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## Career Success in Different Countries – Reflections on the 5C Project.

*Jon Briscoe, Michael Dickmann, Tim Hall, Emma Parry, Wolfgang Mayrhofer, Adam Smale*

# 1 Left behind: career studies and the rise of international work

Career studies have at best partly kept pace with the enormous rise of international work. While on virtually all accounts such as volume of international business transactions, importance of organizations operating across national and cultural boundaries, or individuals pursuing an international or global career indicators point towards growth, the body of career-related research on this has not grown to the same extent. With the exception of expatriation and its various facets such as classic expatriation (Bader, Schuster, & Bader, 2016), self-initiated expatriation (Andresen, Al Ariss, & Walther, 2013), or migration (Solimano, 2010 ), systematic research about various aspects of careers in different countries and cultures, in particular in a comparative sense (Lazarova, Dany, & Mayrhofer, 2012), only has started to emerge.

To be sure, a substantial body of knowledge about careers as such exist (see the overviews in, for example, Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007; Gunz, Lazarova, & Mayrhofer, 2018 [in press]). Fed by a great variety of disciplines ranging from developmental psychology via management studies to labour economics and sociology, research efforts focusing on organization and management careers (OMC) have produced substantial insight on individuals' careers and the aspects linked to condition, space, and time (Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018 [in press]). Often tracked back to the Chicago School of Sociology and the work of Hughes and his colleagues on a great variety of topics ranging from high-status professions such as medical doctors to careers more on the fringe of society such as taxi hall dancers (Cressey, 1932), jack rollers (Shaw, 1930), professional thieves (Sutherland, 1937) or hobos (Anderson, 1923), the existing body of knowledge is particularly strong in terms career success and its influencing factors (e.g. Gunz & Heslin, 2005; Heslin, 2005a Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014).

Looking at the research in this area reveals, however, a familiar picture in many areas of management studies: the research focuses on a comparatively small set of countries and uses concepts originating from North America with a strong explicit or implicit universality assumption. With regard to the former, much of career studies focuses on WEIRD countries, i.e. Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic. While this has its merits, it also constitutes a severe limitation since it leaves out large parts of the world where we know little, if anything, about careers, career success and factors influencing careers. Another element of the emerging picture arguably is even more worrying. Underlying much of the existing research are theories, frameworks and operationalizations that come from a narrow set of countries, most often the USA, and implicitly or explicitly claim universal applicability. Examples include conceptualizations of career transitions (Louis, 1980) or career success

measures such as the widely used career success scale by Greenhaus et al. (1990). They represent an etic, i.e. a general, non-structural and objective, view (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999) on careers that gives preference to ‘outside’ views instead of also looking at and analysing a phenomenon through the eyes of the respective local actors.

In a related field, human resource management, systematic efforts to comparatively study HRM policies and practices already started in the early 1990s (e.g. Hegewisch & Brewster, 1993) and comparative HRM is now a well-established field (e.g. Brewster & Mayrhofer, 2012; Brewster, Mayrhofer, & Farndale, 2018 [in press]). In career studies, similar developments only now start to occur. In the mid-noughties, there was very little systematic and comparative information available on how people in different countries and cultures view different aspects of careers. Roughly a decade ago, initial efforts for a more comprehensive views on careers and career success across the globe took shape in the form of the 5C project ([www.5C.careers](http://www.5C.careers)) and started to bear first fruit (Briscoe, Hall, & Mayrhofer, 2012; Chudzikowski, Demel, Mayrhofer, Briscoe, Unite, Bogicevic Milikic et al., 2009; Shen, Demel, Unite, Briscoe, Hall, Chudzikowski et al., 2015). Building on this, the current effort of 5C targets a more comprehensive and emic view of different aspects of careers across the globe.

Our chapter focuses on the issue of career success in different countries based on the development of the 5C project. Before presenting major findings both in conceptual and empirical terms and taking stock about what we currently know in this area and outline promising avenues for future research, we outline efforts for a more emic view, i.e. an approach focused on understanding careers more from a perspective that explores elements, their functioning and their interactions from an internal perspective. To this we turn next.

## 2 Digging deep: towards an emic view on careers

The 5C project started with rather traditional WEIRD goals at first. The groups three co-founders (Jon Briscoe, Douglas T. Hall and Wolfgang Mayrhofer) at first agreed to look at the protean or self-directed (Hall, 1976; Hall, 2002) careers across cultures, wondering if such a career was indeed relevant across the globe. Fortunately, upon investigating research methods and reflecting upon alternatives, they arrived at a more emic approach. Realizing that documenting the reliability and variability of a construct created in the Northeastern United States (the protean career) was of little utility, they instead opted for an „N-Way“ approach (Brett, Tinsley, Janssens, Barsness, & Lytle, 1997) in which the countries, research participants and researchers themselves each contribute to the theory and knowledge being formed. This demanded an approach in which the research participants‘ voice and circumstances were heard.

### 2.1 Initial steps

Collaborating as a growing group, 5C decided to look at two broad areas of careers—career success and career management (management from the individual’s perspective). We knew that how people attach meaning to their careers was important and would likely vary in part due to national culture. We also were interested in how culture as well as other contextual factors such as, e.g., rate of economic change, access to education and degree of diversity, might impact how individuals managed their career. We thus focused upon career transition(s)

as an important event that could reveal career management behaviors in context.

In terms of method, the semi-structured interview was our preferred approach in order to offer flexibility in exploring interviewee experiences and forming initial frameworks (Patton, 1990). But who to interview? We decided after careful discussion to focus upon three occupations (loosely speaking): nurses, business people, and blue-collar workers. These groups were not precisely similar in terms of professional or informal realities across countries but at least the tasks were standardized. We reasoned further that the relative structure of each occupation would highlight important contrasts in how career actors networked, received validation, defined career success, etc.

Beyond occupation we tried where possible to balance genders and to address age. We wanted people to have at least two years of work experience so as to have gained career perspective, but from there we divided our sample into early (first ten years of career) and late (last ten years of career) career stages, seeking maximum contrast in how they managed their careers and defined career success.

In terms of country-level sampling we chose to use Schwartz's cultural values framework (2006). We felt that his methods for establishing his framework were superior to others (Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) but also he offered something unique—a division of countries into cultural regions. This made sampling countries a much easier project. The GLOBE framework (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004a) offers similar advantages and has some redundancies with Schwartz's work, but it was not readily available at the time we began our research (we have since incorporated it in later research stages). Schwartz outlined seven cultural regions: Africa/Middle East, Confucian Asia, Eastern Europe, English Speaking, Latin America, South Asia, and Western Europe. Israel was considered as not fitting into any of these categories precisely. Using the Schwartz framework we chose 11 countries for our qualitative interviews: Austria, China, Costa Rica, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, and the United States of America (U.S.). We wanted to have at least one country in each cultural region; in some cases we were able to obtain more than one.

After the interviews were obtained and transcribed, they were coded by each particular country team and initial codes were developed around the general themes of career success, career transitions and contextual factors that impacted these themes. Representatives for country teams met to explain and question these tentative conclusions. A coding guide was integrated with participation from across teams, based upon agreement over common themes created from the coding discussion. Then all teams used this coding guide and re-coded their data. The derived data concerned career transitions (and their management) as well as meanings of career success.

## 2.2 Broad Findings

Looking first at career transitions, the 5C research revealed that both individual differences (e.g. mastery versus performance orientation) as well as social and macro contexts shaped the nature of how people coped with career change (Briscoe, Chudzikowski, & Unite, 2012). For example, at an individual level, business people were more likely to perceive themselves as driving career transitions whereas nurses were the least likely. At a macro level, countries characterized by more hierarchy in Schwartz's (2006) framework were less likely to see

transitions as self-driven, but those high in egalitarianism (i.e. favouring equality in all people) were more likely. Also, countries lower in uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1991) were more likely to attribute career transitions to individual factors.

Perhaps more interesting than the general associations just reviewed were the contextual factors that emerged in individual country samples. Countries undergoing drastic transitions due to political or economic developments such as China, Serbia and South Africa showed marked contrasts between old and younger generations. The experience of an older worker in China for example was perceived as almost completely out of one's control, whereas younger workers felt a significant degree of autonomy.

Taking a closer look at five countries' in terms of perceived career transition attributions and triggers (Austria, China, Serbia, Spain and the U.S.), 5C found that Western Europe and U.S. participants were more likely to attribute career transitions to internal causes while external context was seen as a stronger cause of career transitions in China, with Serbia sharing some features of both polarities (Chudzikowski et al., 2009). Overall, some of the key contextual factors that shape and frame career transitions were legal/political, education, socio-economic status, gender, race, age, and generation.

Career success was also studied in depth in the qualitative phase of our research (Demel, Shen, Heras, Hall, & Unite, 2012). Initially, three broad categories of career success emerged from our coding scheme: person (e.g. learning and development), job (e.g. performing one's role), and interaction with the environment (e.g. work-life balance). The most frequently perceived meanings of career success were achievement, satisfaction, and job task-characteristics. Achievement was often depicted as an objective sort of success, satisfaction as subjective success, and job/task characteristics could be either subjective or objective. Concerning influences upon their career success, over half of the research participants cited the context in which they were working, personal history, personal traits, and motivations as key.

A further round of data analysis (Shen et al., 2015) also focused upon achievement, satisfaction, and job task characteristics but added learning and development as another "universal" meaning of career success—meaning it was found in each sample. This study also looked at "contextualist" meanings of career success that were found or amplified in some countries but not others. For example "making a difference" was more important in Malaysia, South Africa, and the U.S whereas survival and security was pronounced in China, Costa Rica, and Mexico. The authors used this contextualist versus universalist aspect of career success and juxtaposed it with traditional versus agentic career orientations on the individual level. In addition, they discussed differentiation versus standardization in terms of HRM strategy. In doing so they outlined how multinational and international HRM can emphasize the more common meanings of career success but also cater to local populations where the differences are distinct and call for specific national rather than cross-national approaches.

### **3 Casting the net wide: conceptual and empirical developments**

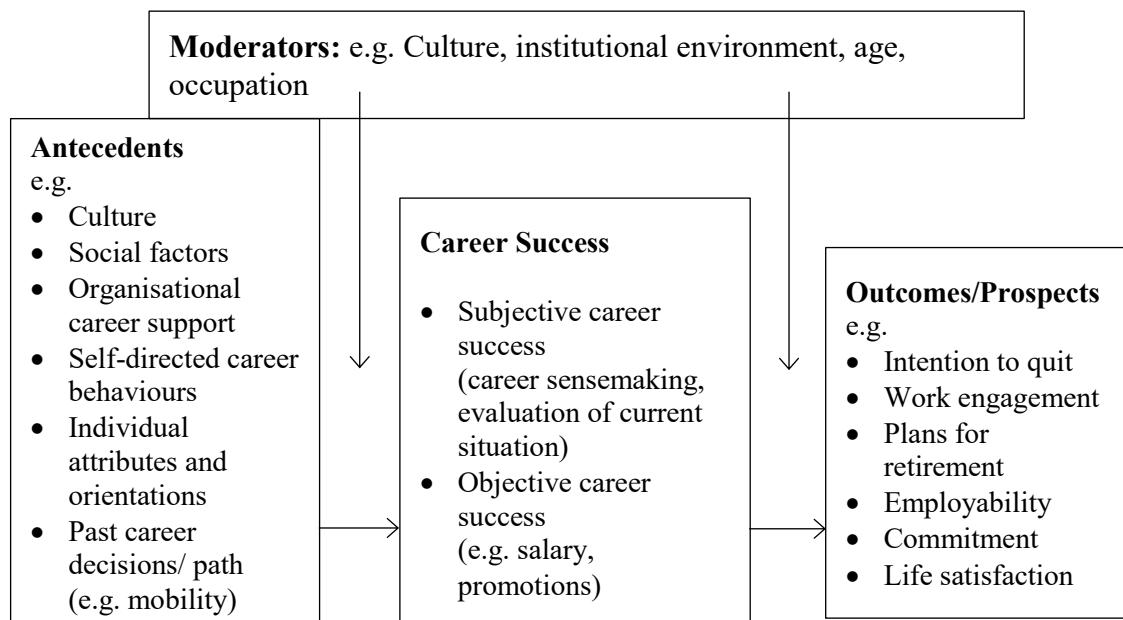
The qualitative research phase described in the previous section provided some interesting initial insights into the different meanings of career and career success, as well as the role of context in shaping career attitudes and behaviours. The insights from this qualitative study led

to a more encompassing endeavour involving both developing a heuristic framework and large-scale quantitative surveys building on it. Whilst seeking to test the generalizability of some of the findings of the qualitative phase, the quantitative phase had a narrower approach – focusing primarily on issues related to career success.

The primary research question that this stage focused on was “how do people in different countries perceive career success.” However, beyond the “how” question, we were also interested in the many “why” questions. Why do people view career success the way they do? Are these views better explained by structural societal explanations such as culture, economies, educational levels, and generations or by individual factors, e.g. self-directed career behaviours, personality, gender? And why does career success matter? Are views of career success associated with, for example, higher levels of work engagement, objective career success, or overall life satisfaction? And in terms of their interaction, which contextual factors (societal, organizational) moderate the relationships between the antecedents, meanings and outcomes of career success?

**Error! Reference source not found.** presents the heuristic framework which informed much of the thinking around the quantitative research design.

*Figure 1: Heuristic Framework on the Antecedents and Outcomes of Career Success*



### 3.1 Measuring Career Success

The central focus on meanings of career success was important partly due to the limitations in extant research in this area. Despite major conceptual contributions dealing with careers in general and career success in particular, the literature has concentrated on only a few broad distinctions, e.g. ‘objective vs. subjective’ or ‘satisfaction vs. salary’. Since Hughes (1937) studied the corporation there has been a concern with subjective versus objective career experiences. Since salary and promotion can be objectified and quantified, they have often

been turned to as proxies for career success. In 1976, Hall (1976) documented a new “protean” career that was less concerned with objectified career paths and more concerned with the individual’s idiosyncratic psychological and career success. Derr’s Career Success Map (1986) and Schein’s career anchors (1978) are other examples of concerted efforts to capture the subjective forms of career success.

Despite this, existing measures of career success have failed to identify its true nature or to acknowledge its multidimensionality. For example, the commonly cited career satisfaction scale from Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley (1990) does not specify the source of the satisfaction. Following the suggestion of Heslin (2005b) and others, scales have since been developed that account for the more subjective sources of career success meanings (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008; Dries, 2011; Shockley, Ureksoy, Rodopman, Poteat, & Dullaghan, 2015). However, these have been measured and examined within a single culture and thus their cross-cultural robustness has not been tested.

Indeed, most theoretical and empirical research on career success has been based on a perspective dominated by looking at *Western*, *educated*, *industrialized*, *rich*, and *democratic* countries. This contributes to the fact that up to now career research has not fully integrated the multi-layered richness and diversity of views on career success that individuals around the globe possess, and as such, has failed to take into account the importance of national context in our understanding of career success.

In order to address the above limitations, it was felt that a new career success scale was needed to enable the comparison of career success across countries. The 5C collaboration thus set about developing a scale (Briscoe, Kaše, Dries, Dysvik, Unite, Çakmak-Otluoğlu et al., 2014) which was rooted in the initial qualitative research described above. After developing robust theoretical categories from an innovative combination of card sorting and cultural domain analysis (Borgatti, 1998), a confirmatory factor analysis revealed that these categories of career success were present in countries in each of the GLOBE clusters (delineated in the global study of leadership by House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004b). Using a sample of over 18,000 respondents from 30 countries and testing across four occupational categories (see below) the scale validation exercise arrived at the following 7 dimensions of career success that were valid and culturally invariant across all of the GLOBE clusters: *Learning and Development*, *Work-Life Balance*, *Positive Impact*, *Positive Work Relationships*, *Financial Security*, *Financial Success* and *Entrepreneurship* (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Table 1: Summary of the Career Success Scale<sup>1</sup>

Dimension of Career Success	Example Item
<i>Learning and Development</i>	Doing work that gives me the opportunity to learn
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>	Achieving a satisfying balance between work and family life
<i>Positive Impact</i>	Contributing to the development of others
<i>Positive Work Relationships</i>	Getting positive feedback from supervisors
<i>Financial Security</i>	Being able to provide for my family financially
<i>Financial Success</i>	Steadily making more money
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	Owning my own company

A further contribution of this scale is that it measures career success in terms of the value (what we refer to as *importance*) that people place on different aspects of their careers, as well as their degree of satisfaction (or *achievement*) with the level of success they have reached. This distinction acknowledges the fact that people can be driven by certain aspirations without feeling fulfilment in that respect, and vice versa may experience fulfilment along a certain dimension to which they attach relatively little importance (Argyris, 1982; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Both aspects of career success can be applied to the each of the seven dimensions and thus can be compared, and/or used to measure the gap between the perceived importance and achievement of career success. Some examples of this kind of analysis are provided below.

### 3.2 Multi-Country Data Collection

Using this validated scale and other existing scales representing the antecedents and outcomes in our framework (see **Error! Reference source not found.** above), we proceeded to gather research in multiple countries. One goal was to include at least two countries from each of the GLOBE cultural clusters to ensure that all the clusters were represented in our sample. Another target was to include data from at least 30 countries since that would provide a sufficient number of observations at the country level to perform multilevel analyses. This cross-cultural research collaboration required a long process of recruiting academic collaborators, establishing group norms, coordinating data collection efforts and addressing a variety of linguistic, ethical, methodological and practical challenges (see e.g. Easterby-Smith & Malina, 1999 and Thomas, Tienari, Davies, & Meriläinen, 2009 for a discussion of some of these issues in cross-cultural research teams). While data collection is still ongoing at the time of writing, data has been collected from 30 countries (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

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<sup>1</sup> For the complete career success scale and full list of items please contact the authors.

*Table 2: Country Sample (by GLOBE cluster)*

GLOBE Cluster	Countries
Confucian Asia	China, Japan, South Korea
Southern Asia	India, Philippines
Sub-Saharan Africa	Malawi, Nigeria
Latin America	Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia
Middle East	Pakistan, Turkey
Anglo	Australia, United Kingdom, USA
Nordic Europe	Finland, Norway
Latin Europe	Italy, Portugal
Eastern Europe	Estonia, Greece, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia
Germanic Europe	Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland

In each country a convenience sample was used. Past careers research has tended to focus on managerial and professional careers, neglecting the careers of blue collar, skilled labour. Therefore, we targeted at least 100 employees for each of the four broadly defined occupational groups: managers, professionals (defined as those in occupations which usually require degree level education), sales/clerical workers, and skilled labour. Survey questions were back-translated from English (Brislin, 1970) where acceptable translations of scales were not yet available. Surveys were pre-tested in each country and adjusted for factors such as respondent fatigue.

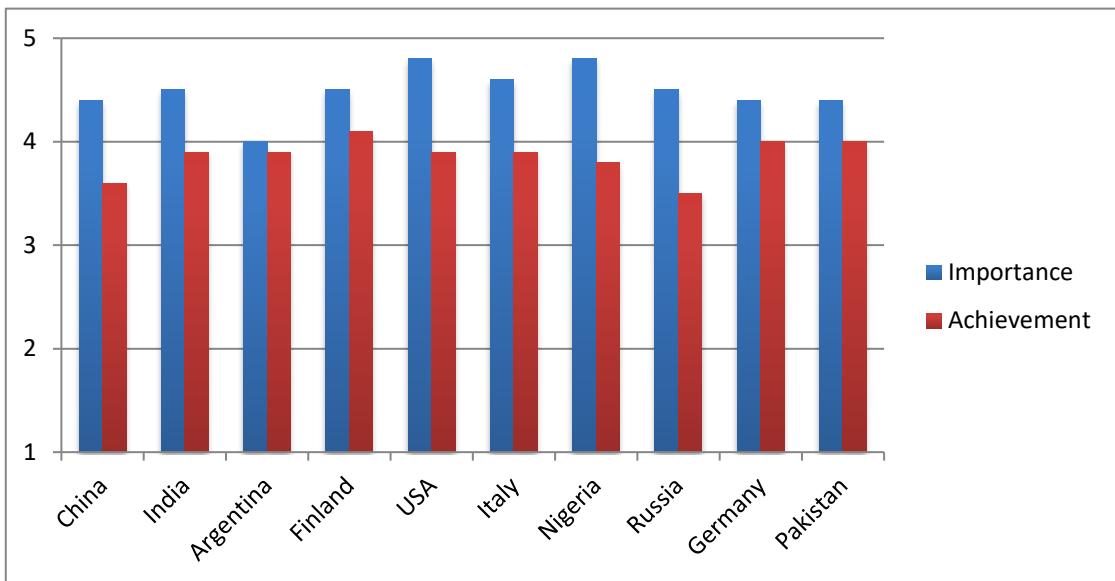
### 3.3 Empirical Insights

Some of the early findings on career success are presented below. For the purposes of this chapter, we have chosen to provide three examples of analyses: first a comparison of career success conceptualisations by country; second, an analysis of gender differences within a particular region (DACH); and third, an analysis of the impact of a macro-level factor (income equality) on conceptualisations of career success. The purpose of this is to illustrate the utility of the 5C data as well as to provide a flavour of some of the initial findings.

#### Career success conceptualisations by country

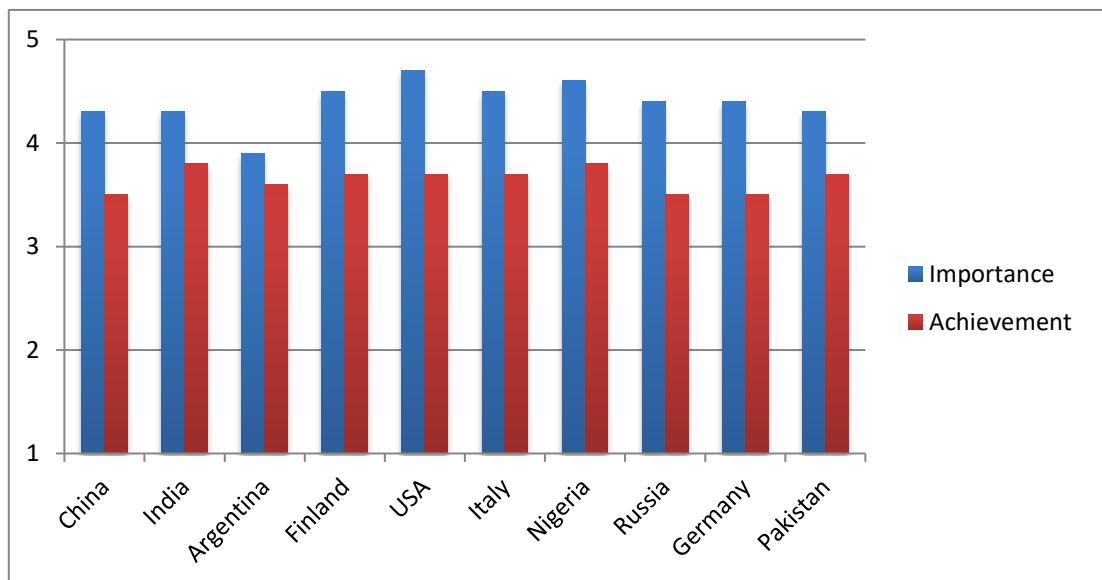
To examine career success conceptualisations across country descriptive data from ten countries have been selected; one from each of the 10 GLOBE clusters. The countries are: China (Confucian Asia); India (Southern Asia); Argentina (Latin America); Finland (Nordic Europe); USA (Anglo); Italy (Latin Europe); Nigeria (Sub-Saharan Africa); Russia (Eastern Europe); Germany (Germanic Europe) and Pakistan (Middle East). A simple comparison between these countries in terms of the average scores for career success importance and achievement for some of the career success dimensions are reported together with a short commentary. The scale for importance was: 1 = not at all important... 5 = very important, and for achievement: 1 = strongly disagree... 5 = strongly agree. The charts below show the average rating for importance and achievement in each country for four of the scales. These four were chosen as an illustration of the country differences.

*Figure 2: Financial Security by Country*



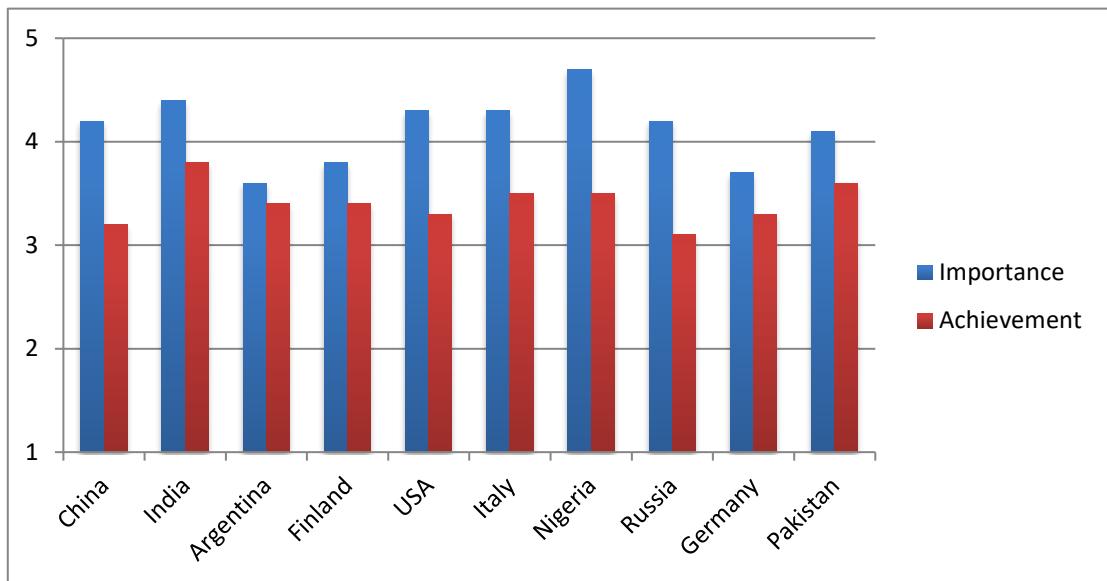
*For the majority of countries, Financial Security was seen as the most important dimension of career success, especially in the USA (4.8) and Nigeria (4.8). Whilst one might expect to see notable differences in importance and achievement in developing and transition economies such as Nigeria, Russia and China, these differences are not much smaller than in the USA and Italy.*

*Figure 3: Work-Life Balance by Country*



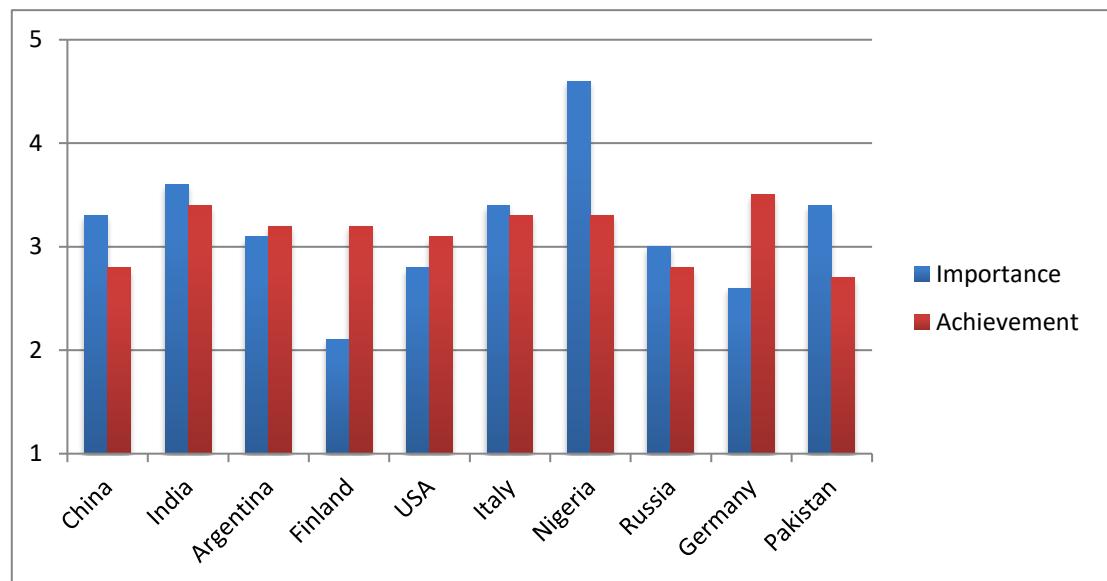
*Work-Life Balance follows Financial Security as generally the second most important dimension of career success for most countries. However, this dimension (together with Financial Success) produced some of the largest gaps between importance and achievement. Interestingly, there are few big differences between countries with perhaps the exception of Argentina.*

Figure 4: Financial Success by Country



Compared to Financial Security and Work-Life Balance we see much more variance in the importance attached to *Financial Success*. We also see more between-country variance in the importance of Financial Success than its perceived achievement. There were large differences between the levels of importance and achievement in several countries, in particular Nigeria (4.7 compared to 3.5), Russia (4.2 vs. 3.1), China (4.2 vs. 3.2) and the USA (4.3 vs. 3.3).

Figure 5: Entrepreneurial by Country



As one would expect, for most dimensions of career success people's levels of perceived achievement are almost always below that of importance since importance comprises an aspirational element. The Entrepreneurial dimension of career success, however, behaves differently in many countries (e.g. Finland, USA and Germany). This might be partly due to the rather low overall importance attached to entrepreneurial career success (least important

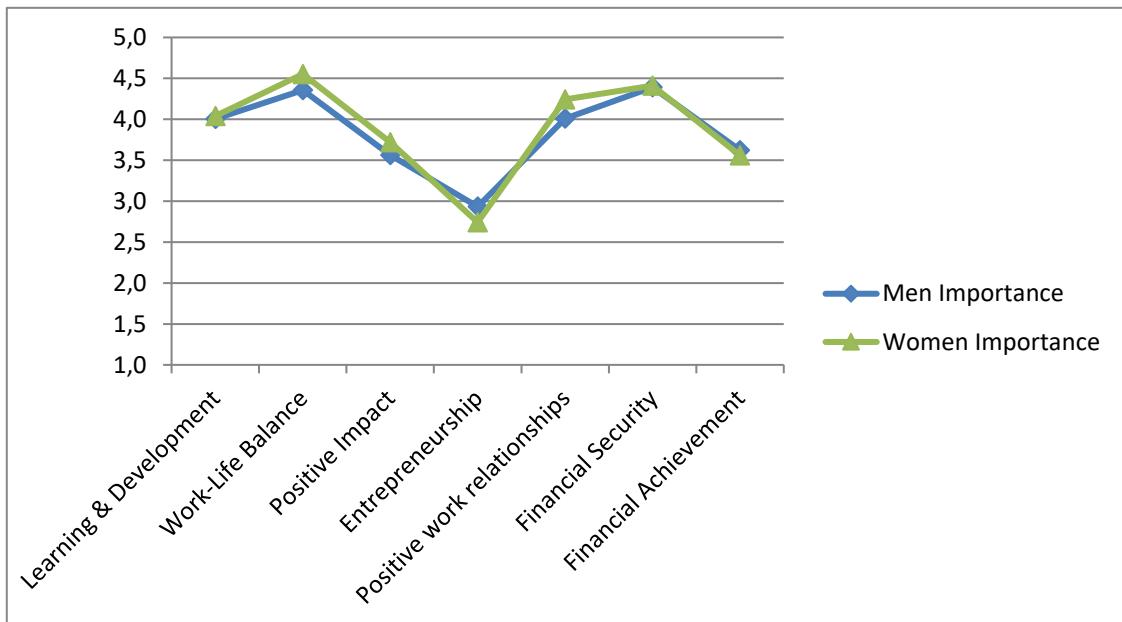
of all seven dimensions), where one explanation could be that such modest aspirations are easier to surpass. Another could be that certain aspects of being entrepreneurial (e.g. being self-employed and running your own business) are more straightforward to assess.

### Gender differences within the DACH region

Next we turn to look at career success in a specific region of the world, the German language countries Austria, Germany, and Switzerland ('DACH-countries') that are on the one hand quite similar but nevertheless show clear fine differences. This makes them a good test-bed for looking at similarities and differences in closely related contextual settings.

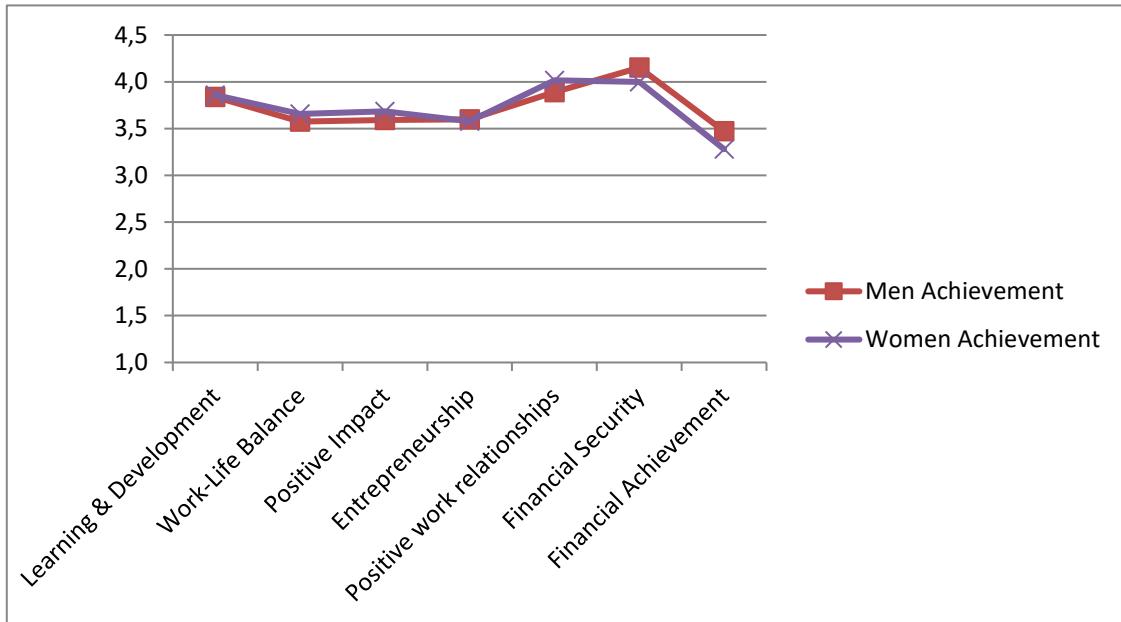
Using the seven dimensions of career success and looking at both importance and achievement as well as men and women, the following picture emerges. In terms of importance, work-life-balance and financial security rank highest and entrepreneurship, positive impact and financial achievement lowest (**Error! Reference source not found.**). In this regard, there are no substantial differences between women and men.

*Figure 6: Importance of dimensions of career success for women and men (DACH-countries)*



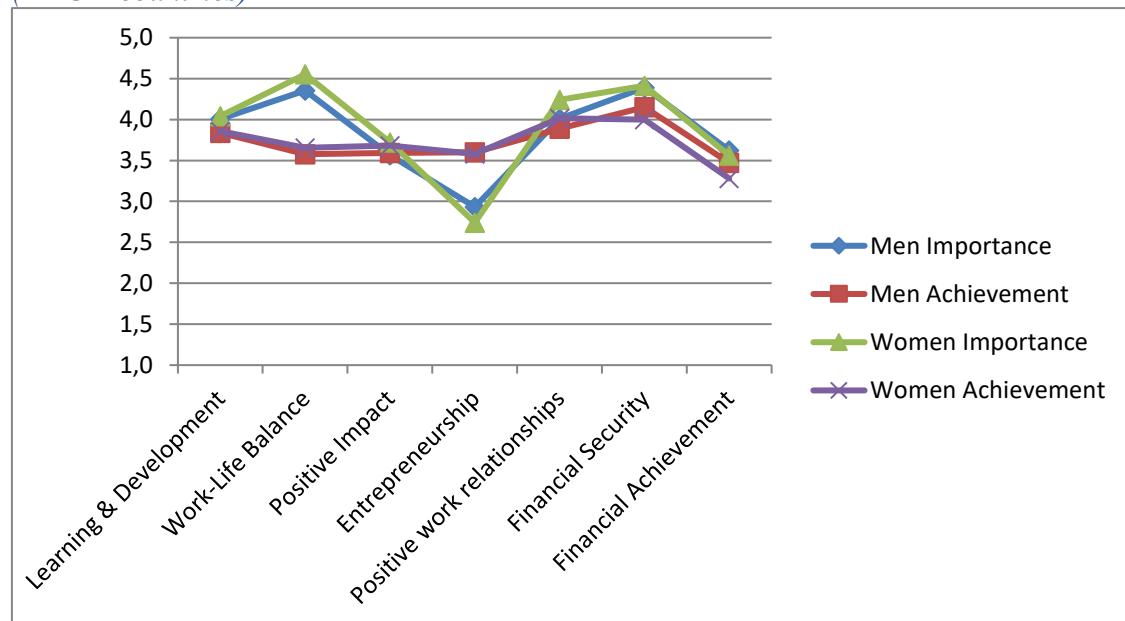
With regard to achieving the various dimensions of career success, financial security, positive work relationships and learning & development score highest (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Again, there are hardly any noticeable differences between women and men.

*Figure 7: Achievement in dimensions of career success for women and men (DACH-countries)*



Looking at the expectation-realization-gap, one can see clearly that there is the greatest negative gap in the area of work-life-balance for both women and men. Vice versa, with regard to entrepreneurship, a low level of importance is far exceeded by actual achievement for both sexes (Figure 8).

*Figure 8: Importance-achievement gap in dimensions of career success for women and men (DACH-countries)*



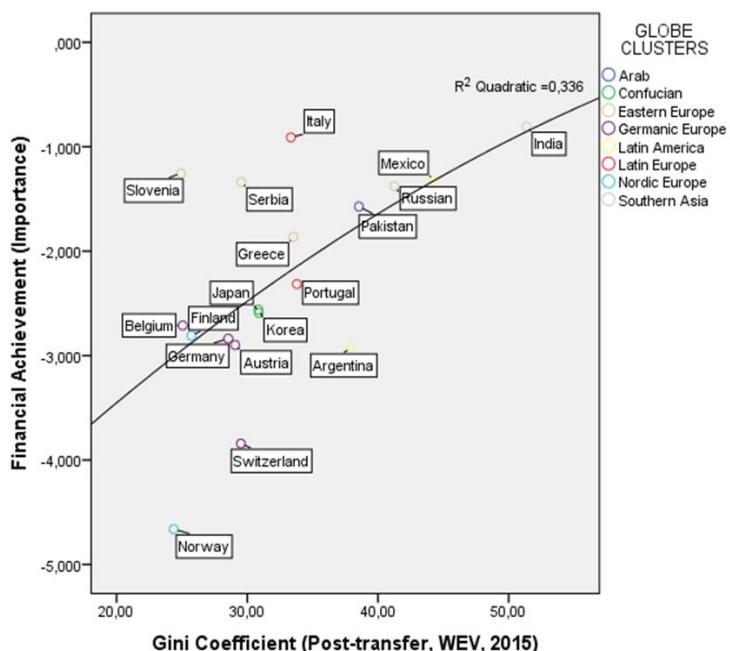
Overall, for both women and men importance and achievement of the seven dimensions of career success follow a pretty similar pattern. A more in-depth comparative analysis of the three countries reveals that again there are remarkable parallels between the three countries

with hardly any noticeable differences.

### Macro level influences on conceptualisations of career success

An additional effort of 5C research addresses the effects of factors at the societal level on career views. Following previous calls for a better integration of these macro-factors, first explorations show that this seems to be a promising route for better understanding commonalities and differences in career views. One example for this kind of undertaking is the analysis of the effects of national income inequality on the importance of various career success dimensions. Looking at 18 countries across three continents (Americas: Argentina, Mexico; Asia: India, Japan, Pakistan, Korea; Europe: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Finland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland), one can see that in countries with stronger income inequality financial achievement is a more important aspect of subjective career success (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

*Figure 9: National income inequality and importance of financial achievement*



## 4 Taking stock: the global picture of careers

In this section, we outline what we currently do know based on scholarly work in this area aiming at better understanding of what happens globally in terms of careers and muse about the extent to which this knowledge adds value to practitioners' activities, e.g. in HRM, career counselling, coaching, national policy making.

### 4.1 Established insights and future research

Although comparative career studies is a nascent area with a lot of work still ahead, one can identify at least three areas where both some insight and a broad idea of future research has

been developed. They consist of exploring the lay of the land and developing a descriptive world map, following developments over time in terms of how individual careers and organizational career management in different countries, cultures and institutional contexts develop, and explaining relationships and developments both cross-sectional and over time. We will briefly address these issues in turn.

**Exploring the lay of the land.** In terms of empirical insight into what happens across the globe career wise, we have a bulk of studies looking at different aspects of careers in various countries. However, as argued above, systematic approaches that allow a sound comparative view are few and far between. Still, we are currently able to point to some emerging insights in this respect.

First, it seems like there are some universal underlying dimensions that people use when talking about a successful career. To be sure, individuals score very differently on these dimensions depending on respective specifics such as individual career trajectories and demand levels, profession, and cultural and institutional context. Yet, they draw on the seven identifiable dimensions of career success in the areas of growth (learning and development, entrepreneurship), material output (financial security, financial achievement), and life design (work-life-balance, positive work relationships, positive impact). Second, the empirical results seem to point towards a peculiar duality. On the one hand, insights such as the underlying dimensions of career success and the striking similarities in related countries point towards a substantial degree of universalism in this area. Factors such as the strong force of the capitalist economic logic and a, by and large, global media community transporting (largely ‘Western’) views of career and career success via cinema, TV, and streaming services contribute to a certain kind of uniformity. On the other hand, both at the individual and the collective level we see substantial differences, too. This indicates that there are important factors that lead to individual differentiation. Hence, it becomes crucial to further analyse the interplay between various factors in order to better understand the forces pushing towards ‘standardization’ and ‘differentiation’ of career views, respectively. Third, despite a growing body of knowledge, we still know very little about basic ‘facts and figures’ in other regions of the world outside ‘WEIRDland’, in particular large parts of Africa, Middle East, South East Asia, (parts of) South America.

Against this backdrop, further exploring the lay of the land and developing a descriptive world map with regard to conceptualisations of careers, views on career success and career-related HRM policies and practices becomes a crucial issue. Ideally, the respective data *collection* efforts go beyond safari research and ad-hoc collaboration and target countries and regions beyond WEIRD-countries. With regard to data *analysis*, focusing on descriptive analyses showing commonalities and differences and making this knowledge broadly accessible for both academia, organizational practitioners such as HRM-specialists, policy makers and the broader public becomes a priority.

**Following developments over time.** The existing data is the result of cross-sectional snapshots. Analyses based on this data is, see above, valuable by all means, but also limited. While it allows insight into the respective status quo, it is devoid of following developments over time. Both at the individual and the collective level, this is far from ideal. The time dimension built into careers and the resulting dynamics call for data that allows tracking the developments over the individual life-course. In a similar vein, at the collective level these efforts allow to detect changes within and between national, institutional and cultural contexts and, consequently, to uncover stasis, convergence or divergence when comparing the relative

positioning of national, cultural and institutional contexts (for a similar effort in HRM, see, e.g., Mayrhofer, Morley, & Brewster, 2004; Mayrhofer, Brewster, Morley, & Ledolter, 2011).

**Explaining relationships and developments over time.** Descriptively analysing the situation in various countries, cultures and institutional settings as well as tracking developments over time contributes to our insight into careers. In addition, sound empirical data and descriptive analyses provide the basis for answering the ‘why-question’ of commonalities and differences as well as changes over time by using good theory that allows a guided in-depth analysis of why the observed commonalities and differences occur. Various theoretical schools are available and offer suitable theoretical concepts already used in other areas of comparative analysis. Besides the widespread use of cultural theories (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; House et al., 2004a), one can mention neo-institutional theories (e.g. Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012) focusing on the institutional setting within which individual careers and organizational career systems take place or behavioural economic theories trying to combine insights from classical economics and behavioural approaches, in particular from sociology and psychology.

## 4.2 Applied value

The applied value of the 5C research, the creation of a career world map and the ability to distinguish country (and country-cluster) patterns can be discussed looking at the levels of individual, team, organization and policy maker.

**Individual Level.** The 5C work has yielded seven dimension of career success in a culturally invariant scale: learning and development, work-life balance, positive impact, positive work relationships, financial security, financial success and entrepreneurial. These dimensions are investigated distinguishing importance and achievement.

The act of filling out the 5C questionnaire can trigger an intensive engagement with one’s career success values, aspirations and behaviours. In combination with the survey feedback, individuals can reflect more deeply on their career strategies and actions and may formulate new career plans.

In addition, an emerging career world map allows individuals to understand the predominant career attitudes in their own country which can lead to a reflection vis-à-vis potential contrasts with their own career success values or organizational context. A deeper understanding of one’s own personal and professional context can lead to superior career planning.

**Group/Team Level.** The emerging 5C world map ([www.5C.careers](http://www.5C.careers)) gives country-level data of career success values in combination with macro-level economic and sociological data. This leads to potentially useful applications at the group/team level.

Where all individuals in a team fill out the 5C questionnaire, an in-depth picture of the career values and aspirations will emerge. Team leaders and coaches can use this to reflect the fit of individuals to their current positions and engage in active career planning.

In addition, the overall picture may allow leaders and coaches to reflect on the role distribution within the team and adjust their management accordingly. For instance, individuals who value entrepreneurial activities highly, may be more likely to be given projects that need entrepreneurial minded staff. In addition, leaders may find it important to

understand how individuals view work-life balance importance and achievement when drawing up job description and distributing posts & activities.

**Organizational Level.** The 5C data adds new insights which are especially valuable for organizations operating in ‘non-WEIRD’ countries. While HR decisions are likely to be most affected, some strategic approaches can also benefit from the 5C insights.

Where MNCs expand into other countries, they have a choice of a range of configurations (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1998; Dickmann & Muller-Camen, 2006) that determine the degree of international standardization and integration of (HR) policies. The 5C data shows that macro-economic factors such as inequality predict the importance attached to financial achievement and should, therefore, be factored into the design of reward systems. Different importance of entrepreneurship and work-life balance considerations will also constrain the ability of firms to highly standardize all their HR approaches across different countries, thus influencing Strategic HR Decisions to integrate People Management approaches globally.

Factoring in 5C data also allows to shape decisions in HR policy areas. 5C has, among others, set out to understand the linkages of individuals’ views on career success to work engagement and objective career success as measured by salary and hierarchical advancement.

Understanding individuals’ career values and aspirations better can inform talent sourcing strategies. The (local) corporate branding initiatives as well as selection approaches may be fine-tuned to attract (and choose) the best talent for an organization given its specific country-location, context and corporate strategy. Given the individual and group level discussion above it is clear that HR professionals would also benefit from using the 5C data in the design of overall career structures in organizations as well specific career planning for individuals. Job and work design implications should also be analysed. Gender and age patterns may also be used to design people management approaches in organizations. Lastly, performance management and reward strategies are generally aimed at motivating staff to exert effort on behalf of the organization and to do ‘the right things in the right way’. 5C data would allow companies to understand the general career values that individuals hold in a country (and specifically in their organization if they choose to apply the 5C instrument broadly in their enterprise). Attitudes towards work-life balance, financial security and financial success as well as the other dimensions could be used as an input into the design of performance management and reward systems.

**Policy Maker Level.** Given that career success is likely to have a link to broader outcomes such as work engagement, employability or life satisfaction, policy makers are likely to be able to use the 5C data for a range of decisions. The seven dimensions of the career success scale are each in themselves important sources of information. Three are outlined as examples.

Differences in Learning and Development importance and achievement – especially when analysed in relation to other factors such as skills shortages in the economy, gender and age as well as occupational data – give important indication about the strive for (lifelong) learning and how difficult it might be to motivate individuals to fill particular skills shortages. Government policies – such as the UK’s apprenticeship levy that came into effect in 2017 – may then be developed that aim at strengthening lifelong professional development.

The degree of preference (and achievement) of individuals for Entrepreneurship, in particular to own their own companies, can give important information with regards to how to design

and shape industrial policy, especially in relation to small and medium-sized companies and the administrative and financial burdens of incorporating and running these organizations. Given that intrapreneurism is also often sought by companies, a high level of entrepreneurial orientation may be an attraction factor for foreign direct investment.

The importance and achievement of Financial Security can also be crucial information for governments who use their fiscal policies and social security systems to tax individuals and organizations and then to reallocate funds. Unemployment benefits and other social security spending is intimately related to individuals' feelings of how they are able to provide for their families. This may be particularly relevant in precarious or low paid jobs or when 'bread winners' are out of work. Distribution policies and the Gini coefficient are shaped by many influences – the need for financial security could be one of these.

It is not difficult to see that the 5C data can have even more application, for instance through improved insights into work-life balance preferences or the attitudes to strive for a positive impact at work. The discussion about the applied value of the 5C research has only been able to give a brief glimpse into the broad array of fields in which the data could be used. As the 5C project matures, many more practical uses are likely to emerge.

## **5 More than a look into the crystal ball: promising future avenues**

As we think about major issues for research in contemporary careers, one of the most pressing is studying ways to help people make changes in their careers that will help them adapt to what Johansen (2012) calls the "VUCA" environment (where VUCA stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous.) This turbulent world is made so by many powerful forces in the institutional environment: political, economic, military, social, religious, technological, etc. Whether we are focusing on the needs of immigrants who, either voluntarily or involuntarily, have left an established career in their home countries and now find themselves in a totally new living and working environment, or on the plight of another kind of refugee, those who have lost their jobs and been shunted aside because of obsolete skills or high wages that cannot compete with those of workers in another part of the world, or people who would like to switch jobs or retire but are unable to find a way to do so, we are dealing with the need for major career change. In this section we will examine major research issues that must be addressed in the future if we want people to become more effective in acquiring new, current skills, as well as new attitudes and self-perceptions that would let them be more comfortable with the turbulent and demanding forces in the VUCA world.

Two specific career needs that people need to develop in a VUCA world are identity learning and adaptability (Hall, 2002). By identity awareness we mean the ability to take perspective on one's self-identity and to be able to develop personal clarity about it (e.g., awareness of one's values, needs, capabilities, career goals, etc.) Identity learning and change occur through behavior changes and experiments (Ibarra, 2003; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006; Pratt, 2012). This process involves taking risks, trying out new behaviors, receiving feedback, and self-reflection. Argyris (1993) called this process "double-loop learning," which means that the person takes in feedback and reflects not only on the outcomes of his or her behavior, but more fundamentally on his or her original purpose and sense of identity. We need more studies of ways this double-loop process might operate, as well as how it might produce both a greater sense of identity awareness and increased ability to engage in self-

directed change – i.e., greater adaptability.

One of the most understudied areas in careers research is how for people can increase these identity learning and adaptability skills in later career, as in the case of older workers who need to keep up with changing technologies and ways of working. Older workers are often the target of organizational cutbacks, and given the discrimination that often exists against this group, it can be difficult for them to find re-employment. One way to combat this issue would be for HR specialists to find ways to help older employees develop a more flexible, mobile career, with frequent moves and ongoing training, with the aim of maintaining high employability. Employability has been found to be a strong asset for unemployed workers in finding new employment (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007). There are numerous possibilities for good action research studies on innovative H. R. programs for facilitating later career mobility. A good model here is recent research being done in Belgium, where government policy provides entitlements for career counseling for its citizens (see, e.g., Verbruggen, Dries, & Van Laer, 2017; Dries, 2011)

Similar talent development strategies could also be helpful for individuals and organizations in improving retirement practices. More focus on late career development could also include the encouragement for workers to begin thinking and planning for retirement, including options for phased approaches, with a gradual move from reduced-load work to eventual retirement. An example here would be Kim's (2013) study of the changing work identity narratives as they age (adjusting, progressing, and regressing.) Research such as this could give the organization more options for managing its workforce, as well as for employees in realizing their career aspirations and financial life planning needs in later life.

Beyond the individual level, the interplay between various contextual factors and careers are an important element both from a comparative and a single country angle. This is a field that offers the potential for major advances in understanding how factors and developments from the macro-level affect individual careers. This not only includes a ‘static’ and ‘snapshot’ view of various factors such as income inequality, gender equality, demographic composition, or national educational portfolio. In addition, developments over time in these areas and the potential consequences of different national trajectories do play an important role.

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