergo sum” (“*I think, therefore I am*”) has shaped the culture’s rational and deductive approach (1637/2000). The framework for negotiation in the French culture is like that of a rational debate, in which each side seeks to reach its objectives quickly, easily, and efficiently, using logical arguments and solid structures to gain an advantage over the other side. Latin American negotiators would do well to accommodate the French inclination toward formalism, for instance by drafting and sharing documents on the key points agreed upon.

Implications for Pedagogy

Our project offers two main lines of work for colleagues who seek to integrate theory, research, and practice with teaching; one is related to method, the other to content.

Methodologically, this research project illustrates a participant-centric approach to negotiation theory and practice. We asked Master of Business students, after being taught the main models of cross-cultural negotiations, to play the role of junior investigators by collecting accounts of negotiation within their own culture, including experiences from in-group and outgroup members, and to reflect on them; according to collected class evaluations, participants much appreciated this way of “learning about one’s own negotiation culture.” We believe that this course design, which combines theory and practice-based learning, could inspire other projects to increase students’ awareness of their own negotiation behavior in various cross-cultural contexts.

The content of our description of French negotiation behavior in cultural context also has classroom potential. An executive summary of our results could back up the discussion of a teaching case such as the negotiations between a global Latin American aircraft manufacturer and its French first-tier provider (cf. Ghemawat, Herrero, & Monteiro, 2009), or between major French and Latin American retailers (Cimilluca & Ibáñez, 2012).

Limitations

The limitations of this article point to promising directions for future research. First, our sample includes a large, geographically diversified group of (Latin American) outsiders (see Table 2), which exhibits consistency in regard to its perceptions of French negotiation behavior. We did not observe significant variations across focal Latin American nationalities (Argentinian, Brazilian, Colombian, and Mexican) either from French or from Latin American perspectives; researchers may be willing to challenge this apparent cultural homogeneity across Latin American nations by sampling specific nations.

Second, as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012, p. 36) warn, we should be “careful when describing what we mean by the typical ‘French’, for example, given demographic changes in the population.” France, like other European countries, has been integrating immigrants (Foroohar, 2015) whose values are also shaping French culture and negotiation style. However, evidence suggests a strong inertial effect of French national institutions; for instance, the French educational system (“Education

nationale”) is regarded as a quite strong, top-down, centralized ideological system (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Relatedly, while Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012, p. 310) observe that nearly three decades of research on cultures “have found that almost all countries show a larger diversity within their boundaries (the multicultural society),” they tellingly add, “although France less so.” Further research may benefit from examining how immigration-related changes are shaping perceptions of the French style of negotiation.

Finally, the structure of our data and the nature of our analyses introduce two unavoidable limitations. First, interviews and narratives on past experiences, like any retrospective accounts, are exposed to the bias of recall (Fischhoff & Beyth, 1975). Further, qualitative data collection and analyses are intrinsically dependent on subjectivity; but our cross-cultural emphasis and the diverse backgrounds of our informants and researchers (who represent student, practitioner, and academic experiences) limit this bias (cf. Bhagat et al., 2004, p. 204).

Directions for Future Research

To conduct this study, we used a pattern matching approach, whose goal is “not to conclude a study but develop ideas for further study” (Yin, 2009, p. 141). Future researchers might introduce a group perspective during data collection and thus, for instance, interview cross-national focus groups about the link between the French logic of honor and past experiences of negotiation. Although this alternative would raise important practical issues, such a project would offer an interesting extension of the present research.

Second, our article focuses on the boundary between dignity (how I value myself) and honor (how others and I value myself); further negotiation research may also explore the boundaries of honor culture with face culture (how others see me)—a hallmark of cooperative hierarchy, typical of caste-oriented societies (Leung & Cohen, 2011, p. 510).

Third, researchers studying cross-cultural negotiations with French might also fruitfully examine not only similarities in the perceptions of negotiation insiders and outsiders (like this article) but also differences. This approach would require collecting and analyzing data along a 2×2 matrix whose dimensions would be, on the one hand, insider view versus outsider view, and on the other, French versus non-French. Noting and discussing differences and commonalities between perceptions of one’s and other’s negotiation styles would improve the understanding of cognitive factors in cross-cultural negotiations.

Finally, in this article about the French/Latin American negotiations, we suggested that incongruities with theory had a practical use—they actually helped negotiators find common ground. Certainly, a lot of our argument above depends on France’s specific historical experience. But *all* countries have their own unique histories and accordingly will fit more smoothly or less smoothly into systems of categories like dignity/face/honor. Thus, in our postcolonial, “liquid” world (cf. Bauman, 2007), we should expect to see a lot of cross-contamination between categories especially as many cultures are less ideologically uniform than the French. Hence, we recommend that future researchers look for the ways in which specific cultural realities do not *quite* fit the categories.

Conclusion

French negotiators’ emphasis on formality, and their approach to reconciling politeness with open conflict, trace back, we suggest in this study, to a unique source: the honor principle. Understanding this cultural logic represents a step toward improving the processes and outcomes of cross-cultural negotiations.

Literature giant Gabriel García Márquez, who used to travel every year from Latin America to Paris, once mocked French “schematic mental games and abstraction” (Simons, 1982). If French and Latin American cultures, despite their completely different relational styles (Sanchez-Burks et al., 2000), can still constructively negotiate an agreement despite diverging orientations, it may be because they both

value—through in different ways—what García Márquez fascinatedly explored in *Chronicle of a death foretold* (2003), and what Europeans may have brought to America (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994) albeit in questionable forms: honor.

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Appendix A Interview and Narrative guide

- (1) Think of a specific formal negotiation (purchase or sale, conflict resolution, talks to reach an agreement on common policy, etc.) in which you have been engaged and which has involved individuals or entities in both countries.
- (2) What were the antecedents (the “interests”) that led to this negotiation? (What would have happened to each party in the absence of an agreement; what were their alternatives?)
- (3) How was the preparation of the negotiation? What were the prenegotiations, the parties’ approach?
- (4) How did you decide who would negotiate, the agenda, the place?
- (5) How did the negotiations begin? (Was it a bargaining process with an exaggerated claim at the beginning?) Who did open the negotiation? How were openings of each party established? Did they seek to establish criteria and objectives, or did they engage in mere bargaining?
- (6) What were the main incidents of the transaction? How did you obtain the more important points for you?
- (7) How was the closure and the agreement? Was it a good deal (satisfactory, sustainable, etc.)?
- (8) What were the more salient aspects of this negotiation experience? What did you like most? What did you like least? Do you think that people of the country are like you? To what extent?
- (9) Do you think this was a typical experience? Have you had experiences very different from that one?
- (10) What advice would you give to a colleague or a friend who is going to negotiate with that other country?
- (11) In short, how do these people usually negotiate? Do you believe that you can generalize from the negotiation experience you have just described?

Appendix B Codebook: The Twenty First-Order Codes

- (1) *Negotiation philosophy*: Summing up: How do they negotiate?
- (2) *Perception of other side*: Do they conceive the counterpart as a friend, a colleague, a rival, a neutral party?
- (3) *Present orientation*: Do they negotiate long-term or short-term interests?
- (4) *Basis for trust*: Is their trust based on the person, or on the legal system and the written contract, or previous experience with the organization?
- (5) *Risk-taking*: Do they take high risks (e.g., risk of failing to deliver)?
- (6) *Who negotiates*: How do they select negotiators?
- (7) *Decision-making*: Who is the decision-maker and what is the decision process?
- (8) *Formality*: Are they informal/formal, do they follow a protocol, is interpersonal treatment close/distant?
- (9) *Informal negotiations*: Do they use out-of-the-office negotiations?
- (10) *Prenegotiations (and negotiation preparation)*: Do they have preliminary preparation meetings, do they come well prepared?
- (11) *Opening demands*: Do they open negotiations with extreme demands (haggling), or use objective criteria to justify reasonable demands?
- (12) *Arguing*: Do they use emotional persuasion (e.g., threats) or structured argumentation (e.g., quantitative evidence or rational principle)?
- (13) *Emotionality*: Do they have an authentic (i.e., expressive) or instrumental approach to their feelings? Is it acceptable to express emotions during the negotiation?
- (14) *Power tactics*: Do they employ tactics of intimidation, confrontation, and aggressiveness; do they fake lack of interest?
- (15) *Level of discussion*: Do they discuss details or do they stick to generalities?
- (16) *Negotiation time*: Are they punctual, polychronic, slow, agenda-focused?

- (17) *Format of agreement*: Do they prefer *oral* or written, legal agreements?
 - (18) *Compliance and commitment*: Do they see agreements as binding?
 - (19) *Flexibility*: Are they rigid or flexible about changes?
 - (20) *Style of self-expression*: Are they friendly, courteous, confrontational, diplomatic, evasive, neutral?
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