Taking stock of expatriates' career success after international assignments: A review and future research agenda

Rodrigo Mello [a,*], Vesa Suutari [a], Michael Dickmann [b]

[a] *University of Vaasa, Wolffintie 34, 65200 Vaasa, FI, Finland*
[b] *Cranfield University, College Rd, Cranfield, Bedford MK43 0A, UK*

ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review explores studies addressing the objective career success and subjective career success of company-assigned and self-initiated expatriates after their long-term international assignments. Expatriate work is defined as high-density work that affects employee learning and career trajectories. We develop a holistic expatriate career success framework exploring the following questions: 1) What individual career impact results from international assignments? 2) What are the antecedents of such career success? and 3) What are the outcomes of assignees' career success? A previously neglected range of theoretical perspectives, antecedents, and outcomes of expatriate career success is identified. Subsequently, a threefold contribution is made. First, we extend the conceptualization of international work density to unveil the differences between general and global career concepts. Second, we identify promising theories that have not been utilized in expatriation research, emphasizing context-related and learning theories that chime with the specific nature of global careers. Lastly, we suggest an extensive future research agenda.

1. Introduction

In recent years, an increasingly interdependent global economy has transformed how MNCs operate across the world, creating a strong need for culturally sophisticated, and globally agile leaders (Caligiuri, 2013), who must manage international operations effectively. It has become more common for employees to obtain global work experience (Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002), which has triggered an increase in empirical studies on expatriates over the past 20 years. The main interest has been in long-term assignments lasting at least one year (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011), and very commonly around 2 or 3 years, given that such expatriation is a transitional experience for both expatriates and their families. According to previous studies, expatriate work seems to be more complex and demanding than domestic work (e.g., Shin, Morgeson, & Campion, 2007), suggesting that expatriates' work is of the high-density type. High-density professional work affects individuals' competencies, work interests, and future careers (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998: 329).

Most expatriation research is concerned with expatriates' experiences abroad. There is less research devoted to analyzing the experiences of assignees after an international assignment (IA), although this area of interest is slowly expanding in the literature (Brewster, Bonache, Cerdin, & Suutari, 2014). When such research has been conducted, the focus has typically been on repatriation adjustment (Kierner & Suutari, 2018) or related support needs (e.g., van der Heijden, van Engen, & Paauwe, 2009). Another angle

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* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: rodrigo.mello@uva.fi (R. Mello), vsu@uva.fi (V. Suutari), m.dickmann@cranfield.ac.uk (M. Dickmann).

attempts to understand the career impact of IAs (e.g., Ramaswami, Carter, & Dreher, 2016). Such interest has been boosted by findings on assignee dissatisfaction with their treatment after repatriation (e.g., Doherty & Dickmann, 2009). That disappointment may also stem from the nature of the job undertaken and the assignees seeking to safeguard their career progression, as companies may not recognize the competencies repatriates developed when abroad (e.g., Suutari & Brewster, 2003). As a result of high-density developmental experiences, expatriates often feel competent to take on more demanding jobs and may also have developed greater career aspirations (Dowling, Festing, & Engle, 2013). In turn, disappointment with job and career opportunities after the IA may lead to career dissatisfaction, strengthen intentions to leave an employer (Kraimer, Shaffer, & Bolino, 2009), and increase staff turnover rates among repatriates (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007). Such disappointment runs counter to the very definition of expatriate career success that regards it as the accomplishment of desirable, positive psychological or work-related outcomes resulting from an IA (Holtbrügge & Ambrosius, 2015; Suutari, Brewster, Mäkelä, Dickmann, & Tornikoski, 2018).

The above indicates that incorporating context in international career studies is highly important. Nevertheless, this aspect is neglected in the literature (Andresen, Aspori, et al., 2020). We argue that existing general career frameworks would benefit from incorporating international career elements. Doing so, would better capture the realities of international work density (Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012) and take account of the more complex and varying macro-, meso-, and micro-level influences that shape global career success (Mayrhofer, Smale, Briscoe, Dickmann, & Parry, 2020).

In addition, the existing evidence on the career impact of IAs is still fairly limited (Brewster et al., 2014; Suutari et al., 2018). Mixed findings exist in relation to the career experiences, career success implications, and other outcomes associated with working abroad. The evidence is drawn mainly from one type of long-term assignees, assigned expatriates (AEs), while research on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), being those who have gained work abroad on their own initiative, is limited (Andresen, 2018; Brewster et al., 2014). The consideration of both types is important because empirical studies among expatriates indicate that career success can vary according to the type of IA undertaken (Andresen, 2018; Shaffer et al., 2012; Suutari et al., 2018). Assigned expatriates are sponsored by their employers and move internationally within the boundaries of one organization. The work experience acquired often contributes to their organizational career development. In contrast, self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) usually arrange their own expatriation to a country of their choice to pursue personal and career development experiences (Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008), often with no definite residence period in mind (Tharenou, 2013). These different starting points and job experiences abroad may influence personal development and growth (Andresen & Biemann, 2013; Suutari et al., 2018) and lead to variations in career success between the two types of assignees. For all the reasons above, it is important to undertake a systematic literature review to identify how much we know about the career impact of IAs. Such a review allows us to design a more nuanced career success framework, which in turn supports the development of a future research agenda to condense and enrich expatriate career success insights.

The current research builds on earlier reviews in the field of career success in general to refine the approach to understanding the career success of international assignees (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014a, 2014b; Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2018). It draws upon recent developments in general career success theories to analyze the antecedents of success among expatriates augmenting insights of what success means in the context of IAs. In particular, Spurk et al. (2018) identified different theoretical perspectives that help systematically apply their suggested antecedents to expatriate career success. Crucially, we identify promising theories that have not been utilized in expatriation research, incorporate context, and list new antecedents. Finally, research into career success outcomes is limited despite many theoretical connections, such as well-being or withdrawal, being suggested (Spurk et al., 2018). We have integrated further theoretical connections as outlined in the section describing the organizing framework.

Starting from general career success provides additional theoretical breadth and practical detail to the two previous reviews that have explored the international career context (Chiang, van Esch, Birtch, & Shaffer, 2018; Shaffer et al., 2012). Shaffer and colleagues investigated the individual choices, challenges, and career consequences associated with different global work experiences. The focus of our study is different. We identify antecedents and explore outcomes of expatriate career success, which Shaffer et al. did not. In addition, we provide a more comprehensive analysis of the career impact of IAs on assignees by examining career success sub-dimensions (e.g., promotions, salary, career satisfaction). That analysis will allow academics to refine their understanding and target their research more accurately. Chiang et al. (2018) have conducted a review of research into the repatriation stage covering both antecedents and outcomes. Our broad theoretical approach led to identifying pockets of studies previously neglected and consequently theoretical perspectives not covered in their review, such as institutionalization and learning theories. Given the high-density experience that expatriates gain by working abroad, we argue that learning theories in particular can contribute significantly to understanding expatriates' career success. Finally, we cover additional career patterns, such as that of global careerists, who re-expatriate (Suutari et al., 2018). We also update both earlier reviews during a time of strong migration flows and a substantial debate on new nationalism (The Expat Survey, 2019; Valluvan, 2017).

The primary goals of our systematic review are to answer three questions: What individual career impact results from IAs? 2) What are the antecedents of such career success? and 3) What are the outcomes of assignees' career success? Based on an overview of the empirical research carried out up to 2020, we address those three questions and develop a framework that depicts the impact of IAs on expatriates' career success while delineating both antecedents and outcomes. Crucially, this enables us to broaden our understanding of objective and subjective career success factors, identify antecedents and theories currently neglected in the study of expatriate career success, and suggest additional outcome factors. We conclude by presenting a potential future research agenda.

2. Review method

In thematically reviewing articles that focus on the career impacts of long-term IAs on the future career of expatriates, this study addresses empirical findings on career success and its antecedents and outcomes among AEs and SIEs. Our database selection follows

clear, specified criteria by adopting a replicable, scientific and transparent process (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003).

First, between January and June 2021, we searched the Web of Science, EBSCO, and SCOPUS databases using Boolean search techniques combining general and specific terms from the career success and expatriation literature. Four groups of words were developed based on an initial analysis of the career and global mobility literature: general terms from the IAs literature: (e.g., expatriation, expatriates, repatriation, repatriates, international assignment), specific terms from the IAs literature (e.g., SIEs and AEs), and general as well as specific terms from the career success literature (e.g., promotions, employability, competencies, satisfaction). Next, we narrowed the focus to long-term AEs and SIEs and thus excluded other forms of international experience (e.g., short-term assignments and those of "flexpatriates" and international business travelers). Finally, we considered full English text articles from peer-reviewed academic journals that publish expatriation research. Owing to the moderate number of studies addressing career success after an expatriation experience, it was possible to include all identified studies without any time limitation.

More than 30 combinations of the above keywords in the first wave and found about 1900 articles were used. We read headlines and searched for repetition to exclude articles that did not address global assignment or career issues. That action filtered the total down to about 400 articles. Reading abstracts alerted us to purely domestic articles and, excluding these, produced a final list of 144 manuscripts. Two members of the author team read each article individually to produce a precise manual analysis of the 144 articles. They cross-checked their decisions and discussed them with the third author. Studies on expatriates who were still on assignment (e.g., van der Heijden et al., 2009) and studies focused on experiences during expatriation (e.g., Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010) were excluded. The excluded studies did not provide any evidence on expatriate career success after working abroad or findings on antecedents or outcomes of such career success after the IA. However, studies exclusively addressing career competencies were considered even when expatriates were still abroad (e.g., Jokinen, 2010). That is because such diverse career competencies are continually developed and utilized during further career steps after the IA. We excluded studies that addressed a single competency development (Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2013) as they do not genuinely reflect the breadth of career competencies that shape international careers. At this stage, the list of articles numbered 81 papers. Finally, to improve clarity, we excluded a few studies in which international experience was operationalized as a sum variable consisting of different kinds of international experience. Examples included studying abroad and traveling on the grounds that the experience would be different from that gained on a long-term assignment (Schmid, Altfeld, & Dauth, 2018). To improve focus, we also excluded research that combined international experience with other variables (e.g., including overall professional experience as in Andresen & Biemann, 2013). Therefore, the final selection consisted of 55 articles addressing some sub-dimensions of career success for AEs and/or SIEs after their assignment. Appendix 1 shows these articles marked with a number in the list of references.

Overall, the systematic literature review has identified all empirical evidence that fit our pre-specified inclusion criteria to answer the three research questions. By using explicit and systematic methods when reviewing articles and incorporating all available evidence, bias was reduced, thus providing more reliable findings (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). However, it is important to acknowledge that while systematic reviews can augment the quality of the review they can also lead to some 'rigidity' that may represent limits to cover all relevant angles (Carver, Hassler, Hernandes, & Kraft, 2013).

3. An organizing framework for the review

The high-density nature of global work as a theoretical frame for understanding why expatriation has an extensive impact on careers will be discussed first. Next, we explain why AEs and SIEs are separated in our review. After that, we thematically categorize studies in three steps: the impact of IA on the career success of expatriates, antecedents of such career success, and outcomes of career success.

3.1. The high-density nature of global work

Discussing the nature of expatriate work creates the foundation to understand why global work experiences are so impactful for careers. Scholars have suggested that global work is a form of high-density work experience. For instance, Shaffer et al. (2012) adopted Peiperl and Jonsen's (2007) characteristics of global work as a starting point to differentiate three different peculiarities of global work: a) physical mobility (employees travel or relocate internationally), b) cognitive flexibility (assignees need to adjust their thought patterns and behaviors to adapt to situational demands across cultures), and c) non-work disruption (work role requirements disrupt employees' usual activities outside work). Therefore, expatriation extensively affects individuals' work motives, competencies, and careers (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998: 329).

We extend the concept of international work density by adding *task challenge* and *autonomy* as additional aspects of the high-density nature of expatriate work. These aspects of expatriate work are commonly reported and are likely to significantly impact expatriate work experiences and career outcomes after an IA. First, expatriates are typically responsible for a greater variety of tasks abroad than in previous domestic jobs (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Suutari & Makela, 2007) and many of them also work at a higher organizational level when abroad (Solomon, 1995; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Their jobs abroad can therefore be more challenging than at home. Second, expatriates have jobs with a higher level of autonomy than they did before (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Suutari & Makela, 2007). In turn, expatriates may have access to less help owing to foreign affiliates often being small in size (Harzing, 2001). Accordingly, in such work, there are fewer other highly skilled experts available, and expatriates often find that experts from HQ are not very helpful as they do not understand the specific challenges of a local context (Reiche, Kraimer, & Harzing, 2011). Consequently, expatriates are more dependent on their social networks to resolve work-related challenges than home-based staff would be (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

3.2. The impact of IA on the career success of expatriates after the IA

Career success is typically divided into objective career success (OCS) and subjective career success (SCS) in career theory and research. We categorize the evidence on the career success of AEs and SIEs accordingly. In addition, we classify the evidence in relation to different measures used in research on OCS and SCS.

Objective career success is indicated by factors that can be directly observed and measured by others in a standardized way (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005). Typical measures of OCS are salary increases (Spurk et al., 2018), career advancement (Shaffer et al., 2012), and job offers (Suutari et al., 2018). Alternative perspectives on OCS have also been applied, such as whether IAs facilitate or accelerate employees' route to the top (Bolino, 2007; Stahl et al., 2002). In contrast, SCS is defined as the focal actor's evaluation and experience of achieving career outcomes that are meaningful to them personally (Ng et al., 2005; Shockley, Ureksoy, Rodopman, Poteat, & Dullaghan, 2016). Typical measures of SCS include career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), perceived career success (Heslin, 2003), and perceived employability (Wittekind, Raeder, & Grote, 2010).

Furthermore, the accumulation of career competencies during IA has been considered a horizontal perspective of career success (Shaffer et al., 2012). Career development is among the commonly perceived meanings of career success regardless of location (Shen et al., 2015). Shaffer et al. (2012) observed that many expatriates perceive career benefits in terms of the development of career capital competencies (CCC) abroad (Dickmann et al., 2018). The conceptualization and operationalization of CCC development are based on DeFillippi and Arthur's (1994) career competencies framework. The framework suggests that people invest in their careers through three "ways of knowing" that broadly reflect an individual's psychological capital (knowing why), intellectual capital (knowing how), and social capital (knowing whom) (Parker, Khapova, & Arthur, 2009). Such development can be explored either as an aspect of SCS (perceived development of CCC) or as OCS (CCC development observed and measured by others) (see Arthur et al., 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005). Next, we need to look at the antecedents that influence career success.

3.3. Theories addressing the antecedents of expatriates' career success after IA

We augment the theories used to identify antecedents of career success. Previous reviews have organized those antecedents based on theory. Ng et al. (2005) ran a meta-analysis based on four categories of predictors of career success: stable individual differences, human capital, sociodemographic status, and organizational sponsorship. The study identified a number of variables commonly used as predictors of career success. However, in recent years, new theories have been employed in the field of career success (e.g., career capital and the protean career) that place more onus on self-directed career management. In addition, different jobs offer diverse development and career opportunities (Brewster et al., 2014; Shaffer et al., 2012). Further, scholars have attempted to use a broader contextual perspective examining how factors such as national culture influence expatriates' views of their careers (Andresen, 2018).

Aware of such theoretical heterogeneity and based on the conservation of resources (COR) theory, Spurk et al. (2018) extended the number of theoretical groups used by Ng et al. (2005). Spurk and colleagues examined competing theoretical approaches used to study career success and examined competing perspectives of the different theoretical approaches. The authors identified seven theoretical categories applied when analyzing the antecedents of career success: *1) personal resources (sub-categories: human capital, roles and identity, and performance); 2) environmental resources (sub-categories: social and work environments); 3) resource management behaviors and attitudes (sub-categories: career agency, stress and coping); 4) personal key resources (sub-category: stable traits); 5) contextual macro-resources (sub-category: national culture); 6) resource accumulation, and dynamics (sub-categories: person–environment interactions, life span, and career transitions 7) hybrid (mixing several aspects of the above approaches)*. We adopted this classification of antecedents in our review since this up-to-date approach is a high-quality framework that draws together the existing theories and research in the career field (see Spurk et al., 2018 for an overview). In contrast to other reviews (e.g., Ng et al., 2005), Spurk et al.'s framework treats career success itself as a resource that helps achieve other outcomes that follow career success. In line with this suggestion, one of the promising directions for future research identified by this review is the need for more research on such outcomes of career success.

The description of different theories (see Spurk et al., 2018) enabled us to classify the majority of antecedents. When possible, we also examined whether the authors of the reviewed articles had connected a particular antecedent with certain theories in their empirical studies (e.g., human capital theory is often used when studying the impact of different skills on career success). We also considered how Spurk and colleagues had connected different antecedents with career theories. In those very few cases when the authors of the reviewed studies had not used any specific theory to connect certain measures to career success and no clear guidance was available from the literature, the author team jointly analyzed different theories and their related antecedents to determine the appropriate categorization. Furthermore, due to our focus on the international career context, we were also able to identify antecedents and related theories that did not fit any sub-category in the framework. For example, we found a set of identified antecedents related to different aspects of the institutional context of the host country (not only national culture as a subdimension in the framework). Consequently, a new sub-category, *Institutional Theories*, was suggested. Similarly, adding career competency development as a measure of career success made it possible to add new theories to the framework, such as learning theories and their related antecedents. The method resulted in a broader, yet more nuanced, framework of expatriates' career success which we will outline below. Furthermore, we will discuss the theories and antecedents that emerged through our analysis in our conclusions section.

3.4. The types of outcomes of expatriates' career success after IAs

Career success can be seen as a resource that helps individuals attain other outcomes (Spurk et al., 2018). On the one hand, career

success indicators, such as high-status positions, might influence individuals' interpretations of people around them. These indicators can work as resources that impact their emotions and behaviors (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). Hence, when individuals are perceived as successful and treated differently by others, a number of valued internal and external states and objects can be attained via the social prestige and respect gained from others (Hall & Chandler, 2005). On the other hand, COR theory conceptualizes that, in order to pursue career success, employees must use their resources to receive new or protect existing resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This might also result in negative outcomes. People tend to chase career success by investing resources (e.g., money, time, energy). Those resources cannot then be used to achieve other valuable goals such as well-being or free time. Consequently, accomplishing career success might be a double-edged sword, where the depletion of valued resources that accompanies career success may result in either positive or negative outcomes, depending on a number of personal and contextual variables (Spurk et al., 2018).

We will categorize our review into five different types of outcomes of career success as identified by Spurk et al. (2018): withdrawal (e.g., intention to leave), career attitudes (e.g., career calling), well-being and health (e.g., burnout), reactions from the (work) environment toward someone's career success (e.g., being pointed as potential global leader), and self-concept (e.g., self-esteem).

4. Results and analysis

Table 1 provides an overview of studies assessing career success per two types of assignment. From the 55 studies reviewed, 35 included only AEs; seven included only SIEs; and eight included both AEs and SIEs. Five studies do not clearly express whether the expatriates in question are AEs or SIEs.

4.1. IAs impact on the career success of expatriates

We analyzed how IAs impact the objective and subjective career success of AEs and SIEs after their next move. A key discussion in the literature is whether working abroad is beneficial for assignees (Brewster et al., 2014; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Table 2 summarizes the main findings from the identified studies assessing different dimensions of career success. The findings demonstrate that scholars should intensify their efforts to investigate the career success of SIEs after their IA empirically.

4.1.1. Objective career success

Our analysis revealed some underlying tensions and surprising gaps in our knowledge. Starting with studies addressing dimensions of OCS, we identified findings concerning four factors: *salary, career advancement, time to top position, and job offer.* First, the research showed that German AEs experience a positive impact on their salaries (e.g., Biemann & Braakmann, 2013). Second, the evidence of the impact was quite mixed for career advancement. Positive impact studies reported that, on average, American and Finnish AEs were working at a higher organizational level after their assignment than they were previously (Magnusson & Boggs, 2006; Suutari & Brewster, 2003, respectively). Surprisingly, American repatriates (AEs) of one large professional services firm were less likely to have been promoted than employees without IA experience (Benson & Pattie, 2008). A better exploration of the reasons for these diverse findings would be beneficial. Third, AEs from Europe and the USA appear to need a longer time to reach top positions (e.g., Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011). However, these authors did not analyze whether IAs increase their chances of reaching such positions. Finally, no connection was found between IAs and the number of job offers expatriates receive after repatriation to the USA (Benson & Pattie, 2008). Interestingly, the SIE research does not cover OCS impact: the identified studies did not assess career advancement, time to top, job offers, or job responsibility development. While some practical challenges can be acknowledged, we conclude that more OCS indicators in SIE career success studies would be highly welcome.

Table 1
Identified studies on career success of AEs and SIEs.

	Objective career success					Subjective career success				Studies
	Salary	Career advancement	Time to top	Job offer	Job responsibility development	Career satisfaction	Job satisfaction	Perceived employability	Perceived CC development	
SIEs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	4, 20, 37, 38, 44, 52, 55
AEs	4	15	4	1	1	3	4	9	9	1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53
AEs SIEs	3	1	0	1	0	3	0	2	1	2, 6, 16, 23, 27, 41, 45, 49
Not defined d	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	11, 13, 22, 31, 54
Total	**7**	**16**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**7**	**4**	**15**	**17**	

In many areas, the evidence regarding OCS is very limited, even among AEs. The studies that found that the time to reach top positions (e.g., Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011) was extended would have benefited from a broader investigation. Just taking CEOs, who are the likely winners in terms of OCS, precluded investigation of whether IAs improve the likelihood of expatriates reaching top positions, and whether the developmental experiences embodied in their higher-density work make a difference to job performance. In addition, we also identified one study assessing job responsibility development as a dimension of OCS after IA (Breitenmoser, Bader, & Berg, 2018). In contrast to most studies, this study compared the job responsibilities during the IA (rather than before) with the responsibilities after the IA. The high-density nature of expatriate jobs naturally impacts findings because responsibilities are typically broader. Many expatriates also work at higher organizational levels abroad than they had in their home country. Future studies could compare the situation before and after the IA.

We only found two studies analyzing the number of job offers received as a subdimension of OCS after an IA (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Suutari et al., 2018) and so further research is necessary to verify the findings. The literature on career success, in general, has also suggested alternative dimensions of OCS that have been relatively neglected in expatriation research. Typical elements of objective success are embodied not only in a hierarchical (vertical) perspective (promotion or hierarchical position) but also in movements that may be horizontal, such as greater job security and longer vacation allowances (Nabi, 1999), or network connections and material success (Nicholson & Waal-Andrews, 2005), or development of career competencies (Shaffer et al., 2012). Future studies could incorporate such horizontal elements of OCS.

4.1.2. Subjective career success

For SCS, we identified three key aspects: *career satisfaction, perceived employability, and perceived career capital competencies (CCC) development*. The evidence, however, is limited. Lazarova, Dimitrova, Dickmann, Brewster, and Cerdin (2021) reported mixed findings on assignees' career satisfaction when working for an inter-governmental organization and Biemann and Braakmann (2013) report a positive impact of IAs on career satisfaction among a mixed sample of German AEs and SIEs. In contrast, most studies have analyzed the impact of an IA on perceived employability after the assignment, and again results are mixed. Studies reporting positive findings have found that AE repatriates in the USA (Benson & Pattie, 2008), including women repatriates (Culpan & Wright, 2002), perceived greater external employment opportunities than employees without IA experience. However, some studies with SIEs reported negative perceived employability (e.g., Begley, Collings, & Scullion, 2008). For instance, an assignment to China may be an example of a placement in a host country that does not seem highly appreciated by future employers (e.g., Makkonen, 2015). Finally, most articles reported a positive perception of career capital development abroad (e.g., Jokinen, 2010). However, in some contexts, such as Qatar (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014) and China (Yao, 2014), SIEs seem to be disadvantaged by contextual factors and they experienced reduced development. The evidence above indicates that further context-specific research is needed due to differences in expatriation and location effects.

To avoid erroneous interpretations, it is worth noting that in some areas of research, it is necessary to consider that the use of concepts and measures differs across studies. For example, we found scholars treating *perceived employability* as external and/or internal employability perceived by expatriates (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007; Mäkelä, Brewster, Dickmann, Tornikoski, & Christelle, 2015; Suutari et al., 2018), or as something embodied in personal characteristics of and competencies accumulated by expatriates (Andresen, 2018; Makkonen, 2015). Future research should pay attention to these different conceptualizations and related measures to add clarity to our insights.

In addition, the literature on career success has suggested various other dimensions of SCS (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008; Gunz & Heslin, 2005). Future research aiming to reflect a broad view on the SCS of expatriates could apply the alternative interpretations of SCS among expatriates listed below. Those include the work of Shockley et al. (2016), who suggested that career success as a construct consists of multiple dimensions (e.g., authenticity, meaningful work, personal life, quality work, and recognition). Authenticity refers to the direction of one's career reflecting personal needs and preferences. This notion of authenticity aligns well with the interpretations of success typical of the *new career* and *modern careerist* mindsets. Meanwhile, the personal-life dimension relates to a career that impacts life outside of work in a positive way (Shockley et al., 2016). Given that global work is characterized by a considerable degree of non-work disruption and physical mobility compared to careers in domestic settings (Shaffer et al., 2012), authenticity and personal life might be important measures for SCS.

There are also some methodological issues to overcome, for instance, perceived CCC development is typically measured as self-reported/perceived development. We lack studies using more objective measures such as development observed/measured by others in a standardized way (see Arthur et al., 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005).

Overall, we have identified the need to explore and contrast career success issues before, during, and after an IA. It would be beneficial to refine our methods and both broaden and contextualize our approaches. In particular, the SIE context is under-researched.

4.2. Antecedents of expatriates' career success

Forty-four studies reported findings on antecedents of post-assignment career success. We identified whether the antecedents consider the high-density nature of global work (see Table 3). The transitions among countries expose expatriates to different types of jobs in different cultural and institutional environments that require continuous adaptation (Caligiuri, 2013), which would have consequences for a career (Shaffer et al., 2012). Our analysis offers new antecedents and expands the theoretical discussion exploring the career success of assignees. The high-density working experience abroad is a learning experience that impacts assignees' career success.

We categorize the identified antecedents into the theoretical categories used by Spurk et al. (2018): *personal resources, proximal*

environmental resources, resource management behaviors and attitudes, personal key resources, contextual macro-resources, resource accumulation and dynamics, and hybrid approaches.

5. Personal resources theories

Personal Resources include three sub-categories: human capital, roles and identity, and performance.

5.1. Human capital

Assignees who accumulate knowledge and skills during IAs expect that they will subsequently benefit their OCS and SCS. Skill development has often been found to affect career advancement (Benson & Pattie, 2008) and perceived employability (Guo, Porschitz, & Alves, 2013). However, it is also suggested that companies may not recognize the development of assignees (Suutari & Brewster, 2003).

International assignments result in AEs and SIEs acquiring different forms of human capital. Human capital theory predicts that developmental job experiences (such as international assignments) provide valuable learning that should have a positive impact on employees' long-term careers within and/or beyond their organizations (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Kraimer et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2005). It has been argued that high-density expatriate jobs are more complex and demanding than domestic jobs (e.g., Shin et al., 2007). Therefore, assignees might have different career outcomes because they had different development opportunities while abroad. Differences in skills development between AEs and SIEs seem to be hitherto underexplored in research. Generally, SIEs work in lower hierarchical positions in organizations (Doherty, Dickmann, & Mills, 2011; Jokinen et al., 2008) and may have less challenging tasks than AEs (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). The SIE might therefore have comparatively lower density work and thus relatively lower skill development than AEs (Suutari et al., 2018). Accordingly, the short and long-term career impacts for the two types of expatriate might be different (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009), resulting in divergent internal promotion and salary growth trajectories.

5.2. Roles and identity

Gender (in)equality seems to be an important antecedent affecting cultural adjustment, engagement, performance, and perceived career success. During international assignments, expatriation exposes expatriates to cultural environments with different degrees of gender (in)equality (Rendall, 2013). Ramsey and Lorenz (2020) reported that the work adjustment of female expatriates was hindered by lack of gender equality at the workplace or the dominance of male co-workers in host countries. When women are embedded in host environments with lower degrees of gender equality (e.g., glass ceiling), their engagement and performance might be affected, which would possibly influence their career success. For instance, women CEOs in China received lower salary increases after IAs (Peng, Sun, & Markóczy, 2015), and female managers in the USA were less satisfied with their careers after IAs than men (Ren, Bolino, Shaffer, & Kraimer, 2013), possibly due to the glass ceiling affecting female repatriates (Baruch & Lavi-Steiner, 2015, Linehan & Scullion, 2002). However, facing greater adjustment challenges seems to spur women to learn more and accumulate more career capital when abroad than men do (Myers & Pringle, 2005).

Identity theories represent a further research opportunity. The concept of identity refers to how individuals develop a sense of self during their career, taking into account that individuals change roles over time, which influences how individuals interpret environmental stimuli (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2002). Therefore, identity theories illuminate how assignees adjust their thought patterns to new environments across cultures during high-density work experiences. Expatriation has been reported to affect the identity of individuals and their career interests (Kohonen, 2005). Ongoing international work may lead to global careers that are more long-term oriented. The shift is typified by various international assignments in different locations and the emergence of a so-called global career identity (Suutari & Makela, 2007) or an international employee identity (Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, & Ren, 2012). The connection between such identity changes and career success (e.g., career satisfaction) merits further attention.

5.3. Performance

Performance theories are underutilized in research on the career success of international assignees. This review did not identify antecedents that could be categorized as performance theories. Tournament theory suggests that organizations and sports tournaments have similar characteristics (Rosenbaum, 1989). The relevance of tournament theory to expatriation research is clear as there is a lot of discussion of the "out of sight – out of mind" phenomenon, as seen when expatriates absent from their home-country units or HQs are overlooked when job opportunities arise. The situation can lead to repatriates lacking appropriate jobs when returning to their home country (Dickmann & Doherty, 2008a). Given that high-density work experiences are characterized, for instance, by greater autonomy and demanding task challenges, it would be good to understand how repatriates use their capabilities to search for and acquire meaningful roles. Second, contest-mobility theory suggests that people can get ahead based on their abilities and performance and that they compete with others to maintain upward social mobility (Ng et al., 2005; Turner, 1960). It has been argued that companies struggle to recognize the development of expatriates abroad (Begley et al., 2008; Scullion & Collings, 2011), and that expatriate performance evaluations are complicated by distance and cross-cultural issues (Bonache & Noethen, 2014). It would be interesting to analyze whether and how those challenges limit the career success of assignees.

6. Personal key resources

Personal key resources only feature *stable traits* as a sub-category. Stable traits is a category used previously in general career success research and it would be beneficial to apply the same to advance investigations of expatriate career success.

6.1. Stable traits

Personal key resources theories focusing on personality characteristics have not yet been applied to expatriate career success research, although personality has been found to be an important antecedent of various work-related outcomes and behaviors (Barrick & Mount, 1991). For example, the 'Big 5' personality characteristics have been reported to influence expatriate behavior and cultural adaptation (Bhatti, Battour, Rageh, & Sundram, 2014; Caligiuri, 2000), and thus could impact career success. In addition, Zhang and Arvey (2009) applied the *incentive-enhancing property of personality* and reported two personality traits that predict career success: social potency and achievement. Individuals who score highly on social potency are forceful, decisive, and persuasive; they also like to influence others, to take charge of social events, and to be noticed at them. As expatriates need to integrate themselves into new social networks abroad, and later reintegrate into their networks at home, such social potency should be useful. A person scoring highly on achievement is someone who likes demanding work and is willing to put a lot of effort into work, even to the detriment of their personal life. Again, such a trait should help deal with the high-density nature of expatriate work and could have a longer-term career impact.

7. Proximal environmental resources theories

The proximal environmental resources category has two sub-categories: social environment and work environment.

7.1. Social environment

More context-sensitive explorations of social networking relationships and their impact on expatriates' career success are needed. Assignees' distance from home has an impact on social ties. It may either strengthen (networks abroad) or weaken (networks at the home country) both internal and external networks (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Reiche et al., 2011). While IA experience and network development can help AEs get promoted (Baruch, Steele, & Quantrill, 2002) there is no clear empirical evidence of the same effect among SIEs. Andresen (2018) reported the relevance of social networks to access job opportunities upon return, but a comparison between SIEs and AEs is not available. Nevertheless, the author observed a substantial social recognition for AEs upon return.

Global mobility exposes expatriates to two types of social capital: international or host country connections and those in the home country. The challenge concerning the social capital of expatriates is that during expatriation, international social capital expands while home-country connections weaken (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). This shift affects the ease of identifying future career options through networks. That is why personal activity in networking has been reported as an antecedent of the accumulation of competencies (Jokinen, 2010; Jokinen et al., 2008; Suutari & Makela, 2007). Indeed, assignees tend to increase their awareness of networking activities as they change countries.

Future exploration of the more context-sensitive perspectives on social capital could enhance the understanding of expatriate career success. One possible route might be an investigation of the quality of the supervisor–subordinate relationship (see Harris, Kacmar, & Carlson, 2006) between local leaders and expatriates. Cross-cultural differences might make it difficult for expatriates to forge a good relationship with their leaders, which could adversely affect their performance and their job evaluations, and thus have

Table 2
Impacts of IAs on the career success of expatriates.

Dimensions of career success	Number of success factors (one study may assess more than one factor)				
	Positive (+)	Negative (-)	No Impact	Mixed (+ and -)[a]	In total
Objective career success					
Salary	4	0	2	0	**6**
Career advancement	4	3	0	2	**9**
Time to top positions	0	4	0	0	**4**
Job offer	0	0	1	0	**1**
Job responsibility development	1	0	0	0	**1**
Subjective career success					
Career satisfaction	1	0	0	1	**2**
Job satisfaction	0	0	0	0	**0**
Perceived employability	5	5	0	1	**11**
Career competencies development	16	0	2	0	**18**
In total	**31**	**12**	**5**	**4**	52
Studies' number	6, 11, 20, 34, 40, 41, 44, 45, 48, 51, 52, 54, 55	1, 4, 7, 8, 19, 21, 37, 46	3, 6, 44, 55	2, 3, 5, 50	

[a] Study 5 found promotion (-) and perceived employability (+), while studies 2, 3 and 50 found (+ and -) to the same success factor.

Table 3
The identified antecedents of career success organized based on Spurk et al. (2018) theoretical categorization.

	Objective career success					Subjective career success			
	Salary	Career advancement	Job offer	Time to the top	Job responsibility development	Job satisfaction	Career satisfaction	Perceived employability	Perceived CC Development
Personal Resources (Human Capital, Roles and Identity, Performance)	**Human Capital** - Importance of money **Roles and Identity** - Having children - Gender	**Human Capital** - Education - Skills development - Language skills - Managerial skills	-	**Human Capital** - Education	-	-	**Roles and Identity** - Gender	**Human Capital** - Education - Skills development - Education **Roles and Identity** - Ethnicity	**Roles and Identity** - Having children - Married - Gender - Identity change
Proximal Environmental Resources (Social Environment, Work Environment)	**Social Environmental:** - Number of mentor[a] **Work Environmental:** - Profit and loss of responsibility at the home country - Line vs staff[a] - Industry - Non-global or not-for-profit organization - Job title at home and abroad - The number of team members[a] -	**Social Environmental:** - Social capital **Work Environmental:** - Career planning - Psychological contract breach / compensation - Degree of the IA's developmental purpose[a] - Management of expatriates' expectations[a] -	**Work Environmental:** - The type of IA[a] - Business unit at home and abroad	-	**Work Environmental:** - Degree of the IA's developmental purpose[a] - Organizational support	**Work Environmental:** - Organizational support for repatriation - Job fit after IA - Psychological contract breach / compensation - Management of expatriates' expectations[a]	**Work Environmental:** - Organizational support for repatriation - Sector (Public vs private) - Psychological contract breach / compensation - Management of expatriates' expectations[a]	**Social Environmental:** - Social capital **Work Environmental:** - The repatriation management - Career planning - Functional background - Sector (public vs private) - Job title	**Social Environmental:** - Social capital[a] - Number of mentors[a] **Work Environmental:** - Career planning - The perceived value of IA experience by organization - Degree of the IA's developmental purpose[a] - Higher task challenging[a] - Organizational support[a] - Job rotation[a] - Non-global or not-for-profit organization - Job title[a] - The type of IA[a]

Table 3 (*continued*)

	Objective career success					Subjective career success			
	Salary	Career advancement	Job offer	Time to the top	Job responsibility development	Job satisfaction	Career satisfaction	Perceived employability	Perceived CC Development
Resource Management Behaviors and Attitudes (Career Agency, Stress and Coping)	**Stress and Coping** - The number of hours worked[a]				**Career Agency** - Self-directed career management	**Stress and Coping** - Self-adjustment upon repatriation	**Career Agency** - Self-directed career management **Stress and Coping** - Reverse-cultural shock	**Career Agency** - Self-directed career management	**Stress and Coping** - Cross-cultural adjustment[a]
Personal Key Resources	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contextual Macroresources (National Culture, Institutional Theories)	**Institutional Theories** - The economic development of the host country[a]	**National Culture** - Country specific career structure[a] **Institutional Theories** - The economic development of the host country[a] - Geographical Distance[a]	-	**National Culture** - Cultural distance[a] **Institutional Theories** - Geographical Distance[a]	**Institutional Theories** - The economic development of the host country[a]	-	-	**National Culture** - Country specific career structure[a] **Institutional Theories** - The economic development of the home country[a] - The economic development of the host country[a]	**National Culture** - Cultural distance[a] **Institutional Theories** - The economic development of the host country[a] - Host governments[a]
Resource Accumulation and Dynamics (P-E Fit, Life Span, Career Transitions)	-	**Life Span** - Age **Career Transitions** - Number of IA[a]	**Life Span** - Age	**Career Transitions** - Number of IA[a] - The number of countries[a] - Length of IA[a]	-	-	-	**Life Span** - Age - The age at first IA[a]	**Life Span** - Career stage[a] **Career Transitions** - Number of IA[a]
Hybrid (e.g., Career capital)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	- Career capital[a]	-
Studies	5, 6, 10, 40, 41, 45, 48	1, 3, 5, 8, 17, 18, 24, 29, 34, 35, 39, 43, 48, 49, 51, 52	5	7, 19, 21, 46	9	18, 32, 33, 47	6, 9, 23, 31, 43, 49, 50	2, 4, 5, 8, 11, 20, 25, 30, 36, 37, 42, 49, 50, 51, 52	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 26, 27, 28, 38, 44, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55

[a] Antecedents that occur only during an expatriate assignment.

consequences for promotion and salary growth. It might also be more difficult for expatriates to build strong local networks.

7.2. Work environment

Differences in expatriate management, organizational characteristics, and job characteristics impact expatriates' learning and career success and are topics that merit further investigation. Considering international work is often of a high-density nature, it is easy to understand why the requirements for constant learning and development during extended global careers can prove very taxing for international professionals and their families (Mäkelä et al., 2015; McNulty & Brewster, 2017; McNulty & Vance, 2017). Therefore, support from within the work environment can be extremely important for assignees. That is why this is the theoretical sub-category with the largest number of antecedents and why we have organized them into the groups expatriate management, organizational characteristics, and job characteristics.

Much research has been done on expatriates owing to the high-density experience and related career expectations and turnover outcomes. Studies addressing antecedents related to expatriate management focus on the career success impact on AEs. This focus makes sense as SIEs are not affected by expatriate management processes. It seems that the degree to which organizations plan the careers of AEs before their assignment impacts AEs' accumulation of career capital when abroad. That same planning also affects how AEs leverage opportunities to extend their networking in other countries, adapt to different cultures, and function in jobs marked by high levels of task challenge and autonomy. Career planning impacts AEs' promotions (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Doherty & Dickmann, 2009; Valk, van der Velde, van Engen, & Szkudlarek, 2015), perceived employability (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Valk et al., 2015), and the perceived accumulation of CCC (Dickmann & Doherty, 2008b; Dickmann & Harris, 2005). Repatriation management also impacts the perceived employability of repatriates (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009) and organizational support offered to repatriates contributes to a repatriate's job responsibility development and career satisfaction (Breitenmoser et al., 2018).

The impact of IA on the career success of assignees is also related to the characteristics of their organizations and jobs. First, it has been reported that business units (Benson & Pattie, 2008) and industries (Ramaswami et al., 2016) influence the number of times a recruiter offers a job to an AE and the salary obtained. Dickmann and Cerdin (2018) interviewed SIEs working for an international governmental organization and found that the UN organization in question had high barriers to accumulating competencies and their transferability. In addition, the job characteristics of the work IAs conduct affect career success. For instance, the functional background makes a difference as expatriates in line management tasks reported higher internal perceived marketability than expatriates working in other functions such as general management and marketing (Suutari et al., 2018). In fact, AEs received more job offers than SIEs. These studies offer interesting findings, but they were conducted on a Finnish graduate population. There is a need to explore these topics among a broader target population of AEs and SIEs worldwide.

8. Resource management behaviors and attitudes theories

The resource management behaviors and attitudes category has two sub-categories: *career agency* and *stress and coping*.

8.1. Career agency

Career agency, especially in relation to career adaptability and repatriation, is a promising area of research. Scholars found that assignees are more aware of their strengths, weaknesses and career interests than their employers are (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). Furthermore, experience of the foreign high-density work fosters such awareness (Suutari & Makela, 2007). It is reported that self-directed career management is more efficient in advancing careers than the less customized repatriation and career support practices applied by organizations (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). However, the evidence based on career agency theories is very limited. Self-directed career management as an aspect of protean career attitudes has been shown to help expatriates to perceive an accumulation of CCC abroad (Jokinen et al., 2008; Kirk, 2016) and to affect expatriate job responsibility development and career satisfaction after an IA; more so than does organizational support (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). In the case of SIEs, it is even more relevant, as they cannot call on organizational support. SIEs' personal agency in searching for a job before returning home positively impacted the perceived employability of repatriates (Guo et al., 2013). As staff working in the domestic environment do not face the challenges associated with high-density jobs, it would be interesting to contrast the attitudes of SIEs and AEs to career self-management with that of non-expatriated staff. The call is strengthened by the concepts of the boundaryless career and protean career attitude being central to the cognitive flexibility of assignees (Shaffer et al., 2012).

High-density work experience abroad may also have other impacts. For many AEs, IAs are a form of promotion (Dowling and Welch, 2005). The roles will carry greater autonomy, a broader area of responsibility and, at the top management level, more prominent roles in the local community. Overall, this indicates a greater task challenge and a degree of autonomy likely to raise status (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Upon return, repatriates are often expected to resume their old positions within the home company, resulting in the loss of status and autonomy. A loss of special status affects family members too, and they can feel the effects of non-work disruption to their lives similarly (Dowling and Welch, 2005; Shaffer et al., 2012). Expatriate families might have benefited from having domestic help while abroad, and the assignment might have brought them into contact with the host country's social and economic elite and an array of senior international managers. Returning home can invoke feelings of social disappointment flowing from a loss of status and self-esteem (Black et al., 1992).

Experience gained abroad can affect assignees' future careers. People who have successfully navigated a high-density work role must be adaptable to have coped with the transitions involved. Career adaptability represents a pivotal construct in career construction

theory (Savickas, 1997) and reflects the constellation of individuals' behaviors, competencies, and attitudes engaged "in fitting themselves into work that suits them" (Savickas, 2005, p. 45). Our review shows that more research is needed into repatriation experiences and phenomena such as career adaptability. Similarly, if assignees continue on an international career track, well-developed career adaptability skills should help them adjust to new career situations.

8.2. Stress and coping

Having accumulated high-density experiences abroad, and being away from their home country, returnees may face repatriation challenges that can hinder their career progression. Examples include employer demands that SIEs encounter when they need to find new jobs at home (Begley et al., 2008). Alternatively, when AEs repatriate they might find that the job they return to does not correspond to their expectations (Valk et al., 2015). In addition, reverse cultural shock is negatively connected to the career satisfaction of repatriates. Moreover, repatriates' levels of self-adjustment upon repatriation are positively related to job satisfaction (Ho, Seet, & Jones, 2016). In terms of work density, the cognitive flexibility of repatriates might counter reverse cultural shock and may be related to the career and job satisfaction of repatriates. The evidence is limited, and more studies comparing the experiences of SIEs and AEs are warranted.

Scholars seeking to understand how the high-density of global work influences assignees' career success can turn to stress and coping theories. The classic definition of coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984: 141) describes coping as: "the constantly changing cognitive & behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." Expatriates are constantly adjusting to their new host country environment and must then readjust to their home-country context upon repatriation. Career scholars have largely overlooked the cultural context of stress and coping (Heppner, 2008) as many studies have not addressed international career settings. However, assignees and their family members face international transitions when moving across borders. In addition to cultural adjustment, many issues can induce stress and necessitate effective coping tactics. Moving abroad adds to the workload (e.g., pre-departure preparations) and can involve challenges such as coping with a new social and country context, mastering multiple visa, social security, and tax compliance issues, and public health or education systems. The resources available to cope with the challenges of transitions will influence how much extra effort expatriates will be required to make and how much of the burden is shouldered by their employers (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). Existing support structures have a bearing on perceived career success during such international transitions (van der Laken, van Engen, van Veldhoven, & Paauwe, 2016). Additionally, expatriates—and potentially their family members too—will need to adapt to new jobs and different cultural and institutional environments. Moreover, expatriates will have to re-adjust to their home country and often to a new job after repatriation (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). An employee working in the same country is unlikely to face the same degree of transition and consequent career outcomes (Andresen & Biemann, 2013).

9. Contextual macro-resources theories

The contextual macro-resources theories category has only one sub-category—national culture. The situation is a clear limitation that does not facilitate a holistic understanding of career success.

9.1. National culture

Due to global mobility, people work across different cultures. The cultural differences encountered are a source of learning, but it can be challenging to transfer that learning to a substantially different context. In addition, employers may not value experiences acquired in culturally distant countries. Schmid and Wurster (2017) found that the greater the cultural distance in the host country, the longer it takes for managers to reach the board level in their home country. Furthermore, the career structure dominant in the home country can affect assignees' career success; for example, when the perceived employability of repatriates varies between the Netherlands and India (Valk et al., 2015). Cultural norms seem to influence how international experience is valued in different countries.

Interestingly, Spurk et al. (2018) do not discuss the relevance of institutional theories when analyzing the relevant theories in career success research. However, in addition to culture, variables such as the sophistication of industrial production, service delivery, and the state of economic development are important factors in assignment decisions (Koleša, Burger, & Dickmann, 2022) and subsequently impact career success. We could identify other institutional factors supporting the notion that adding an institutional theories sub-category is important to understanding careers in the international context. We expand this analysis in Section 5 of this article.

10. Resource accumulation and dynamics theories

The *resource accumulation and dynamics* category includes three sub-categories: *life span, career transitions, and person–environment interactions*.

10.1. Life span

Age is an important factor in the career success of assignees. Life span theories present people's lives as a progression of stages

categorized by age (Levinson, 1986). It has been reported that increasing age impacts negatively on home-country marketability (Mäkelä et al., 2015) and the number of job offers AEs receive (Benson & Pattie, 2008). In addition, Makkonen (2015) identified a negative impact of aging on the perceived employability of SIEs. The finding indicates that the older the assignee becomes, and the longer they stay abroad, the harder it is to adapt to returning to work in the home country, and to find a job that exploits their new skills. In addition, companies may avoid recruiting older people when re-integration back into a home-based role may take some considerable time.

Numerous theories address career development over a person's lifespan, such as Levinson's life stage developmental model (Levinson, 1986), Super's lifespan model (Super, 1957, 1990), and Cron's career stages theory (Cron, 1984). These theories not only consider adult lives as a progression of stages influenced by their age, but also how individuals' performance during previous phases influences their career progress (Nagy, Froidevaux, & Hirschi, 2019). It might be that the earlier individuals gain international experience, the more pronounced the impact on their career success, owing to their augmented capabilities having undertaken high-density work. For instance, a*ge at first assignment* is related to perceived international marketability (Mäkelä et al., 2015). Lengthy re-integration spells might, however, mean it takes individuals years to reap the career benefits from working abroad.

10.2. Career transitions

The number and context of international career transitions impact the career success of expatriates. The high-density work experience gained abroad might trigger other types of moves, such as inter and intra-organizational mobility between countries (see Andresen & Biemann, 2013). Hence, the number and the length of IAs seem relevant to assignees' careers. The more transitions they experience abroad, the more pronounced is the impact of the high-density of global work on their career success (Shaffer et al., 2012). For instance, it has been found that the overall *number of IAs* is negatively related to career advancement upon repatriation (Kraimer et al., 2009) and to the time it takes to reach top positions (Blanco & Sastre Castillo, 2020; Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011). In addition*,* there is a negative influence of the total *length* of international work experience on time required to reach CEO or CFO positions (Blanco & Sastre Castillo, 2020; Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011; Schmid & Altfeld, 2018; Schmid & Wurster, 2017). However, the number of IAs seems to increase the perceived CCC developed abroad of AEs and SIEs equally (Jokinen, 2010; Jokinen et al., 2008).

Family issues are important in international career transitions. For instance, family influence and involvement is instrumental in every stage of an assignment—from the willingness of the expatriate to accept an assignment (Brett and Stroh 1995; Konopaske, Ribie and Ivancevich 2005) to the way repatriation is managed (Caligiuri, Hyland, Bross and Joshi 1998; Grant-Vallone and Ensher 2001). The number of times that assignees decide to relocate to another country impacts the entire family and the career journey of individuals. Therefore, decisions about whether to return home, stay in the same country, or move to another country should consider the assignees' family members. That approach will influence the career outcomes of global workers in terms of objective and subjective factors.

10.3. Person–environment interactions

Theories conceptualizing person–environment interaction are under-represented in IA career success research. Spurk et al. (2018) identify important person–environment (PE) interactions when assessing career success. Interestingly, while scholars in the field of cultural adjustment have used PE theories (Lauring & Selmer, 2018; Makkonen, 2015), the literature on expatriates' career success (after their IAs) clearly neglects them. Nevertheless, it has been argued that accumulated CCC developed abroad is valued by assignees when the augmented capabilities fit the next job in terms of utilization (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010) and can be transferred (Dickmann & Harris, 2005). This probably explains why Eugenia Sánchez Vidal et al. (2007) found that a suitable match of repatriates' skills and their jobs positively affects repatriate job satisfaction.

Person–environment fit theory refers to the environmental condition that can either facilitate or hinder the use of resources that will impact performance and outcomes (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Examples include person–organizational fit (Bretz & Judge, 1994), person–job fit (Cable & DeRue, 2002), and culture–fit (Holtschlag, Morales, Masuda, & Maydeu-Olivares. (2013). After having high-density jobs abroad, assignees can face challenges finding similar, interesting jobs back home and person–environment theories could therefore offer promising new research avenues. There might not be a match between the organization and individual; for example, if the organization is not international, repatriates may not be able to use their international competencies, which might lead to dissatisfaction.

11. Hybrid theories

Hybrid Theories can offer promising insights into expatriates' career success. Career capital theory as a hybrid theory (Spurk et al., 2018) has also been applied when studying the antecedents of expatriate career success. For instance, Mäkelä et al. (2015) reported that the development of knowing-how *career capital* abroad was positively connected with perceived external marketability while the development of knowing-why or knowing-whom career capital has little impact on any aspect of perceived marketability. This may relate to the fact that companies are better able to recognize (or value more highly) the development of knowing-how aspects of career capital than those in other areas. In addition, we previously discussed the challenges related to social capital acquired abroad after the IA.

Given that extant research has focused predominantly on work relationships, we would benefit from a clearer understanding of career impacts related to other types of relationships, such as family issues impacting career success. For example, the *kaleidoscope*

career model incorporates relationships, personal values, and interests outside the workplace (Maniero & Sullivan, 2006). The high-density of global work tends to invite non-work disruption and involves considerable challenges. Therefore, the kaleidoscope career model could offer a promising starting point for expatriation research. For example, assignees may take jobs involving less responsibility, fewer working hours per day, and more flexible hours to spend time with their families which might affect the salaries and career progress of global workers.

Table 3 reports the findings on the antecedents of career success and organizes the identified antecedents according to the theoretical classification by Spurk et al. (2018). Crucially, this overview table is a starting point for our analysis in Section 5. That analysis flows from mapping our insights against the specific context of high-density work during IAs and also identifies future research opportunities.

12. Moderators and/or mediators

More sophisticated global careers research is needed as moderators and mediators are often neglected. Many factors in the organization, the job, and the environment, might also moderate and/or mediate the relationship between IAs and career success (Bolino, 2007). For example, the way assignees and organizations perceive the value of IAs to careers may moderate the impact of IAs on assignees' career satisfaction after they complete their assignments (Ren et al., 2013).However, many empirical studies seem to ignore those variables (Biemann & Braakmann, 2013). While almost two hundred studies were identified in general career research (Spurk et al., 2018), we found only a few incorporating moderators and mediators in the global careers field.

A variety of factors relating to people and their environment could moderate and/or mediate the relationship between expatriation and career success. International careers are a type of boundaryless career; one in which the role of individuals in managing their careers is emphasized even more than in domestic careers (Andresen, Ariss, Akram, & Walther, 2012). Therefore, factors under the resource management behaviors and attitudes theoretical category such as self-directed career management (De Vos & Soens, 2008) and career adaptability (Guan, Zhou, Ye, Jiang, & Zhou, 2015) warrant further attention. In addition, the diversity of institutional contexts is a key element that distinguishes international from domestic career research (Mayrhofer et al., 2020). The political system of a country is an example. Peng et al. (2015) investigated firms listed on the Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges between 2001 and 2008 and reported that CEOs with IA experience could receive higher compensation if they were politically connected to external directors. Political connection is pronounced in China as most companies are state-owned enterprises (Peng et al., 2015) with CEOs directly appointed by the political strata. Peng and colleagues argued that human capital manifested in political ties leads to prestige and wealth. Thus, factors listed under the contextual macro-resources theoretical category could be relevant. In addition, we suggest PE fit theory (see Fig. 1) that emphasize resource accumulation and dynamics given that career success could be moderated and/or mediated by factors related to the fit between the individual and job or organization after the IA. For example, Erdogan and Bauer (2005) found that person–organization fit and person–job fit moderate the relationship between proactive personality and career satisfaction.

12.1. Outcomes of career success

We identified fourteen studies[1] that analyzed the outcomes of expatriate career success, but surprisingly, found no expatriation studies addressing how career success shapes career attitudes, well-being and health, the expatriate's self-concept, or reactions from the environment linked to other outcomes. Clearly, some opportunities to refine our understanding of expatriates' career success exist. In addition to the outcome categories identified by Spurk et al. (2018), we identified three studies that analyzed the connection between expatriate career success and re-expatriation as a new outcome factor. We thus added a new category, *re-expatriation*. Identifying that category is an important finding related to the high-density nature of global work. Expatriates are often interested in continuing on an international career track due to the development and career opportunities offered (Suutari & Brewster, 2003).

13. Withdrawal

Twelve studies focused on withdrawal. They address how expatriates' career success after their high-density IA experience influences their intention to leave their job, the organization, or occupation, and also the action of quitting.

The studies show that *career advancement, perceived employability*, and *job satisfaction* are antecedents of *withdrawal*. First, a negative relationship between career advancement and turnover intentions has been identified among American repatriates (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Kraimer et al., 2009; Pattie, White, & Tansky, 2010). Second, perceived external employability was positively related to the turnover intention of AEs in France, the USA, and Canada (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007), and academic AEs repatriates in Sri Lanka (James & Azungah, 2019). Finally, the greater the job satisfaction among repatriated managers, the lower are their turnover rates (Eugenia Sánchez Vidal et al. (2007)).

Withdrawal as an outcome of career success among assignees is not surprising since expatriate turnover is one of the key challenges that companies face with regard to repatriation (Kraimer et al., 2009; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007). The issue can be connected to the high density of expatriate work and the related high expectations of future careers. When an organization recognizes IA experience by

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[1] *Outcomes of career success: studies 1, 3, 8, 18, 23, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33, 39, 50, 51, 53*

Under-Utilized Career Theories

Theoretical group:	Sample of Underutilized Theories:	Sample of Underutilized Antecedents:
Personal Resources Theories		
1. Roles and Identity	Identity Theory	Identity change
2. Performance	Contest Mobility and Tournament Theories	Task performance
Personal Key Resources Theories		
3. Stable Traits:	Big 5, Incentive-Enhancing Property of Personality	Extroversion, social potency, achievement
Proximal Environmental Resources Theories		
4. Social Environment	Social Capital	Supervisor-subordinate relationship quality
Contextual Macroresources Theories		
5. National Culture	Hofstede's Theory	Culture distance
Resource Management Behaviors and Attitudes Theories		
7. Career Agency	Career Construction Theory	Career adaptability, reverse-cultural shock
8. Stress and Coping	Stress and Coping Process Model	
Resource Accumulation and Dynamics Theories		
9. P–E Interactions	PE Fit Theory	P-job Fit, P-O fit, career stage, Age at the first IA
10. Life Span	Super's Lifespan Model	
11. Career Transitions	International Career Logics Typology	Number of IAs, Length of IA
Hybrid Theories (no subcategory)	Kaleidoscope Career Model	Non-work factors (e.g., relationship status, lifestyle, pregnancy)
Additional Theories		
Contextual Macroresources Theories		
6. Institutional Theories	Institutional Theory, Neo-institutional Theory	Immigration bureaucracy, technological distance, macro-economic situation of host/home countries
Personal Learning Theories		
13. Learning Theories	Experiential Learning Theory	Learning abilities, learning styles, learning skills, and developmental-learning ability

Objective Career Success (OCS)

Hierarchical Perspective
Salary, Career Advancement, Job Offer, Time to the Top, Job Responsibility Development

Horizontal Perspective
Job Security, Longer Vacation Allowances, Network Connections

Additional: CCC-Development

Subjective Career Success (SCS)

Traditional View
Career Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction, Perceived Employability

Broader View
Authenticity, Meaningful Work, Personal Life

Additional: *Perceived CCC-Development*

Under-Utilized Outcomes of Expatriates' Career Success

- Career Attitudes
- Well-being and Health
- Self-Concept
- Reactions from the Environment

Additional Outcome

- Re-expatriation (Global career)

Moderators and Mediators of Expatriates' Career Success

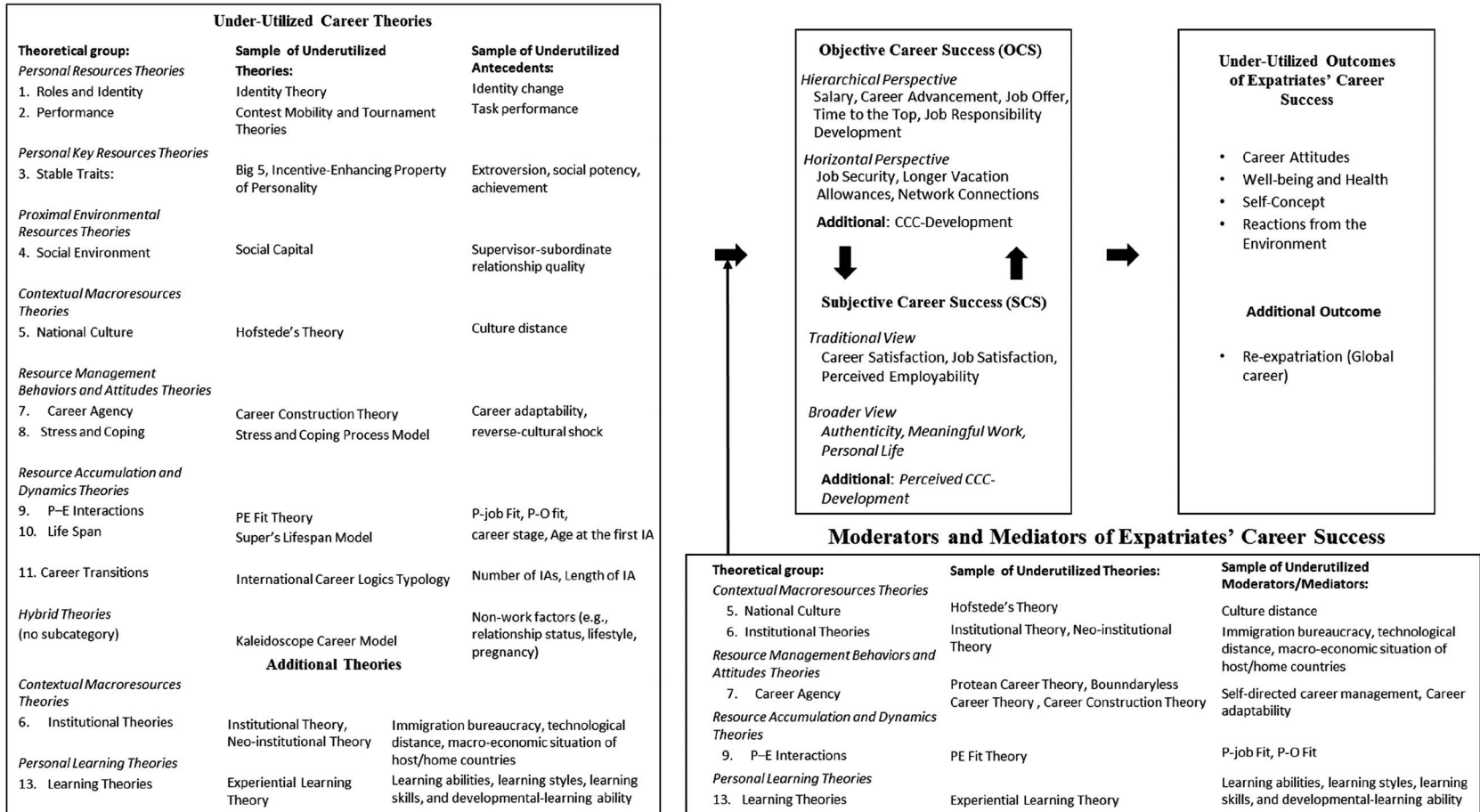| Theoretical group:	Sample of Underutilized Theories:	Sample of Underutilized Moderators/Mediators:
Contextual Macroresources Theories		
5. National Culture	Hofstede's Theory	Culture distance
6. Institutional Theories	Institutional Theory, Neo-institutional Theory	Immigration bureaucracy, technological distance, macro-economic situation of host/home countries
Resource Management Behaviors and Attitudes Theories		
7. Career Agency	Protean Career Theory, Bounndaryless Career Theory , Career Construction Theory	Self-directed career management, Career adaptability
Resource Accumulation and Dynamics Theories		
9. P–E Interactions	PE Fit Theory	P-job Fit, P-O Fit
Personal Learning Theories		
13. Learning Theories	Experiential Learning Theory	Learning abilities, learning styles, learning skills, and developmental-learning ability

Fig. 1. A framework for exploring the career success of expatriates: towards a future research agenda.

ensuring the career progression of its assignees, those staff members demonstrate a stronger intention to stay in the company. Conversely, when staff perceive that their organization does not value the experience gained from an IA, they are more likely to leave their employer upon repatriation in search of better opportunities (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). We did not find studies reporting withdrawal as an outcome of career success among SIEs. Unlike AEs that engage in IA for organizational reasons and seeking promotions, the motives of SIEs are more subjective, for example, personal development and family reasons (Tharenou, 2013). Scholars trying to understand the impact of career success on an assignee's intention to leave a job, an organization, or an occupation should perhaps consider that non-work disruption factors might be the most significant driver of SIEs leaving a country (and consequently a job and an organization). Assigned expatriates, in contrast, have stronger connections to organizational objectives (Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann, 2014; Andresen & Biemann, 2013). In addition, the perception of how an organization values an SIE's IA experience might not be as relevant as for AEs. Dickmann and Cerdin (2018) reported that many SIEs working for an international humanitarian governmental organization did not focus on maximizing their career-relevant capabilities or social networks. Instead, they pursued international careers and intentionally sacrificed internal career progression in favor of their aid duties.

There are underutilized theories that address the outcomes that follow the career success of assignees. We suggest new opportunities for expatriation research through utilizing existing theories and studies from the general career success literature. First, future researchers could investigate how career success impacts expatriates' attitudes to the work and career domains (Praskova, Hood, & Creed, 2014). Second, research might identify the role of SCS for expatriates, such as career satisfaction, interacting with the achievement of OCS, and of well-being (Shockley et al., 2016). Third, scholars could look at the reaction of other individuals from both the work and non-work domains to expatriates' career success. These might include issues such as how these individuals' reactions help expatriates obtain mentoring (Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009b) or trigger a perception of failure (Westman & Etzion, 1990). Moreover, future researchers could investigate whether generalized self-perceptions about personal characteristics or attributes (e.g., self-esteem or core self-evaluation) might be impacted by career success (Sutin, Costa, Miech, & Eaton, 2009).

14. Re-expatriation

Re-expatriation outcomes address how the career success of expatriates influences an assignee's intention to return to work abroad, which might constitute a step toward becoming a global careerist. This outcome is exclusive to expatriates, and therefore, was not identified by Spurk et al. (2018). Our analysis is explicated in Section 5, where we focus on factors that are strongly connected to the high-density nature of expatriate jobs.

15. Future research directions

Expatriate work is a high-density work experience that has a substantial impact on the development of expatriate careers and expatriates' career interests and career outcomes. Beyond the three aspects (physical mobility, cognitive flexibility, and non-work disruption) of global work identified in earlier work (Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007; Shaffer et al., 2012), we add two characteristics: *task challenge* and *autonomy*. Expatriates often have more demanding jobs due to broader or higher level responsibilities and also more autonomy than domestic employees. This extension of the concept is important to fully capture the high-density nature of expatriate work and to understand the career consequences of such experiences.

This section discusses the conclusions from our review in four separate subsections. In the first subsection, we summarize our review findings on the future research agenda for expatriation research that appeared when we compared existing theoretical approaches on careers organized by Spurk et al. (2018) and the existing research in the international career context. In particular, we highlighted promising theories for career research in the international career context. The remaining subsections discuss selected theoretical angles that expand the framework by Spurk et al. (2018) with new theoretical angles identified as being very important in international career research. First, we discuss the central role of career competency development of expatriates in the overall expatriation experience. We believe it should be considered as a career success dimension in itself (see also Briscoe, Hall, & Mayrhofer, 2012; Shaffer et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2015)) and be added to the career success measures in the framework of Spurk and colleagues. Next, we discuss two theoretical approaches that seem particularly relevant in the international, high-density career context but are not sufficiently utilized in the reviewed research: institutional and learning theories. In these areas, we also thus contribute to general career research by expanding the framework of Spurk et al. (2018). Fourth, our review leads to the identification of a new outcome that commonly follows the career success of expatriates: re-expatriation. The last subsection thus addresses how the career success of assignees following their high-density working experience abroad may lead global workers to re-expatriate, in other words, they might become global careerists. Finally, we also make several suggestions on how future research might address the methodological limitations that constrain investigating the issue at hand.

Fig. 1 draws together the suggested research agenda for future expatriation research, including both underutilized theories and new theoretical angles that we suggest are relevant in the exploration of expatriates' career success after IAs.

15.1. Underutilized theories to explore the career success of expatriates

Based on our review of existing research in the international career context and the framework by Spurk et al. (2018) that specifies different theoretical approaches applied in general career research, we contribute by identifying various underutilized theoretical frames in existing antecedent research (see Section 4). Crucially, Fig. 1 adds previously unidentified theories and novel antecedents unused or underused in expatriate career studies.

We have also highlighted the theories that seem most promising in the context of high-density global work. For example, the concept of person–environment interactions could be useful given that the high-density work experience assignees have been immersed in makes finding a suitable job after the IA challenging. Similarly, career agency theories and career transition theories seem to be interesting approaches given that expatriates, and particularly SIEs, often do not get appropriate organizational support in managing their career transitions in an international career context. Expatriation, as a high-density work experience, affects family members, thus theories such as the kaleidoscope career model that incorporates relationships and personal values and interests outside the workplace can help illuminate the area.

Furthermore, we suggested promising moderators and mediators of the IA and career success relationship. We suggest that person–environment interactions theories in particular and theories related to individual agency of the careerist could connect well with the nature of global, boundaryless careers and address the interaction between assignees and their environment. Finally, we identified many underutilized theories with regard to outcomes of career success where the focus of existing research has been mainly on withdrawal. These theories were already discussed in subsection 4.3 and are thus not discussed again here in such detail. Instead, we present potential future avenues for expatriation research.

15.2. The role of CCC as a measure of career success among expatriates is central

As shown in Table 2, despite the "dark side of international careers" arguments associated with the repatriation and global career literature, the majority of studies reported positive impacts of IA experiences on the careers of assignees. In particular, the perceived accumulation of CCC abroad is highly significant for our results. That is because assignees often report a very positive perception of learning experiences. The reviewed literature also indicates that such extensive development has major impacts on expatriates' career success after their IA and other outcomes such as retention (Kraimer et al., 2009) and re-expatriation (Ho, Seet, & Jones, 2016). Thus, we suggest that it should be included among the success measures in the framework of Spurk et al. (2018), which in turn leads to the identification of additional antecedents and related relevant theories.

The high-density work experience concept belongs to theories addressing the modern career landscape. The protean career concept highlights the importance of flexibility, freedom, continuous learning, and intrinsic rewards (Hall, 1976). In addition, Arthur and Rousseau (1996) introduced the boundaryless career, defined as a career that is independent of traditional organizational career arrangements with a single organization (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). Subsequent research suggests that certain factors, such as learning and development (Granrose & Baccili, 2006), are more important to career success in those individuals who have a boundaryless mindset. Although these theoretical perspectives differ to some extent in their foci, the idea that success has an internal evaluative component based on learning and development is a common underlying pattern. While learning and development is emphasized in this context, it is worth noting that it can be regarded as a commonly perceived meaning of career success across countries (Briscoe, Henagan, Burton, & Murphy, 2012; Shen et al., 2015). That perception reflects the nature of turbulent job markets, which means constant development is expected of individuals if they are to remain employable. Accordingly, development itself appears to be part of career success in these new career realities.

The developmental angle is closely connected with the high density of expatriate work and has a broad connection to expatriate careers. Expatriates' career interests and expectations concerning their future jobs and careers change when they perceive they have developed substantially. Accordingly, their development alters their perceptions of what is an interesting job and will be reflected in their career satisfaction with their future work. The level of dissatisfaction reported in repatriation studies may decrease overall motivation among repatriated assignees and often leads individuals to leave the organization. If staff do stay, their diminished motivation may impinge on their job performance, which can undermine career progress in the longer term. Such observations stress the importance of paying attention to the relationship between SCS and OCS (Arthur et al., 2005; Hall & Chandler, 2005). For example, Abele and Spurk (2009) discuss how "broaden and build theory" (Fredrickson, 1998, 2004) suggests that the perception of positive experiences leads to processes that broaden a people's perspectives and build their resources. They also found that subjective success is not just a by-product of objective success, but it also has a strong influence on objective attainments over time. Accordingly, we argue that the developmental angle we explored above has important connections with other aspects of expatriate career success. The only studies found that analyze the connections between OCS and SCS explored how OCS affects SCS when job responsibility development (Breitenmoser et al., 2018) and high compensation (Vidal et al., 2007) were positively related to career satisfaction after the IA. Consequently, the links from perceived development to other aspects of career success merit further attention.

15.3. High-density working experiences place institutional and learning theories as antecedents of career success

This review has not only identified a number of underutilized theoretical categories that have the potential to improve our understanding of global career success, but it also suggests two new theoretical angles not identified in previous studies. This section explores how institutional theories and learning theories may be relevant in this undertaking.

15.3.1. Institutional theories and career success of assignees

We argue that the contextual macro-resources category seems to be an essential and underutilized one in studies of expatriates' career success. Research addressing contextual macro-resources has to date focused on the cultural angle. However, because careers link individuals to organizations, occupations, institutions, and society in general, they are relevant not only to micro and meso concerns but also to broader macro concerns (Dacin, Goodstein, & Scott, 2002). This review has found very few studies exploring the impacts of certain aspects of the institutional context on the career success of expatriates. However, when the research was analyzed,

significant findings were often reported (e.g. Breitenmoser et al., 2018; Schmid & Wurster, 2017).More research would be needed on various aspects of institutional contexts, to fully understand the impact of contextual macro-resources on the career success of expatriates.

The broader institutional profile of a host country, which includes but is not limited to its culture (Khanna, Palepu, & Sinha, 2005), exerts pressure on expatriates that affects their career success both while they work abroad and after their assignment ends (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005; Lee & Liu, 2006; Makkonen, 2015). Careers are always embedded in a context. Therefore, more attention should be paid to situational differences when studying careers (Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2007), especially in expatriation research (Andresen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2020). On a broader level, a relevant issue noted is how organizations tend to operate in an intertwined web of different institutional systems (Roth & Kostova, 2003). These systems create such complex pressures that organizations need particularly active managers to address the constantly emerging challenges (Kostova, Roth, & Dacin, 2008).

Institutional theories offer a useful theoretical angle on the above issue. The multi-level institutional environments of different countries influence expatriates' global work (Chan & Makino, 2007). Indeed, it has been argued that the high-density of their jobs places expatriates at the intersection of overlapping institutional factors, primarily due to the physical mobility required of expatriates (Shaffer et al., 2012). As a result, expatriates face non-work disruptions, undertake more challenging tasks with more autonomy, and adjust their thought patterns and scripts to different situational demands. These factors arise not only owing to cross-cultural interaction (Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007) but also to broader institutional differences between home and host countries (Kostova, 1997; Scott, 1995).

Concerning specific aspects of the institutional context, the national culture dimension has attracted the most attention as the only sub-category of the contextual macro-resources category suggested by Spurk et al. (2018). Studies addressing national culture have focused on the *cultural distance* between the home and host countries (Schmid & Wurster, 2017) or cross-cultural differences in career structures (Andresen, 2018).

We identified only a few studies suggesting that *the macro-economic situations of host/home countries* can undermine the ability of organizations to use the new set of competencies acquired by their expatriates or repatriates. Challenges to transfer and application of competencies impact the perceived employability and promotion opportunities of expatriates (Begley et al., 2008; Valk et al., 2015). Economic situations in a particular country influence the overall labor market situation. The contextual factors prevailing in a country affect the agentic efforts made by SIEs to accumulate career competencies (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014; Yao, 2014). Differences in economic factors therefore impact the career success of expatriates.

Further, *the regulatory environment* in a country also affects expatriate careers (Kostova, 1999; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999a). That environment may limit work opportunities (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010) or career progress when abroad (Begley et al., 2008) and thus can hinder expatriates' career success, which would, in turn, affect their long-term career prospects. Employment regulations might undermine SIEs' job hunting and erect institutional barriers to working in some host countries (e.g., onerous requirements to obtain a visa) (Hajro, Stahl, Clegg, & Lazarova, 2019).

Looking beyond employment practices and regulations, Phillips, Karra, and Tracey (2007) propose that *technologies* should be investigated to understand institutional aspects. Technologies are standardized solutions to certain challenges that are not present at the same level across countries (referred to as *technologies distance*). This distance poses different challenges for companies and expatriates. There are different options to assist learning how to work with the latest technology. We could not identify any studies addressing how the technological level of the host country affects career success. Presumably, expatriates would gain more from working in technologically advanced countries, and companies would value an IA in an advanced technological context, such as Silicon Valley (Valk et al., 2015).

Overall, there are still plenty of opportunities to investigate how different institutional characteristics in the home and host country directly or indirectly affect long-term expatriate career success. In light of institutionalization theory, the focus on national cultures has been overly dominant (Mayrhofer et al., 2020), while other crucial aspects have been neglected.

15.3.2. Using learning theory to investigate career capital competencies (CCC) and the development of assignees

Assignees have a heightened need to learn owing to their high-density work in various cultural contexts. Our review indicates that the most extensive, positive impacts of IA flow from the development of CCC. Expatriates tend to acquire various skills that facilitate success in a new host culture or back in their home country and which facilitate the transfer of knowledge across cultures (Spreitzer, McCall Jr., & Mahoney, 1997). Existing research also indicates that such developmental experience has an extensive impact on career interests and outcomes among expatriates in the longer term. Given the importance of learning in the overall expatriate experience, we suggest research pay more attention to learning theories when analyzing the antecedents of career success. The development of CCC is a process of learning from international experience (Jokinen, 2010; Jokinen et al., 2008), and expatriates learn differently from similar international experiences (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002; Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004).

Although there are many different approaches to learning, it is not within our purview to explore them all. Expatriates often learn across cultures without formal training or education in cross-cultural skills (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009). As expatriate learning seems likely to occur mainly outside of any formal educational system, CCC development fits naturally under the more general category of experiential learning (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991; Kolb, 1984). That is in contrast to traditional learning theories that focus on learning as a behavioral or cognitive outcome (Ng et al., 2009). Experimental learning theory has commonly been connected with various cross-cultural learning experiences (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991; Li, 2013; Ng et al., 2009). Surprisingly, however, learning theories do not seem to feature in attempts to understand the antecedents of CCC development.

Experiential learning is defined by Kolb (1984) as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. It emphasizes the central role of experience in the learning process and regards learning as a holistic adaptation process to

the world. In essence, it prescribes a process of learning where the learner should undergo four modes of learning—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting— to transform an experience into learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Individuals do not learn equally from their IA experiences because only some individuals engage in the entire experiential learning cycle when exposed to new experiences during their IAs (Ng et al., 2009). Expatriates possess different l*earning abilities, learning styles, learning skills, and developmental-learning ability* (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004).

Experiential learning theory would support scholars seeking to understand the antecedents of CCC development as a measure of objective or subjective career success, and may also function as a moderator. Scholars aiming to understand development when abroad with regard to cross-cultural learning have stressed the relevance of experimental learning theory (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). Other research suggests it is important to consider the role of learning style as a moderator between IAs and the development of cultural intelligence (Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2013). Relatively little empirical research has been conducted on the experiential learning of expatriates (Jarvis, 2012; Morris, 2020), an exception being Li et al. (2013), who focus on how the learning style of global leaders influenced the development of cultural intelligence during expatriation.

We might expect that different antecedents related to learning theory would be similarly connected to different aspects of CCC development. Assignees' learning processes seem relevant because the learning from concrete experiences acquired working abroad (knowing how) triggers the development of a sense of identity and self-awareness (knowing-why) through reflection on those experiences, and therefore, leads expatriates to adapt their networking behavior (knowing-whom). Inkson and Arthur (2001) depict this interaction between the three ways of knowing and encourage individuals to take the initiative to manage their own careers. Assignees may need to develop multiple learning abilities, styles, and skills to match their learning abilities to the high-density nature of global work. Consequently, their learning might lead to other career successes as it may drive career satisfaction, marketability, job offers, and promotions. In conclusion, experimental learning theory seems to offer extensive opportunities for future research on expatriates.

15.4. The career success of assignees leading to re-expatriation and a global career

Most expatriation and global career research regards working abroad as a one-time phenomenon, although it may be part of a repeated pattern of how individuals shape their domestic and international careers. There has been some research that defines different global careers. Suutari and Brewster (2003) identifies two groups of global careerists: those moving from one assignment to the other and those alternating between assignments abroad and some periods in their home countries. Existing research indicates that all kinds of expatriates are commonly motivated by factors such as competency development and career development when living abroad (Doherty et al., 2011). During a longer-term international career, development opportunities and the nature of the job (e.g., the autonomy available and the meaningfulness of a job) become even more central given the high-density work experienced abroad (Suutari, Tornikoski, & Mäkelä, 2012).

When analyzing how and why global careerists have international careers, two types of professionals have been identified (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). First, some individuals were very clear on their international orientation; they had purposefully looked for study and job opportunities abroad and been successful in their efforts. However, this was not always the case. There is another group of global careerists who started their global career at the instigation of their employers. After taking on this opportunity, respondents found that high-density international work was highly stimulating and rewarding, and then determined to continue on the global career path.

While in many instances setting off to work abroad again might be motivated by expatriates' career drivers and the career success experienced from working in a foreign country, in some cases, re-expatriation may also be the outcome of a disappointment with career progression after repatriation (Ho et al., 2016). Due to their repeated expatriation patterns, these international workers may become global careerists (Suutari & Makela, 2007). Global career research has largely ignored repeated foreign sojourns and their impact on careers.

Given the various cultural environments that such global workers are embedded in throughout their careers, the cultural identity model (Sussman, 2010) might be a useful framework to employ. It explores identity change as assignees lose their identification with the home culture and increase cultural flexibility in a new culture. Identity changes happen during IAs (Kohonen, 2005) and repatriates often find that their new sojourner identity no longer matches the cultural identity of their home country (Peterson and Plamondon, 2009). The more the cultural identity changes, the more distressing the repatriation experience can be (Sussman, 2010). Such distress can in turn affect career satisfaction and increase the readiness to move on to another sojourn upon return home (Ho et al., 2016). In the long run, such 'truly international' careers may lead to long-term global careers with various international jobs and assignments in different locations (Valk et al., 2015) Overall, future studies should pay more attention to holistic career journeys (McNulty & Vance, 2017) and how career success both abroad and afterwards impacts re-expatriation intentions and actual global mobility.

15.5. Future research: using more sophisticated methods agenda

Reviewing the research methods applied in the field indicates several limitations that should be taken into account in future research. Context and time is relevant to the assessment of assignees' career success (Holtbrügge & Ambrosius, 2015; Mayrhofer et al., 2020; Ng et al., 2005). First, most existing studies concentrate on a few geographic regions (e.g., Begley et al., 2008). Second, most studies in this review collected data shortly after an IA (e.g., Kraimer et al., 2009). Therefore, they can only estimate short-term outcomes arising from the repatriation process, ignoring the cumulative effects over time (Fuller, 2008). Only a few studies adopted longitudinal research designs (e.g., Biemann & Braakmann, 2013; Ramaswami et al., 2016) or collected data as part of a follow-up study a long time after the IAs (e.g., Suutari et al., 2018) to provide evidence of the long-term career impacts of expatriation.

Furthermore, most career studies are carried out among repatriates; many assignees do not repatriate but continue on their internal career track in the same host country or another foreign state (Suutari et al., 2018). In addition, only a few studies address a global sample (e.g., Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011) to reflect different institutional and cultural perspectives that might also moderate and/or mediate the relationship between IA and career success. Finally, expatriate studies typically collect data only among expatriates, and less research is available comparing expatriates and employees working in their home country (e.g., Benson & Pattie, 2008). Appendix 1 provides sample information.

16. Conclusion

This study takes the theoretical categorization of the antecedents and outcomes of expatriates' career success by Spurk et al. (2018) as its starting point. We conducted a systematic literature review which is a high quality approach to literature analysis (Tranfield et al., 2003) although such an approach, like all research, it is not without methodological challenges (Carver et al., 2013). The review explored the antecedents of expatriates' career success and their outcomes in terms of OCS/SCS. Crucially, we also explored other outcomes that follow the career success of expatriates after their IAs. The main contribution of this research lies in developing a framework of expatriate career success and its outcomes to guide a future research agenda. Overall, it became clear that the available international career research still has many gaps and promising areas for further investigation. We suggest using our framework to develop a more holistic and refined understanding of the career success of expatriates and its consequences. Doing so would allow researchers to understand why and under what conditions expatriates experience career success. In addition, the results would inform researchers, individuals, and organizations of a range of different outcomes, be they positive, negative, or a mixture of both. This enhanced understanding would enable global mobility stakeholders to make more informed decisions and better manage expatriate journeys, to shape the career success of expatriates, and to manage broader outcomes such as retention. Finally, using our suggested framework might allow us to distinguish the empirical results found in general career success studies from research focused especially on the careers of expatriates. The difference seems to be an outcome of the high-density nature of global work, which is likely to have substantial practical implications for individuals, organizations, and countries.

Credit author statement

The role(s) of all authors are listed under the author names.
Rodrigo Mello, corresponding author
University of Vaasa,
Wolffintie 34, 65200 Vaasa, FI

- Conceptualization: Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims
- Methodology: Development or design of methodology; creation of models
- Software: Develop a excel tool to organize and match the data
- Validation: Verification of theoretical categorization.
- Formal analysis: Interpretation of the data
- Investigation: Collection and allocation of the data
- Resource: Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools
- Data Curation: Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later reuse
- Writing - Original Draft: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation)
- Writing - Review & Editing: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre-or post-publication stages
- Visualization: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/ data presentation

Vesa Suutari
University of Vaasa
Wolffintie 34, 65200 Vaasa, FI

- Conceptualization: Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aim
- Methodology: Development or design of methodology; creation of models
- Formal analysis: Interpretation of the data
- Writing - Review & Editing: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre-or post-publication stages
- Supervision: Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team
- Project administration: Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution
- Funding acquisition: Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication

- Resource: Provision of stud

Appendix

Appendix 1
Sample characteristics.

	Sample	Type of expatriate	Research method	Home-country	Host-country
1	14	AEs	Qualitative	Saudi Arabia	UK
2	40	AEs, SIEs	Qualitative	Germany and France	Europe, Asia, North-America, Africa
3	15	AEs	Qualitative	UK	Europe
4	11	SIEs	Qualitative	Ireland	Europe, USA, Japan, Canada, Saudi Arabia
5	82	AEs	Quantitative	USA	38 countries
6	159	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Germany	–
7	169	AEs	Quantitative	Latin America	Asia, Latin America, Europe North America
8	20	AEs	Qualitative	USA	Pacific Northwest
9	295	AEs	Quantitative	Germany	–
10	245	AEs	Quantitative	USA	–
11	14	–	Mixed	–	USA
12	18	AEs	Qualitative	UK, Asia	–
13	29	–	Qualitative	Asia, USA, Africa, Europe, South America	Asia, Africa, South America, USA
14	26	AEs	Qualitative	UK	–
15	14	AEs	Qualitative	UK	–
16	207	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Finland	Global
17	13	AEs	Qualitative	UK	–
18	81	AEs	Quantitative	Spain	–
19	163	AEs	Quantitative	Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom	–
20	20	SIEs	Qualitative	China	Canada, UK, Australia, USA, Germany, France, Algeria
21	1001	AEs	Quantitative	USA, Europe	–
22	154	–	Quantitative	Austria	Global
23	290	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Vietnam	Australia, UK, USA, France, Singapore
24	59	AEs	Quantitative	USA	Germany
25	112	AEs	Quantitative	Sri Lanka	Asia and other developed countries
26	16	AEs	Quantitative	Finland	–
27	200	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Finland	Global
28	38	AEs	Qualitative	–	USA, Europe, South America, Asia
29	84	AEs	Quantitative	Majority USA	China, USA, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, Canada
30	133	AEs	Quantitative	France, USA, Canada	–
31	333	–	Quantitative	African, Asian-Pacific, Europeans, North American, Latin American and Caribbean	–
32	124	AEs	Quantitative	Taiwan	–
33	118	AEs	Quantitative	Taiwan	–
34	78	AEs	Quantitative	USA	–
35	20	AEs	Qualitative	Finland	Europe, Asia, Africa, Saudi Arabia, Chile, Australia.
36	113	AEs	Quantitative	Finland	–
37	23	SIEs	Qualitative	Western Europe	China
38	50	SIEs	Qualitative	New Zealand	
39	295	AEs	Quantitative	USA	Western Europe, Japan
40	1581	AEs	Quantitative	China	–
41	440	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Asian, Canadian, Europe, US	–
42	143	AEs	Quantitative	32 countries	Germany
43	84	AEs	Quantitative	Majority USA	China, USA, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, Canada,
44		SIEs	Qualitative	UK, USA, Asia	Qatar
45	170	AEs	Quantitative	Germany	–
46	212	AEs	Quantitative	Germany	–
47	305	AEs	Quantitative	japan	–
48	79	AEs	Quantitative	Finland	Europe, USA, Asia
49	203	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Finland	–
50	20	AEs	Qualitative	Finland	Hungary, China, Switzerland, Germany, France, Chile, Russia, Austria, Turkey, Hong Kong, Guatemala, The USA, Pakistan
51	55	AEs	Qualitative	Indian, The Netherlands	Indian, The Netherlands
52	30	SIEs	Qualitative	Indian	Bangalore and New Delhi

Appendix 1 (*continued*)

	Sample	Type of expatriate	Research method	Home-country	Host-country
53	30	AEs	Qualitative	Indian, The Netherlands	Indian, The Netherlands
54	28	–	Qualitative	China	Australia, Europe, US, New Zealand
55	28	SIEs	Qualitative	China	Europe, UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand

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