

## Discussion Paper

# Theorizing Career Success for Low Status Migrants

February 2018

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February 2018

# Theorizing Career Success for Low Status Migrants

## **Abstract**

We use qualitative research to build and enrich theory on the career success construct of Low status migrants (LSMs). This is an important category of the workforce in many MNEs in, for example, the transport, hotels and construction industries, but is often overlooked in international business research. We find that, despite some similarities, the theory of motivation to integrate that applies to highly qualified immigrants needs to be adjusted to enable understanding of the career success of LSMs. We introduce 'imposed change', 'fate/ religion', and 'community networking' into the theory, finding that LSMs cope with the constraints of imposed change through a combination of fate/ religion and self-determination/ self-efficacy, leading, with the support of community networking, to settlement and career success. We draw conclusions about the value of understanding the possibilities as a means of improving management in the relevant sectors.

## **Keywords**

Low status migrants; theories of career success; imposed change; religion/ fate; community networking; loci of control

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## Introduction

In the international labor force, a significant role is played by Low status migrants (LSMs). Many ‘famous name’ multinational enterprises (MNEs), especially in industries like distribution, cleaning, health and construction, use LSMs as a substantial element of their workforces. The purpose of this article is “to build and enrich theory” (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006: 236), around how such workers construe career success their integration into the host country economy. We argue that in order to understand the management of these under-researched workers, there is a need to study how they construe their lived career. Following the theory of motivation to integrate (TMI) of highly qualified immigrants (Cerdin, Abdeljalil-Diné, & Brewster, 2014), our inductive treatment aims to elaborate and enrich theory by “filling what has been left out – that is by extending and refining its existing categories and relationships” (Locke, 2001: 103) in this under-theorized element of the international workforce.

The number of people living worldwide outside of their country of origin increased to around 250 million in 2015 (World Bank, 2016), 150 million of these are migrant workers (ILO, 2015). Of these international migrants have not obtained qualifications beyond school leaving (OECD, 2013) and even amongst those who do have such qualifications, there is considerable evidence that they are often forced to accept low status work well below the level of their skills (Morawska & Spohn, 1997; Raijman & Semyonov, 1995; Fullin & Reyneri, 2011). While migration for work in lower-waged and low-status labor markets is closely related to wider global changes (Anderson, 2010; Tilly, 2011), LSMs are a significant part of the international labor market, holding an average of one quarter of low-qualified jobs in the developed countries of the world (OECD, 2015, 2016). Notwithstanding their human capital input and the benefits for employers, consumers and the economy (Holzer, 2011), the career success construct of LSMs is almost entirely overlooked in the business literature. This paper aims to start the process of redressing this situation.

The existing business and management literature that examines career success focuses on highly qualified employees (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Lyness & Judiesch, 2008). The international career mobility of these highly qualified individuals has been well covered (Gaur, Delios, & Singh, 2007; Wang & Takeuchi, 2007) and, generally, research that links international workforce mobility and career success, is mainly focused on such individuals (Allen, Lee, & Reiche, 2015; Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012; Cerdin et al., 2014). By contrast, LSMs are largely underexplored in this literature. While scholars are invited to raise “awareness about this growing but poorly understood group” (American Psychological Association, 2012: V), the economics literature has examined the effects on receiving countries and on the countries losing the capacities of this

group (Gibson & McKenzie, 2010). Closer to our interest here is the political geography literature which defines the context in which migration occurs (Lettner, 1997), and the literature on cross-cultural psychology (Berry, 1997). In sociology, research on Low status migrants focuses on those issues that migrants have to confront in the host country: pay gaps (Siebers & Van Gastel, 2015), discrimination and racism (Holgate, 2005), job strategies and experiences (Bloch, 2013), precarious and vulnerable work conditions (Ahmad, 2008; Alberti, 2014; Anderson, 2010; Clark & Collin, 2016; Potter & Hamilton, 2014).

Business and management literature has little to say about the career success construct of LSMs from developing countries, which remains “under-theorized” (Al Ariss, 2013: 235). The research that exists is mostly focused on highly qualified immigrants, discussing the ‘brain-drain’ phenomenon (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2008) or the talent waste (Ramboarison-Lalao, Al Ariss, & Barth, 2012) or issues of sociocultural integration and discrimination, career choice and strategy (Gözde, Al Ariss, & Forson, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of this article is to build and enrich theory around how career success is construed through the experience of LSMs from a developing country. We cannot assume that the substantial body of research on career success generally, or even that of highly qualified immigrants in particular, can be transferred to this low status group. Theory-building approach is relevant “when little is known about a phenomenon and current perspectives seem inadequate” (Eisenhardt, 1989: 548).

Our example is LSMs from Madagascar, a state off the east coast of Africa, who are working in France. It has been argued that “bringing Africa in” leads to “promising directions for future management research” (George, Corbishley, Khayesi, Haas & Tihanyi, 2016: 377), and that, “it is urgent that psychologists make immigrant-origin populations a key population in psychological research agendas at every phase of development” (American Psychological Association, 2012: 77). Given the general dearth of research in this area, it is no surprise to find that a lack of research on the international career experiences of migrants from Africa or other developing countries, working in developed societies (Al Ariss, 2010; Syed, 2008).

Before presenting our methodology, we first provide a brief theoretical review of the migration process and career success, following the TMI “to orient the reader toward our eventual findings” (Pratt et al., 2006: 236). Then, the study of the life stories of low status Malagasy workers in France enable us to explore the process by which the career success is construed through migration. Conclusions and implications are discussed.

## The Migration Process and Career Success: A Brief Review

We aim to elaborate a theory of the career success construct (TCSC) of LSMs examining how the TMI theory used in high-skilled migration needs to be developed to encompass our findings for this different group of internationally mobile workers.

### Motivation to Migrate

There is a large body of literature in international mobility that tackles motivation to migrate through different lenses. For example, the American Psychological Association (2012: 15) reports three main universal motives in migration trends in the USA: humanitarian refuge, family reunification, and search for work. Career-related motivations play an important role in the decision to migrate (Andresen, Bergdolt, & Margenfeld, 2013), and are one of twelve push and pull motivational levers applying to highly qualified international workers (Cerdin, 2013). In their TMI, Cerdin et al. (2014) capture the balance between gain framing and loss framing regarding political, cultural, economic, family-related and career-related factors for host and home countries. They found a relationship between the motivation to migrate of highly qualified individuals and migration success, leading to a four-fold typology.

### Integration in the Local Community

Once in the new country integration has also been studied, though less explicitly. Terminology is problematic here with numerous pseudo-synonyms being used, and multiple theoretical perspectives can be used to address the subject (Haslberger, Brewster, & Hippler, 2014; Lazarova & Thomas, 2012). Examining highly qualified immigrants, Cerdin et al. (2014), for example, emphasize that integration is the result of a complex process which starts from motivation to migrate, and includes a crucial role for the career success construct. Other research, has been mainly focused on expatriates (Feldman & Thomas, 1992), examining the roles of stakeholders (Takeuchi, 2010), such as the organization (Gaur et al., 2007; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004), the family and the partner (Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008), local fellow workers (Toh & DeNisi, 2005) and potential work–family conflict (Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk, 2001). The findings from this research on high-qualified expatriates have not been applied to people in low status jobs.

## Career Success

Several studies in the business and management literature (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011) implicitly or explicitly adopt a career success perspective, some specifically in the context of international mobility (Allen et al., 2015; Shaffer et al., 2012). Most career research has assumed there are universally applicable predictors of career success (Briscoe, Hall, & Mayrhofer, 2012). In behavioral psychology, career success is invariably related to career motivation, referring to an individual's motivation to succeed in their career by aspiring to fill their need for success or achievement (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003). While for London and Noe (1997) career motivation covers individual's attitudes, decisions and behavior regarding one's career, Mayrhofer and Schneidhofer (2009) note that the contextual nature of careers matters. In their TMI (Cerdin et al., 2014), the ultimate outcome of the migration process leads to career success. These texts have researched highly qualified internationally mobile workers, ignoring the LSMs. We collected data to redress this gap and enable us to build and enrich theory on how career success is construed among LSMs.

## Method

### Sample and Context

Since our focus is on an under-researched and under-theorized topic, we adopt a qualitative research methodology. We consider the work situation of low status ethnic minority migrants from a developing country, operating in a developed society, and draw on life story interviews (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Sanséau, 2005; Siljanen, & Lamsa, 2009). We follow an adapted grounded-theory inductive approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), with the objective of arriving at an understanding of, and explanations for, how the career success construct of LSMs unfolds during their time in the new country. The life story method enables us to capture information from the respondents related to the past, present and future (Lieblich et al., 1998). What makes them migrate from their home country to the host country? What factors influence and motivate their constructs of career success?

To build and enrich theory drawing from individuals' narrative analysis, we follow Pratt et al. (2006: 238), who emphasize that: "extreme cases facilitate theory building because the dynamics being examined tend to be more visible than they might be in other contexts". Applying this criterion, our sample consists of an under-researched ethnic minority of migrants, who have moved from a developing African to a developed European country. As such, they are 'extreme cases', unlike highly qualified western mobile workers who have been the subject of extensive research in

management. In France very few work permits are granted to LSMs, where the policy of selective immigration is geared towards highly qualified foreign nationals. 'Invitations' to leave the country are frequent for all foreign nationalities who are *sans papiers* (Barron, Bory, Chauvin, Jounin, & Tourette, 2016). However, because of France's prior colonial relationship with Madagascar, some Malagasies are entitled to French citizenship by descent. They can also get work and residence permits through marriage to a French person, which enables the less-qualified person to get into the job market more easily. The French state also authorizes international students to work a maximum of 964 hours each year.

Our sample was developed through the informal networks of the Malagasy migrant community in France and is shown in Table 1. We interviewed enough participants to satisfy the need for variety and differentiation of life stories (Sanséau, 2005). We targeted two low status jobs with different gender compositions. Hence, our research relies on the life stories of 27 male Malagasy delivery drivers and 17 female Malagasy cleaners.

--- Table 1 ---

## Data Collection

Our approach captures the process of migration and the career success construct through the narratives of the interviewees. Primary data were collected via interviews conducted in French, one of the two official languages of Madagascar in which all respondents were fluent. Interviews, generally lasting around an hour, were conducted by the first-named author, who is of Malagasy origin and lives in France.

Researching migration may be contentious (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011) and it is a particularly sensitive issue in France. Thus, "... extra precautions must be taken to shield the identities of the participants" (American Psychological Association, 2012: 76) by the use of pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity. Nevertheless, some of the interviewees were working without work permits and expressed a strong reluctance to be tape-recorded as they risked expulsion from France if caught. Their vulnerability made it more difficult to get evidence through typical research methods.

The inhabitants of the Island of Madagascar consist of a melting pot of eighteen ethnicities from African, Asian, Arabic, Indian and European origins. While the Malagasy people originate from "mixed African and Indonesian ancestry" (Hurles, Sykes, Jobling, & Forster, 2005: 1), "its first inhabitants were of Southeast Asian origin, which molds its culture" (Ratsimbazafy, 1995: 208). Culturally, Malagasies are thus traditionally reserved and do not easily share their stories.

Accordingly, “flexibility and some opportunism in methodology is an established approach” (Clark & Collin, 2016: 8). So, where it was not possible to record interviews, detailed notes were taken (Sanséau, 2005), in order “to make interviewees feel comfortable and to generate trust and empathy” (Anderson, 2004: 151).

These notes were transcribed immediately after each interview in order to minimize data-loss bias (Sanséau, 2005: 49; Corley & Gioia, 2004: 181). In addition to the interviews, the first-named author joined four of the delivery drivers during their work day, conducting observational research, to access more information and to better comprehend the low status profession in practice. For this paper, quotes were translated into English by the authors.

## Data Analysis

Our data was subjected to qualitative analysis (Fendt & Sachs, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Based on the principle of elaboration theory, the goal was to obtain a comprehensive structuring framework of the verbal accounts, leading progressively to the formulation of theoretical propositions and eventually to a theoretical model. Although our analysis was predominantly data-driven, primary data analysis was supplemented with recent literature on highly qualified migration, with a special interest in the TMI.

The researchers analyzed the data independently. After several interviews had been conducted, and as the iterative process of analysis was progressing till we reached the point of theoretical saturation, key themes emerged regarding participants’ motivations for migrating to France, leading to theoretical propositions. Data were coded into themes by the researchers, separately to ensure trustworthiness (Corley & Gioia, 2004:183). The Cohen (1960) K was 0.89, the few differences were reconciled through discussion. In line with data-analysis rigor (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013), Figure 1 provides an overview of our data structure, following a three-step “recursive, process-oriented, analytic procedure” (Locke, 1996: 240). In our first order analysis, 20 codes were identified. Next, we identified seven theoretical themes, and then we aggregated the seven categories into three theoretical dimensions which lead to the theory of the LSM’s career success construct (our TCSC): The motivation to migrate, the motivation to settle, and career success.

--- Figure 1 Overview of the Data Structure ---

# Towards a Theory of the Career Success Contract (TCSC) for LSMs

## Motivation to Migrate

Respondents' descriptions of their motivation to migrate shared elements with the literature on qualified immigrants:

**Home country considerations.** The interviews point to several push factors and show a weak loss framing perception regarding the home country.

***Desire to escape from social, political or economic difficulties.*** In 2015, Madagascar is one of the world's least developed countries with a human development index of 0.512 (UNDP, 2016: 2). There were major political crises in 2002 and 2009 and the situation remains fragile.

Naina, who inherited French nationality, describes how he felt at this time:

... there was no work, no future, no security in Madagascar ... it was anarchy ... I had only one thought in my mind, to leave ... I decided to join my older brother in France even though I had no degree ... I am lucky enough to hold French citizenship.

***A better life for my family.*** For many, indeed, coming to France was motivated by family considerations.

Nivosoa, a cleaner who inherited French citizenship, explains:

In Madagascar there is no future ... We saved some money during the first three years of our marriage while my husband's application was being processed. When we received the good news from the French Embassy, we left Madagascar and several months later I gave birth to our first son. We made this choice for our children.

**Host country considerations.** We identified host country considerations which highlighted the fantasy, or dream, of living in France among interviewees.

***The "siren song" of France.*** The attraction of France and the country's reputation enchant low status Malagasy migrants.

Lalaina, a cleaner who arrived in France aged 21, is married to a French Malagasy and wants to become a childminder. She explains:

I have always been fascinated by the beauty of France from what I have seen on television, and it has nourished my childhood: At school, I learned French, French

history ... Paris, nice dresses, the Eiffel Tower, the Champs-Élysées... all this made me dream.

**Monetary assumptions.** Monetary consideration is the predominant career-related motivating factor and is often tied to a quest for personal self-accomplishment and social recognition. At the time of writing, the minimum monthly wage in Madagascar is €40, compared to €1,400 in France.

Naina, a delivery driver, is Franco-Malagasy and arrived in France at the age of 21:

There is a Malagasy proverb that says *ny vola no maha rangaha* [money turns a man into a gentleman]. I came to France in order to make money, right now I am doing two tours ... being a delivery driver is not seen as prestigious back home, but here it is different because with the money I make I am a *rangaha* [gentleman] ... I go to Madagascar for vacation every two years, ... At home, everyone respects me, small and big, because I succeeded.

**Adventure/travel, education.** These motives can be found amongst young Malagasies. Before becoming delivery drivers, many young men dreamt of becoming a legionnaire, others are motivated by their pursuit of higher education. Tsoa, 36, says:

I was 20 years old, I was determined and very enthusiastic to come to France ... I was young and strong, I wanted above all to become a legionnaire, to have great adventures in uniform serving under the French flag.

Valisoa, a 20-year-old cleaner, is pursuing studies in psychology alongside her work:

I did all I could to convince my parents to send me to France after high school, my dream was to study psychology at the Sorbonne ... I am a student at Paris Sept [part of the Sorbonne] ... I can meet French and foreign students, meet interesting people and that is what I wanted ... today I am working as a cleaner, just until I get my degree.

The interviews allowed us to observe a striking contrast between the idyllic perception that interviewees had of France and the disillusionment with their own country. This duality leads to our first proposition (P1) on the motivation to migrate:

**Proposition P1: The motivation to migrate results from a combination of weak loss framing regarding the home country and high gain framing related to the host country.**

## Motivation to Settle

No matter how diverse their paths, the life stories of the participants show a pervasive wish for immigration at least until retirement.

Jao, a 32-year-old delivery driver, French by marriage, left Madagascar for France in 2010 and is one of the participants who sees repatriation as an option:

With the socio-political crisis of 2009, my wife and I decided to leave for France ... but I will see if we can return to Madagascar within ten years or so to become a tour operator there ... It's not sure, because we enjoy our new life in France.

**Sociocultural efforts at integration.** Certain sociocultural efforts at integration tend to be related to the motivation to settle:

***Speaking the host country language.*** Madagascar was a French colony from 1896–1960, and French remains an official language, routinely spoken by many Malagasies.

Soafara, a cleaner who arrived in France at the age of 27, refers to the advantages of speaking French:

I feel at ease in what I do ... which is not the case for certain colleagues from Eastern Europe who don't speak French very well ... the fact that I speak French will allow me, I hope, to become a cashier at a supermarket later on, that is the job I would like to have.

***Flexibility, and the willingness to adapt and to work hard.*** Being flexible and willing to work hard are also connected to the motivation to settle.

Liantsoa, a 19-year-old French citizen by descent, who works as a cleaner, adds:

Right now I work in a hotel where I clean the rooms on three floors ... it doesn't bother me, on the contrary I am always up for extra hours ... it is nothing compared to what women do in Madagascar: Gathering and chopping wood, making food, working in the field, crushing the rice, making a fire, preparing the meal and taking care of children.

Looking at the link between these sociocultural efforts at integration and the motivation to settle (and related to P1), we derive proposition P2:

**Proposition P2: The higher the motivation to migrate, the higher the motivation to settle, which is captured by sociocultural efforts of integration.**

Beyond these issues, which can be easily encompassed by existing theories built on high qualified immigrants, we identified others.

**The moderating effects of loci of control.** Respondents bring out the influence of locus of control factors on the relationship between motivation to migrate and to settle:

**Beliefs, religion and attitudes to fate.** Many Malagasies are religious, actively or passively. This is important in the motivation to migrate and settle, which, in some cases, is associated with an auspicious sign, chance, or Fate.

Ramena, a 37-year-old delivery driver and ex-legionnaire, talks about his beliefs:

My family gave me this lucky charm bracelet when I left Madagascar, my father and uncles blessed it, and I never go anywhere without it because if I did my fate could be reversed ... I have a lot of vintana [luck] and I believe in my destiny, it is what has guided me and allowed me to stay in France ... I believe in Zanahary [God] who watches over me when I go to work every morning.

**Self-efficacy and self-determination.** On the other hand, several accounts also point to the importance of an internal locus of control. They particularly emphasize self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Tovo, a 26-year-old delivery driver and French national by descent, expounds this view:

I am in control of my work because I give it all I have ... I know my routes almost by heart, I work hard, for me there is no other secret to make money ... I know that many Malagasy believe in luck and fate, for me they do not exist, you are the master of your own destiny.

Some of the participants' comments reveal the possibility of going beyond the dualistic and mutually exclusive conception of internal versus external locus of control, through beliefs that combine luck, religion and self-determination. This leads us to our third proposition:

**Proposition P3: The locus of control moderates the influence of the motivation to migrate on the motivation to settle, so that a strong internal locus of control in terms of self-determination and self-efficacy and/ or a strong external control in terms of resort on religion/fate reinforces the motivation to settle.**

The novelty related to the influence of religion and fate and their overlapping interrelation with self-determination and self-efficacy will be discussed further below.

**Context factors.** Opportunity and imposed change are also important. In some cases, context can have a significant influence on settlement success or can cause a return to the home country. The interviews highlight two contextual factors which impact the settlement success of LSMs, irrespective of their motivation.

**Administrative constraints/facilities.** Those with French citizenship, obtained through marriage or descent, do not need to obtain a work permit. For non-students, and for those without French nationality, the constraint of obtaining the necessary authorization to work is challenging and can undermine the motivation to settle. Diamondra, a 24-year-old former student who acquired French citizenship by marriage, describes these differences:

Before, you had to stand in line at the prefecture to renew your residence permit ... and then, with the student work permit, working hours are limited ... but since I got married [to someone with French citizenship], I don't have to deal with these administrative headaches. I can ... look towards my goal of becoming a nurse.

Zaka, a 41-year-old with a family and a contractor in Madagascar, and with four years of university education, was in a different position:

I am here with a three-months' visa. I attempted ... to see if I could remain and work as a courier driver ... I think I would have adapted to this profession and I really would love to stay in France to make money, but finally I have to return home because it's not so much the work itself that bugs me, it's all the papers and red tape, and it's hopeless.

**Community networking.** Social capital, usually help from siblings, is based on Fihavanana (family ties), an ancestral value in Madagascar of solidarity and networking, and plays an important role in the motivation to migrate and to settle, and in achieving settlement success. Professional contacts or social networks established through church are also important.

Tantely, aged 24, said:

I was able to come to France thanks to my sister who is married to a Frenchman ... I stayed with her for six months and she helped me to find a small studio apartment. Thanks to her contacts, she also paid for a lawyer to take care of my work permit ... right now I am working as a cleaner and also do some babysitting.

Samy and Manitra, two brothers who obtained authorization to come to France with the assistance of the resident social worker at the French Consulate in Madagascar, said:

Through the informal network of Malagasy contacts, and by word of mouth, we soon found employment in courier deliveries. We now work for an employer from Alsace, who had married a Malagasy ... We benefitted from material assistance from our 'brothers and sisters' at church.

These results enable us to formulate propositions P4 and P5, which are closely linked:

**Proposition P4: High motivation to settle leads to settlement success under favorable factors.**

**Proposition P5: Context factors, such as work permits and community networking, moderate the relationship between motivation to settle and settlement success in the host country.**

The overlapping relationship between fate/religion, self-efficacy/self-determination and facilities/imposed changes constitutes key insights which will be discussed further below.

## Career Success

Settlement success ultimately leads to career success for the LSM. Based on the interviews, it appears that the perception of career success includes career fit to expectations and work/ life satisfaction.

**Work/ life satisfaction.** For some of the respondents the important issue was work/ life satisfaction.

**Work/ life satisfaction.** Tsoa, a delivery driver who lives with a French woman talks about the importance of this balance:

With the money I make, I can indulge myself and go to Madagascar or other European countries for vacation during my time off ... If I had stayed in Madagascar, this would not be possible... In order to get rid of stress I practice taekwondo with my friends and my girlfriend, we regularly go to Malagasy parties on weekends ...

**Social recognition and income.** For some LSMs, the motivation to settle involves having a reasonable salary and social recognition. Naina, a delivery driver, notes:

I settled in France in order to make money, right now I am doing two tours ... I have no intention of changing jobs because my employer gives me a satisfactory salary ... I am proud to be able to go back on vacation to Madagascar every other year, plus I'm having a small house built for me in Madagascar ... It's very important and a pride to show to the family in Madagascar that we succeed.

**Career fit to expectations.** Interviewees see settlement success as leading to career success, which they measure by career fit to expectations.

**Qualifications, job satisfaction.** This applies to low-qualified migrants who are content to have a job which, even though low status, fits their perception of their own lack of qualifications.

Saholy, a cleaner with a secondary school education, states:

After my wedding, my husband and I, right away, went to France ... since he has French citizenship, we decided that to live and work in France was the best thing to do for our

children. Today I work as a cleaner... I love my job, what I do is very similar to the domestic tasks I was performing in Madagascar.

**Willingness to change occupation.** Several individuals were looking for more career success, they see their job as temporary and aspire to a better situation.

Voahirana, cleaner and French national by descent explains:

I would like to become a child minder, today I am working as a cleaner... I have done secondary studies at the French highly school in Antananarivo, I am French because my parents have French citizenship...

**Career development through entrepreneurship.** Options for career advancement included aspirations to become self-employed or even to become the boss of a delivery company.

Zily, an unqualified French Malagasy who came to France at 21, discusses his entrepreneurship:

After having worked as a delivery man for two years, I decided to start my own firm with my friend Rado ... I obtained authorization to set up my own limited liability courier services company after qualifying for a two-week training program... We both work very hard as self-employed bosses and our business is now doing well. We have a fleet of 17 vans. The majority of our employees are Malagasy.

**Preparedness for work in lower-qualified job and resilience capacity.** Some of the respondents had moved down the career ladder (Liversage, 2009). Some were unable to find work that matches their qualifications and some had wanted to be legionnaires but failed to get in and switched professions. Resilience plays a major role in coping strategies.

Faly, a highly qualified commercial executive who migrated with his wife and son to France for political asylum in 2002, ended up courier driving:

I have a four-year university education in management, I was earning €200 a month in Madagascar ...In France, I could have been earning at least €2,000 to €2,500 in my field. Unfortunately, my attempts to secure a position led to nothing ... I now work as a delivery driver and earn €1,600 ... You don't even have a choice ... because we really want to start a new life in France.

This leads us to our final proposition.

**Proposition P6: When settlement success in the host country is achieved, career success in terms of work/ life satisfaction and career fit to expectations follows.**

The six theoretical propositions that emerge from this study enable us to propose a framework of the career success construct of LSMs (see Figure 2).

--- Figure 2 Theoretical framework of career success construct of LSMs here ---

## Key Insights: Discussion and Implications

We propose a theory of career success construct (TCSC) for LSMs which stipulates that the career success (P6) construct follows an integrative process driven by the motivation to migrate (P1) and to settle (P2-P4) with a moderating influence of loci of control and context factors (P3-P5). Our theory highlights the hypertrophy of host country gain framing in the motivation to migrate and the hypertrophy of imposed change variables. Beyond the importance of religion/ fate and community networking, the TCSC speculates an overlapping interrelationship between loci of control and context factors, leading to an eight-fold typology.

### Theoretical contributions and implications

The “originality and utility” (Corley and Gioia, 2011:15) of our theoretical contributions and their implications are discussed.

### Asymmetry of loss and gain framing

As with highly qualified immigrants (Cerdin, et al., 2014), we found a relationship between motivation to migrate and migration success, that, in the case of LSMs, was linked directly to perceived career success. However, for LSMs, there is no strong loss framing with regard to the home country and no weak gain framing with regard to the host country. Thus our TCSC starts with a dichotomy (P1) with a striking contrast between the weak loss framing in relation to the home country versus the strong positive gain framing perception of the host country. Unlike QIs, LSMs lack self-confidence in their human capital, linked to their low qualifications, which explains these limited perceived dichotomous configurations and reinforce their resort to religion and fate. This theoretical “incremental” insight (Corley & Gioia, 2011: 15) may be a valuable piece of the puzzle of the TCSC of the LSMs. Its “utility” (ibid.) contributes to better understanding of the primary motivation of the career success construct of LSMs.

From a practical point of view, we assume that companies can expect both commitment and dedication from their LSM employees, which enable them to work successfully in low status jobs (often with harsh conditions and neglected by locals). The idyllic gain framing perception of the host country appears to reflect an intrinsic motivation, required to achieve good performance in

these low status jobs. This predictive managerial added value may be what encourages firms to recruit these LSMs.

## Novelties beyond the TMI: “Hypertrophy” of imposed change, religion/fate and community networking

In our TCSC, failure of the settlement is defined as the impossibility of career success in the host country and leaving France. New moderating variables such as loci of control (self-determination/ self-efficacy and religion/ fate) shed a new light, and contextual factors in terms of imposed change or opportunity (work permits, networks) come more strongly into play (see P3 and P5). LSMs are more vulnerable and more at the mercy of circumstances than QIs. Where the opportunity is more limited, and restrictions are imposed, LSMs will go home, go ‘underground’ (become illegal residents), or might move on to another location. Otherwise, settlement success ultimately leads to career success. In short, we argue that motivation to migrate + motivation to settle + opportunity (moderated by locus of control and context) = successful immigration. Furthering this major contribution, we propose a typology of LSMs by speculating on eight potential scenarios ( $2^3=8$ ) which summarize all possible overlapping relationships between context (work permit/ nationality, community networking) in the form of facilities or imposed change (C+/-), and reliance on self-efficacy/ self-determination (SD+/-) or religion/ fate (R+/-).

--- Figure 3 Typology according to the interrelation between context factors, religion/ fate and self-efficacy/ self- determination ---

Figure 3 appears to be self-explanatory : as an example, the favorable context (C+) of having French citizenship, for someone who relies on religion/ fate (R+), but nevertheless is ready to use self-determination and self-efficacy (SD+), could be categorized as a Blessed Pragmatic LSM. The dualistic relationship between religion and self-determination is often thought of as dichotomic, but our interviewees’ responses indicate that the reality is more complex and there may be an overlapping relationship between them. In our example, a Blessed LSM who is characterised by both C+ and R+, could be either self-determined (SD+) or not (SD-) and would therefore fall into different categories.

This eight-fold taxonomy could be extended and applied to other categories of migrant workers, including qualified immigrants. Beyond the input of self-determination/ self-efficacy which has

been largely documented, our discussion will focus on the main theoretical novelties of the TCSC centered on imposed change, religion/ fate and community networking.

We start with the contextual factors and the “hypertrophy” of imposed change. Although much of the voluntary turnover/ job change literature assumes full choice and options, often mainly driven and limited by the individual (Super, 1980; London & Noé, 1997) our interviewees’ experiences, and those of people they know, point to the crucial importance of imposed variables such as visa and immigration barriers. Unlike QIs who can rely on their human capital asset, LSMs are particularly more at the mercy of the context. While individuals have to consider the contextual nature of their careers (Mayrhofer & Schneidhofer, 2009), our findings point to the very pronounced effect of context on which, for LSMs, their settlement/ career success depends. Imposed change can have major power than ‘the individual developmental self-concept’ (Super, 1980), thus challenging the mainstream assumption that individuals mainly drive their own career choices. Selective immigration policy (as operated in France) deliberately limits the possibilities of low status foreign staff coming from developing countries, compared to QIs from the same countries.

Dreams of career success can turn into nightmares that may force the LSMs to go back home or to work underground. Managerially, the implication is that companies should be socially responsible by avoiding any form of unlawful labor (e.g. ensuring that MNEs subcontractors in the transport section do not employ cheap foreign workers unlawfully) and should providing organizational support to help vulnerable employees with their administrative struggle to get a work permit.

The major role played by religion/ fate. While Gebert et al. (2014) note that religion is a ‘neglected diversity dimension’ in management, our findings point to the significance of accounting for religion/ fate in the career success construct of LSMs. This external locus of control enables LSMs emotionally to compensate for their lack of human capital assets compared to QIs, and thus to enhance their career success construct. We make a contribution here by demonstrating, in the field of international business, the importance of a religion/ fate perspective.

In practice, companies who employ LSMs have to be aware of the predictive managerial role that religion/ fate may play as a lever of motivation for these workers. While religion has been a taboo dimension within companies for decades within the ‘secularism’ republican principle expressed in a French Law of 1982, Galindo and Zannad (2015) reported that 28% of French managers have been confronted by religious issues at work. In order to take the most of LSMs’ commitment, firms should adopt socially responsible flexibility towards LSMs who rely on religion/ fate, regarding

certain religious practice requests at work (fast, specific holidays, time for prayers, clothing, food accommodations, etc.) to improve both work performance and for societal benefits.

Community networking. While an extensive body of research points to the major roles played by the formal organizational support for high-qualified expatriates (e.g. Gaur et al., 2007; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004) and QIs (Cerdin et al., 2014), our findings conversely highlight the crucial role played by the informal 'collectivist solidarity' of the migrants' community network. Often based on the cultural collectivist value of solidarity, social capital from siblings or social networks established through church encapsulate and support the career success construct of LSMs in the host country.

For practitioners, MNEs who employ LSMs do not need to provide costly organizational support for the integration of LSMs, as they might for QIs. Nevertheless, socially responsible companies who intend to employ these foreign labor force have to provide minimum organizational support.

### Career Fit to Expectations and career paths of LSMs

While work/ life satisfaction is a commonly shared career success dimension (P6), we note different career success paths amongst three categories of LSMs: Lower-qualified migrants; qualified migrants who moved down the career ladder; and students occupying lower-status jobs whilst they study. Our results point to the challenges imposed upon foreign migrants without host country citizenship working in low status jobs, but also note that migration has been a very positive experience for most interviewees. For LSMs who both work and study, low status jobs provide useful financial support and can lead to entrepreneurship, allowing them to become business owners. The low status work serves as a springboard for some who take up the option of staying on to work in the host country after their studies. However, LSM students who co-finance their studies through a low status job need to be aware of the pressures this can create and remain vigilant to the danger of failing the degree and then losing everything as a result.

Migrants tend to be more entrepreneurial than indigenous populations (Ndofor & Priem, 2011) and this is reflected in our sample: Self-employment can be an efficient career strategy for ethnic minorities (Gözde et al., 2013). The predictive implications suggest that, for practitioners, MNEs in transport for example, can enhance their performance by collaborating with these reliable subcontractors (they are often their former employees, which reinforces trust) who are hard-working, self-efficient, self-determined entrepreneurs, with ethics anchored in their religious values.

## Limitations and future research directions

Our sample was made up of individuals from one African country, Madagascar, employed in one developed western country, France, and only considered a couple of occupations. Despite the specificity of our ethnic minority sample, we assume our TCSC framework would apply to LSMs from other countries because we have developed a theory based on variables that should apply to other populations. However, examining other populations in other industries offers rich research possibilities.

Beyond the potential bias of social desirability, our data is self-reported and lapses in memory may have occurred, although migration is such an important event in the life of a LSM that memory bias in such cases is likely to be limited (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007). However, this opens up the possibility of future research involving the longitudinal following of a migrant population from the time of arrival to establishment and career success. There were some difficulties in gaining access to and the trust of interviewees, given the legal status of some of them and the traditional cultural reserve of this population. The interviewer shared the same ethnic background and cultural codes of the interviewees and, therefore, was able to establish trust. Since the alternative is not to collect the data, collection methods had to be adapted to the situation (Clark & Collin, 2016, p. 8), eschewing recording and taking detailed notes, completed by in situ observation.

For future research, our TCSC (Figures 2 and 3) is thus a potential basis for studying other LSM populations, especially in the current context of extensive flows of migrants coming to developed countries. Future research could test and expand our TCSC with, for example, different nationalities or different work occupations, identifying whether the model developed from the qualitative methods in this study is supported through quantitative research. The 'collectivist solidarity' dimension of community networking is more important for LSMs than for QIs because the latter have higher social capital assets that nurture self-confidence and a more individualistic perspective. Furthermore, future research might focus in depth on the LSM categories suggested by our data in order to refine and extend these insights. In line with the recent interest in religion (Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014; Gebert et al., 2014), the eight scenarios of potential behavior could be tested upon a broader range of international workers, even including QIs.

## Conclusions

Previous literature on the career success of international workers is insightful, but has mainly focused on highly qualified individuals, and lacks a conceptual framework to help us understand the career success construct of Low status migrants. This qualitative paper argues that in order to

understand the management of LSMs, there is a need to explore their lived career experiences. Our elaboration theory contributes to the IB literature by building a theory of career success construct (TCSC) around the migration experiences of these under-researched LSMs. Our findings thus extend and enrich the TMI of QJs (Cerdin et al., 2014) by showing, beyond other insights, the need for firms to better comprehend and capture the important predictive managerial roles played by religion/ fate, community networking and imposed change variables in their individual career construct, in order to implement effective management of these under-researched migrant workers.

Within the challenge of firms' Corporate Social Responsibility, managers from organizations that employ large numbers of LSMs have to be aware that these employees tend to be self-selecting (hearing of work through family and friends), self-motivating by resorting on religion/fate combined with self-determination/self-efficacy, and usually learn the job hands-on, having sometimes to cope with the inextricable forced change imposed by the context. However, assumptions that standard management issues around problems of maintaining motivation, and organizational support cannot be ignored, except at the risk of reduced performance.

Research conducted on the international careers of LSMs from developing countries is very limited, even though people from developing countries or ethnic minority migrants are a significant part of the labor force in many rich countries. Our study gives an initial image of the career of immigrants from developing countries in low status jobs, through the examples of Malagasy LSMs. Our paper, which is one of the first to study in depth the career success construct of LSMs working for MNEs in a western country, offers the opportunity for future research avenue, to advance the understanding of managing international workers, by weighting of the effects of our eight-fold typology among a more diverse group of members of the international labor force such as more qualified immigrants and self-initiated expatriates.

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**Table 1: Overview of the Sample**

Pseudo	Gender	Previous occupation in Madagascar	Age of arrival in France	Occupation targeted in France	Job access in France
Naina	Male	Student	21	Courier driver	French nationality by descent
Jao	Male	Independent tourist guide	32	Courier driver	French nationality by marriage
Rivo	Male	Student	20	Courier driver	French nationality by descent
Naivo	Male	Student	19	Courier driver	French nationality by descent
Tovo	Male	Student	20	Courier driver	French nationality by descent
Samy	Male	Shuttle driver	32	Courier driver	French nationality by descent
Manitra	Male	Shuttle driver	29	Courier driver	French nationality by descent
Ramena	Male	Student	22	Legionnaire	French nationality after 15 years of service in the French Foreign Legion (army)
Balita	Male	Student	21	Legionnaire	French nationality by marriage after prematurely leaving the French Foreign Legion (army)
Hery	Male	Student	20	Legionnaire	French work authorization with support of lawyer and financial assistance of the family
Setra	Male	Student	20	Legionnaire	French work authorization with support of lawyer and financial assistance of the family
Tsoa	Male	Student	20	Legionnaire	French work authorization with support of lawyer and financial assistance of the family
Bary	Male	Student	19	Legionnaire	No work permit obtained during their three months visa
Nasolo	Male	Student	20	Legionnaire	No work permit obtained during their three months visa
Zama	Male	Student	21	Legionnaire	No work permit obtained during their three months visa
Zaka	Male	Haulage contractor	41	Courier driver	No work permit obtained during his three months visa
Faly	Male	Sales manager	38	Salesman	Work permit for political asylum
Bora	Male	Student	24	Sales insurance representative	Student permit as driver and permanent contract as sales insurance representative
Hasina	Male	High-potential student	20	Position in France, Madagascar or Canada: boundaryless	Student permit as driver

Ando	Male	High-potential student	19	Position in France, Madagascar or Canada: boundaryless	Student permit as driver
Bena	Male	High-potential student	20	Position in France, Madagascar or Canada: boundaryless	Student permit as driver
Zefa	Male	Student	19	Position in France or Canada: boundaryless	Student permit as driver
Doma	Male	Student	20	Position in France or Canada: boundaryless	Student permit as driver
Bila	Male	Student	21	Position in France	Student permit as driver, then work permit thanks to his wife
Zily	Male	Student	21	Courier driver boss	French nationality by descent
Rado	Male	Student	20	Position in France	Student work permit then work permit as entrepreneur in delivery
Haja	Male	Student	27	Position in France	Student work permit then work permit as entrepreneur
Nomena	Female	Housewife	29	Cashier	French work authorization
Njara	Female	Student	22	Position in France	Student permit
Sahondra	Female	Student	21	Nurse	Student permit
Seheno	Female	Student	24	HRM position	Student permit
Onintsoa	Female	NGO manager	27	Nurse	Student permit
Peta	Female	Computer-seller	21	Nurse	Student permit
Diamondra	Female	Computer-seller	24	Nurse	Work permit by marriage
Soafara	Female	Housewife	27	Cashier	French work authorization
Tantely	Female	Seller	24	Childminder	French work authorization
Narindra	Female	Housewife	25	Old age minder	Work permit by marriage
Nivosoa	Female	Housewife	23	Old age minder	French nationality by descent
Saholy	Female	Housewife	25	Old age minder	Work permit by marriage
Valisoa	Female	Student	20	Phone operator	Student permit
Lalaina	Female	Student	21	Childminder	Work permit by marriage
Liantsoa	Female	Student	19	Sales	French nationality by descent
Vola	Female	Student	19	Nurse	French nationality by descent
Voahirana	Female	Housewife	20	Childminder	French nationality by descent

**Figure 1. Overview of the data structure**

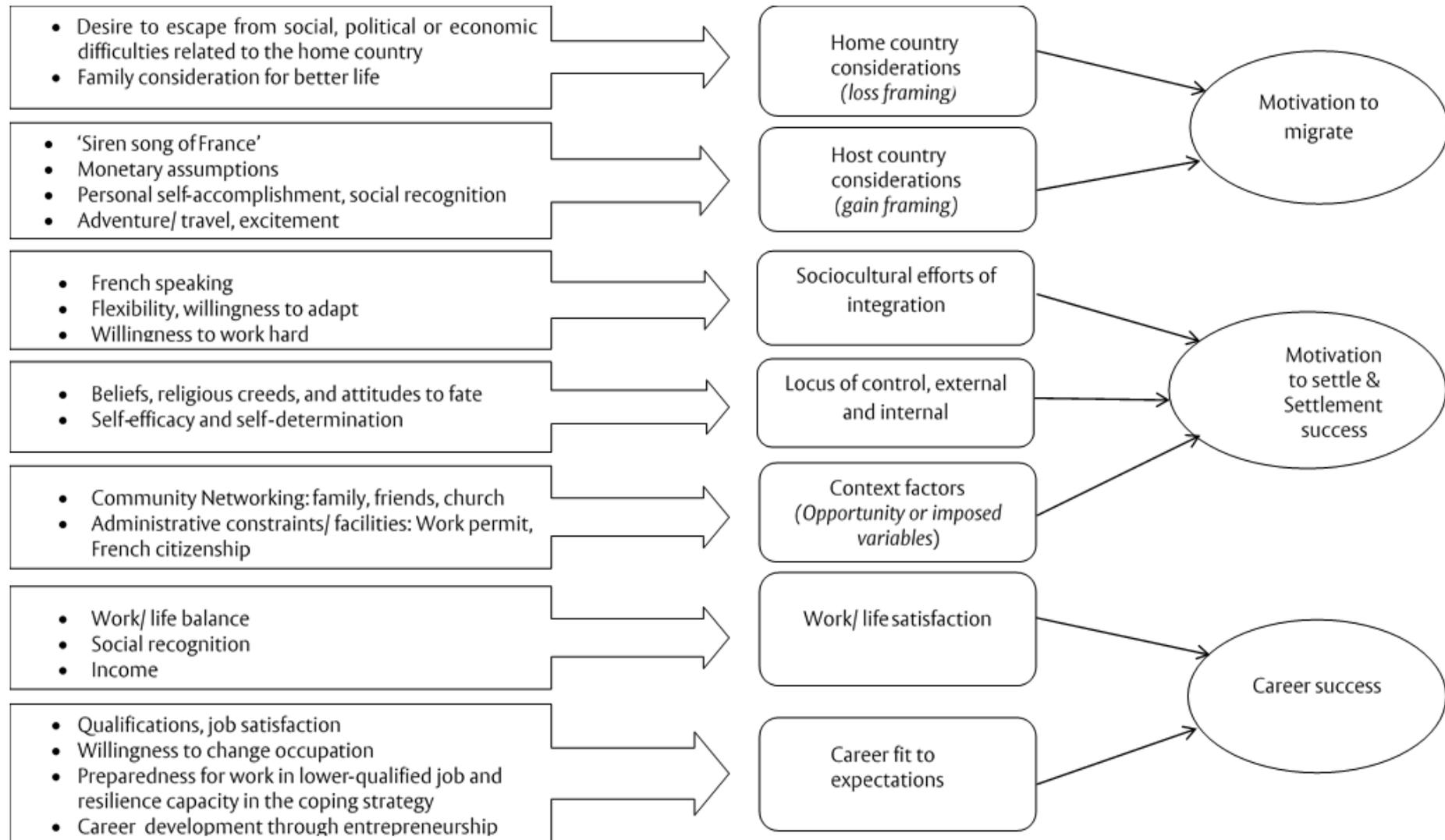


Figure 2. Theoretical framework of career success construct of LSMs

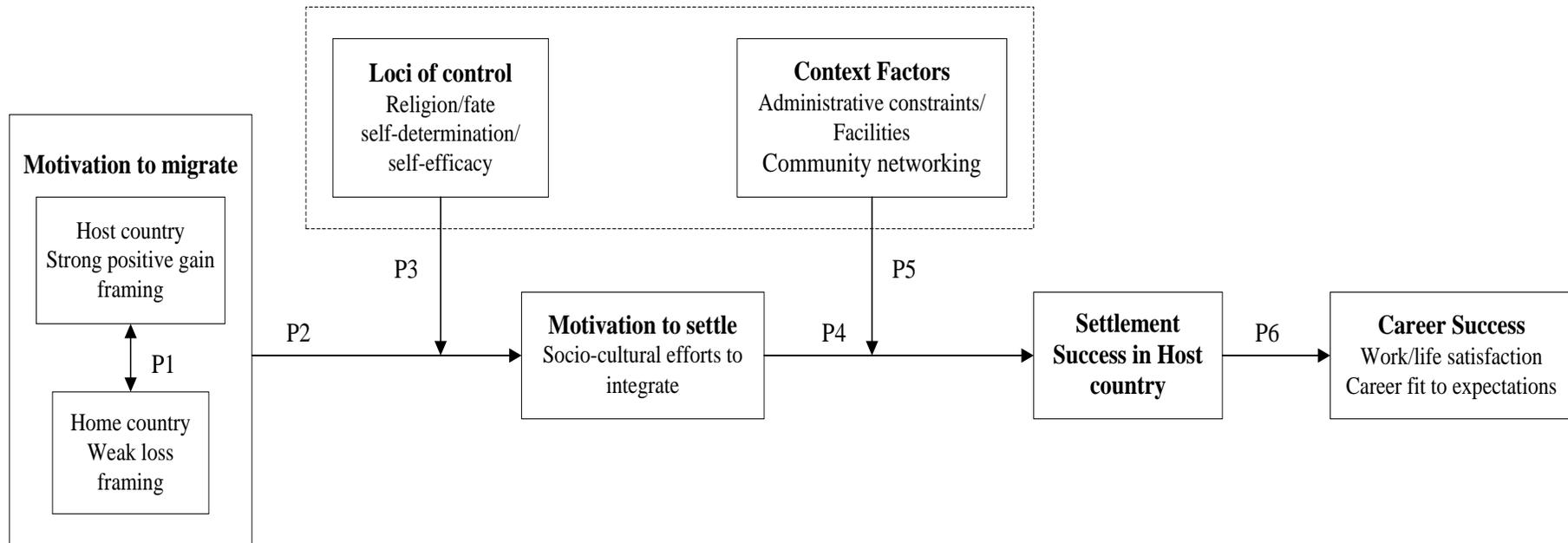


Figure 3: Typology of the interrelation between context factors, religion/ fate and self-determination/ self-efficacy

