French Interpersonal Argument: Fundamental Understandings

Michel Dufour, Dale Hample

French Interpersonal Argument: Fundamental Understandings

MICHEL DUFOUR
University Sorbonne-Nouvelle Paris
michel.dufour@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr

DALE HAMPLE
University of Maryland
http://dhample@umd.edu

Abstract: Our aim here is to provide what we believe to be the first general survey of fundamental French understandings about interpersonal arguing. We consider how arguing fits into French language and culture. In parallel with recent projects done in other nations, we report French people's argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, argument frames, and tendency to take conflicts personally. These results are compared to those of other nations.

We first learned how to argue when we were small children. In our homes we argued within our family about whether to eat vegetables, whether squirrels can actually fly, and why it is wrong to hit mean children. This was all interpersonal arguing, done face to face. As we got older and more intellectually capable, we also became a little reflective about the activity of arguing and learned when to avoid it, when engagement is necessary, what arguments can do, and how other people feel about the activity. These understandings carried forward into our mature lives, perhaps becoming an unquestioned platform for our adult arguments or perhaps constituting a touchstone for what we wanted to change in our relationships. Public arguments about foreign or domestic policy are all produced by people who first learned to argue interpersonally, in their homes. Although this paper does not study children, we do study the understandings about argument that we believe began in early childhood (a good example of research on children aged 3-7 with discussion of the limited literature base

is Hannken-Illjes, 2016; older but still useful examples are Kline & Oseroff-Varnell, 1993; O'Keefe & Benoit, 1982).

Our aim here is to provide what we believe to be the first general survey of French fundamental understandings about interpersonal arguing. This project takes its place alongside similar studies in other nations: the United Arab Emirates (Rapanta & Hample, 2015), Chile (Santibáñez & Hample, 2015), China (Xie, Hample, & Wang, 2015), India (Hample & Anagondahalli, 2015), Portugal (Hample, Lewiński, Saàágua, & Mohammed, 2016), and Malaysia (Waheed & Hample, 2016). The impulse behind this community research project is to evaluate the possibility of exporting American theories and instruments to other cultures, and to track results as they differ from nation to nation. This work has found that many of the American ideas resonate in other nations and that sets of similar nations have been discovered on several points, but that other concepts and instruments pass borders with more difficulty. Very similar research plans have been used in all these nations to promote comparability, and we implement that same design in this paper as well.

The Fundamental Assessments

French understandings of interpersonal arguing could be assessed in many ways, but we have chosen three sets of instruments that are well researched in the United States, and which are now generating a substantial data record elsewhere in the world. These instruments fall into three conceptual categories. The first is argument motivations. These are assessed by means of (translated) self-report measures of argumentativeness (Infante & Rancer, 1982) and verbal aggressiveness (Infante & Wigley, 1986). The second is argument frames, a set of instruments that assess people's goals, expectations, and reflections about interpersonal arguing (Hample, 2005). The last category is reactions to interpersonal disagreement, measured with the taking conflict personally scales (Hample & Dallinger, 1995).

Argument Motivations

Under the term "argument motivations" we collect four separate measures, two for each large construct. The first construct is argumentativeness (Infante & Rancer, 1982). Argumentativeness is the impulse to propose a controversial position, or to attack the evidence, reasons, or conclusions of another arguer. The two subordinate measures are argument approach, indicating that a person wishes to engage in controversy on the merits of a case, and argument avoidance, measuring the desire to escape such interactions. The second construct is verbal aggressiveness (Infante & Wigley, 1986). This is the predisposition to attack the other person's character, background, or other attributes. It amounts to an engaged interest in initiating ad hominem attacks. The two subscales are verbal aggressiveness (antisocial), which directly indexes the desire to attack the other person, and verbal aggressiveness (prosocial), which is the opposite impulse to be polite and considerate

during conflicts. Both argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness are traits, or predispositions, rather than behaviors (we would call the behaviors substantive arguing and verbal aggression, respectively, but they are not studied here).

Argument Frames

The idea of argument frames is that people have understandings of what arguing is and is not, and that they register arguments in these ways. Collectively, measurement of argument frames is designed to answer the question, "What do people think they are doing when they are arguing?" The argument frames battery also has a number of separate instruments (Hample & Irions, 2005; Hample, Richards, & Skubisz, 2013; Hample, Warner, & Young, 2009). The frames are organized into three sets. The first collects the primary goals for arguing, the individual ambitions of an arguer. These are utility (seeking some benefit), identity display (showing off some prized aspect of one's self), dominance assertion (proving that one can subordinate the other person), and play (arguing for entertainment). The second set points out the degree to which an arguer takes the other person genuinely into account. The three measures here are blurting (speaking spontaneously without adapting to the other person), cooperation (rather than competition), and civility (expecting a politely contended and constructive disagreement). The final set deals with one's reflective understanding of the abstract activity of arguing, and has only one scale, called professional contrast. This measurement invites respondents to endorse various possible understandings of arguing on which scholars and ordinary actors often disagree (e.g., is arguing an alternative to violence or an invitation to it?). These measures simultaneously indicate people's understandings of arguing as well as their own histories of it.

Reactions to Arguing

Of the many possible reactions to arguing that people may have, we focus on the possibility that they might take conflict personally (Hample & Dallinger, 1995). Personalization of conflict is understood here as mainly an emotional reaction, although there are some cognitive components as well. As with the other categories of constructs we survey, this measurement has subscales. These are direct personalization (straightforwardly indicating whether the respondent takes conflict personally), stress reactions (both psychological and physiological), persecution feelings (the sense that others start conflicts in order to victimize the respondent), positive relational effects (the cognitive estimate that conflicts can improve relationships), negative relational effects (the opposite expectation), and positive valence (giving positive valence to participating in conflicts).

All these measures have very substantial empirical records in the U.S. (Hample, 2005; Hample & Cionea, 2010; Rancer & Avtgis, 2014). Collectively they rerpresent a great deal of the U.S. research on interpersonal arguing. These are also the measurements that have been used in the other nations involved in the current community project to see whether U.S. ideas can be transported into other cultures.

Arguing in France

Although Croucher (2010; Croucher, Anarbaeva, Turner, Oommen, & Borton 2010) has done some related work on several religious groups in France, we are aware of no efforts to survey a representative population of French residents on the matters we have just outlined. Work in other nations warns clearly against assuming that relationships found in the U.S. or any other nation will generalize to France. Consequently, we will not be making any specific hypotheses. Instead, we will try to anticipate French reactions to our measures by trying to understand argumentation through the lens of French culture and vocabulary.

Freedom of Speech

Dating from the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, the *Declaration of Human and Civic Rights* is still an explicit element of the current French constitution. Article 11 states: "The free communication of ideas and of opinions is one of the most precious rights of man. Any citizen may therefore speak, write and publish freely, except what is tantamount to the abuse of this liberty in the cases determined by Law."

Well before the huge demonstrations following the radical islamist attack against the French satirical magazine *Charlie-Hebdo* in January 2015, a famous political episode of the early 19th century showed that freedom of speech had become an essential principle for the French people. July 1830 saw a brief revolution known as "The three glorious days," which began by riots against king Charles 10th who tried to limit the freedom of the press. This revolution had two immediate consequences: a new king with more limited powers and the abolition of the censorship of the press.

The caveat of Article 11 "… what is tantamount to the abuse of this liberty in the cases determined by Law" rightly suggests that the freedom to speak, write and argue is not absolute in France. A more or less explicit censorship existed till today. A famous recent example of effective censorship is Stanley Kubrick's movie *Paths of Glory* on a rebellion of French soldiers during World War I. The movie was forbidden in France from its outset in 1967 until 1987. Another widely discussed case is 1990 Gayssot's law which makes any denial of a crime against humanity a punishable offence. This law is the answer of the French state to the claim of extreme-right politicians that the Nazis' exterminations camps did not exist or that their importance has been

exaggerated. Official limitations of pornography, of the promotion of drugs or violence are still political controversies.

Freedom of speech is secured by secularism (*laicité*), a very important French political principle stated in the first article of the constitution. A major milestone towards secularism is a law voted in 1905 known as "The law of separation of the Church and the State." It recalls that the State respects any religious opinion but also states that it does not support any religion. This principled secularism is very influential in public administration, especially in public education where educational programs and professionals cannot promote a religious or political movement in front of pupils or students.

French Vocabulary for Arguing

A default hypothesis of the world survey project is the adequacy to other cultures of concepts and terminology common in US culture, but previous case studies, especially in China (Xie et al, 2015), have invited doubt. The translation of the survey into French is a new challenge to this hypothesis. The first trouble is the very translation of "argument" which is omnipresent since about 60% of the approximately 140 items explicitly use either the noun "argument" or the verb "to argue."

One of us has written on this topic (Dufour, 2014). A key point in that paper was that the combat metaphors for argument, so common in English and Dutch, seem genuinely odd to native French speakers. This might be surprising, since the Latin root of the English word certainly reached England with the old French language, one of the two main sources of English vocabulary. The French attitude towards the English "argument" is close to the Portuguese one (Hample, Lewiński, Saàágua, & Mohammed, 2016). In French, an argument is only a reason. It is never an action or a process. Yet, the word "argumentation" can mean both the utterance of a logical argument and the very argument. So, the lay French concept of "argument" is closer to the logical account of argument with premises and conclusion since a French reason is not a reason by itself but a reason for "something." So, in O'Keefe's (1977) terms, in French like in Portuguese, "argument" refers only to $argument_1$, never to $argument_2$ and has no negative connotation. However, the rather rare noun "argutie" (usually used in the plural form) has also an agonistic dialectical connotation close to the English "argument." You do not utter "arguties ;" only others do when you think they lose their time putting forward minor boring arguments, probably just for the pleasure of hair splitting. On the other hand, as in Portuguese, the use of argument often has a positive value in French. Tixier stressed that the French educational system often incites pupils and student to "develop their ideas." This could be another manifestation of the French taste for flourished speech but it often goes further than a mere requirement for longer descriptions. A way to develop one's ideas is to use arguments. A quite typical expression of exam rhetoric is,"Your answer will be (or should be) *argumentée.*" Even if it is correct, a brief answer is not enough: it should be supported by "arguments" or

"explications" (*explanations*) which roughly amount to the same. An old fashioned way to say it with a slight 18th century flavor is "Your answer will be *raisonnée*".

So, in spite of their close similarity, it was not always possible to translate the English "argument" by the French "argument." A consequence of this is a drastic reduction of the total occurrence of the lexical root "argument" in the French survey: it appears only in eight items and three times in the general introduction to the survey.

How did we finally translate the English "argument" understood as "agonistic verbal exchange?" We hesitated between "discussion" and "débat" (*debate*). We finally chose "débat" because "discussion" can be applied to any kind of dialogue including chatting, while "débat" usually presupposes a controversial topic but not necessarily a quarrel. This distinction is quite salient with the associated verbs: when two students "discuss" in the back of the class, they do not necessarily "debate." Moreover, a French debate (*débat*) suggests conflicting opinions or point of views but does not require that they are supported by reasons. When you train students to use arguments in a classroom debate, you must insist that to express your favorite views or the ones of the party you support is not enough: they must be supported by reasons. This lack of reasons is quite common in political debates, especially in the popular TV election debates where unsupported assertions are more frequent and perhaps rhetorically more efficient than logical arguments.

To preserve both the rational and the dialectical sides of the English "argument", we made explicit in the introduction that in the survey "débat" means "débat argumenté" ("rational argument"), i.e., an argument using arguments. Yet, in the items we did not use "débat argumenté" to translate the English agonistic "argument" because it would sometimes have made cumbersome sentences. Fluent questions and a familiar vocabulary were an important concern because we intended to submit the survey to people with no academic background, especially seniors who often have only a primary school level. So, the items usually use "débat" to translate "argument" but also "complementary words" like "controversy, controversial, polemics" to make explicit the dialectical or the rational side when it seemed necessary.

Furthermore, even in some of the English items the use of arguments in argument may not be obvious, for instance in one of the first items: "I enjoy avoiding arguments." When a French person reads, "Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence," she may ask to make explicit what may appear as a native subtle English ambiguity. The French will ask: do you mean "Quarrelling over controversial issues improves my intelligence" or "Using reasons to support my point of view over controversial issues improves my intelligence"? Both? We grant that the option finally chosen is open to criticisms: "Participer à des débats sur des sujets controversés développe mon intelligence." *("To participate to debates over controversial issues improves my intelligence").* This ambiguity does not seem to be a problem only in French since the American author of this paper had to make explicit to American students ready for the survey, that "argument" does not always mean quarrel.

With this background regarding the national ethos of free public argumentation and the vocabulary with which French people consider the activity of interpersonal arguing, we are ready to propose specific research objectives for this project.

Research Questions

Consistent with the exploratory aims of this study, we pose research questions rather than hypotheses. The first research question concerns sex differences. These have been consistent in the U.S., with men providing more aggressive responses and women showing more avoidance and nurturing. However, these patterns have not repeated themselves in all the nations surveyed to this point. Therefore we ask

RQ1: Do French men and women differ in their arguing motivations, argument frames, and personalization of conflict?

A second matter of concern is whether French respondents are comparable to U.S. adults. These theories and measurements originated in the U.S. and the bulk of empirical conclusions on these matters are drawn from American data. A first indication of whether those conclusions can be applied in France will be obtained from answering our second research question:

RQ2: Do French and U.S. adults have different mean scores for measures of argument motivation, argument frames, and personalization of conflict?

Besides wanting to know if French and American respondents have comparable scores on these instruments, we also wonder if the variables' intercorrelations are similar. Even if the mean scores differ, perhaps the variables have the same dynamic relations to one another. This is another fundamental consideration bearing on the exportability of U.S. results to France. Therefore,

RQ3: What are the correlational patterns among the study's instruments in France, and are these patterns comparable to those in the U.S.?

Method

Participants

We collected data from 223 adults living in France. They provided data online, usually from their homes. Some respondents were identified through an extended and snowballing series of personal connections, and others were found at the first author's institution. The sample's average age was 39.3 years (*S.D.* = 18.3). More respondents were women (61.4%) than men (38.1%). Most (91.5%) were high school graduates (oui to

Avez-vous le bac). The modal education level in our sample was Bac + 3 (34.5%) (roughly equivalent to a BA in the U.S.) with notable percentages having Bac + 5 (26%) (graduate work) and doctorates (18%).

Because this is an adult sample rather than the undergraduate samples common in other research, we will compare results to those from the U.S. adult sample reported in Hample and Anagondahalli (2015). That sample (N = 256) was collected online through Amazon's MTurk system. About half (47%) were male, and their average age was 35.8 years (*S.D.* = 12.5). Their modal education level was "some university work" (37%), another 35% had graduated from college, and 14% had at least some graduate school experience. Further details are available in the original report.

Instruments

All the instruments used here were originally developed in the U.S. Those standard English versions were translated into French by the first author, a bilingual speaker, then discussed by two French native speakers having a good competence in English and two native English speakers living in France. Finally, it was back-translated into English by a second bilingual, who did not participate in the original translation. Since one aim of the study was to make a survey of people with a low or no academic training, special attention was paid to the use of "simple" words. This was an extra challenge for the translation and the reason why a few preliminary tests were made to check the trouble lay people have with the meaning of the questions. The few apparent discrepancies were repaired to produce the final French version of the measures. Those translations are freely available from either author.

Descriptive statistics, including reliabilities, are in Table 1. Only the cooperation scale had clearly unacceptable reliability, but those results are still included here for the sake of comparability to other nations' results.

Argument Motivations. We distinguish between the motivation to argue (to present a controversial case, to object to another person's evidence or reasoning) and the motivation to attack the other arguer (to insult, to display personal hostility, to ridicule). The former is called argumentativeness (Infante & Rancer, 1982). This measurement has two subscales, *argument-approach* and *argument-avoid*. In the U.S., the avoid score is usually subtracted from the approach score to generate an overall rating of argumentativeness, but the assumption that the two subscales will be negatively correlated has not been consistently supported in other nations. Therefore the two subscales will be reported separately. Engaging in *ad hominem* attacks is called verbal aggressiveness (Infante & Wigely, 1986). Here, too, there is a pair of subscales: *verbal aggressiveness-antisocial* and *verbal aggressiveness-prosocial*. The antisocial items directly measure willingness to do *ad hominem* attacks, and the prosocial items reflect the reluctance to do so. As with the argumentativeness scale and for the same reasons, these two subscale scores will be reported separately rather than being combined as they normally have been in the U.S.

Argument Frames.   Argument frames is a collection of scales designed to display people's understandings what it means to argue: what it is for, what it is like, and what it really is. Most of the frames scales were reported in Hample, Warner, and Young (2009), but some scales were later revised in Hample, Richards, and Skubisz (2013) and Hample and Irions (2015). The frames fall into three categories. The first is self-oriented and concerns one's goals for participating in interpersonal arguments. Those goals are *utility* (to obtain some benefit), to display some important feature of own *identity*, to assert one's *dominance* over the other, or to engage in verbal *play*. The second set of frames takes the other person into account. Here we assess the degree to which one does or does not *blurt*, the balance of *cooperation* and competition one expects in an argument, and the level of *civility* that the person thinks is typical of face-to-face arguing. The final category of frames only has one scale, called *professional contrast*. Here respondents are asked to indicate their judgments on matters that ordinary arguers often disagree with argumentation professionals, such as whether arguing is relationally damaging or relationally developmental. The scale is scored so that high scores indicate agreement with the scholars.

Taking Conflict Personally.   The final scales measure people's expectations for and reactions to interpersonal conflict. The key question is whether the respondent takes the conflict personally or orients to the conflict's explicit topic. Six scales are used here. *Direct personalization* is the most immediate measure of whether a person takes conflict personally. More specific scales are *stress reactions* (both psychological and physiological) and *persecution feelings* (the idea that others started the conflict in order to attack self). A pair of scales assesses expectations about the effects conflict can have on personal or workplace relationships: *positive relational effects* and *negative relational effects*. The final scale is a generalized measure of whether the respondent enjoys participating in conflict, positive conflict *valence*.

Results

Sex Differences

The first research question asked about sex differences within the French sample. Pertinent results are in Table 2. Of the 18 possible comparisons, significant differences appeared for six. This is an intermediate proportion of sex differences across the world (see Hample, 2015) and less than occurs in the U.S. Table 2 shows that men had higher scores for play and overall positive valence for conflict, but women had higher scores for argument avoidance, direct personalization, stress reactions, and persecution feelings. To the degree that we found sex differences in France, they correspond to the general worldwide pattern of men being more

aggressive and women being more avoidant, but the French pattern is not as marked as in some other nations. Table 2 also reports correlations between age and the various measures. Age seems to have minor effects on arguing orientations in France.

French and U.S. Mean Scores

The second research question invited a comparison of French and U.S. mean scores for our instruments. These results are in Table 1. Respondents from the two nations differed on nearly all the measures.

The motivational results show that the French were more aggressive than the Americans. French respondents were less avoidant and more interested in engaging in argumentation. They were also more willing to be antisocial, but no more prosocial than U.S. respondents.

The argument frames results show that the French were generally less moved by various arguing goals but had more favorable expectations about argumentative episodes. The French were less likely to argue for instrumental reasons, to display identity, or to assert dominance. This pattern is not entirely consistent with the argumentativeness results reported above, and suggests that the argument frames measures may not have captured all the French arguing goals. The French were less likely to blurt and found arguments to be more civil than Americans, indicating more careful and pleasant experiences during arguments. The French also had somewhat more sophisticated reflective understandings of arguing, as indexed by the professional contrast measure. However, the French found arguing to be less cooperative than the Americans did, which is not entirely consistent with the blurting, civility, and professional contrast results. However, the cooperation scale was not reliable in the French sample, so this result may be due to statistical noise.

The final set of mean comparisons concerned personalization of conflict. French and U.S. adults had comparable results for direct personalization and estimates of positive relational effects. The French reported more stress associated with conflicts, but less persecution. They were less likely to say that conflicts result in negative relational effects. They had a more positive overall valence for interpersonal conflict than the Americans did. This pattern is not entirely consistent, according to the original American conceptualizations of the scales. Were it not for the stress results, however, the pattern would indicate that the French have a more positive outlook on conflicts.

Correlational Patterns

The third research question asked about the correlational patterns in the French sample, and whether they corresponded to the U.S. results. These are reported separately for each set of scales and correlations across the scale sets are available from the authors.

Table 3 shows the results for the argument motivation measures. A particular point of developing interest is the correlations between the subscales of the two main instruments, argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness. In the U.S., the two subscales typically have large negative correlations, sometimes even larger than those reported for the U.S. sample in Table 3. In France, the two subscale pairs have negative correlations (this has not been true in every nation), with argument approach and avoid correlating at $r = -.40$, and verbal aggressiveness antisocial and prosocial correlating at $r = -.26$. These associations are somewhat small compared to U.S. data, but results indicate an overall correspondence between French and U.S. patterns.

The correlational patterns for argument frames are in Table 4. In France, the goals and blurting measures are, for the most part, positively correlated, and that is the general pattern for the U.S. data in Table 4 and in the U.S. research program generally. However, the U.S. correlations are consistently larger than for the French sample, indicating that these goals are more tightly clustered together motivationally in the U.S. than in France. Cooperation and civility have no significant correlation in France, in contrast to the U.S. result of $r = .35$, which better matches the U.S. conceptualization that cooperative episodes should also be more civil. However, the French cooperation scale was quite unreliable. Readers will recall that the mean comparisons for France and the U.S. concerning cooperation and civility (Table 1) also showed an inexplicable pattern according to U.S. theorizing. Finally the French correlations for professional contrast (negative with dominance and positive with civility) were similar to those in the U.S. However, the American results also indicate that professional contrast scores were associated with blurting and cooperation scores, and these associations were absent in France. In summary, Table 4 shows some similarities between France and the U.S. for argument frames dynamics, but also some interesting divergences.

Finally, Table 5 displays the correlations for personalization of conflict. In France, the indicants of personalization (direct personalization, stress reactions, persecution feelings, and negative relational effects) were all positively correlated, and had negative associations with valence. This is typical of U.S. results as well. Here our summary is simple: the correlational patterns are quite similar. Table 5 shows some noticeable differences in magnitude, but all the correlational signs are the same, large effect sizes are large for both, small or non-significant associations are the same for both, and so on. The main exceptions have to do with the relationships between valence and the relational effects estimates in the two samples. The personalization measures had roughly similar dynamics in both nations.

Discussion

Our discussion is organized into two main sections. The first deals with the concrete research questions and the answers our data suggest. The second deals with larger reflections on the project of moving U.S. conceptualizations to France and the world outside North America.

French Understandings of Arguing

With several important exceptions, we were successful in exporting U.S. measurement techniques to France. The fact that most of the instruments showed reliability in France while remaining true to our understandings of the items' content indicates considerable common ground between the two nations. The main exception was the cooperation subscale for argument frames. We have no good explanation for this because cooperation is certainly a common idea in France. But as we remarked, the combative element of "argument" in English is odd in France, so perhaps a clue may be found there. We also discovered slightly inadequate reliability for the identity display, play, blurting, and civility measures, but these results might just as well have occurred in the U.S., and might simply be put down to ordinary statistical noise. We believe that the base concepts we studied in France are comparable to those originating in the U.S.

We found that men's and women's scores were somewhat distinct in France, but not to the degree that they are in the U.S. Patterns of this sort have been noticed before (Hample, 2015), and we are beginning to pay serious attention to the variability of sex differences from nation to nation. We have found that the fewest sex differences seem to occur in nations where women are striving most urgently for equality, and that Westernized nations' progress on this front seems to free women to express themselves as nurturing and unaggressive (cf. Charles & Bradley, 2009).

Compared to U.S. adults, the French respondents in this study tended to be more motivated to argue on the merits and to engage in ad hominem attacks. However, Americans had higher endorsement of the specific arguing goals, such as utility, identity display, and dominance assertion. The French reported more stress during conflicts but less sense of personal persecution, compared to U.S. respondents. The French also reported enjoying conflicts more.

Correlational patterns were complicated, of course. For the most part the two nations generated comparable variable-to-variable dynamics, especially in the case of taking conflict personally. A few divergences involved the unreliable cooperation scale, but others may be worth pursuit. These include the distinctive associations of civility with other frames measures. Civility is a somewhat global and summarizing measure indicating the degree to which interpersonal arguments are inviting. French civility scores may be a clue to their motivational dynamics, and why these differ to some degree from those in the U.S.

Reflections on the Project

In her comment about Hample's and al. (2015) study of argument in Portugal, Paula Castro (2016) worries about the expectations of our project of a world-wide study of argument based on surveys made in different countries. She wonders whether "nationality can be taken as an explanatory principle for the local regularities revealed by such a statistical survey" (p 163).

First, although it is sometimes tempting to stick to the general unifying principle "one country, one nation (or people), one culture, one language," we grant that it is generally false. This principle is sometimes weakened by more modest associations between only two of its terms, for instance "one country, one culture" or "one country, one nation" or "one language, one culture". All of these are dubious, especially in France. Yet, as far as France is concerned one association is true: the constitution states that "French is the language of the Republic." Let us be clear: French is the language of the republic, it is the official language; it is neither the language of the country nor of a hypothetical French nation.

As a psychologist, Castro is especially worried by what she calls an essentialist psychological interpretation of the survey. According to her it would be mistaken to consider that it reveals what people *are* (for instance verbally aggressive): it should rather be interpreted as a description of what people *do*. Castro denounces as essentialist Hample et al.'s claim that the survey reveals "personality traits," then interpreted as "national personality traits." Notice that this shift from "do" to "is" would amount to one variant of our initial unifying principle: "one nation, one personality." But Castro knows, like the authors of this survey, that statistical studies give only statistical results, namely global tendencies. We grant that the individualization of these tendencies is a risky step.

Yet, it seems that most human beings like allegories and caricatures especially the ones individualizing a human type in a single character, for instance to figure the (proto)typical Frenchman, the (proto)typical teenager and so forth. French people, like many others, do not lack ideas about their neighbors: the disciplined German, the proud Spanish, the effervescent Italian and even the so British Englishman. These caricatures also say a lot about how the hypothetical average French person sees himself or herself. When you say that others are very this or that, this often implies that they are too this or that and that you presume that you are less this or that than they are.

There is a stimulating antidote against hasty generalization and the essentialism that follows about national styles, namely the tensions, if not the inconsistency, that one sometimes meets in unifying descriptions. Two of them seem especially relevant for the case of argument in France.

It is not rare to hear people, especially French people, saying that the French are "Cartesians." This is not to be interpreted in a philosophical technical sense since many people who say so have at most a very vague acquaintance with Descartes' work beyond the celebrated but mysterious "Je pense donc je suis." To be Cartesian just means that the French would like clear ideas, precision, a rigorous attitude, and order. The French physicist Pierre Duhem, posthumously married with the American logician W.V.O. Quine in the "Duhem-Quine thesis," wrote famous pages about it (Duhem, 1989, I.4). He borrowed from Blaise Pascal's (1954, item 21) *Thoughts* a distinction between two mental attitudes or kinds of minds: the geometrical mind and the subtle mind. The first one, "strong and narrow," is keen on deductions from a few principles; the second, "broad and weak," can grasp a lot of principles but is at pains to make them explicit and then draw conclusions. According

to Pascal, you can meet both of them in a single mind in different circumstances (he himself was certainly exceptionally gifted for both). Duhem goes further. According to him, the first one is typically French and the second typically English: Descartes and Bacon are paradigms of each one. The theme of a Cartesian French style meets other famous contrasts, for instance between the geometrical gardens *à la française* and the romantic English ones or the French well-structured and explicit political and legal system and the jurisprudential and traditional legal system of England.

But this Cartesian rigor is counterbalanced by another view about the French, well spread among French people themselves, which can be illustrated by Asterix the Gaul, the major character of a very successful comic strip. Asterix is a clever little man who is supposed to have lived two thousand years ago in Northwestern France in the last village that resisted Caesar's armies. A typical feature of this village is its messy inhabitants, in sharp contrast with the Roman order and Caesar's tidy legions looking like gardens *à la française*. The inhabitants of Asterix' village are also noisy, angry, arrogant and always unsatisfied except when they practice their favorite activities, eating, drinking and singing since, in this village like in France (as it is well-known) "anything ends with songs." But before this happy end, the French, like their ancestors, complain and grumble a lot or go on strike because they are definitely unable to negotiate.

We are not sure that any essentialism is mistaken, but the variety of ill-assorted features often associated with a culture suggests that the personification of alleged national features should not go beyond caricatures. Cultural essentialism is as risky as psychological essentialism.

What do the French think about Portuguese? French common places match the general features in Hample et al.'s paper: the Portuguese are quiet, modest, hard-working and reliable people. How do the French know that? Is it just a French *cliché*? No, this picture could be based on a radical empirical claim: just look! There is an important Portuguese community among the 66 million inhabitants of France. According to the French National Institute of Statistics and Economical Studies (INSEE; http://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1410693), in 2014 a bit less than 6 million immigrants lived in France, including a vague Portuguese "community" of about one million and a half people (2% of the whole population and one of the largest "foreign" communities).

France, like many other European countries, is a country of immigration. At least in a loose sense, it can be said to be multicultural, especially in big cities and universities. This is another reason to be careful about the use of "nationality" or "culture" to explain the results of the survey. As in many countries, it is not uncommon to have dozens of percent of international students in some French academic departments. Hence, it would be dubious to point to "national culture" or to "nationality" to explain the result of a survey when it is mostly based on such a population of students. "Youth culture" or "global culture" could seriously compete with "French culture" as an explanatory factor. This is not the case in this survey since only about one third of the people surveyed were students.

The survey reveals tendencies that we may try to correlate with long term tendencies supposed to be typical of French people. Yet, long term stability, the criterion that Castro seems to judge most typical of an essence, does not entail essentialism. True or false, stereotypes are typically stable. So, let us turn to the same sources as in Hample et al's comment on the Portuguese survey to see whether they confirm and enrich the previous remarks about typical French tendencies. Both Tixier's (1994) and Hofstede's (2001) studies were made in an international professional context. Tixier's paper is focused on executives and Hofstede's study is first based on a large multinational survey made by the IBM company among its subsidiaries in 72 countries, half a century ago. Unless we believe in long term underlying national cultural stability, questions can be raised: haven't French employees or executives behaviors changed during the last half century, at least at work? Hofstede discusses this point (p 34) and his global answer is no. He argues that many typical national traits revealed by his study already appeared in descriptions made centuries ago, so a change is not excluded but it would appear at a very low rate. According to him, "people carry 'mental programs' developed in the family in early childhood" and "these mental programs contain a component of national culture" (p. xix). This view is not essentialist but traditionalist.

Among the traits that can be ascribed to the French according to Tixier's studies on European people, some are not typically French but shared with other people. For instance, when recruiting an executive, countries of southern Europe pay more attention to the presumed personality of the candidate than to technical skills (p. 17). This trend appears again in people management: "The personality and popularity of a leader is customarily a powerful influence for the French" (p. 19). These behaviors can be associated with centralized bureaucratic states and have consequences on the parameter that Hofstede calls "power distance." On the other hand, Tixier stresses that in spite of general tendencies, there are exceptions to broad multinational cultural distinctions like Northern/Southern Europe or Latin/Anglo-saxon/Nordic: a national behavior can diverge from the one of a global zone.

Tixier stresses specific traits of the French that meet some of the remarks we previously made. She contrasts the pragmatism of British, Dutch, Germans and Scandinavians with the French taste for "great intellectual and abstract theories" (p 14). This intellectual distinction is analogous to the geometrical/subtle Pascalian and Duhemian ones and can also meet bureaucratic tendencies: "the precision and clarity, which French managers generally demand, leave less room for the initiative of subordinates…" (p. 22) and "the French might appear aggressive in their vocabulary." This latter remark is reminiscent of our own findings about argument motivations.

On the other hand, in Europe the French have the reputation to be the "finest talkers" and they are sometimes reproached for it as a result (p. 19). The French executive is credited "for skill in public relations and ease in manipulating ideas: she takes great pleasure in talking, debating, and exchanging points of view. This talent confers on French executive a vivacious, glossy appearance which some find superficial…" This makes

French close to Italians with whom they share a strong tendency for oral expressiveness. The French language itself would make it difficult to be brief (p. 21). Furthermore, the elitist French educational system which emphasizes the classification and ranking of schools and individuals teach pupils and students to develop their ideas (p. 20). This could explain why the Germans complain about "the long hours spent in business dinners" but it would also contradict the German reproach "for abstractly synthesizing information too much and for being too concise." Tixier suggest that this would be a misunderstanding of the fact that the French prefers "a mode of expression that is subtle, suggestive, and requires reading between the lines" (p. 21).

In summary, while we have sympathy for Castro's worries about using studies such as the present one to describe "the French," we also find reason to suppose that there really is a French ethos, and that our present results may point to some reasonable conclusions. Applying summarizing statistics to a particular individual is, of course, an awful fallacy of reasoning. However, in our present effort to characterize nations as similar or distinct on basic argumentation measures, we are comfortable with the present state of our work. We would welcome more detailed work on smaller cultural concentrations in various nations, including France.

References

Castro, P. (2016). Commentary on Hample, Lewiński, Saàágua and Mohammed's A Descriptive and Comparative Analysis of Arguing in Portugal. In D. Mohammed & M. Lewiński (Eds.), *Argumentation and reasoned action: Proceedings of the 1ˢᵗ European Conference on Argumentation, Lisbon, 2015* (vol. 1, pp. 159-164). London: College Publications.

Charles, M., & Bradley, K. (2009). Indulging our gendered selves? sex segregation by field of study in 44 countries. *American Journal of Sociology*, *114*, 924-976.

Croucher, S. M. (June, 2010). *Conflict styles among Muslims and Christians in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States: An analysis of religious and national difference*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Singapore.

Croucher, S. M., Anarbaeva, S., Turner, J. S., Oommen, D., & Borton, I. (2010). A cross-cultural analysis of argumentativeness among self-identified Christians in France and Britain. *Speaker & Gavel, 47*, 16-27.

Dufour, M. (2014, July). *[Title to be supplied]*. Paper presented at the conference on Empirical Approaches to Argumentation, Laboratoire Communication et Politique, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris.

Duhem P, *La Théorie physique*, Paris : Vrin, 1989. English translation : *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory*, Princeton U. Press, 1991.

Hample, D. (2005). *Arguing: Exchanging reasons face to face.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hample, D. (2015). Orientations to interpersonal arguing in Chile and around the world. *Cogency, 7*, 61-80.

Hample, D., & Anagondahalli, D. (2015). Understandings of arguing in India and the United States: Argument frames, personalization of conflict, argumentativeness, and verbal aggressiveness. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 44*, 1-26. doi:10.1080/17475759.2014.1000939

Hample, D., & Cionea, I. A. (2010). Taking conflict personally and its connections with aggressiveness. In T. A. Avtgis & A. S. Rancer (Eds.), *Arguments, aggression, and conflict: New directions in theory and research* (pp. 372-387). New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis.

Hample, D., & Dallinger, J.M. (1995). A Lewinian perspective on taking conflict personally: Revision, refinement, and validation of the instrument. *Communication Quarterly, 43,* 297-319.

Hample, D., & Irions, A. (2015). Arguing to display identity. *Argumentation, 29*, 389-416.. doi: 10.1007/s10503-015-9351-9

Hample, D., Lewiński, M., Saàágua, J., & Mohammed, D. (2016). A descriptive and comparative analysis of arguing in Portugal. In D. Mohammed & M. Lewiński (Eds.), *Argumentation and reasoned action: Proceedings of the 1ˢᵗ European Conference on Argumentation, Lisbon, 2015* (vol. 1, pp. 135-157). London: College Publications.

Hample, D., Richards, A. S., & Skubisz, C. (2013). Blurting. *Communication Monographs, 80,* 503-532*.*

    doi:10.1080%2F03637751.2013.830316

Hample, D., Warner, B., & Young, D. (2009). Framing and editing interpersonal arguments. *Argumentation, 23,* 21-37. doi:

    10.1007/s10503-008-9107-x.

Hannken-Illjes, K. (2016, May). *Establishing validity: Argumentation in child-child communication.* Paper presented at the biennial

    Wake Forest University Argumentation Conference, Venice Italy.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2d. ed.).

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Infante, D. A., & Rancer, A. S. (1982). A conceptualization and measure of argumentativeness. *Journal of Personality Assessment,*

    46, 72-80.

Infante, D. A., & Wigley, C. J. (1986). Verbal aggressiveness: An interpersonal model and measure. *Communication Monographs,*

    53, 61-69.

Kline, S.L. & Oseroff-Varnell, D. (1993). The development of argument analysis skills in children. Argumentation and Advocacy, 30,

    1-16.

O'Keefe, B. J., & Benoit, P. J. (1982). Children's arguments. In J. R. Cox & C. A. Willard (Eds.), *Advances in argumentation theory*

    and research (pp. 154-183). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

O'Keefe, D. J. (1977). Two concepts of argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association, 13,* 121-128.

Pascal B., "Pensées" in *Oeuvres completes,* Paris : Gallimard, 1954.

Rapanta, C., & Hample, D. (2015). Orientations to interpersonal arguing in the United Arab Emirates, with comparisons to the United

    States, China, and India. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 44,* 263-287. doi:

    10.1080/17475759.2015.1081392

Rancer, A. S., & Avtgis, T. A. (2014). *Argumentative and aggressive communication: Theory, research, and application*, 2d. ed.

    New York: Peter Lang.

Santibáñez, C., & Hample, D. (2015). Orientations toward interpersonal arguing in Chile. *Pragmatics*, *25*, 453-476.

Tixier, M. (1994). Management and communication styles in Europe: Can they be compared and matched. *Employee Relations*, *16*, 8-

    26. doi: 10.1108/01425459410054899.

Waheed, M., & Hample, D. (2016, June). *Argumentation in Malaysia and how it compares to the U.S., India, and China.* Paper

    presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, Fukuoka, Japan.

Xie, Y., Hample, D., & Wang, X. (2015). A cross-cultural analysis of argument predispositions in China: Argumentativeness, verbal
aggressiveness, argument frames, and personalization of conflict. *Argumentation, 29*, 265-284. doi: 10.1007/s10503-015-9352-8

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	#items	French Data alpha	N	mean	S.D.	US Data mean	t
Argument Avoid	10	.78	223	4.48	1.41	5.71	-8.25***
Argument Approach	10	.84	223	6.07	1.48	5.27	4.99***
VA-Antisocial	10	.79	223	4.28	1.50	3.77	3.19**
VA-Prosocial	10	.81	223	6.68	1.52	6.60	0.51
Utility	8	.72	205	4.39	0.90	5.16	-6.90***
Identity	8	.67	205	5.22	0.70	5.22	-8.46***
Dominance	6	.83	205	2.95	1.38	2.95	-7.82***
Play	4	.61	205	4.10	1.22	3.921	1.09
Blurting	10	.69	205	4.27	0.88	5.17	-7.07***
Cooperation	5	.43	205	5.57	0.59	6.99	-13.11***
Civility	6	.65	205	8.12	0.99	6.04	17.46***
Prof Contrast	7	.83	198	7.05	1.51	6.69	2.11*
Direct Personalization	7	.82	192	5.73	1.71	5.82	-0.48
Stress	5	.77	192	5.85	1.97	4.93	4.46***
Persecution	6	.79	192	3.92	1.64	4.94	-6.14***
Pos Relational Effects	7	.81	192	5.17	1.47	5.41	-1.47
Neg Relational Effects	5	.79	192	6.46	1.66	6.83	-2.36*
Valence	7	.74	192	5.04	1.49	3.78	7.06***

Note. Means and standard deviations are on a 1-10 metric. All measures are scored so that higher numbers indicate more of the named variable.

For the French data: Items 5, 6, and 8 from the standard ordering were omitted in the Cooperation scale. No further improvements in reliability were possible. Items 2, 3, 5, and 9 were omitted from the Civility scale, leaving only the reverse scored items phrased to propose uncivil experiences. Other scales made use of all the standard items.

U.S. data are from Hample & Anagondahalli (2015). *t* tests are two-tailed and all were adjusted for unequal variances.

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

Table 2: Correlations with Age, and Sex Differences in France

	age r	male	female	t
Argument Avoid	.02	4.12	4.71	-3.29***
Argument Approach	-.02	6.15	5.99	0.79
VA-Antisocial	-.08	4.22	4.32	-0.49
VA-Prosocial	.19**	6.70	6.66	0.20
Utility	.02	4.36	4.41	-0.33
Identity	-.01	5.28	5.18	1.02
Dominance	-.11	2.98	2.90	0.41
Play	-.21**	4.38	3.92	2.66**
Blurting	-.04	4.12	4.36	-1.91
Cooperation	.08	5.63	5.53	1.16
Civility	.08	8.14	8.11	0.20
Prof Contrast	.04	7.10	7.03	0.31
Direct Personalization	.00	5.12	6.09	-3.92***
Stress	.06	5.08	6.28	-4.21***
Persecution	-.02	3.51	4.12	-2.69**
Pos Relational Effects	-.06	5.06	5.22	-0.70
Neg Relational Effects	.11	6.29	6.58	-1.16
Valence	-.05	5.63	4.69	4.81***

Note. Sample sizes for males and females were 85 and 137 for the argument motivation scales; 76 and 128 for the argument frames scales; and 67 and 124 for the taking conflict personally scales. t-tests were adjusted for unequal group variances when necessary. Significance tests were two-tailed.

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

Table 3: Correlations Among Argument Motivation Measures

	ArgAvoid	ArgAppr	VAAntisocial	VAProsocial
Argument Avoid	--	-.54***	.02	.28***
Argument Approach	-.40***	--	.46***	-.08
VA-Antisocial	.17*	.11	--	-.43***
VA-Prosocial	.06	.12	-.26***	--

Note. French results are in the lower diagonal, and $N = 223$. U.S. results are in the upper diagonal, and $N = 256$.

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

Table 4: Correlations Among Argument Frames Measures

	Utility	Ident	Dom	Play	Blurt	Coop	Civil	ProfCon
Utility	--	.56***	.58***	.45***	.37***	17**	.09	-.04
Identity	.23***	--	.45***	.59***	.16*	.29***	.22***	.05
Dominance	.40***	.41***	--	.52***	.42***	-.16*	-.26***	-.28***
Play	.01	.26***	.42***	--	.19**	-.07	.14*	-.04
Blurting	.17*	.14*	.25***	.27***	--	-.08	-.29***	-.18**
Cooperation	.08	.08	-.03	-.03	-.06	--	.35***	.27***
Civility	-.35***	-.16*	-.51***	-.17*	-.32***	.10	--	.43***
ProfContrast	-.09	-.11	-.37***	-.08	.13	.10	.38***	--

Note. French results are in the lower diagonal and $N = 205$. U.S. results are in the upper diagonal, and $N = 256$.

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

Table 5: Correlations Among the Taking Conflict Personally Measures

	Direct	Stress	Persec	PosRel	NegRel	Val
Direct Pers	--	.62***	.67***	-.10	.43***	-.38***
Stress	.67***	--	.58***	-.26***	.41***	-.38***
Persecution	.49***	.48***	--	-.11	.45***	-.23***
Pos Rel Eff	.00	-.14	-.08	--	-.28***	.48***
Neg Rel Eff	.41***	.48***	.43***	-.27***	--	-.61***
Valence	-.46***	-.57***	-.35***	.14	-.37***	--

Note. French results are in the lower diagonal, with $N = 192$. U.S. results are in the upper diagonal, with $N = 256$.

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