DEPARTMENT of PSYCHOLOGY

Defeated With Their Own Weapons:
Conflict Management Adaptation in Cross-Cultural Conflict
Among British and Spanish Expatriates

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Abstract

Due to intercultural encounters becoming more and more frequent in times of globalization, the importance of successful intercultural conflict management has increased. In intercultural conflict, cultural differences in conflict management styles (CMS) can lead to misunderstandings and poorer negotiation outcomes. However, it is yet to be understood if and how individuals overcome CMS discrepancies. A few studies have shown that interculturally experienced individuals adapt their CMS towards their counterpart's cultural background in Western-Eastern samples. This study investigated this phenomenon in a European context: CMS preferences of British expatriates in Spain ($n = 113$) and Spanish expatriates in the UK ($n = 141$) were tested in two imagined conflict situations with a colleague of their own or the other culture respectively. Results revealed that Spanish and British participants differed significantly in their use of dominating and avoiding CMS and that they partially adapted to the other culture's CMS patterns. Further, the expatriates' Cultural Intelligence, cultural experience, and daily interaction level with host nationals were tested as predictors of the amount of CMS adaptation in a hierarchical regression analysis. None of the variables turned out to be a significant predictor. Implications for the understanding of intercultural conflict dynamics and future research directions are discussed, including suggestions for an adjustment of the culture-based social-ecological conflict model.

Keywords: intercultural conflict, conflict management, cross-cultural adaptation, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural experience, expatriates, Spain, United Kingdom

Defeated With Their Own Weapons: Conflict Management Adaptation in Cross-Cultural Conflict Among British and Spanish Expatriates

In the course of globalization, the frequency and importance of intercultural collaborations in politics, economy, in our work and our private life has increased sharply (Bendl, Bleijenbergh, Henttonen, & Mills, 2016; Caputo, Marzi, Maley, & Silic, 2019; Gunia, Brett, & Gelfand, 2016). Intercultural conflicts occur more often and in a wider range of contexts, thereby having an enormous impact on people's life and our society (Caputo et al., 2019; Gunia et al., 2016). Beyond the fundamental challenges of conflict management, parties from different cultures find themselves confronted with additional difficulties: communication issues, as well as differences in values, habits, and expectations, can impede the resolution of intercultural conflicts and result in less favorable outcomes for both parts (e.g., Lee, Adair, & Seo, 2013; Liu, Zhu, & Cionea, 2019; Kumar, 2004; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). One factor that impacts the outcomes of intercultural conflict in particular is the fact that individuals from distinct cultures differ in their use of strategies and conflict management styles (Gelfand, Leslie, Keller, & De Dreu, 2012; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Friedman, Chi & Liu, 2006; Stohl, McCann & Bakar, 2013; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; Wang, 2018). For instance, individuals from individualistic cultures tend to use more result-oriented conflict resolution strategies, while collectivistic individuals tend to focus more on the relationship with the other conflict party (e.g., Altalhi, 2018; Elsayed-EkJiouly & Buda, 1996; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Understanding and handling the problems emerging from clashes of conflict management styles in intercultural conflicts is of utter salience since it entails a huge potential to improve both the processes and the outcomes of intercultural conflicts (Brett, 2014; Dusi, Messetti, & Steinback, 2014; Templer, Tay & Chandrasekar, 2006; Wang, 2018). Therefore, it is important to understand the process of how conflict management styles are chosen and how it is impacted by the culturally conditioned differences in management style preferences in intercultural encounters.

Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001; 2013) developed their culture-based social-ecological conflict model (CBSECM) in an attempt to depict and organize the processes of intercultural conflict. They implemented the levels of socioecological analysis (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), emphasizing conflict management behavior as a result of several individual and contextual factors such as self-construal (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek Swing, 2009) or ingroup-outgroup dynamics (Leung & Kim, 2007). Beyond these factors, recent research has shown that factors interacting on several levels can impact an individual's conflict behavior: in intercultural

conflict, an individual's conflict management styles (CMS) can change towards the direction of their counterpart's CMS as a consequence of intercultural interaction over a longer period of time (Adair, Okumura, & Brett, 2001; Friedman & Berthoin Antal, 2005; Oommen, 2017; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015). Most studies looking at CMS adaptation in intercultural conflict have focused on long-term shifts in CMS tendencies (e.g., Vollmer & Wolf, 2015). At the same time, there is relatively little and mixed evidence for the existence of spontaneous CMS adaptation in intercultural encounters (Lügger, Backhaus, Geiger, & Neun, 2015).

This study will investigate whether bicultural individuals indicate different CMS depending on their counterparty's cultural background in a way that justifies a manifestation of spontaneous CMS adaptation as a new concept in the literature. This is of particular interest because an ability to spontaneously adapt one's CMS would be of high value for the individual functioning in multicultural environments (Brett, 2014; Early & Ang, 2003; Molinsky, 2007). Since most studies in this area have been conducted based on Asian-Western cultural comparisons (e.g., Adair, 2003; Adair et al., 2001; Adair, Taylor, & Tinsley 2009: Lügger et al., 2015; Mintu-Wimsatt & Calantone, 1995), this study will look at two European cultures to increase the generalizability of CMS adaptation in cross-cultural conflicts. This is of particular importance since intercultural collaboration among European countries increases, and a better understanding of cultural differences within Europe and how these affect conflict management is essential (Gobel, Benet-Martinez, Mesquita, & Uskul, 2018). For this purpose, Spanish expatriates in the UK and British expatriates in Spain were asked to indicate their CMS preferences in imagined conflict situations with a Spanish or British colleague respectively. Provided that CMS adaptation depending on the counterpart's culture is evident, the degree of individuals' spontaneous CMS adaptation and its potential variation with demographic variables will be examined. In addition, three variables that have been linked with general cross-cultural adaptation (Cultural Intelligence, Ang et al., 2007) or CMS adaptation (length of residence and daily intercultural interaction, Adair et al., 2001; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015) will be tested as potential predictors of spontaneous CMS adaptation. Since there has been contradictory evidence about the link between an individual's CMS adaptation and cultural experience (the length of residence and interaction level with host nationals), this study aims at clarifying this interrelation. Even in research addressing Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and individuals' CMS preferences, the evidence is contradictory (Engle, Elahee, & Tatoglu, 2013; Gonçalves et al., 2016; Imai & Gelfand, 2010). Exploring CQ as a potential predictor of CMS adaptation rather than an predictor of certain CMS preferences as

in earlier studies might contribute to a better understanding of the way these variables are linked.

Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate whether Spanish and British expatriates use different CMS and if they spontaneously adapt their conflict management to their counterpart's culture. Since mixed evidence puts the existence of CMS adaptation into question, this study tries to add empirical foundation and generate further insight into this phenomenon. Furthermore, it is attempted to clarify the role that cultural experience and daily interaction with the other culture play for the extent to which individuals adapt their CMS. As an explorative attempt to explain mixed results in earlier research, CQ is assessed as a possible predictor of CMS adaptation. In this way, this study aims at increasing the understanding of intercultural CMS adaptation, thereby paving the way for further multilevel research with a richer perspective on intercultural conflict.

Conflict Management Styles

Ting-Toomey (1994) defined conflict as a "perceived or real incompatibility of values, expectations, processes or outcomes between one or more parties in practical and/or relational issues" (p. 360). On the interpersonal level, conflicts can be managed in different ways depending on factors such as an individual's background and motivational orientation in conflict situations (Ruble & Brown, 1975). These individual conflict management styles (CMS) or "patterned responses to conflict in a variety of situations" (Ting-Toomey, Yee-Jung, Shapiro, Wright, & Oetzel, 2000, p.48) have been conceptualized by several researchers (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Hall, 1976; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas, 1976). Initially, Blake and Mouton (1964) derived five conflict management styles from the intersection of an individual's concern for her own and the other party's interests, resulting in the management strategies problem solving, compromising, smoothing, withdrawing, and forcing. Today, the most widely used conceptualization of CMS is Rahim and Bonoma's (1979) dual concern model (Choi, 2017), which is based on Blake and Mouton's (1964) original model. According to Rahim and Bonoma (1979), the two dimensions characterizing an individual's CMS is her general concern with self (assertiveness), and her concern with others (cooperativeness; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). A high concern with self in combination with a low concern for

others results in a dominating CMS, characterized by one party forcing through its own needs while disregarding the other party's interests. An individual with low concern for both self and others will employ an avoiding CMS and rather accept that neither party's interests get fulfilled instead of taking action in the conflict. When the interest for both oneself and the other is high, the integrating CSM is typically characterized by open information exchange to map out interests, differences, and priorities and solve problems creatively. If a party's concern with self is low while the concern with the other party's interests is high, an obliging CMS is applied. This can imply the emphasis of commonalities or the sacrifice of one's own needs in favor of the other's interests. The fifth CMS, compromising, reflects a medium-high concern for both self and others. In this style, the parties typically accept certain restrictions of their needs to find a solution acceptable to both (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979).

Cultural Differences in CMS

The way individuals approach and manage conflict has been found to be determined by several individual, situational and cultural factors such as personality traits (e.g., Ma & Jaeger, 2005; Park & Antonioni, 2007; Wood & Bell, 2008), gender, age, and cultural background (e.g., Adair & Brett, 2005; Brewer et al., 2002; Florea et al., 2003; Gbadamosi, Ghanbari Baghestan & Al-Mabrouk, 2014; Holt & DeVore, 2005). An individual's culture can be defined as a "learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, and symbols that are passed on from one generation to the next and are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.10). As an individual's cultural background generally frames and affects her behavior (Berry, 1992; 1997), it also impacts her interests, values and communication strategies in conflict situations (e.g., Cai & Fink, 2002; Gelfand et al., 2012; Gunia et al., 2016; Posthuma, 2012; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; Triandis, 2000). The dimension of culture that has been found to be of particular relevance for conflict management behavior is the individualism-collectivism dimension (e.g., Komarraju, Dollinger, & Lovell, 2008; Choi, 2017; Gelfand et al., 2012; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Friedman et al., 2006; Stohl et al., 2013; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; Wang, 2018). According to the most commonly used conceptualization (Choi, 2017), individualism-collectivism dimension indicates the degree to which an individual identifies as an independent or interdependent part of her social surrounding (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). While individualism is characterized by self-focused emotions and individual goals as being more important than ingroup-interests and socially directed emotions,

collectivism refers to the opposite. In collectivistic societies, the "we"-identity usually has a higher status than an individual's "I"-identity (Hofstede, 2001).

In research, individuals from highly individualistic cultures such as the USA or western European countries (Hofstede et al., 2010) were consistently found to have a higher concern for their own interests than individuals from collectivistic societies (Gelfand, Severance, Fulmer & Dabbagh, 2012; Gunia et al., 2016; Friedman et al., 2006; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Tinsley & Brett, 2001; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015). Likewise, individualistic individuals tend to apply more result-oriented CMS such as competing and collaborating compared to collectivistic individuals (e.g., Altalhi, 2018; Elsayed-EkJiouly & Buda, 1996; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Tinsley & Brett, 2001; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015). At the same time, individuals from collectivistic cultures have been found to be more concerned about the relationship with the counterparty: They showed more approval-seeking behavior in conflict situations and were more likely to sacrifice own needs than people from individualistic cultures (Aslani, Ramirez, Semnani-Azad, Brett & Tinsley, 2013; Gelfand et al., 2012; Komarraju et al., 2008; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). This lower concern with own interests in collectivistic individuals also explains why they were less likely to apply the dominating style (Elsayed-EkJiouly & Buda, 1996; Gunkel, Schlaegel & Taras, 2016; Komarraju et al., 2008; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991) and showed stronger preferences for accommodating, compromising, collaborating and avoiding CMS (Friedman et al., 2006; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Leung et al., 1992; Morris et al., 1998; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015). For instance, Komarraju and colleagues (2008) found that individualism positively predicted dominating and negatively predicted obliging and avoiding conflict management preferences in students in the USA. A study by Friedman et al. (2006) revealed that Chinese individuals were more likely to show an avoiding CMS than US-American individuals because they expected direct conflict to harm the relationship. Hence, cultural differences in CMS tendencies have been evident in various research settings. But what happens when individuals from different cultures clash in their way of handling conflicts? Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001, 2013) developed a model that can serve as a frame for the analysis and understanding of culture-based dynamics in the management of interpersonal conflict.

Culture-Based Social-Ecological Conflict Model (CBSECM)

The cultural differences in conflict management outlined above can render conflict situations more complex: If the parties involved in a conflict have different cultural backgrounds, culturally conditioned differences in expectations, judgments, and attitudes are likely to impact the conflict management dynamics (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; 2013). In their culture-based situational conflict model (CBSCM) and the later extension to the culture-based social-ecological conflict model (CBSECM), Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001; 2013) organize the culture-based factors that are thought to affect the intercultural conflict process into four sections: primary orientation factors, situational features, conflict processes, and conflict competence.

Primary Orientation Factors

Primary orientation factors are defined as existing patterns on the inter- and intrapersonal level that the individual brings into the conflict situation (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2013). They are theorized to determine the individual's interpretation and understanding of the conflict situation, as well as her assumptions of how the conflict in question should be managed (e.g., Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; Zhang, Ting-Toomey, Dorjee, & Lee, 2012). For instance, self-construal has been shown to be a relevant primary orientation factor. Self-construal is the counterpart of the individualism-collectivism dimension on the individual level and describes the degree to which an individual defines herself as interdependent or independent from other individuals (Cross et al., 2009). A cross-cultural study by Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2003) showed that interdependent self-construal is linked to a preference for integrating and avoiding conflict management while independent self-construal is associated with competing and dominating conflict management styles.

Situational Features

In addition to these individual attributes, Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001, 2013) emphasize the importance of culture-based situational features for the conflict management dynamic. The situational context of the conflict is theorized to impact the way the individual expresses her conflict management orientation in concrete conflict processes such as emotional expression and conflict management styles (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2013). Examples of situational features relevant to the choice of CMS are the intensity of conflict, the relationship between the parties involved, and ingroup-outgroup dynamics (TingToomey

& Oetzel, 2001; 2013). For instance, Leung and Kim (2007) compared students' conflict behavior with in-group or out-group members and found that the participants used more dominating and deceiving and less obliging, compromising, and integrating with out-group members. Likewise, Oetzel (1998) found that individuals use more avoiding conflict management and emotional expression in conflicts with outgroup as opposed to ingroup members. In other studies, the counterparty's relative status in the conflict situation was shown to affect the extent to which participants were ready to sacrifice their own goals for the sake of the relationship (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Friedman et al., 2006; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal, 1964; Phillips & Cheston, 1979; Rahim, 1986).

Conflict Processes and Conflict Competence

Conflict processes stand for verbal and non-verbal behaviors that are displayed in the conflict interaction itself as a result of both primary orientation factors and situational features. Further, the conflict processes applied by an individual in conflict situations are thought to determine her conflict competence. Conflict competence features include, for example, the appropriateness of the individual's behavior in the intercultural conflict as perceived by other members of the respective culture (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), or her communicational effectiveness in creating shared meaning and understanding (Canary, Lakey & Sillars, 2013). The better the conflict parties' conflict competences, the higher the probability of a positive conflict outcome according to the model (TingToomey & Oetzel, 2001; 2013). The experiences throughout the conflict process finally affect the individual's conflict competence over time, which will, in turn, impact the individual's primary orientation factors.

CBSECM

In the extension from the CBSCM to the CBSECM, Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2013) integrated the socioecological analysis levels as conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner (1979), allowing for multilevel analysis of greater complexity and within the wider context of the conflict situation. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) emphasizes five analytical levels whereof four have been implemented in the CBSECM: macro-, exo-, meso- and micro-level (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2013). The macro-level refers to an individual's cultural preconditions such as her socio-economic status. The exo-level consists of

interconnections of social factors that indirectly influence the individual while the meso-level includes connections between groups or persons in her immediate surroundings. Finally, the micro-level concerns the direct relationship between the individual and other persons and groups (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). All these levels are emphasized for each subsection of the model (primary orientation factors, situational features, conflict processes and competence).

The CBSECM has been proven useful in organizing, analyzing, and explaining intercultural conflict processes and many important factors have been integrated into the model (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2013; Tommy & Oetzel, 2019). However, as useful as the division into four subsections might be, seeing individual and situational factors as distinct and relatively independent in their impact on conflict processes bears the risk that research is conducted within the borders of these subsections. In fact, almost all studies about intercultural conflict have focused on either individual or situational factors (e.g., Adair et al., 2001; Brew & Cairns, 2004; Groves, Feyerherm, & Gu, 2014; Friedman et al., 2006; Kumar, 2004; Leung & Kim, 2007; Oetzel, 1998; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000), and too little research exists where the interaction of both levels is addressed.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Conflict Management Styles

One aspect that arises from the interaction of both subsections is cross-cultural adaptation in intercultural conflicts. How and to what extent individuals adapt their culturally conditioned conflict behavior tendencies to the cultural frame of the situation has been addressed surprisingly little. However, cross-cultural adaptation is necessary for meaningful interaction between individuals from different cultures (Adair et al. 2001; Kamins, Johnston & Graham, 1998; Natlandsmyr & Rognes, 1995) and can result in joint agreement and a more positive conflict resolution (Lügger et al., 2015; Molinsky, 2007; Rubin & Brown, 1975). It has been defined as "the process through which persons in cross-cultural interactions change their communicative behavior to facilitate understanding" (Cai & Rodriguez, 1997, p. 34).

In the literature, two explanations are presented for why CMS adaptation in conflict resolution is likely to occur: Firstly, conflict resolution is a dynamic process in which a certain amount of interactional synchrony is necessary to render the conflict parties' interaction meaningful (Condon, 1980). Secondly, in intercultural conflicts, a culturally experienced individual might hold assumptions about the other party's conflict behavior and

imitate the culturally appropriate behavior (Adair, Taylor & Tinsley, 2009; Brett & Okumura, 1998). Despite these perspectives suggesting that CMS adaptation should occur, evidence about such cultural adaptation is mixed and it remains unclear which party adapts and to what degree (Lügger et al., 2015; Oommen, 2017; Tommy & Oetzel, 2019). For instance, Lügger et al. (2015) found that in German and Chinese dyads resolving bargaining tasks intra- and interculturally, German participants partially adapted their conflict behavior when negotiating with a Chinese while Chinese participants did not. Adair et al. (2001) tested the way Japanese and American negotiators handled conflict in intra- and intercultural situations and observed that the interculturally experienced Japanese negotiators adapted their use of influence and information sharing depending on their counterparty's cultural background while the American participants did not. According to Adair et al. (2001), these results support a theory by Weiss (1994), stating that the party who is more familiar with the other's culture adapts in negotiations. However, Vollmer and Wolf (2015) investigated the impact of cultural experience in conflict settings between Russian and West European negotiators over a longer period of time and found that it did not predict the degree of conflict management adaptation. Instead, they found communication frequency with individuals from the other culture to antecede a mutual adaptation of participants' CMS independently from their cultural background. While Russians increased their display of assertiveness in negotiation, western Europeans decreased this tendency when communicating frequently with Russians. Furthermore, a high communication frequency was found to result in a lower degree of avoidance in CMS (Vollmer & Wolf, 2015). These results suggest that the frequent interaction with individuals from the other culture increases CMS adaptation rather than the overall cultural experience over a longer period of time. Even Oommen (2017) found that immigrants' choice of CMS partially depended on their interaction levels with individuals from the host and their original culture. This contradicts the results of Adair et al. (2001) and Weiss' (1994) theory. Instead, the interplay of factors that determine the adaptation of CMS in intercultural conflict seems to be more complex than previously assumed.

A possible explanation for these contradictory findings could be that cultural knowledge or experience might be a relevant but not sufficient antecedent of adaptation. Concerning long-term cultural adjustment, for instance, it has been shown that not only an individual's cultural knowledge but also her capacity to apply it is determinant for successful adaptation (Ang et al., 2007; Ward, Wilson, & Fischer, 2011). Hence, even in the context of intercultural conflict, the application of knowledge, as well as the motivation and the capacity

to adjust expectations, might be necessary for a situational adaptation of CMS to occur (Gonçalves et al., 2016).

For now, there is a clear gap when it comes to the investigation of the degree to which individuals adapt in intercultural conflict. Most studies have been conducted in an Asian-Western context (e.g., Adair et al., 2001; 2003; 2009; Brett & Okumura, 1998; Lügger et al., 2015), and other cultures must be examined to test the generalizability of cultural adaptation in cross-cultural conflict. Therefore, this study will explore whether Spanish expatriates in the UK and British expatriates in Spain spontaneously adapt their CMS according to their counterparty's cultural background and if cultural intelligence, cultural experience, or their daily level of interaction with the other culture predict such adaptation.

Cultural Intelligence as a Potential Predictor of Situational CMS Adaptation

Cultural intelligence (CQ) has been defined as the capacity to accurately evaluate and interpret intercultural scenarios and adjust one's behavior effectively to the cultural environment (Ang et al., 2007; Earley & Ang, 2003; Van Dyne, Ang, & Koh, 2008). High cultural intelligence is characterized by continuous learning and the ability to adapt one's behavior in a way that an intercultural situation requires (Ng, Van Dyne & Ang, 2012; Van Dyne et al., 2008; Ward et al., 2011). The four facets of cultural intelligence are motivational CQ (the motivation to interact with and learn about different cultures), behavioral CQ (the flexibility to adjust behavior), metacognitive CQ (awareness in intercultural interactions) and cognitive CQ (culture-specific knowledge; Van Dyne et al., 2008).

Despite being a relatively new concept, CQ has already been shown to be linked with several skills in intercultural situations (e.g., Delpechitre & Baker, 2017; Huff, Song, & Gresch, 2014; Malek & Budhwar, 2013; Şahin & Gürbüz, 2014; Sharma & Hussain, 2019; Zhang, 2013). Hence, several researchers assume that cultural intelligence is also a key factor when it comes to the understanding of successful intercultural conflict management (Caputo, Ayoko, & Amoo, 2018; Caputo et al., 2019; Chen, Wu, & Bian, 2014; Huang, 2010). The ability and motivation to analyze the intercultural setting and flexibly adapt in behavior according to the situational requirements are thought to result in more effective conflict management in diverse situations (Chen et al., 2014; Gonçalves et al., 2016; Imai & Gelfand, 2010; Molinsky, 2007). In fact, Groves et al. (2014) found that CQ positively predicted

students' general performance in intercultural conflict settings. Sharma and Hussain (2019) showed that CQ positively predicted an Indian minority's cultural adaptation and acculturation. Likewise, in Delpechitre and Baker's (2017) study, sales students with a high CQ successfully adapted their selling strategies in cross-cultural interacting with clients. These results suggest a clear link between CQ and individuals' adaptation in cross-cultural situations. The interrelation of cultural intelligence and CMS, however, has not been fully understood yet (Aycan & Gelfand, 2012; Imai & Gelfand, 2010; Caputo et al., 2018).

In an attempt to explain the effect of CQ on negotiation performance, cultural intelligence was tested as a predictor of individuals' choice of conflict styles: Engle et al. (2013) conducted a study in Turkey and the USA and found that metacognitive CQ positively predicted the choice of a problem-solving negotiating style. According to their interpretation, people with a high metacognitive CQ are more aware of the other's culture and, thus, more empathic which leads to a higher motivation to solve the conflict in a favorable way for both parts (Engle et al., 2013). This is in line with Imai and Gelfand's (2010) results who found that CQ was positively associated with integrative information sharing in intercultural conflict. Based on the assumption that integrating is the most favorable CMS to be used in negotiations, Gonçalves et al. (2016) expected the facets of cultural intelligence to predict the choice of more integrative CMS. However, only motivational CQ was shown to account for 11,3% of the variance in integrating CMS, while the other CMS were not predicted by any of the CQ subscales (Gonçalves et al., 2016).

One of the reasons for these results might be that certain CMS are favorable and successful in some, but not in all cultural contexts. For instance, avoiding conflict management can be perceived positively in more collectivist societies and negatively in individualist societies (Gelfand et al., 2012; Gunia et al., 2016). Therefore, a person with cultural experience and high cultural intelligence might not always choose the same CMS in all encounters, but rather use her mental flexibility to adapt the choice of CMS to the cultural frame of the conflict. Since CQ has been shown to predict general behavioral adaptation in cross-cultural situations (e.g., Delpechitre & Baker, 2017; Groves et al., 2014; Sharma & Hussain, 2019), it is a promising variable to test as a predictor of CMS adaptation in intercultural conflict (Adair et al., 2009).

Research Questions

Earlier studies have addressed the question of whether interculturally experienced individuals adapt their conflict management preferences according to their counterpart's culture (Adair et al., 2009, Vollmer & Wolf, 2015, Lügger et al., 2015). However, most studies about both conflict management adaptation and cultural differences in CMS were based on the comparison of a Western and an Eastern culture (e.g., Adair et al., 2001; 2009; Boros, Meslec, Curseu, & Emons, 2010; Brett & Okumura, 1998; Friedman et al., 2006; Gelfand et al., 2012; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Lügger et al., 2015, Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). In order to increase intercultural generalizability of these phenomena in a European context, the first two research questions are as follows:

1. Do Spanish expatriates in Britain and British expatriates in Spain use different CMS?

2. Do Spanish expatriates in Britain and British expatriates in Spain adapt by using different CMS when handling a conflict situation with a counterparty of their own compared to a counterparty of the other culture?

Further, CMS adaptation will be investigated as a dependent variable in order to explore individual factors that might be crucial for the amount of CMS adaptation. In an attempt to clarify the interrelation of cultural experience and CMS adaptation as well as CQ and CMS, the following research questions will be addressed:

3.   Does the length of residence in the foreign country predict the amount of British and Spanish expatriates' spontaneous CMS adaptation?

4. Does the daily interaction frequency with individuals from the counterpart's culture predict British and Spanish expatriates' level of situational CMS adaptation?

5. Does Cultural Intelligence predict the amount of British and Spanish expatriates' situational CMS adaptation?

Method

Participants

The study was conducted with a sample of British expatriates in Spain and Spanish expatriates in the United Kingdom. The choice of cultures was based on the UK's

significantly higher scores on individualism compared to Spain (UK = 89; Spain = 51) according to Hofstede's culture comparison tool (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Since this is the main cultural variable that has been found to determine individuals' CMS (e.g., Choi, 2017; Gelfand et al., 2012; Holt & DeVore, 2005), it was expected that Spanish and British people would have different CMS tendencies. Participants were recruited via groups for expatriates on social media (e.g., "Brits in Spain" on Facebook) where a short description of the study and its purpose, as well as a link to the online survey were provided. Inclusion criteria were a minimum age of 18, having grown up in either Spain or the UK, and an expatriate experience in the other country of at least 2 months.

A power analysis conducted with G*Power revealed a minimum sample size of $N = 160$ for a medium effect size of Cohen's $f^2 = 0.15$. Ultimately, the sample included a total of $N = 254$ participants, whereof $n = 141$ were Spanish expatriates in the UK, and $n = 113$ British expatriates in Spain. The participants had been expatriates in Spain or the UK between two and 480 months ($M = 75.60$, $SD = 82.75$). The subsamples differed somewhat in the distribution of demographic variables (see Table 1). The age range of British participants was bigger and included more older participants which could be explained by the fact that many British pensioners move to Spain. This would also explain the high rate of British participants that indicated "other" as their main occupation while the percentage of working and studying participants was higher in the Spanish subsample (see Table 1). Further, the percentage of female participants in the whole sample and both subsamples was notably high, which is a known issue in psychological research and might depend on women's higher willingness to volunteer (McCray, King, & Bailly, 2005).

Table 1

Distribution of demographic variables in the Spanish and British subsamples

Variable	Spanish (*n* = 141)	British (*n* = 113)	Total (*N* = 254)
Age			
Mean	32.56	48.52	39.66
Standard Deviation	7.16	14.79	13.72
Min-Max	20 - 50	22 - 82	20 - 82
Gender (%)			
Male	32 (22.7)	35 (30.97)	67 (26.38)
Female	107 (75.89)	77 (68.14)	184 (72.44)
Other	2 (1.42)	1 (0.88)	3 (1.18)
Education (%)			
Secondary education	8 (5.67)	12 (10.62)	20 (7.87)
College or equivalent	15 (10.64)	17 (15.04)	32 (12.6)
Vocational education	9 (6.38)	8 (7.08)	17 (6.69)
University degree	109 (77.3)	76 (67.26)	185 (72.83)
Main occupation (%)			
Studies	15 (10.64)	1 (0.88)	16 (6.3)
Work	121 (85.82)	67 (59.29)	188 (74.02)
Other	5 (3.54)	45 (39.82)	50 (19.69)

Materials

Conflict Management Styles

      The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II; Rahim, 1983) was used to measure the participants' interpersonal conflict management styles in an imagined conflict condition with a Spanish and a British colleague respectively. The inventory consists of five subscales measuring the integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising CMS tendencies. The 28 items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = "Strongly disagree" to 4 = "Strongly agree" (Rahim, 1983). The ROCI-II is the most commonly used measure for CMS (Choi, 2017) and has shown high validity and reliability across samples (Rahim, 1983; Rahim & Magner, 1995). The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach alpha) for each subscale was .90 for integrating, .82 for avoiding, .76 for compromising, .81 for dominating, and .84 for obliging which is satisfactory (Taber, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the wording of the items was slightly adapted to the conflict situation participants should imagine. For instance, the item "I usually accommodate the wishes of my peer" was adjusted to "I usually accommodate the wishes of my Spanish/British colleague".

CMS Adaptation

CMS adaptation as a variable was calculated based on the difference between participants' results on the ROCI-II for conflict condition A (with a member of their own culture) and B (with a member of the other culture). The absolute value of the difference between the scores for each subscale measuring integration, avoiding, compromising, obliging, and dominating CMS was summed up to an overall CMS adaptation score ranging from 0 for no adaptation to a theoretical maximum of 20 which would indicate opposite conflict behaviors in condition A and B.

Cultural Intelligence

The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) was used to assess participants' capability to function well in different cultural contexts (Ang et al., 2007). The four subscales metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ were assessed with a total of 20 items to be answered on a Likert scale between 0 = "Strongly disagree" and 4 = "Strongly agree". The CQS has earlier shown good validity across samples, countries, and time (Ang et al., 2007) as well as solid reliability with a Cronbach's alpha above .70 for each subscale. In this sample, the Cronbach's alpha was satisfactory for all subscales (meta-cognitive CQ: .66; cognitive CQ: .72; motivational CQ: .77; behavioural CQ: .78). Only the meta-cognitive CQ subscale was slightly below the cutting edge of .70 but still above .60 and, thus, acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The overall Cronbach's alpha for the CQS was .79.

Length of Residence and Interaction Frequency

To measure participants' experience with the other culture and their daily interaction with members of the other culture, they were asked to indicate the length of their residence in in months, and their interaction habits with locals on a five-point Likert scale ranging from interacting 0 = "seldomly" to 4 = "several times a day".

Control Variables

As control variables, age, gender, main occupation, highest completed education, and language skills in the foreign language (Spanish or English) were queried. Age was indicated in years, gender could be indicated as "male", "female" or "other" and main occupation was

divided into the options "work", "studies" and "other". For highest completed education, the options were "secondary education", "college or equivalent", "vocational education", and "university degree". Language skills were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = speaking English/Spanish "not at all" to 4 = "perfectly".

Design

Research questions 1 and 2 were addressed with a within-group design comparing each CMS between the cultural groups and conflict conditions. After confirming the assumptions for parametric tests, dependent t-tests were conducted with the participants' culture (research question 1) and the counterpart's culture (research question 2) as independent variables. The five conflict management styles (integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, compromising) were set as dependent variables. To answer research questions 3-5, the variable "CMS adaptation" was calculated as the sum of the differences between participants' scores in the ROCI-II in the two conflict conditions. CMS adaptation was then used as the outcome variable in a hierarchical regression analysis, assessing the predictive value of participants' length of residence in the foreign country, their daily interaction level with members of the foreign culture, and the interaction of these two variables (research questions 3 and 4). In an additional set, motivational, behavioral, metacognitive, and cognitive CQ were tested as predictors (research question 5). Control variables implemented in the design were the participants' cultural background, age, gender, main occupation, and highest completed education.

Procedure

The data was collected in two online surveys generated with Google forms, whereof one was designed for British expatriates in Spain and the other for Spanish expatriates in the UK. Before filling in the survey, participants had to give their informed consent to participation and the handling of their answers for the purpose of research. The purpose of the study was briefly described and the duration of participation estimated to be about 10 minutes. Each survey contained questions about the inclusion criteria (age, cultural background, and residence in Spain or the UK respectively) and control variables (gender, education, and occupation), as well as the length of residence in the foreign country and daily interaction level with locals. Further, two versions of the ROCI-II were presented, first with

the request to imagine a work-related conflict with an individual of their own cultural background, then with a colleague of the other culture. Finally, the participants answered the CQS. To avoid question order effects, the item order of each subsection was randomized.


Results

Cultural Differences in CMS

The CMS with the highest indicated preference across all observations was integration ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.59$), followed by compromising ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.78$), avoiding ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.97$), obliging ($M = 1.9$, $SD = 0.82$), and dominating ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 0.95$). Before testing the adaptation of conflict management styles, independent t-tests were conducted to see whether British and Spanish participants had different CMS tendencies as expected given their differences on the individualism-collectivism culture dimension (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). For this purpose, British participants' CMS preferences in the conflict situation with a British colleague were compared to Spanish participants' CMS preferences in the condition with a Spanish colleague. The results showed that British participants used significantly more avoiding ($M = 2.25$; $SD = 0.86$ compared to $M = 1.79$; $SD = 0.91$; $t(251) = -4.16$, $p < .001$) and more dominating conflict management ($M = 2.13$; $SD = 0.84$ compared to $M = 1.81$; $SD = 0.91$; $t(251) = -2.88$, $p = .004$) than Spanish participants. Preferences for the other CMS did not differ between the cultural groups.

CMS Adaptation

In order to examine whether the participants adjusted their CMS preferences according to their counterparty's culture, CMS scores for British and Spanish participants respectively were compared between the two conflict conditions. The t-tests showed that participants adjusted their preferences in three CMS: British participants showed significantly more obliging ($t(111) = -2.89$, $p = .004$) and less dominating CMS ($t(111) = 3.7$, $p < .001$) when imagining a conflict with a Spanish colleague compared to the imagined conflict situation with a British colleague (see Figure 1). Spanish participants expressed significantly more obliging ($t(140) = -2.07$, $p = .04$) and more avoiding CMS tendencies ($t(140) = 1.21$, $p = .027$) when the counterparty was British compared to the conflict condition with a Spanish colleague (see Figure 2).
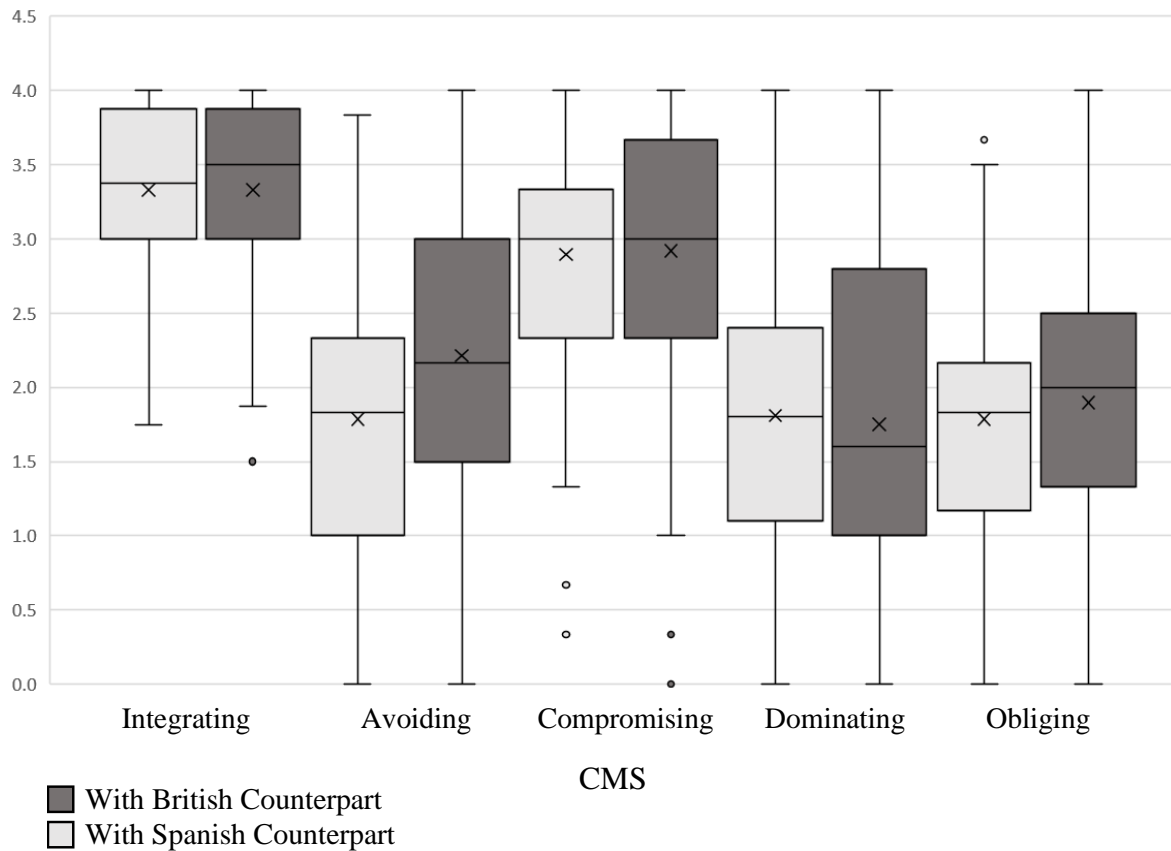
Figure 1

Conflict Management Styles: British Sample
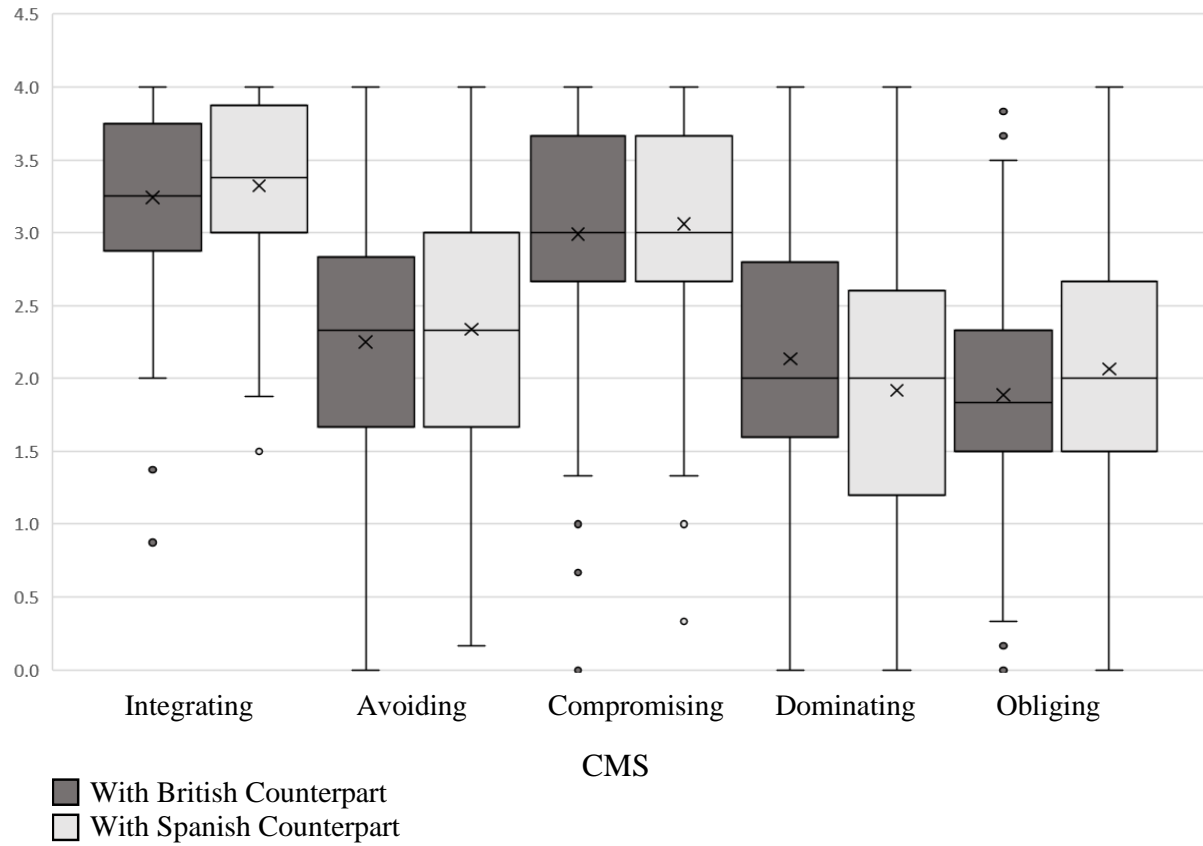
Note. n = 112. British participants' indicated conflict management styles in a conflict situation with a British and Spanish counterpart respectively. The mean is indicated by the cross, the median by the line.

Figure 2

Conflict Management Styles: Spanish Sample

Note. $n = 141$. Spanish participants' indicated conflict management styles in a conflict situation with a British and Spanish counterpart respectively. The mean is indicated by the cross, the median by the line.

To test whether the different use of CMS was based on an ingroup outgroup effect rather than the counterparty's culture, the CMS used in intracultural interactions (British participants with British colleagues and Spanish participants with Spanish colleagues) were compared to those in intercultural interaction (Brits with Spanish colleagues and Spanish with British colleagues). The only CMS differing significantly in this comparison was avoiding which was used more frequently in the intercultural than in the intracultural conflict conditions ($M_{intracultural} = 1.99$, $SD = 0.91$, compared to $M_{intercultural} = 2.27$, $SD = 1.00$; $t(252) = -1.86$, $p = .001$).

CMS Adaptation as Dependent Variable

Hierarchical linear regression models were built to examine whether the amount of spontaneous CMS adaptation can be predicted by the participants' length of residence in the foreign country, their daily level of interaction with members of the foreign culture, or their

cultural intelligence. The variable CMS adaptation was calculated based on the deltas between the participants' absolute scores on each CMS measured in the conflict situation with a Spanish and British colleague respectively. These delta scores for integration, avoidance, obliging, compromising, and dominating were summed up to an overall CMS adaptation value, ranging from 0 for no adaptation to a maximum score of 20 for full adaptation. In the data, the scores on CMS adaptation ranged from 0 to 10.26 ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.55$). Despite the Shapiro-Wilk test indicating problems with the assumption of normal distribution, a further examination of skew and kurtosis showed an acceptable grade of normality considering the relatively big sample size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Five univariate outliers were identified at the upper tail of scores. Analyses were conducted with and without these outliers and their high impact on the predictive values in the hierarchical regression models finally lead to their exclusion.

Independent Variables

Besides the demographics age, gender, culture, occupation, and education, the predictor variables implemented in the models were language skills, length of residence, and daily interaction with members of the other culture. Language skills in the foreign language were estimated by the participants on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from speaking English or Spanish 0 = "not at all" to 4 = "perfectly". The mean score was 2.85 ($SD = 0.88$). Length of residence varied between 2 and 480 months ($M = 75.6$, $SD = 82.75$) and the daily level of interaction, indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = "seldomly" to 4 = "several times a day", had a mean score of 2.67 ($SD = 1.19$). The potential predictor cultural intelligence was measured with the four subscales of CQ facets (behavioral, motivational, cognitive, and metacognitive CQ). The motivational CQ facet had the highest average score ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 0.54$), followed by metacognitive ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.64$), behavioural ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 0.72$) and cognitive CQ ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.75$). Normality was controlled with skew and kurtosis and no univariate outliers were detected for these variables.

Hierarchical Regression Sets

The first set of predictors were the demographics and control variables age, gender, cultural origin, education, occupation, and language skills (see Table 2). In the second set, stay duration in months and the daily interaction level were added. In order to examine

potential moderating effects, the interaction between the two latter variables was implemented as an additional predictor in set 3. In a fourth set, it was examined whether participants' motivational, behavioral, cognitive, or metacognitive CQ predicted the amount of CMS adaptation (see Table 2). In the final regression model, three influential outliers were detected with Cook's distance. As mentioned above, after conducting the analysis with and without five univariate and three multivariate outliers, their impact on the results was proven rather high and results are, therefore, presented without these cases. The assumptions of linear regression were tested with skew and kurtosis for normality, scatterplots for linearity of relationship, Levene's test for homogeneity of variance, and variance inflation factors (VIF) for multicollinearity. After removing the outliers, all assumptions were met. None of the subsets showed a significant regression equation (see Table 2) and the only significant predictor of CMS adaptation was language skills in set 2 and 3. Neither the daily interaction level nor the length of residence or any facet of CQ were significant predictors of CMS adaptation (see Table 2). The beta-values ranged from 0.00 (age) to 0.31 (metacognitive CQ) and the final regression model did not explain a significant amount of variance in CMS adaptation ($R^2 = .08$, $F(14, 231) = 1.32$, $p = .199$).

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of CMS Adaptation

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients (*ß-values)*			
	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 4
Age	0.000	0.007	0.006	0.013
Gender	-0.126	-0.118	-0.024	-0.150
Culture	-0.198	-0.145	-0.287	-0.262
Education	-0.065	-0.074	-0.012	-0.052
Occupation	0.134	0.107	0.235	0.031
Language skills	0.149	0.246*	0.274*	0.237
Stay Duration [a]		-0.002	-0.003	-0.001
Daily Interaction		-0.005	-0.071	-0.016
Interaction [b]			0.001	0.000
Metacognitive CQ				0.309
Cognitive CQ				-0.231
Motivational CQ				-0.119
Behavioral CQ				0.185
R^2	0.027	0.039	0.036	0.082
R^2 Adjusted	0.002	0.006	0.002	0.018

Note. Unstandardized coefficients for each subset of the hierarchical regression analysis of predictors of CMS adaptation (*n* = 246).

* $p < .05$

[a] In months

[b] Interaction between the variables Stay Duration and Daily Interaction.

Discussion

Cultural Differences in CMS

The comparison of CMS tendencies in intracultural conflict conditions across the whole sample showed that British participants used significantly more avoiding and dominating conflict management than Spanish participants. The latter outcome confirms the result of earlier studies that identified more individualist cultures as tending towards more dominating conflict management (Elsayed-EkJiouly & Buda, 1996; Gunkel et al., 2016; Komarraju et al., 2008; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). The British participants' higher use of avoiding, however, contradicts the expectations since earlier studies had shown individualism to be negatively related to avoiding CMS (Friedman et al., 2006; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Komarraju et al., 2008; Leung, 1992; Morris et al., 1998; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015). Even the obliging CMS was expected to be used less by participants from the

more individualistic culture based on previous research, but no significant difference was detected in this study. There are several possible explanations for these results. Firstly, the investigated sample consists of expatriates who have lived in the other culture for at least two months. Long-term CMS adjustments to the host culture as found by Oommem (2017) might have evened out cultural differences in the use of obliging and avoiding CMS. Another explanation might be the fact that previous research often investigated cultures that differed more extremely on the individualism-collectivism dimension (e.g., Adair et al. 2001; 2009; Lügger et al., 2015; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015). The differences found in those studies might, therefore, not become evident here since the differences between Spain and Britain are less extreme on those dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010). The higher use of avoiding by British participants could also be explained by more specific cultural characteristics of Spain and Britain that are beyond the individualism-collectivism dimension and thus not detectable in a comparison with the general Hofstede dimensions (Tay, Woo, Klafehn & Chiu, 2010).

Spontaneous CMS Adaptation

The analysis showed that British participants used significantly less dominating conflict management when imagining a conflict situation with a Spanish counterpart compared to an imagined conflict with a British colleague (see Figure 1). Since Spanish participants in total used less dominating than British participants, this shift suggests an adaptation of British participants' CMS in the use of dominating. Likewise, Spanish participants adapted their CMS towards the direction of British CMS tendencies by increasing their use of avoiding when imagining a conflict with a British colleague (see Figure 2). These results support and complete the findings of earlier research by showing that spontaneous adaptation of CMS to the counterpart's culture by culturally experienced individuals does occur even in cultures that differ less extremely. Moreover, due to the bidirectional within-group design of this study, ingroup-outgroup dynamics could be excluded as the reason for the avoiding and dominating CMS tendency shifts as they were not evident in the comparison of intra- versus intercultural conflict situations. The only CMS differing between inter- and intracultural conflicts was obliging. The higher level of obliging CMS in intercultural conflicts could be explained by the participants' position as immigrants and members of a minority group in the described scenarios (Oommen, 2017).

Interestingly, spontaneous CMS adaptation became evident in only one CMS per cultural group. Spanish participants did not adapt their dominating behavior, just as British participants did not significantly change their use of avoiding. This would support the idea that adaptation does not occur based on the factual cultural differences in CMS, but based on assumptions of the other's conflict management styles (Adair et al., 2009). Such assumptions of cultural differences might in parts deviate from the actual differences evident in the measure which would explain the lack of adaptation in avoiding (among British) and dominating (among Spanish). Another interesting finding is that some participants did not change their CMS at all while others shifted significantly in their CMS tendencies between the conditions. This variability of spontaneous CMS adaptation has never been shown in earlier research, and it confirms the need of further investigation of factors that account for these individual differences.

CMS Adaptation as a Dependent Variable

Length of Residence and Daily Interaction

In the second part of this study, the length of the participants' residence in the other country, their daily interaction level with host nationals, and their CQ were tested as predictors of the level of spontaneous adaptation in CMS. None of these variables had a significant predictive value in the hierarchical regression analysis where age, gender, culture, education, and main occupation were controlled for. This is surprising since both the amount of cultural experience (Adair, 2001) and the interaction level with individuals from the other culture (Oommen, 2017; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015) had been found to be crucial factors determining the amount of long-term adaptation of CMS. There are several possible explanations for these results: Firstly, the sample consisted of expatriates who already had a minimum cultural experience of two months in the other country. Hence, differences in CMS adaptation might become evident when comparing culturally completely inexperienced with culturally experienced individuals. If CMS adaptation is based on assumptions about the other party's CMS as proposed by Adair et al. (2009), these assumptions might not change massively with the amount of cultural experience once they are established. In this case, the amount of cultural experience beyond the establishment of these assumptions would, indeed, not predict the amount of spontaneous CMS adaptation in intercultural encounters.

Another possible explanation for the present results is that previous studies of CMS adaptation (e.g., Oommen, 2017; Vollmer & Wolf, 2015) focused on long-term CMS adaptation in intercultural interaction while this study focused on spontaneous, short-term adaptation between intra- and intercultural conflict situations. Short-term cultural adaptation and its antecedents, in particular in the context of CMS, is still widely unexplored in the literature. The assumption of short-term CMS adaptation as being determined by similar factors as long-term CMS adaptation is put into question by the present results. Once more, it is a promising approach for future research to assume that long-term adaptation is predicted by intensity and amount of cultural experience while short-term adaptation might be based on assumptions about the other's behavior rather than direct experience. However, the present results might also be the consequence of how CMS adaptation was measured: the variable was calculated based on the delta of all five CMS, even those that did not significantly differ between the cultural groups at the first stage. In future studies, it might be worth considering to observe the short-term adaptation of each single CMS as several dependent variables instead. Furthermore, variables crucial to short-term behavioral adaptation such as self-monitoring (Harrison, Chadwick, & Scales, 1996) should be tested as potential predictors of short-term CMS adaptation. Possibly, the variable causing the necessity of adaptation (the cultural frame of the situation) impacts individuals' behavioral adjustments more than the sort of behavior they engage in (conflict management behavior or other behavioral categories). If this is the case, variables linked with general behavioral adaptation might be more promising predictors of CMS adaptation than variables that impact the choice of conflict management styles directly.

Interestingly, language skills turned out to be the only significant predictor of CMS adaptation before CQ facets were implemented in the model (see Table 2). Since CQ facets were not significant predictors themselves, it might be another factor underlying both measured variables that caused this significance. Good proficiency of a language might, for example, indicate a high level of acculturation which, in term, is linked to cultural intelligence (e.g., Jiang, Green, Henley, & Masten, 2009; Rachmawaty, Wello, Akil, & Dollah, 2019). More research would be needed to test acculturation and other variables linked with both variables as predictors for CMS adaptation. However, the amount of variance explained by both models is rather small, which makes the importance of further investigation questionable (see Table 2).

Cultural Intelligence

None of the four CQ facets turned out to be a significant predictor of participants' spontaneous CMS adaptation. This is surprising, considering that CQ has been shown in earlier studies to be linked to several kinds of behavioral adaptation in cross-cultural situations (e.g., Delpechitre & Baker, 2017; Huff et al., 2014; Malek & Budhwar, 2013; Sharma & Hussain, 2019). However, it might be too early to fully reject the idea of cultural knowledge as being a necessary but not sufficient antecedent of CMS adaptation and that it is some sort of intercultural skill determining the behavioral adaptation in intercultural conflict. There are many concepts in the literature attempting to capture individuals' capability to adjust in intercultural situations. The relatively new concept of cultural intelligence is an attempt to combine several aspects of intercultural skills into one measure (Thomas et al., 2008). Being based on the combination of earlier concepts rather than the direct observation of successful intercultural behavior, one main criticism of CQ is its theoretical rather than descriptive character (Blasco, Feldt, & Jakobsen, 2012). According to critics, this theoretical character impedes the possibility to link it to other variables capturing concrete behavioral outcomes in intercultural situations (Blasco et al., 2012). Furthermore, CQ is based on a generalist approach to culture, trying to measure a general skill to handle cultural differences rather than overcoming culture-specific obstacles (Blasco et al., 2012; Ailon, 2008). The fact that language skills but not CQ predicted CMS adaptation might suggest that such cultural-specific knowledge could be more important to behavioral adaptation than the general cultural knowledge and skills measured with the CQ scale. Ultimately, these conceptual problems might explain why CQ did not predict the amount of spontaneous CMS adaptation in this study. Since this study was the first to investigate the possible link between intercultural skills and spontaneous CMS adaptation, more research is needed to either reject or support this idea.

Another possible explanation for the surprisingly non-significant results might be the way CMS adaptation was measured as elaborated above. Future research might consolidate these results examining the predictive value of intercultural skills in the adaptation of the five CMS. In addition to these conceptual aspects, even this part of the results might have been caused by the theoretical difference between long and short-term adaptation: CQ is defined as an individual's general capacity to effectively adapt in intercultural contexts (Ang et al., 2007), but most of the studies showing its link to cultural adaptation are focusing on long-term cultural adjustment rather than short-term adaptation (e.g., Huff et al., 2014; Molinsky, 2007). The fact that CQ failed to predict short-term cultural adaptation in this study might

imply that these processes are less similar than previously assumed and thus relate to CQ in different ways. For instance, instead of adapting simply more to their counterpart, individuals with high CQ might be more open when entering a conflict situation and match their behavior more flexibly to the specific situation and negotiation partner. Further, if spontaneous CMS adaptation is based on assumptions of the counterpart's conflict management styles, individuals with a high CQ might be more flexible in adjusting their assumptions based on new cultural experiences. This, in turn, could lead to more accurate assumptions about the other's CMS allowing for a more appropriate adjustment in intercultural encounters. Considering that Adair et al. (2009) showed that overcompensation of cultural differences can lead to cultural clashes as well, culturally intelligent people might engage in an appropriate amount of adaptation without ending up in assumption-based overcompensation. Such an emerging, flexible adaptation behavior would revive the insights from dynamic systems theory (Ford & Lerner, 1992) and might be a promising approach for future research.

The concept of spontaneous CMS adaptation in intercultural conflicts needs to be further explored and understood. If individuals differ in the way and extent to which they adapt their CMS in intercultural situations, it is crucial to detect the factors determining this adaptation on both the individual, situational, and possibly cultural level. Such knowledge can be of great value when training negotiators and diplomats in international and cross-cultural companies and organizations.

Limitations and Future Research

This study aimed at advancing the exploration of spontaneous CMS adaptation in intercultural conflict. Because of its explorative character, the conclusions drawn are based on a relatively small amount of evidence and lack a stable interpretative frame which qualifies a limited power and external validity. Since no study has examined predictors of spontaneous CMS adaptation before, it is possible that important confounding variables are still unknown and could not be controlled for in this design. Furthermore, the recruitment of participants via social media and the lack of a non-response analysis is problematic for the representability of the targeted population and the generalizability of results. Likewise, the partially uneven distribution of gender and occupation might have affected the results, even if demographic variables did not significantly predict CMS adaptation in the analysis. As the results were found in a sample of British and Spanish expatriates, the cultural differences and CMS

adaptation found in this study might not hold for other cultural comparisons, culturally inexperienced individuals, or other kinds of conflict management behavior. Future research examining the evident effects in other populations and when other CMS differ are necessary to complement and increase generalizability. For instance, cultures differing other than on the individualism-collectivism dimension would be an interesting target for research to gain more insight on spontaneous CMS adaptation. As in all cross-cultural research, it must be considered that important culture-specific differences might remain undetected when using the conceptualization of CMS or Hofstede's dimensions for comparison (Tay et al., 2010). Thus, for the further exploration of culture-specific differences and CMS adaptation, it might be necessary to observe cultural differences more case-specifically and independently from categorical frameworks.

Even though the conflict situation in the survey was formulated openly, some participants might have been able to imagine work-related conflicts more easily than others. Earlier work experiences with different status constellations, for instance, might have affected participants' indication of CMS preferences. This might have impacted the results of the first two research questions while the within-group design of the second part of the study should limit the effects of earlier experiences on the obtained results. The use of self-report and associated social desirability effects, however, might have prevented the expression of CMS adaptation since indicating differing CMS in the two conflict situations could be interpreted as discriminating behavior. This might have caused a higher risk of beta-error in the analysis. The fact that the survey design of this and earlier studies addressing CMS adaptation does not fully capture the dynamics of a real intercultural conflict might as well cause internal validity issues. Therefore, observation studies should be conducted in the future to examine actual context-embedded behavioral adaptation. For instance, bicultural individuals could be observed while negotiating with counterparties from different cultures and their CMS tendencies could be rated by independent test-leaders. This would allow for a more individualized, situation-specific measurement of spontaneous CMS adaptation and decrease measurement problems such as response bias and social desirability effects.

The variable CMS adaptation has been calculated using discrepancy values. Since spontaneous CMS adaptation is a phenomenon of future interest and importance, the development of a validated measurement is crucial in order to increase construct validity in future research. This would not only facilitate the handling of outliers but also increase the

power of future investigations examining factors linked with spontaneous CMS adaptation. Moreover, in the further exploration of spontaneous CMS adaptation, other variables important to spontaneous behavioral adaptation (e.g., self-monitoring; Harrison et al., 1996) and conflict management (e.g., negotiation experience and power relationship; Leung, 1997) should be considered. Since some individuals expressed more CMS adaptation than others, it is central to detect factors that can explain this variance. Another promising direction is the examination of individuals' assumptions about their counterparty's CMS as a possible mediator of the relationship between cultural experience and spontaneous CMS adaptation (Adair et al., 2009). Future research should also examine why the evident CMS adaptation did not reflect all actual cultural differences in CMS.

Conclusion and Practical Implications

This study has shown that British and Spanish expatriates differ in their conflict management and that they partially adapt their CMS when negotiating with a member of the other culture. Since little research has addressed inner-European cultures and their differences in CMS before, the insight that both CMS differences and adaptation exist is a valuable basis for further necessary investigations. The increasing collaboration between European countries makes it essential to understand how European individuals manage and adapt in cross-cultural conflicts and how their conflict management can be improved.

Another important insight from this study is that spontaneous CMS adaptation does not necessarily occur in all differing CMS. This might support the idea of individuals' assumptions of cultural differences as being the basis for such adaptation, not the cultural differences per se. Further, short-term CMS adaptation does not seem to be anteceded by the same factors that determine long-term cultural adjustment in CMS. This suggests that these processes must be investigated as rather distinct in future research and that further investigation of spontaneous CMS adaptation might need to consider variables closely linked with situational adjustment rather than long-term CMS adaptation. Likewise, the schematic representation of intercultural-conflict dynamics in the CBSECM should probably be adjusted to the new insights: If the conflict parties' assumptions of the cultural differences with their counterpart turn out to be the basis for spontaneous CMS adaptation, the simple succession of primary orientation factors and situational features might not be sufficient to depict the dynamics of how intercultural conflict is managed. Instead, interaction loops between these

factor categories might improve the model's representation of conflict dynamics and open up for more holistic conflict management research.

To what concerns spontaneous CMS adaptation as a dependent variable, this study showed that some participants adapted more than others. This observation confirms the necessity to explore factors determining the degree of spontaneous CMS adaptation. However, the fact that individuals with a high CQ did not adapt more as originally assumed puts the pure positivity of adaptation into question. Before these results can be used for practical application in intercultural training, it might be important to differentiate between simple adaptation and purposeful adaptation. Even though cultural differences usually impede the outcomes of intercultural negotiations, this does not mean that all kinds of cultural adaptation automatically improve the outcomes. On the contrary, incomplete adaptation as evident in this study might as well impair negotiation outcomes. Therefore, the most promising road to improve intercultural negotiation is to continue research about the role of assumptions in spontaneous intercultural CMS adaptation as well as its effects on negotiation outcomes. Once these dynamics are better understood, interventions can be developed to improve intercultural conflict management.

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