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## **POLISH WOMEN EMPLOYED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS**

### **ROZUMIENIE SUKCESU ZAWODOWEGO PRZEZ POLKI ZATRUDNIONE W WIELKIEJ BRYTANII**

**ABSTRACT:** The aim of the article is to show how self-employed Polish women living in the UK perceive professional success. The main assumption adopted in this article is based on the stereotypical model of a male entrepreneur and the social division of labour, which is being renegotiated by immigrant women are beginning to shape their own model a professionally active, successful woman. The theoretical framework of the analysis is determined by the definitions of the objective and subjective dimensions of success and the relationships between them, as well as the concepts and results of research on women in the labour market and their approach to a professional career. The empirical part of the work is based on the results of qualitative research (27 individual, in-depth interviews) conducted among self-employed Polish women in the United Kingdom. An intersectional perspective was used in the data analysis. Based on the research, it has been established that the subjective dimension of the professional success of self-employed immigrant women includes, among others, definitions such as material success, success as job satisfaction and success as a balance between work and family life.

**KEYWORDS:** professional success, professional career, self-employment, immigrants, women's entrepreneurship.

**ABSTRAKT:** Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie sposobu, w jaki samozatrudnione Polki mieszkające w Wielkiej Brytanii postrzegają sukces zawodowy. Głównym założeniem przyjętym w niniejszym artykule jest nawiązanie do stereotypowego modelu mężczyzny-przedsiębiorcy i pokazanie, jak kobiety-immigrantki renegeocjują swoją rolę w społecznym podziale pracy, kształtując przy tym swój własny wzorzec aktywnej zawodowo kobiety sukcesu. Ramy teoretyczne analiz wyznaczają definicje obiektywnego i subiektywnego wymiaru sukcesu oraz relacje między nimi, a także koncepcje i wyniki badań na temat sytuacji kobiet na rynku pracy i ich podejście do kariery zawodowej. Część empiryczna pracy bazuje na wynikach badań jakościowych (27 indywidualnych wywiadów ustrukturyzowanych) przeprowadzonych wśród kobiet prowadzących działalność gospodarczą w Wielkiej Brytanii. W analizie danych zastosowano perspektywę intersekcjonalną. Na podstawie badań ustalono, że subiektywny wymiar sukcesu zawodowego samozatrudnionych imigrantek obejmuje między innymi takie definicje jak: sukces materialny, sukces jako satysfakcję z wykonywanej pracy oraz sukces jako równowagę między życiem zawodowym a rodzinnym.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** sukces zawodowy, kariera zawodowa, samozatrudnienie, imigranci, przedsiębiorczość kobiet.

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## Introduction

The term “professional success” is extremely difficult to define. In colloquial language, a professionally successful person is usually someone who holds a high, responsible position, often has their own prosperous company, is wealthy and has a specific – usually very lavish – lifestyle. This type of definition, however, imposes a one-dimensional (i.e. material) way of understanding this concept. Then again, ‘a successful person’ is not only the head of a bank or the owner of an international corporation, but also anyone else who feels and believes that they have achieved success (Bańka 2005; Miś 2006). The purpose of this article is to present the way self-employed Polish women living permanently in the UK perceive professional success and to point out that their subjective understanding of success stems from the social context in which they find themselves as immigrant women, who often encounter disadvantageous labour market segmentation, gender and nationality stereotypes.

The issues mentioned above seemed particularly interesting due to, on the one hand, a clear upward trend in the number of companies set up by women worldwide and a high percentage of Polish immigrants (14%) who decide to start a business in the United Kingdom (Okólski & Salt 2014) on the other. An equally important issue was to draw attention to the fact that the subjective understanding of success by immigrant Polish women stems from the social context in which they have found themselves. Numerous research studies have shown that both women and immigrants are particularly inclined to self-employment, which for many of them is often a way to escape the discrimination they may experience in the labour market (Clark & Drinkwater 2000). Such discrimination may manifest itself, among others, in unequal treatment during the recruitment process, more difficult access to permanent employment contracts, but also in poor working conditions. Then again, immigrants possess cultural capital that enables them to establish companies in attractive ethnic niches and to meet the demand for specific ethnic services (Bonacich 1973). For many of them, self-employment is a good solution because it offers a relatively easy way to take up employment (Kangasniemi & Kauhanen 2013). It should also be considered that immigrants running their own businesses contribute to the development of local communities, creating new jobs and at the same time marking their cultural activity (Halkias et al. 2011).

The adopted perspective draws attention to many similarities between the situation of women on the labour market and the situation of immigrants. Women, like immigrants, often face discrimination that often results in lower wages or overall difficulties in finding a job (Apitzsch & Kantos 2008). Moreover, as the intersectional perspective shows (Crenshaw 1989; Makkonen 2002, pp. 10-11), the simultaneous belonging to these two social categories defined by gender and nationality can lead to increased

discrimination in the labour market. Even though women are still in the minority when it comes to being self-employed, studies have shown that being a woman and an immigrant at the same time increases the likelihood of self-employment (Dustmann & Fabbri 2005). What is more, the number of self-employed migrant women is growing much faster than the number of self-employed migrant men (Light & Gold 2000).

The situation of Polish women working in the British labour market does not differ significantly from the occupational situation of other economic migrants. As the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (Census 2011) research shows, 84% of Polish men and 72% of Polish women in England and Wales are professionally active, i.e. they work full-time or part-time, or are self-employed. Polish migrants work mainly in industry, agriculture, hospitality and gastronomy (Census 2011). Despite their good education, Polish women usually hold low-paid, unskilled or semi-qualified positions. Moreover, their employment conditions do not improve over time: they still receive rates not higher than the minimum wage, they work longer and are unlikely to get promoted (Ruhs 2006). On the other hand, women have a different approach to migration than men. They are more determined and make better use of the opportunities that living abroad may offer. Migration experience helps women radically change their employment trajectory, and migration itself becomes a career step that is no longer associated with either their position or their family status. While men present a more conformist approach and submit to institutional conditions, women exhibit a higher level of innovation in the use of their opportunities for professional development and respond quickly to changing conditions (Grabowska-Lusińska, Jaźwińska-Motyłska 2013).

### **Professional success – objective and subjective dimensions of the phenomenon**

Achieving success is quite high in the hierarchy of values in modern society. Success is something of high standing, something that we have reverence for, something that we feel the need to pursue (Szczepański 1972, p. 97). This type of approach is characteristic of individualistic Western culture, especially American culture, where the myth of a “self-made man” imposes on the individual a specific vision of their own life as a task to be carried out or a project to be implemented (Grzeszczyk 2003, p. 159). Not everyone, however, assimilates this type of values and consciously refuses to participate in the so-called “rat race”, which begins to be perceived as something imposed from above, something that is stressful and incompatible with private or family life. As research shows, it is particularly evident in the case of younger generations for whom work constitutes the realisation of passions and interests and enables further development and maintenance of work-life balance (Zagórska 2012; Smolbik-Jęczmień 2013).

However, this type of attitude is nothing new to Poles. As shown by the CBOS (Centre for Public Research) (2013, p. 5), values such as wealth and prosperity (indicated as the most important in life by only 5% of respondents) have for a few years occupied a very low position in the hierarchy of values as compared to, for example, family happiness, which is mentioned as an important value by as many as 82% of respondents. Interestingly, despite the fact that money is perceived as necessary for a happy life by almost half of the respondents (46%) (CBOS, 2006, p. 2), as many as 47% of respondents disagree with the statement that wealthy people enjoy respect and deference (CBOS 2019, p. 8). Therefore, the question arises about a definition of success that could be seen as an alternative to its colloquial meaning.

As Kazimierz Krzysztofek and Marek Szczepański write, success can be defined as “a dream of such behavior, which brings not so much a change of status as internal satisfaction with your own accomplishments” (Krzysztofek & Szczepański 2005, p. 44). In this approach, success is a chance to express yourself, maximise your own abilities, as well as gain personal freedom and independence. It is worth mentioning that success can be considered on many different levels: a general one – as a success in life, and on a number of levels related to various spheres of life, e.g. professional, family, social, etc. The feature connecting all these levels is a general perception of success as a positive ending of an undertaking, achieving a goal, making dreams come true. It is undoubtedly an emotionally positive situation. The construct of professional success is a detailed set of objectives (a promotion, a pay rise, the power of an individual in an organisation) and subjective elements, where the measure of professional success depends on the individual view of one’s own career shaped by the factors that are important only to them. The literature on the subject often combines these two perspectives emphasising the relativistic approach, according to which the objective dimension of success influences its subjective dimension (Judge et al. 1995; Ng et al. 2005; Nicholson and De Waal-Andrews 2005), a subjective and an objective dimension of the professional successes are interrelated (Arthur et al. 2005; Hall 2002; Hall & Chandler 2005) or accepting a perspective that the subjective dimension of success is more important than the objective one (Boehm & Lyubomirsky 2008; Hall 2002). The last perspective highlights the fact that success consists of a series of experiences that can be understood differently by different individuals with different personalities, abilities or aspirations (Savickas 2013). In this sense, success, or rather a sense of success, can be predicated mainly on the basis of the individual’s account of their subjective understanding of career. This type of approach has been adopted in this article.

## Professional success in a gender perspective

The disparity between women and men in the context of a professional career and their chances of achieving professional success have been confirmed by numerous studies and statistics (see Mandal 2004; Lisowska & Sawicka 2009; Bombiak 2016). According to the Central Statistical Office (CSO) data, women are less active professionally – the employment rate of women has been falling for several years and currently amounts to 46.1%, while the percentage of professionally active men is 62.6%. Women are also more often exposed to unemployment than men (CSO 2019, p. 104) and have more limited access to the labour market and many professions. The most frequently mentioned barriers are horizontal segregation (the so-called sticky floor), i.e. limiting women's professional activity to several selected professions (e.g. in trade, services, health care or education) usually associated with lower remuneration, prestige, power and education and vertical segregation (the so-called glass ceiling) caused by invisible (i.e. not resulting from formal reasons) restrictions related to promotion and taking managerial positions in economic, political and social life by women (Budrowska 2004; Gawrycka et al. 2007, pp. 29-30). Inequalities in the treatment of women on the labour market are also evident in their wages. Although women are better educated, they still earn less than men. According to the data from the European Commission, the average gender pay gap in the European Union is 16.3% (Jourová 2019, p. 1).

One of the reasons why women have greater difficulties than men in finding a job and achieving professional success is because they are still perceived as less “attractive” employees due to their traditional social roles (Titkow 2003). The excessive burden of women at home (working full-time both at work and at home) makes it difficult to compete with men on the labor market, and their professional activity is inseparably analysed in terms of family life (Cewińska 2001, p. 33). From this point of view, for many women, setting up their own business is an alternative career model that allows them to strengthen their economic position while maintaining their caring responsibilities. On the other hand, as research shows, self-employed people quite clearly duplicate traditional gender norms (Hagqvist et al. 2018). Many companies run by women reflect feminised work patterns, such as part-time work or working from home, which in turn strengthens the perception of women as mothers and carers in the first place and undermines their credibility as entrepreneurs (Braches & Elliott 2016).

Equally important in women's careers are mental barriers, such as lack of self-confidence, lack of confidence in their skills and abilities, or stereotypical opinions about them (Budrowska 2004). Women often give up and accept the standards created by men related to the assessment of their behaviour and professional activity. For example, there

is a widespread belief that a woman's success in the professional sphere is predestined by traits usually associated with a typically male personality profile, such as: determination, aggressiveness, rationality, the pursuit of success or an emotionless assessment of the situation. Whereas, typically feminine traits such as empathy, sensitivity, caring and gentleness are treated rather as barriers to success. Female stereotypes influence men's attitudes towards women, women's opinions about themselves, as well as their professional choices and other aspects of their lives (Desperak 2001). Women also suffer more often than men from the "impostor syndrome/phenomenon" (Clance & Imes 1978), i.e. they cannot accept their own achievements, and they usually attribute their success to external factors, which include luck, good fortune, contacts or being in the right place at the right time. This type of thinking often leads to excessive perfectionism, which often triggers destructive behaviour and, as a result, destroys their careers. All the phenomena described above contribute to the problem of discrimination against women in the labour market and have a direct impact on both their worse economic situation and their subjective perception of professional success.

### **Methodological note**

The article is based on the results of qualitative research (individual in-depth interviews) conducted by the author among Polish migrants in 2016 in the United Kingdom. The main motivation to conduct the research was the desire to broaden the knowledge about the scale and form of self-employment and to outline the basic differences in the situation of self-employed men and women. One of the detailed threads of the analysis was the respondents' subjective view on their own professional success.

The study involved 27 self-employed women who were recruited using purposive sampling. The invitation to participate in the research was posted on websites and in various groups on social networks aimed at Polish immigrants living in the United Kingdom. The invitation was also sent directly to self-employed women, whose contact details were found on the aforementioned portals in the classified ads section or on the websites of their companies. In a few cases, the invitation to participate in the study was passed on through the recommendation of a person interviewed earlier (the snowball method) or by third parties (informants). The recruitment process was conducted until the theoretical saturation of the sample was reached (Charmaz 2009, p. 141; Guest et al. 2006, p. 65), i.e. a point where new data no longer significantly enriched the existing theoretical content of the phenomenon reconstruction.

Interviews were carried out either directly at the respondent's place of work, respondent's place of residence or in a public place (e.g. cafes), or indirectly – using instant messengers (Skype). The way the interviews were conducted was most often dictated

by practical reasons. Some of the respondents lived in remote places – instant messaging allowed the researcher to reach them without incurring additional financial costs and spending time on travel. Some respondents also preferred this form of contact because of the greater flexibility in choosing the date, which was of great importance to them and to the business they run. Participation in the study was voluntary and the transcribed data was analysed and anonymised. The respondents were informed that their answers would be used only for scientific purposes and would never be published in full or in a way that could identify the participants. The detailed interview questions concerned, among others, where they get basic information about running a business, whether they use formal and/or informal support, and if so, from what source, how they present the reaction of people from their own environment to the fact that they started their own business, or derive satisfaction from their work and whether self-employment facilitates combining professional activity with family life. An important thread was also their approach to professional success – how they define success, what is, according to them, needed to achieve such success and whether they have already achieved it. The following work analyses in detail the last thread.

Most of the surveyed women were economic migrants who came to the United Kingdom after 2004. Only one of the respondents lived in the UK before 2004. They conducted various types of business activities, including accounting, consulting, cosmetology, childcare, language teaching, translations, psychotherapy, cleaning services, and artistic cake baking. They were single, married or in informal relationships, with or without children. They lived in towns of all sizes – from London to small towns in the north of England. The detailed characteristics of the respondents are presented in table 1.

### **Defining success by self-employed Polish women – research results**

Professional success was perceived by the surveyed Polish women in many different ways. However, three main threads dominated the interviews: success perceived in terms of financial success, success as job satisfaction, and success as a balance between work and family or private life. Other threads compared success to continuous development, living in harmony with other people, and a job well done. Some of the respondents also pointed to hard work, lack of stress and helping others. There were also voices that success is an individual matter, because everyone can understand this concept differently. Interestingly, quite a visible thread was the lack of a link between the success and the amount of money earned by some respondents. Considering the above observations, the definitions of success that appeared in the statements of self-employed Polish women can be placed on two main axes: success perceived in material

Table 1. The characteristics of the respondents

No.	Pseudonym	Type of business	Length of their business activity	Age	Education	Marital status	Children	English
1	Anna	beauty studio	3	38	post-se- condary	married	2	good
2	Aneta	language teaching	8	36	higher	married	2	fluent
3	Agnieszka	photography	5	32	post-se- condary	single	1	fluent
4	Zuzanna	language teaching	2	34	secondary	informal relationship	0	fluent
5	Agata	arts and crafts	0,5	32	higher	married	1	fluent
6	Alicja	childminding services	1	35	secondary	married	1	fluent
7	Basia	artistic cakes	1	48	secondary	married	0	fluent
8	Ela	language teaching	5	29	higher	informal relationship	0	fluent
9	Gabriela	translation services	4	33	higher	informal relationship	0	fluent
10	Dominika	fashion design	3	37	secondary	single	n.d.	basic
11	Joanna	beauty studio	8	45	post-se- condary	married	0	good
12	Kasia	nail stylist	3	26	post-se- condary	married	1	basic
13	Kinga	psychotherapy	2	32	higher	married	1	fluent
14	Magda	massage services	3 months	30	higher	informal relationship	1	fluent
15	Karolina	renovation and construction services, property management,	n.d.	31	secondary	n.d.	2	fluent
16	Kamila	interior design	5	36	higher	informal relationship	1	very good
17	Marianna	psychotherapy	0,5	35	higher	married	1	fluent
18	Marta	coaching	a few years	33	higher	single	0	fluent
19	Monika	accounting	5-6	31	higher	informal relationship	2	fluent
20	Natalia	nail stylist	1,5	31	higher	informal relationship	0	average
21	Teresa	artistic cakes	bd	42	higher	married	2	average
22	Julia	organisation of parties, multisen- sory therapy	0,5	33	higher	married	2	good
23	Dorota	cleaning services	8	38	higher	married	1	fluent
24	Renata	translation services	10	39	higher	divorced	2	fluent
25	Małgorzata	physiotherapy, dietetics services	13	66	post-se- condary	n.d.	n.d.	good
26	Wiola	fitness instructor	1	32	higher	informal relationship	0	good
27	Justyna	photography	4	42	secondary	informal relationship	2	good

Source: own study.

and non-material terms and success perceived in individual terms and success related to the external environment. The scheme along with definitions is presented in table 2.

At this point, it is worth emphasizing that the clients of the surveyed women were primarily their compatriots. The reason behind it was, as the respondents themselves pointed out, directing their services mainly towards Poles living in the UK, and less often towards the British. It was dictated, among others, by uncertainty in contacts with the non-Polish community resulting from a sense of cultural diversity and/or from a poor command of English. This feeling was the strongest in the group of women who defined their language skills at an intermediate level or performed services requiring prolonged direct contact with clients, e.g. in the field of cosmetology. One of the women who was active in this field explicitly mentioned different expectations for care treatments.

Table 2. Typology of success definitions

	<b>individual success</b>	<b>external environment</b>
<b>material success</b>	<b>FINANCIAL SUCCESS</b> financial freedom, high income, good earnings	<b>HIGH COMPETITIVENESS</b> winning with competition, growing numbers of clients
<b>non-material success</b>	<b>INTERNAL SATISFACTION</b> satisfaction, pleasure, sense of accomplishment, lack of stress, lack of pressure, more time for themselves, self-development	<b>BALANCE</b> family happiness, time for family, balance between work and family life, helping others

Source: own study.

The first type of definition of professional success – financial success, relates to material success from the perspective of the working individual. Self-employed Polish women quite clearly indicated that the main aim of any professional work, even when done with passion, is primarily to ensure material existence. This type of approach was evident in the following statements:

*Professional success means doing what you like and earning enough money to live peacefully.* (Karolina, 31, renovation and construction services, property management)

*Of course, finance is also a part of success, because a person does not work only to earn, but to be able to exist, to live normally, so let's not lie to ourselves here.* (Alicja, 35, a child minder)

*I can define professional success as a situation when my business will start to bring such income that it will allow me to make some savings and enter into further investments, to employ people, and to gain financial freedom.* (Gabriela, 33, a translator)

However, it should be emphasised that some of the respondents objected to equating success with material success. This type of attitude can be explained by stereotypes functioning in the social space, which attributes to women primarily altruistic and caring features and deprive them of the attitude towards material gain. This kind of

understanding of success can also mean shifting the focus from material values to post-material values, i.e. freedom, self-realisation or success orientation, which are dominant in developed countries (Inglehart 1997). This approach is best illustrated by the following quotes:

*For me, success is not money, for me success is satisfaction with what you do and waking up every morning... and I gladly go to my computer and edit photos. I have a great satisfaction from everything I do and it is the most important for me.* (Agnieszka, 32, a photographer)

*It's not about titles, it's not about money specifically, but it's about the fact that you learn something all the time and that this work provides you with it.* (Zuzanna, 32, an English teacher)

Some respondents also represented a more balanced approach:

*Money is not important, how you feel is important. Okay, you should earn enough to support you.* (Wiola, 32, a fitness instructor)

The most frequent thread in the statements of self-employed Polish women was equating success with job satisfaction. This is hardly surprising, given the fact that their main motivation for undertaking self-employment was the desire to develop, the need for independence or self-sufficiency (Sadurska-Duffy 2017). In this approach, self-employment was a direct path to success. They interpreted their own professional situation from the perspective of the decisions they had already made or were about to make, which were to bring them personal satisfaction, happiness or pleasure. This attitude is exemplified by the following statements:

*I think that professional success is a sense of accomplishment, the feeling that you are in the right place, that you do something that gives you pleasure, something that is your passion. That's how I would describe success – not in material terms, but more in emotional and personal terms.* (Kinga, 32, a psychotherapist)

*I think that professional success is a kind of success, when we do what we like, we feel fulfilled by it. [...] That we walk with a smile on our face. We are glad that we have achieved it, that it is growing. We enjoy every little thing.* (Magda, 30, a masseuse)

*Professional success is 100% satisfaction, because if someone succeeds and it does not bring them joy or satisfaction, then it is not a success, it is torment. Success is what I have achieved for myself, because I have always dreamed of such a profession, I have always wanted to work like this and have been working for years, so it is my success and my fulfilled dreams.* (Renata, 39, a translator)

Another type of definition goes beyond the individual sphere and takes into account the way self-employed women interpret their professional success in the context of their relations with the external environment. The environment can be understood as both the people closest to them (partner, children or friends) and their clients. In the case of material orientation, definitions referring to the second category appeared much more frequently:

*For me, professional success means, first and foremost, that I have satisfied clients and that the number of clients is growing.* (Aneta, 36, an English teacher)

*I can say I have achieved success when I am recommended by parents to other parents.* (Alicja, 35, a child minder)

*Professional success is when someone stands out from the competition because they are good at what they do.* (Monika, 31, an accountant)

The last type of definition also focuses on relations with the environment, but emphasises their immaterial dimension. The most frequently cited threads concern the balance between private and professional life, devoting more time to family, partners or children, or helping others in general, or living in harmony with others:

*At the moment, my professional success means that I have time for my child.* (Kamila, 36, an interior designer)

*Thanks to the work I do, I have a lot of time for myself and I don't have to spend six hours working. If I want, I can go out with my children, I can go with the dog for a walk for two hours.* (Aneta, 36, an English teacher)

*Professional success is a compromise between the satisfaction that you gain on private grounds and in your business and that in all this there is a balance, it means you can combine it. One thing does not happen at the expense of the other, that this machine works and that it all runs so smoothly, harmoniously, and for me it means that I have time for my child, for my family, I have time to rest, that I have time for pleasure and my other passions.* (Marianna, 35, a psychotherapist)

*It means balance between family and professional life.* (Agata, 32, arts and crafts)

*Living in harmony with other people.* (Ewa, 38, a beautician)

It is also worth emphasising that many of the statements indicated that the surveyed women may have already considered the question of what success is and defined it in relation to the experiences of others. It was most clearly seen in the case of emphasising relativism in the meaning of this concept, both in various industries and at various stages in human life:

*I think that in various industries it [the definition of success] would be different.* (Alicja, 35, a child minder)

*Different people look at it differently.* (Basia, 48, a cake artist)

*It depends on the person. I think if you asked me this question right after graduation, professional success would mean working for Norman Foster.* (Kamila, 36, an interior designer)

The last quote proves that the definition of success often changes throughout one's career. Some respondents did not yet know how they would define success because they were only at the beginning of their careers:

*I don't know how I would define it yet. Maybe I will never achieve it, because when I accomplish something, I always think that it is not enough and I need more, so I am always hungry for more.* (Ela, 29, an English teacher)

## Conclusion

The analysis of the research material has shown that the subjective understanding of professional success of the surveyed self-employed Polish women working in the UK is a very complex phenomenon. Running their own company is a chance for them to gain financial independence and self-sufficiency, as well as job satisfaction. A professional success is also an opportunity to combine work and childcare, which is one of the main characteristics of the modern role of a woman, who combines work and family life and as such defines her professional achievements as success. In this approach, professional success penetrates to other domains of an individual's life, such as a position in a peer group, or reconciliation of work with household chores. In the career trajectory, the sense of satisfaction, contentment and self-fulfillment in professional work, as well as the sense of success in the professional field seem to mutually strengthen and determine each other.

Due to the qualitative nature of the research and the small number of respondents, it is difficult to point to any statistical relationships between women's status traits and their understanding of success. It is worth noting, however, that the definition of success evolves under the influence of migration experiences. Women who have more frequent contact with the host society, know English very well, are well-educated or have a British citizen as a partner, seem to be more confident in their professional success – no matter in which dimension they describe their success. They can be categorised as successful immigrants, i.e. well-integrated in the receiving society.

The way women understand success can also affect their professional activity. It can be assumed that women who more often mentioned financial success are more oriented towards meeting material needs in the first place. These are women who, contrary to appearances, are not at the beginning of their careers, but rather those who have been running a business for some time and see that it is starting to bring them more and more profits, often after having worked extremely hard and having made a lot of sacrifices in the past. This way they show themselves and others that it was worth it. In turn, women who are at the beginning of their business career or people who have previously worked in lower positions often pointed to factors related to, for example, their own satisfaction, happiness or balance between work and family life. At this point, the following interpretation can be suggested – women who emphasise the importance of non-material factors in professional success, can opt for a “safeguard” attitude (i.e. I have not achieved a great financial success, but at least I am happy) or do not want to be perceived in terms of being “not feminine enough” because they break the stereotype of a woman as someone who is assigned to the private and family sphere rather than to the world of big business.

Women who are just beginning their adventure with self-employment have more often pointed to the importance of social and cultural capital brought from the country and the importance of informal networks of ethnic contacts and the maintenance of transnational ties with their home country. According to the theory of capital of Pierre Bourdieu (1986), the size of individual cultural resources of the interviewees (formal and informal education, competences, skills) and social resources (location in the network of relationships and social structure) determine their position and social mobility, and hence their prospects for professional success.

It should also be emphasised that the interviewed women are in a particular situation. As immigrants, they hoped that they would achieve success in a country that was, on the one hand, foreign to them, and where professional development due to their immigrant status was exposed to difficulties and obstacles, but, on the other hand, as they often emphasised in their statements, created more favourable conditions for establishing and running a business. From the quoted statements emerges the image of a woman who renegotiates her role in the social division of labour while shaping her own model of a professionally active and successful woman.

The research results may open new perspectives in further research on migration and the professional situation of migrant women, encouraging comparative studies of various self-employed groups: according to gender, nationality, education or the length of stay. An interesting research idea would also be to return to the same respondents in a few years to re-describe their view of professional success and verify their business plans.

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