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Deposited in *Repositório ISCTE-IUL*:

2017-12-21

Deposited version:

Post-print

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Farcas, D. & Gonçalves, M. (2017). Motivations and cross-cultural adaptation of self-initiated expatriates, assigned expatriates, and immigrant workers: the case of Portuguese migrant workers in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. 48 (7), 1028-1051

Further information on publisher's website:

10.1177/0022022117717031

Publisher's copyright statement:

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Motivations and Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Self-Initiated Expatriates, Assigned Expatriates and Immigrant Workers: The Case of Portuguese Migrant Workers in the United Kingdom

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Acknowledgements

This study was funded by SFRH/BD/114646/2016 PhD grant from FCT- Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology). We thank the study participants for sharing their migratory experience. Also, we express our gratitude to Dr. Chris Brewster, associate editor Dr. Jenny Kurman, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on the previous versions of this manuscript.

Abstract

Only in recent years have immigrant workers, assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates been distinguished from each other. This study contributes by offering empirically based comparative results based on interviews with 50 Portuguese citizens who moved to the UK, as self-initiated expatriates, assigned expatriates and immigrant workers. The findings indicate that Portuguese self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates explored their opportunities before leaving Portugal, while immigrant workers explored them after arriving in the UK. Self-initiated expatriates and immigrant workers were driven by poor labor market situation in Portugal (e.g., unemployment, unchallenging tasks), but pull factors (e.g., professional international experience) were also identified as dominant motivators for both types of expatriates. Participants generally felt that their adaptation was easy in terms of the general (e.g., climate, food) and working (e.g., knowing one's role and job related activities) environments. Some self-initiated expatriates and immigrant workers noted that their adaptation to interactions with locals and to accommodation was difficult. Patterns emerged linking the three types of migrant workers with motivational drivers for moving abroad and perceptions of cross-cultural adaptation. We discuss these patterns in the light of previous findings and identify future research areas.

Data from the International Organization for Migration (2013) indicate a significant increase in the number of people living abroad, from 150 million in 2000 to 232 million in 2013. Among several reasons which might have contributed to this, Russel and Lulle (2016) recognize the clear impact of the 2008 economic crisis on the migration dynamics of Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal, which transformed them from countries of immigration to emigration. Of these, Portugal has the highest rate of emigration in Europe: the total 2.3 million emigrant population represents over 20% of the residents in Portugal (Pires et al., 2016).

Currently, the main Portuguese migration flow is to the United Kingdom (UK), which accounts for almost one-third of all Portuguese emigration (Pires et al., 2016). In total 140 000 individuals born in Portugal have migrated to the UK, and since 2012, this migration flow remained at a record level of approximately 30000 individuals each year. Most of them are settled in the London area (47%), or the South East (15%) and East (14%) of the country. The Portuguese migrants in the UK seem to be almost evenly distributed in terms of gender, the majority (around 64%) is aged between 18 and 34 years and approximately 40% have a college education (Pires et al., 2016; Gois et al., 2016). These young and college educated migrants are considered to make a significant contribution to the number of migrant workers in the world, which stands at 150.3 million (International Labor Organization, 2015).

In the international context, three different types of migrant workers have been identified, namely assigned expatriates (AEs), self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) and immigrant workers (IWs). Nonetheless, to the best of our knowledge, the three of them have never been included in the sample of an empirical study. In this study we aim to fill in this gap. But, this would only be possible if we can identify that the Portuguese citizens move abroad under each one of these three forms of international mobility.

Statistics are scant in characterizing the Portuguese forms of international mobility present in the UK, but a recent study (Gois et al., 2016) indicates a possible predominance of SIEs. Therefore, the first aim of this study is to explore the form of international mobility of Portuguese migrant workers in the UK. In addition, we identify their motivations for moving abroad and how they fit in and function in the British environment. Our second goal is to explore which patterns of cross-cultural adaptation are more strongly associated with specific motives and forms of international mobility. Thus we contribute to the international mobility literature by extending research regarding the motivations to move abroad and the cross-cultural adaptation of all three migrant workers comparatively, allowing us to draw more fine-grained conclusions. We also provide some practical recommendations for aspiring migrant workers in the UK and contribute to the design of a preparation program for moving abroad.

The rest of the paper is organized in the following way. First, we provide an overview of the existing literature on the forms of international mobility, migrant workers' motivations to move abroad, and their cross-cultural adaptation. Then we describe the methodology we use and present our results. We end the paper with a discussion of the findings, along with their implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Forms of International Mobility

Geographically and economically speaking, the latest World Migration Report (IOM, 2013), which includes all forms of international mobility under its heading of migration, indicates that migration may occur in four different pathways: South-North (from low and middle-income to high-income countries), South-South (between low and middle-income countries), North-North (between high-income countries) and

North-South (from high-income to low- and middle-income countries). The migrant stock originating from the South and living in the North is reported to contribute the most to the international migration statistics, but special attention should be given to the intra-South and intra-North migration (e.g. Portuguese migrating to the UK) since they are a growing phenomenon.

Among these mobility pathways occurring in the international context, there are various migrant populations, such as migrant workers, i.e. international migrants who are employed in their host countries, and account for 65% of the global migration (International Labor Organization, 2015). The growing pace of economic globalization has created a variety of opportunities for individuals to work abroad and there are, consequently, different forms of international mobility.

For example, a migrant worker can move abroad as an assigned expatriate (AE), defined by Harrison, Shaffer and Bhaskar-Shrinivas (2004, p. 203) as “an employee of a business organization (...) sent overseas on a temporary basis to complete a time-based task or accomplish an organizational goal.” Therefore, an AE: 1) is an employee relocated to work in a foreign subsidiary of the organization; 2) is a non-citizen of the country where the subsidiary is located; 3) engages in regulatory cross-border compliance for purposes of residency and employment; and 4) is fully supported by the business organization (McNulty & Brewster, 2016).

When the support from the organization is inexistent, migrant workers move abroad as self-initiated expatriates (SIEs). Usually, SIEs’ move abroad is planned as temporary and they seek work in the host country on their own volition. Just as AEs, SIEs are non-citizens of the host country and engage in regulatory cross-border compliance for purposes of residency and employment (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry, 1997; Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008; Suutari & Brewster, 2000).

Usually, AEs and to a lesser extent SIEs move abroad with their professional situation regularized (Bozionelos, 2009; Suutari & Brewster, 2000). In other words, before moving abroad, expatriates are informed about their working place and associated tasks they will perform in the host country. Immigrant workers (IWs) are distinguished from expatriates because they intend to settle in the new country on a permanent basis. They may eventually acquire host country citizenship (Przytula, 2015). Usually, they move abroad and then look for a job. Depending on their qualifications, they can either move abroad as skilled immigrant workers or unskilled ones.

Research on these different forms of international mobility has either focused on one group at a time (e.g., SIEs: Froese, 2012; AEs: Dickmann, Doherty, Mills, & Brewster, 2008; immigrants: Berry, 1997) or aimed to compare and contrast them (e.g., SIEs vs. AEs: Doherty, Dickmann & Mills, 2011; SIEs vs. IWs: Al Ariss, 2010). Nonetheless, a limited number of studies have compared and contrasted the three groups together (e.g., Andersen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann, 2014; Bierwiazzonek & Waldzus, 2016; Przytula, 2015). In these studies, the authors reviewed the existing literature about each type of migrant worker; however, to the best of our knowledge, there are no empirical studies focused on individuals moving abroad as SIEs, AEs and IWs. In order to contribute to this gap, we aimed to conduct this study, where Portuguese migrant workers' forms of international mobility were explored. Consequently, if they proved to move abroad as SIEs, AEs and IWs, we aimed to compare them in terms of their demographics, motivations for moving abroad and cross-cultural adaptation.

Research Question 1: How do Portuguese migrant workers move to the UK, regarding the form of international mobility?

Motivations for Moving Abroad

Individuals move abroad for a variety of reasons, often in combination. For example, the socio-economic push-pull model (Massey & Espinosa, 1997) has been widely used to illustrate this. More specifically, economic recessions are considered typical push factors, associated with the host country, that move people to find work abroad, while monetary incentives or accelerated career advancement are pull factors that attract people to move abroad to a specific host country. Push factors are usually associated with skilled/unskilled immigrants' motivations for moving abroad, while pull factors are more commonly related to expatriates' (SIEs and AEs) drives. One possible reason for this is the fact that for IWs "the necessity or the need to relocate to another country is a result of an individual decision or it is a compulsion arising from economic, political, religious circumstances prevailing in the country of their origin, e.g. unstable political situation, war, unemployment, natural disasters, persecution, etc." (Przytula, 2015, p. 104). In the case of expatriates (AEs and SIEs), the relocation to another country is not a compulsion, and it rather involves organizational, career and/or self-development motives, often considered to be pull factors.

More specifically, the prevailing motives for AEs have been associated with the opportunities for career progression, professional and personal development (Doherty & Dickmann, 2008; Inkson & Arthur, 2001; Stahl & Cerdin, 2004; Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002; Suutari & Taka, 2004). It seems that AEs place significantly more emphasis on career factors (e.g., job, skills, career impact) than SIEs, who attributed more value to location and host country reputation motives (Doherty, Dickmann & Mills, 2011). This suggests that SIEs' primary drivers are focused on their desire to move to a particular country and the characteristics of that country. These types of personal drivers are supported by other studies (e.g., Myers & Pringle, 2005; Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Richardson & McKenna, 2003) which also indicate that SIEs are guided by motives

such as desire for adventure, travel and life change. According to Crowley-Henry (2010), SIEs' desire for life change is considered to be an agentic ability to improve one's lifestyle and quality of living, rather than a forced move for economic reasons, which is more associated with immigrants.

In sum, these studies have provided some important information about migrant workers' motivations for moving abroad, by focusing on one specific mobility group at a time. Therefore, different samples, host countries and nationalities were used, sometimes yielding to mixed results. This study was designed to shed further light on migrant workers' motivations, specifically those of Portuguese working in the UK.

Research Question 2: Why do Portuguese migrant workers move to the UK?

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

The terminology of 'cross-cultural adaptation', 'adjustment' and 'acculturation' have been used interchangeably in the literature, when referring to the process and outcomes resulting from individuals moving abroad to unfamiliar cultural environments (Harrison, Shaffer, & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004). However, 'adjustment' is more typically applied to expatriates (SIEs and AEs), as they usually have to cope more with minor changes. Large-scale changes and major realignments (acculturation) are more commonly associated with immigrants. Additionally, acculturation is also used in the immigration literature, since it is argued that it refers to an individual's negotiation between the home and host culture. Due to the fact that expatriates are expected to spend a limited time in the host country, they are unlikely to acculturate (Haslberger, Brewster, & Hippler, 2014; Patterson, 2002). Using the terminology rather differently, Ali, Van der Zee and Sanders (2003) suggest that adaptation is the process of dealing with cross-cultural transitions, while adjustment is its outcome. Since there is no consensus in the literature and due to the fact that in this study we are referring to three

types of migrant workers, we choose to adopt the terminology of cross-cultural adaptation, considering it to be more inclusive and applicable to all participants.

Several studies have been aiming at determining who adapts better to the new cultural environments. By comparing SIEs with AEs, Peltokorpi and Froese (2009) demonstrate that SIEs tend to be better adapted than AEs, in terms of general and interaction adaptation. These are two facets of cross-cultural adaptation proposed by Black (1988), whose validity has been confirmed and commonly employed in several expatriate studies (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005). General adaptation refers to expatriates' degree of psychological comfort with regard to several aspects of the host country environment, such as climate, accommodation, food and health care; whereas interaction adaptation evaluates expatriates' efforts to establishing relationships with the locals. Besides this, Black (1988) proposed a third facet of cross-cultural adaptation which refers to work, i.e. how expatriates fit into the workplace, regarding different performance standards, expectations and work values. Concerning this facet, results were inconclusive, since some did not find any differences between SIEs' and AEs' work adaptation (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009), while others have reported SIEs as having lower job satisfaction than AEs (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011). It has been suggested that SIEs and AEs might face similar problems when adapting to the new cultural environment, but they use different strategies to resolve these problems (von Borell de Araujo, Teixeira, Cruz & Malini, 2014). More specifically, SIEs are less critical and more willing than AEs to emulate local behaviors for resolving problems.

Results from studies focused on either AEs or SIEs, indicate that SIEs in South Korea were relatively well adapted, but there were some factors which influenced their cross-cultural adaptation. For example, poor host-country language skills were perceived as an impediment mainly for general and interaction adaptation, since English

seems to be sufficient for successful work adaptation in international working environments (Froese, 2012). Additionally, family and spouse adaptation influence general adaptation (Caligiuri, Hayland, Boss, & Joshi, 1998), as well as the length of stay (Black & Mendenhall, 1990) and intended length of stay abroad (Froese, 2012). SIEs and AEs whose family and spouse exhibited high levels of adaptation and were intending to stay abroad for short periods, tended to be more satisfied in terms of general adaptation than those who stayed longer or intended to stay for longer periods. Immigrants are expected to spend longer periods abroad than SIEs and AEs, having a more permanent relocation. Therefore, several studies suggest that they adapt better by integrating both the home and host culture into their behaviors and values (Berry, 2005; Ward, Fox, Wilson, Stuart, & Kus, 2010). In this study we focus on how Portuguese migrant workers perceive their own cross-cultural adaptation.

Research Question 3: How do Portuguese migrant workers in the UK characterize their cross-cultural adaptation?

Methods

Participants

The participants in this study were 50 Portuguese migrant workers (50% females) whose time spent in the UK ranged from five to 27 months. Their ages ranged from 24 to 50 years old ($M=31.48$, $SD=5.63$) with half of the sample being emerging adults, *i.e.* aged under 30 years. The majority were single (74%) and 92% had college education, mostly at the level of a master's degree in domains such as IT, engineering, investment banking and health (e.g. nursing, pharmacology). In the UK, the majority (86%) had jobs relevant to their qualifications. Although diverse, the most frequent jobs were site manager, civil engineer, financial consultant and nurse. Those working outside their

qualification area were senior care assistants and shop assistants. Participants without a higher education degree were working as waiters.

For 56% of the participants this was not the first time that they lived abroad. The majority had only moved to the UK (72%) and they were divided about how much more time they will spend there; 54% of the participants did not have a defined timeframe, while the rest stated that they were not willing to extend their time spent in the UK for more than five years (with the exception of one participant who mentioned retirement as the ultimate timeframe to spend in the UK). A brief summary of participants' main characteristics is given in the first two columns of Table 1.

Data Collection

By taking into account our study's objectives, we considered that a qualitative methodology would be the most adequate approach to adopt. We sent a disclosure letter, describing the study and asking the Portuguese citizens living and working in the UK since 2012 to share their migratory experience as interviewees. This letter was distributed among several migration related organizations, social networks, multinational corporations and emerging contacts from snowball sampling. Participants who were willing to participate in the study responded via the provided e-mail and a date was agreed for conducting the interview via Skype. Prior to conducting the interviews participants were asked to fill out two documents: 1) the informed consent, where we described the study and asked for participants' permission to audio record the interview; and 2) the socio-demographic questionnaire composed of open-ended and closed-ended questions which helped us characterize the sample.

A semi-structured guide was used for the interviews. It was composed of three sections: 1) introduction of the interviewer, clarification of the study's objective and the interview process; 2) questions about the participants' motivations to move to the UK,

how they moved and their cross-cultural adaptation; these questions were open-ended to allow participants to describe their migratory experience in their own words; and 3) allowing participants to add any other information. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese by the first author and lasted approximately 70 minutes.

Before conducting the interviews, the interview guide and the socio-demographic questionnaire and the informed consent form had been submitted to a two-phased validation process. In the first phase, three national and three international researchers with experience in investigating migration related issues using qualitative methodologies, examined them, providing feedback on whether the instruments were likely to enable the authors to achieve the study's aims. The main suggestions were related with the inclusion of some probing questions, but overall the feedback was extremely positive, which encouraged us to move to the second phase of the validation process.

In the second phase, we conducted a pilot study with four random potential participants, to test the questions' clarity and identify practical difficulties which could be resolved and anticipated in the study (Kim, 2010). We followed the recruitment procedure previously described, and four participants accepted the invitation to participate in the pilot study. They were interviewed individually and after answering all the questions in the interview guide, they were asked to provide feedback about questions' wording and clarity. Their feedback was positive and we proceeded with data collection, followed by data analysis.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and submitted to a content analysis based on Schreier's (2014) proposed procedures. The software Atlas.ti 7 was used in order to

facilitate the coding process, which yield the conceptual coding system presented in Tables 2 and 3.

The analysis process involved the semantic segmentation of the interviews into units of coding, *i.e.* relevant phrases or paragraphs. In total, 207 units of coding were identified. Then, these units of coding were grouped based on their degree of similarity into categories/subcategories and three main categories: forms of international mobility, motives for moving abroad and cross-cultural adaptation. For each main category, the coding system was generated inductively and mutually exclusive categories/subcategories were formed, *i.e.* one unit of coding belonged to one category/subcategory only.

In order to test for reliability of the conceptual category system, three independent coders were asked to validate the analysis. Each coder was responsible for one main category and had to distribute the units of coding among the categories/subcategories. For a better understanding of each category/subcategory, we provided a definition, which could give coders some clues regarding the units of coding that they should include in each one of them. This process yielded to very good reliability indices, above $k=0.92$, pointing out a high level of internal reliability.

Results

The findings are presented in three sections following the major aspects depicted in the research questions: forms of international mobility, motives for moving abroad, and cross-cultural adaptation.

Forms of International Mobility

Participants moved abroad as SIEs, AEs or IWs. SIEs found a job in the UK while in Portugal and searched for it on their own initiative, using different engines and programs. Six participants used LinkedIn, a familiar recruitment tool. Two participants

applied to VidaEdu and INOV Contacto, i.e., programs which offer educational and working experiences abroad for Portuguese citizens who completed a higher education degree and are willing to have an international experience (VidaEdu, 2016; INOV Contacto, 2016). Besides this, eighteen participants used recruitment agencies and two used personal contacts who were already working in the UK. The following participant's discourse summarize this form of international mobility:

“In my area it's very common to call upon recruitment agencies, because in the UK they need a lot of nurses. So, you can apply to these recruitment agencies, give them your CV and preferred areas where you would like to work and then they contact you when they have a proposal. But they also have a list of places where they are recruiting at the moment and you can apply if there is an interest, taking into account what they are offering.” (SIE, Female, 29 years)

AEs were sent to the UK by their employer. Eight participants moved abroad because the company they worked for in Portugal requested one of its employees to move abroad to one of its branch offices located in the UK. One of these participants stated:

“My move abroad to the UK was possible because the company I worked for needed someone to represent Portugal in the UK. The company has different branch offices all over the world, and they usually indicate when it is necessary for one of the employees to be sent abroad.” (AE, Male, 40 years)

While these two forms of international mobility involved finding a job and then moving abroad, the third one, referring to IWs, involved moving abroad first and finding a job afterwards. Participants contacted friends and/or family members living in the UK in order to guarantee that they would have temporary accommodation and/or the

possibility of a job. Then they moved and started searching for work, as this participant summarized:

“I did not prepare myself for this move abroad. Basically, I just contacted my uncles since they have been living here for a relatively long time, and this gave me some kind of support and reassured me that I will see some familiar faces and I will have a place to stay, at least for some time until I start working. This took its time, with CVs handed in every single day and knocking at the doors of every restaurant, shop etc.”

(IW, Female, 37 years)

The last three columns in Table 1 characterize the Portuguese who moved to the UK as SIEs, AEs and IWs. There are different patterns among the three types of migrant workers. Specifically, SIEs are equally distributed among males and females, while AEs are predominantly male and IWs are predominantly female. Financially, Portuguese IWs are mostly the ones who report to gain the least (10001-30000 euros), followed by SIEs (30001-50000) and then AEs (>50001). The IWs are the only group with some participants without a higher degree and, for those who have a higher degree, it is generally at the bachelor's level. In the other cases, master's level is the most frequent degree, with some doctoral level degrees present among SIEs. As previously mentioned, the majority of participants' (86%) jobs are within their training area. This applies mostly to SIEs and AEs, who have higher degrees and those who work in the area of their qualifications. For IWs with a higher degree, many (60%) work outside their qualification area, as does this female participant:

“In Portugal I worked as a social worker at an institution. Here, I am working as a senior care assistant, because I could not find work in my training area, as a social worker. Hopefully soon I will be able to find something; because that is the job I enjoy the most.” (IW, Female, 31 years)

Two IWs whose jobs are within their qualification area reveal a downgrading of their jobs when compared to the ones performed in Portugal:

“Here I am a pharmacy assistant trainee, but in Portugal I was a pharmacist, responsible for the management of the whole pharmacy. But here, I am just a trainee because they are organized in a different way and I still need to have my degree recognized here.” (IW, Female, 28 years).

All four IWs without a higher education degree work as waiters. In terms of previous international experience, many participants who moved abroad as SIEs do not have a previous migratory experience, while most participants in IWs group have some experience, and those in the AEs group are equally divided among those who do and do not. AEs tend to have defined timeframe for their stay in the UK, which ranges from two to four years, while most IWs are unsure about how much time they will spend there. The same can be said about half of the SIEs, while the remainder know exactly how much time they will spend in the UK.

Motives for Moving Abroad

Decisions to move abroad were mainly related to the labor market situation in Portugal and the desire to engage in an international experience. To a lesser extent participants mentioned: successful previous international experience, reunification, improving their economic situation, the Portuguese mood and improving their English. Most participants mentioned more than one reason for moving abroad. We discuss each reason in turn.

For 39 of the 50 participants, the **labor market situation in Portugal** was the main reason for moving abroad. More specifically, participants highlighted two different scenarios. Seven participants emigrated because they were unemployed in Portugal and it was starting to become an unbearable situation. The second scenario

refers to 32 participants who mentioned that although employed, they moved abroad due to dissatisfaction with their professional life. The negative working conditions responsible for this dissatisfaction were unchallenging tasks performed at work (n=8), difficult career progression (n=5), precariousness (n=5), unfair remuneration (n=5), long working hours (n=5) which did not enable them to enjoy any free time, and lack of hope in a better future in Portugal (n=5).

Thirty five participants explained their emigration decision as a desire to obtain an **international experience**. Twenty of them related this desire to their professional life while the remaining fifteen linked it with their personal life. In terms of the **professional life international experience**, participants were willing to have new responsibilities enabling career progression and/or to work in areas which are more developed than in Portugal. Regarding the **personal life international experience**, participants mentioned that they were interested in getting to know and being in contact with other cultures, speaking a different language and experiencing living in a different environment.

There were four participants who cited their **successful previous experience of living abroad** as an important motivational factor for initiating their present migratory experience.

Three out of 50 participants mentioned that they moved abroad because of their partner, who was living and working in the UK or found a job that would require moving to the UK. Therefore, two participants moved after their partner initiated his international experience, while one participant moved at the same time as his partner. In these cases, the main objective for moving abroad was **reunification**, i.e., to be together.

Three participants highlighted that their motivational driver for moving abroad was related with their desire to make more money and **improve their current**

economic situation. In addition, there were two participants who mentioned that the **Portuguese mood**, i.e. the negative way of thinking and living, encouraged them to move abroad. Two participants considered that they could **improve English speaking skills** by living in the UK; hence this was one reason for moving abroad.

A breakdown of all these reasons among the three forms of international mobility and an example of the correspondent unit of coding is provided in Table 2. Regarding the motivational driver focused on the labor market situation in Portugal, unemployment motivated only (but not all) participants who moved abroad as SIEs and IWs. Other participants in the SIEs group moved abroad mostly because they are dissatisfied with their working conditions, since their work was unchallenging and did not enable career progression, the remuneration was unfair and working hours were too long. On the other hand, participants in the IWs groups seem to move abroad mostly because of their precarious working conditions and lack of hope in a better future. The desire to obtain international professional experience is only mentioned by the participants who moved abroad as expatriates (SIEs and AEs). However, the desire to acquire international personal experience is a motivational driver transversal to all three types of moves. Besides this, there are two other motives for moving abroad mentioned only by participants in IWs group: reunification and improving their economic situation.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Participants' responses were mixed regarding their cross-cultural adaptation. Overall, most participants reported having had an easy adaptation to the general (e.g., food, climate) and work environment (e.g., knowing one's role and job related activities) in the UK. However, there were some participants who perceived their cross-cultural adaptation as difficult, mainly during the first couple of months in the UK: they had problems with some general aspects (e.g., climate) and the interaction with host country

nationals, due to their unfamiliar social behaviors, the pre-formed groups and the use of different expressions/references. Regardless of how participants perceived their cross-cultural adaptation, as easy and/or difficult (participants' own words), they indicated reasons for that occurrence.

Easy Cross-Cultural Adaptation. Twenty-eight participants considered that their adaption was easy and they pointed out at least one reason for this happening. One of the most mentioned reasons for an easy adaptation was their **identification with the British culture**. Participants appreciated and identified with several cultural aspects in the host country and this helped them feel integrated and well adapted.

Another reason for participants' easy adaptation was the **accommodation**. Being away from home, participants valued having a comfortable place they could eventually call home. In addition, five participants highlighted that **agency**, or one's free will to move abroad also helped their adaptation. This is mainly due to the fact that participants wished for this international experience.

Four participants referred to their **social network** as an important facilitator of their cross-cultural adaptation. More specifically, participants mentioned that before moving to the UK, some of their Portuguese friends were living there and through them they were able to meet others in the same situation, counting on their help and support. Also, three participants mentioned that their adaptation was easy due to **partner's support**, already living in the UK.

At the same time, their **successful previous international experience** was also considered, by three participants, to be a factor which facilitated the adaptation, since they had an idea of how life abroad was and the obstacles they had to overcome.

A few participants highlighted other factors, such as small degree of **physical and cultural distance between Portugal and UK**. Two participants mentioned that the

support received from the extended **family** that remained in Portugal made them feel comfortable and at peace with their decision to moving abroad. Also, the **presence of a Portuguese community in the UK**, ‘Little Portugal’, was acknowledged by one participant as a facilitator to his adaptation.

Besides mentioning that the adaptation was easy in terms of these more general aspects (e.g., finding accommodation), seven participants revealed that their adaptation was also easy in terms of work. Being well prepared in terms of the academic background and working in a multicultural environment helped participants’ adaptation to the work environment.

They felt that they were recognized and valued in terms of their performance being promoted or rewarded appropriately. Also participants noted that a common practice in the UK was job turnover. In other words, if they were not satisfied with the current job, it is easy for them to find another job which would fulfill them better.

Difficult Cross-Cultural Adaptation. Although the majority of participants mentioned that their adaptation was easy, for six of them the first six months, right after moving to the UK, were not. In addition, another sixteen participants mentioned that it took some time, until they got used to their new life in the UK, and they identified at least one factor that made adaptation difficult.

Six participants mentioned that the **process of searching for a house was a very stressful experience**. This is mainly associated with the UK’s unique housing rental system: there are plenty of houses available and the number of individuals interested in renting is also very high. Several online platforms are designed to accommodate the housing rental process. However, participants reveal that the posted information does not always correspond to reality. At the same time the rental price is very high for the quality it offers and in order to rent a house or an apartment, one is

required to deposit a large sum up-front. In addition, landlords often ask for references, complicating the renting process for an individual who has recently arrived in the UK. Bearing this in mind, participants revealed that they either rent a room or move away from the city center.

Another factor which made adaptation difficult was mentioned by six participants and it refers to the **climate**. Participants considered that the UK's climate is different from the one in Portugal, which lead to some participants experiencing climate shock. One participant explained that he left Portugal when it was sunny and warm and experienced completely the opposite when he arrived in the UK. Another participant indicated that he was not prepared for the UK winter and had to buy winter clothes. The rainy days were challenging for two participants and the limited amount of daylight during winter days was commonly pointed out. One participant even revealed that the doctor's diagnose for her migraine was lack of sun (vitamin D).

Due to the fact that Portuguese people appreciate their own **food**, participants found it difficult to adapt to the food habits and dishes encountered in the UK. Four participants mentioned the fact that in the supermarkets there is a significant section dedicated to pre-made/fast food, while the fruits, vegetables and fish section is limited and expensive. As a consequence, one participant believed that she had some health problems. The strategy used by most participants was to buy ingredients from the Portuguese stores and import food from Portugal, as a complement to the available food in the UK.

Four participants complained that the **interaction with the locals** had negatively affected their adaptation. The correspondent unit of coding present in Table 3, points out two reasons, i.e. pre-existing groups and the use of different expressions/references, which did not facilitate the interaction with the locals. Participants mentioned that the

place where they interacted the most with the locals was at work. Nonetheless, they considered this interaction to be difficult due to the age difference:

“I think that having older colleagues at work does not help. It is at work where you spend most of your time, and it is the first place where you meet people who are supposed to introduce you to new aspects in the host country. And if you do not have anyone who is willing to do that, because they have their families and friends, and do not identify with you, then you are not going to adapt (...) but they can help you adapt at work, if they are willing to help. Since they are older, they might know more of certain things.” (SIE, Female, 25 years)

At the same, another reason for this difficult interaction was the British unfamiliar social behavior. For instance, the British were described as being very polite, saying “hi” and asking “how are you”, but most of the times not expecting a response. Therefore, participants considered that they are not genuine, and either at work or outside of work they preferred to socialize more with other Portuguese or Southern European countries’ citizens (e.g., Greece, Italy, and Spain) who are in the same situation as them in the UK and whom they can count on for any help they may need. However, they were aware that this interaction could limit their adaptation in some way, because through the interaction with the locals they could learn more about the culture:

“I consider that having only Portuguese friends, maybe because of the language, makes the adaptation more difficult. More difficult because you are not learning about the host country’s culture, as you could learn by interacting with the British.”(SIE, Male, 27 years)

Four participants indicated that their adaptation was also difficult during their first months in the UK, because they were **not fluent in English** or those who were fluent had some difficulties in understanding the British accent and being understood.

Table 3 provides an overview of participants' cross-cultural adaptation distributed among the three ways of moving abroad. It shows that participants who considered that their adaptation was easy are distributed among the three types of moves abroad. More specifically, SIEs considered that their adaptation was easy mostly because they: 1) identify with some aspects of the British culture; 2) wished to move to the UK (agency); 3) are supported by friends who are in the same situation as them; and 4) are satisfied with their job, since it was easy to adapt and they are valued for their performance. Participants in the AEs group also mentioned this work related aspect as a facilitator of their cross-cultural adaptation, along with accommodation. At the same time, accommodation was important for IWs. Also important was their partner's support.

Participants who described their cross-cultural adaptation as a difficult one, were mostly those who moved abroad as SIEs and IWs. On one hand, SIEs referred to the process of finding decent accommodation as the main reason for difficult cross-cultural adaptation, along with the challenging interaction with the locals. On the other hand, IWs denoted that their cross-cultural adaptation was difficult mainly due to the lack of language fluency.

Linking Cross-Cultural Adaptation, Motives and Ways of Moving Abroad

Several potential linkages emerged between the motivation factors, cross-cultural adaptation and ways of moving abroad. Overall, adaptation varied according to the length of stay and the intended length of stay. More specifically, those (SIEs and IWs) who did not have a defined timeframe for time in the UK were the ones who identified the most factors that made their adaptation difficult, along with the ones who have been in the UK for a short period of time. Note that only four SIEs and two IWs found their first six months difficult.

SIEs who moved abroad to obtain international experience, wanted to interact with the locals, but they were not very successful. Nonetheless, many of these participants identified with the British culture and were willing to act like the locals. This applies mostly to those participants who do not have a defined timeframe in the UK.

AEs who moved abroad with the desire to acquire a professional international experience had an easy adaptation to work. Additionally, SIEs who emphasized their dissatisfaction with the labor market situation in Portugal, due to unchallenging tasks, unfair remuneration and difficult career progression, tended to characterize their adaptation as an easy one in terms of work. They explained that their professional life in the UK is everything they wanted but did not have in Portugal: they found they were valued for their performance (e.g., promotion or other type of reward) and if they were not satisfied with the current job, it was easy to get another one.

IWs who were motivated by reunification, characterized their adaptation as easy, due to their partner's support.

Discussion

This study explored how Portuguese migrant workers moved abroad to the UK, what motivated them to move to the UK, and what were their perceptions of the cross-cultural adaptation.

Three main forms of international mobility (SIEs, AEs and IWs) were identified based on participants' discourses regarding the exploration of their career opportunities. Participants, who moved abroad as SIEs and AEs, explored their opportunities before leaving Portugal, while IWs explore them after arriving in the UK. This study is among the first to empirically explore the motivations and cross-cultural adaptation of migrant workers from three different forms of international mobility.

By exploring the different forms of international mobility, we have contributed to Felker's (2011) call for research investigating if and how migrant workers explore career opportunities prior to leaving their home countries. More precisely, we were able to identify that some do, while others do not and this is influenced by the form of international mobility they engage into. For example, those who move abroad as SIEs and AEs explore career opportunities before leaving Portugal, while those who move abroad as IWs, explore them after arriving in the UK. Additionally, after moving abroad and begin exploring the career opportunities, IWs who have a higher degree seemed to be more willing to accept jobs outside their qualification areas, contrary to SIEs, who explored their career opportunities solely in their area of expertise, and before moving abroad. Therefore, we can affirm that the exploration of career opportunities varies by the form of international mobility.

When this study was conducted, the three forms of international mobility occurred between two EU countries. As such, the migrant workers involved in this type of relocation are most frequently conceptualized as "endowed with human capital and therefore free to cross organizational and national borders" (Ramboarison-Lalao, Al Ariss, & Barth, 2012, p. 118). Consequently, they might face fewer barriers constraining their career choices (e.g., underemployment, non-recognition of credentials, discrimination in accessing jobs and advancing in careers) and cross-cultural adaptation than migrant workers from non-EU countries (Al Ariss, 2010).

In line with previous findings (e.g., Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010; Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009; Peiperl, Levy, & Sorell, 2014; Suutari & Brewster, 2000), we were able to determine that among the three forms of international mobility, participants' demographic characteristics are different. For example, we observed that AEs are predominantly male and have a higher annual

income than SIEs. Contrary to previous studies (e.g., Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013; Peiperl et al., 2014), Portuguese expatriates (AEs and SIEs) are proficient in the host country language. A possible explanation for this discrepancy might be host country language itself – English is the world’s most widely spoken second language, while in other studies, Japanese or Chinese were the host country’s official languages. Nonetheless, some IWs in this study found the British accent hard to understand, causing them some adaptation difficulties; hence to some extent, and in line with previous findings (e.g., Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003), language proficiency seems to be challenging for IWs. This limited language proficiency in IWs can be associated with: 1) their academic background in comparison with the other two migrant groups; and/or 2) their desire to gain personal international experience; hence learning the language and achieving personal satisfaction.

IWs are usually considered to be less qualified (Al Ariss, 2010) than those who engage in the other two forms of international mobility, and have similar educational backgrounds (Andresen, Biemann, & Pattie, 2012). We consider that our findings are in line with this, since master’s degree was the most frequent higher education degree for SIEs and AEs, while IWs’ educational background was mostly at the level of the bachelor degree. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that some IWs did not have any higher degree, which indicates that IWs divide themselves into skilled and unskilled ones, congruent with previous findings (e.g., Egger, Nelson, & von Ehrlich, 2012). Also in line with previous findings (e.g., Agullo & Egawa, 2009; Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005) participants in this sample differ in terms of the time planned to stay in the UK. More specifically, Portuguese AEs have a defined timeframe as opposed to half of SIEs and IWs, who are mostly unsure about how much time they will spend in the UK. This uncertainty could be conditioned by contextual variables. For example, a

recent study (Moreh, McGhee, & Vlachantoni, 2016) explored the strategies of 1168 EU citizens (886 Polish, 139 Portuguese and 133 Romanian) living in the UK in the context of the EU referendum. Two strategies could be adopted: leaving or staying in the UK. While staying in the UK, they could take no action or adopt a civic integration strategy (e.g., obtain permanent resident status and/or British citizenship). Portuguese citizens were the least inclined to undergo civic integration unless their EU rights were undermined by Brexit. Therefore, after the results of the EU referendum, participants in this study who were unsure about how much time they will spend in the UK might either leave the UK or continue living there, adopting a civic integration strategy.

Besides these demographic differences among AEs, SIEs and IWs, we identified some differences and similarities in terms of their motivational drivers. As in previous research (e.g., Froese, 2012; Richardson & Mallon, 2005), we found that the desire to seek personal international experience is a dominant motivation factor for SIEs. In addition, our findings indicate that IWs also mentioned this motivational factor. This is an interesting result, which has not been reported in previous studies and we attribute this to sample characteristics of the study, composed by mostly young and highly qualified individuals moving to another EU country. In addition, being individuals who are currently working in the UK, they moved abroad in search of professional international experience. In the literature, this motivational driver has been mostly associated with AEs (e.g., Doherty, Dickmann, & Mills, 2011), but in this study it applied to SIEs also: mostly to SIEs who had been employed in Portugal, but were dissatisfied with their working conditions and career progression. Therefore, as in Richardson and Mallon's study (2005), they were looking for a life change and considered that a professional international experience would enable that, in a country considered as the European center of their profession (Dickmann, 2012). Consistent

with other research findings (Al Ariss, 2010; Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, 2007), IWs' motivations for moving abroad were associated with the poor labor conditions in Portugal (e.g., precariousness, unemployment), which 'forced' them to move abroad. This included unemployed people in Portugal who became SIEs. Therefore, we would argue that pre-migratory experience plays an important role in migrant workers' motivations for moving abroad.

In sum, findings indicated that IWs and unemployed SIEs in Portugal were pushed to the UK by poor labor market situation in Portugal (e.g., unemployment, unchallenging tasks), but pull factors such as personal and professional international experience were also dominant motivational factors. Professional international experience was exclusively associated with SIEs' and AEs' drivers for moving abroad. IWs might not have mentioned this motive, since they explore their career after arriving in the UK and *a priori* they do not know what they are going to work in the UK. Personal international experience was transversal to all three groups of migrant workers.

Some participants from the three groups characterized their adaptation as easy. Similar to Inkson and Myer's (2003) findings, SIEs referred to their positive predisposition to move abroad and its achievability. Additionally, they referred to some work related aspects, such as being valued for their performance and being able to progress in their careers. We should not forget that half of the sample was composed by emerging adults, considered to constantly explore jobs that fulfill them (Arnett, 2000). In addition, 37 out of 50 participants of this study's sample were single. This reinforces Tharenou's affirmation (2003) that young migrant workers' receptivity to international career arises from having no partner, low family influence, and expecting positive outcomes from working abroad. Furthermore, one of SIEs drivers for moving abroad was their dissatisfaction with their working conditions in Portugal, since the performed

tasks were not challenging enough and career progression was not enabled. In sum, this suggests that having the feeling of being in charge over the move abroad, defining realistic expectations and being able to achieve them in the host country, facilitates cross-cultural adaptation. The reasoning behind this is participants' self-efficacy in the new cultural environment, i.e. realizing that they were successful in their move abroad. This might empower them and consequently help them to overcome obstacles and adapt.

Besides this, AEs and some IWs pointed out accommodation as a facilitator of their adaptation. However, this was the factor most likely to hamper SIEs' adaptation. AEs have support from their organization to find and pay for accommodation; IWs count on their family and friends living in the UK; but most SIEs in this sample are exposed to the renting system in the UK. This complicates SIEs' cross-cultural adaptation, as it did with SIEs in Froese's (2012) study.

SIEs found interaction with locals made their adaptation more difficult. As opposed to the AEs, SIEs are expected to find this easier (Petokorpi & Froese, 2009), but for this sample interaction with the locals was complicated, mainly due to the locals unfamiliar social behaviors. This interacted with the fact that participants' social networks were mostly composed of fellow nationals or other foreigners, similar to SIEs in Korea (Froese, 2012). Despite this, many SIEs identified with the British culture, and this facilitated their adaptation. Most likely this happened, because one of their motivations reflected the desire to gain a personal international experience; hence they were willing to know better the British culture, using the strategy reflected in the proverb "do in Rome what the Romans do." Therefore, many participants considered that it would be useful to mold their behaviors and attitudes, acting just like the locals. Taking into account that their social networks are composed by their fellow nationals, but they also adopted some of the British behaviors, we may infer that the Portuguese

SIEs adopted the integration strategy while acculturating (Berry, 2005). This strategy is considered to have the best outcomes for immigrants' adaptation (Berry & Sam, 1997) and whether or not this proves to be true for SIEs is a matter to be addressed in future studies.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has three main limitations. First, participants were not equally distributed among the three types of relocation. Nonetheless, the distribution seems to portray the current situation, which indicates that most Portuguese move abroad mostly as SIEs. In fact, many participants indicated that they would not have left Portugal, without having the professional situation organized. In addition, Portuguese companies seem not to rely heavily on AEs. Instead, they internationalize by buying companies in other countries, and recruiting locals or using open internal recruitment processes, which allow their employees to apply as if they were locals of the country where the subsidiary is located. Subsidiaries are usually located in emerging economy markets or less developed countries (Bento et al., 2015), but this is not the case for the UK; hence this might explain the small number of AEs in the sample of this study.

Second, this study focused only on Portuguese migrants in the UK. The findings may be nationally biased and it requires further studies of Portuguese workers in other countries or other countries' workers in Portugal to establish generalizability. This should include comparisons between EU and non-EU workers and countries. In this respect, the UK leaving the EU could provide a research opportunity. The main reasoning behind this suggestion is related with the assumption that EU migrant workers in EU host countries could face fewer adaptation problems than non-EU migrant workers (Al Ariss, 2010). After the results of the Brexit Referendum, this suggestion could be easily addressed and eventually complemented with a pre-Brexit

and post-Brexit comparison of the results. This would allow a more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon.

In future studies, it may be useful to increase the number of respondents and conduct large-scale surveys. This way, the third limitation, regarding the evaluation of responses provided by 50 individuals, could be overcome, and these quantitative studies may corroborate and complement this study's findings.

Future studies might also explore the reaction of the extended family (e.g., parents) regarding migrant workers' decision to move abroad and how it influences their adaptation process. Future studies could also take a more comprehensive view of adaptation (Haslberger et al, 2014) examining cognitive, affective and behavioral components. Talking about adaptation, let us note that participants' discourses in this study seem to understand adaptation in terms of socio-cultural and work related aspects. Nonetheless, future comparative studies should explicitly ask participants about their conceptions regarding cross-cultural adaptation. This way possible differences and similarities might be identified between SIEs, AEs and IWs' adaptation conceptions, confirming/disconfirming the need for continuing the tradition of focusing on socio-cultural adaptation outcomes when addressing expatriates and psychological ones for immigrants. Our assumption is that all dimensions of adaptation (socio-cultural, work and psychological) are important for SIEs, AEs and IWs and should be integrated to obtain a broader understanding of adaptation. We support Adams and van de Vijver's (2012) call for more studies on expatriates' identity, which was relevant here, to contribute to closing the gap of research on expatriate acculturation (Linberry, 2012) and expatriate identity (Kohonen, 2008).

Contributions and Implications

One of this study's contributions focuses on addressing Wang's (2002) call by identifying data on migrant workers' social networks. We found that Portuguese SIEs' social networks are composed of their fellow nationals and other SIEs from Southern European countries. This is not a consequence of their unwillingness to interact with the British, but rather a failed attempt, caused by inability to cope with unfamiliar British social behavior. Having this in mind, it would be useful if some type of cultural preparation could be provided prior to moving abroad, so that SIEs could create realistic expectations regarding their interaction with the locals. This could be extended to AEs and IWs, although we referred to SIEs first because they were the ones who most mentioned that their adaption was affected by their difficult interaction with locals.

Besides determining how Portuguese migrant workers characterize their cross-cultural adaptation, their discourses enabled the identification of some antecedents of cross-cultural adaptation. They might be very useful when designing a preparation program for moving abroad.

To the best our knowledge, this is the first empirical study to include in its sample SIEs, AEs and IWs. This study confirmed some of the previous findings regarding demographic differences between SIEs and AEs or between SIEs and IWs. Nonetheless, it also disconfirmed others and consequently opened up some possibilities for future research in this area which is constantly evolving.

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Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the total sample and its distribution among the three forms of international mobility

Variables	n (%)	Forms of international mobility		
		SIEs	AEs	IWs
All	50	28	8	14
Age				
20-29	25 (50)	18	3	4
30-39	21 (42)	9	3	9
40 and older	4 (8)	1	2	1
Gender				
Men	25 (50)	14	7	4
Women	25 (50)	14	1	10
Marital status				
Single	37 (74)	22	4	11
Married	11 (22)	6	3	2
Divorced	2 (4)	0	1	1
Annual income (euros)				
10 001- 30 000	18 (36)	8	0	10
30 001- 50 000	18 (36)	14	1	3
> 50 001	14 (28)	6	7	1
Educational background				
High school	4 (8)	0	0	4
Bachelor's degree	18 (36)	6	3	9
Master's degree	20 (40)	16	3	1
Postgraduate studies	4 (8)	2	2	0
Doctoral degree	4 (8)	4	0	0
Previous migratory experience				
Yes	28 (56)	12	4	12
No	22 (44)	16	4	2
Move abroad alone				
Yes	36 (72)	23	6	7
No	14 (28)	5	2	7
Time spent in the UK				
5 months - 12 months	8 (16)	6	1	1
13 months - 24 months	13 (26)	8	1	4
25 months - 36 months	29 (58)	14	6	9
Time planned to stay in the UK				
Undefined	26 (52)	14	0	12
Defined	24 (48)	14	8	2
1 year	1 (2)	1	0	0
2 years	10 (20)	5	3	2
3 years	4 (8)	1	3	0
4 years	3 (6)	1	2	0
5 years	5 (10)	5	0	0
until retirement	1 (2)	1	0	0

Note: SIEs = Self-Initiated Expatriates; AEs= Assigned Expatriates; IWs= Immigrant Workers

Table 2. Motives for moving abroad and their distribution among the three forms of international mobility

Motives for moving abroad	n	Forms of international mobility			Examples of units of coding
		SIEs	AEs	IWs	
Labor market situation in Portugal	39	24	2	13	
Unemployment	7	4	0	3	My husband and I were unemployed. Unfortunately, as soon as I got pregnant and I informed my employer they sent me away. Besides this, things were not going very well in the company my husband was working for and he was also fired. So, having one child and another one on the way, being both of us unemployed was very difficult to handle in Portugal and we decided to look for other opportunities abroad. (IW, F, 33 years)
Unchallenging tasks	8	6	1	1	For several years I had to perform the same exact tasks. Although the institution had a lot of money, they would not value my competences or propose an increase in my salary. Their excuses were ridiculous and I actually started to be depressed and not enjoying my job. (IW, F, 31 years)
Difficult career progression	5	3	1	1	For 10 years I worked at an institution and during this time, I completed two bachelor's degrees, two post graduate studies and I did not make any progress in my career. (SIE, F, 28 years)
Precariousness	5	2	0	3	What motivated me to move abroad was the professional instability in Portugal. We can have contracts during 6 months, one year, but in most cases these are temporary contracts arranged for maternity leave substitution and we are never in a safe and stable position. (SIE, F, 28 years)
Unfair remuneration	5	5	0	0	I did not move abroad because I was unemployed. I had a job, but to gain a fair salary, I had to work in two different places. (SIE, F, 29 years)
Long working hours	5	3	0	2	I would work 60/70 hours every week and afterwards I would be very tired and not able to enjoy any time with my friends and family. So, being tired and having to work so much in order to have a fair salary was one of the main reasons that motivated me to move abroad." (SIE, F, 29 years)
Lack of hope in a better future	4	1	0	3	The other reason ... was the constant uncertainty of what was coming next. It seemed like there would not be any chance of things improving and I would not say that I was depressed but I guess I was living in a bubble and no matter how hard I would work, how much effort I would put into the performed tasks, I would not be able to follow the path that would guarantee the future I wished for my wife and I. (IW, Male, 32 years)
International experience	35	19	11	5	
Professional	20	12	8	0	One of the reasons for moving abroad was the desire to have access to working opportunities that involve more responsibilities, especially in my area, that is finance. Also the best companies in this area are here in London. So, I wanted to have access to more opportunities and better ones that those available in Portugal. (AE, M, 27 years)
Personal	15	7	3	5	I always wanted to have an international experience, knowing how life is outside of Portugal, how can I adapt to other places, cities, people and languages. (SIE, F, 29 years)
Successful previous international experience	4	3	1	0	As part of the Erasmus program I had the opportunity to live abroad in Spain. Since I really enjoyed this experience, I always wanted to engage in a new one, living and working outside of Portugal. (SIE, F, 29 years)
Reunification	3	0	0	3	She found a job in her area as a nurse, and I came with her and found my job afterwards. So we came here because of her, because she found a job and we wanted to be together. (IW, M, 29 years)
Improve economic situation	3	0	0	3	My main motivation for moving abroad was basically economic. I wanted to gain more and improve my financial situation. (IW, M, 31 years)
Portuguese mood	2	0	1	1	Also the economic attitude of the country, not in terms of the salary, but the mood, the way people were living always defeatist, having a pessimist view and not encouraging my ideas, made me leave Portugal and start doing new things abroad. (IW, F, 29 years)
Improve English speaking skills	2	2	0	0	I completed my master's degree in February and I wanted to find a job. ... I knew that in the future I would want to have an international career and one of the obstacles in achieving that would be my difficulties with the English language. So I had to solve this problem and improve my English; hence I decided that the best way is to live in a country where English is the official language, so I chose the UK. (SIE, M, 24 years)

Note: SIEs = Self-Initiated Expatriates; AEs= Assigned Expatriates; IWs= Immigrant Workers

Table 3. Participants' cross-cultural adaptation and correspondent distribution among the three forms of international mobility

Cross-cultural adaptation	n	Forms of international mobility			Examples of units of coding
		SIEs	AEs	IWs	
Easy					
Identification with British culture	10	8	1	1	My adaptation was easy because I identify a lot with the British culture (...) I feel very comfortable here, and I think that the politics and the society as a whole is targeted at people and in their favor. I like living here (...) I identify a lot, more than with the Portuguese culture and sometimes I think about maybe going back to Portugal and (...) I would love to implement this culture there (...) (SIE, M, 29 years)
Accommodation	7	1	3	3	What really helped my adaptation was the place where I live, my home. Most people my age usually rent a room, where they live with other people, because rents are very expensive. It is nice to live with other people, because you get to know other cultures, but after a certain time, it is uncomfortable and tiring. So, I decided to rent an apartment with a Portuguese who I met here (...) it is a place we can call home and feel comfortable (...) being far away from Portugal. (SIE, F, 32 years)
Work	7	3	3	1	I did not feel that I was a migrant and I was never treated like one at work, because the company is multicultural with offices all over the world. So this multicultural environment where I did not feel different than the other colleagues helped me adapt at work. (AE, M, 33 years)
Agency	5	3	1	1	My adaptation was easy and what actually helped me to adapt better was the fact that I was not forced to leave Portugal. I was not unemployed, I could have stayed in Portugal, but I really wanted to have this international experience. So, since moving to the UK was a choice that I made, an option, it was easier for me to adapt. (SIE, F, 37 years)
Social network	4	3	0	1	My adaptation was easy because as soon as I got here, my friends welcomed me and helped me with everything I needed and introduced me to their friends and so I had the chance to meet other people. (SIE, F, 27 years)
Successful previous international experience	3	2	1	0	Since I had the experience of studying here for one year and then working in France, I had an idea of the most important challenges associated with living abroad and I was able to easily overcome them; hence having a very easy adaptation. (AE, M, 40 years)
Partner's support	3	0	0	3	My adaptation was easy because my boyfriend was already living here. So he already took care of finding a place for us to live, he knew where we had to go shopping and he had friends that helped him when we arrived. (IW, F, 34 years)
Physical and cultural distance between Portugal and UK	2	1	1	0	The UK is not that far from Portugal, so I can easily be there in two, maximum three hours. It is like being in Lisbon and visiting my relatives in Porto. They are pretty close on the map and culturally similar; hence this made me adapt better. (AE, M, 50 years)
Family support	2	1	0	1	Since my parents seconded my decision of moving to the UK, it helped my adaptation, because they are not always saying that I should not have moved abroad, that I should be with them, etc. (...) I have their support and I know I can count on them. (SIE, F, 28 years)
Presence of Portuguese community in the UK	1	0	1	0	My adaptation was easy because I was lucky to live close to an area called little Portugal where there are lots of Portuguese living, who can help us. (AE, M, 40 years)
Difficult					
Accommodation	6	6	0	0	My adaptation was difficult because I could not find a decent place to live. Here, it is extremely hard to find a comfortable place to call home, and my quality of life in that aspect decreased, making my adaptation difficult. (SIE, F, 29 years)
Climate	6	2	2	2	When I arrived here, it was extremely cold and I did not have clothes for that weather. I left Portugal on a sunny day and got here to that horrible weather. This weather hampered my adaptation, because I remember complaining a lot in the beginning. (AE, M, 42 years)
Food	4	2	0	2	My adaptation was very hard in terms of the available pre-made and not fresh food. (SIE, F, 27 years)
Interaction with locals	4	3	1	0	In terms of the interaction with the British, my adaptation was very difficult, because groups are already formed and you are an outsider, with different references and using different expressions than them. (SIE, M, 28 years)
Language fluency	4	1	0	3	It was very hard to adapt since I could not speak English, and body language was not always enough. (IW, F, 31 years)

Note: There were eight participants who mentioned more than one reason for having had an easy adaptation; six participants characterized their adaptation as easy and difficult.
SIEs= Self-Initiated Expatriates; AEs= Assigned Expatriates; IWs= Immigrant Workers

