# Immigrant Entrepreneurs: in Search of Identity

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|  A B S T R A C T  |
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| **Objective**:The purpose of this study is to show identity construction processes of immigrant entrepreneurs and the way these identities are constructed and reconstructed in business and migration experiences. |
| **Research Design & Methods**: The findings are based on two qualitative research projects on immigrant entrepreneurs: Vietnamese entrepreneurs in Poland and Polish entrepreneurs in the USA. Both studies were based on ethnographic inspiration. Open interviews and observations were used to collect primary data. |
| **Findings:**The study indicates that identity construction is a process of an interplay of three main elements: being an immigrant, being an entrepreneur, and sense of nationality. This interplay takes place in different, overlapping dimensions: private, social, national and professional, and it takes place in a certain cultural context. Identities of immigrants are constantly constructed and reconstructed in their search for belonging and freedom at the same time. |
| **Implications & Recommendations:**The results imply that the issue of immigrant entrepreneurship requires open, culturally-oriented and comparative studies. Recommendations for further studies are formulated in the last section of the paper. |
| **Contribution & Value Added:**The paper provides insight into the processes of migration between different cultural and institutional contexts and their impact on entrepreneurs' identities. |

## INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the identity construction of immigrant entrepreneurs and its main components, i.e. nationality/ethnics, being an immigrant, and being an entrepreneur[1]– the way their quests for identity, blend and interacts with their business decisions. Our main purpose is to explore, by applying ethnographic methods, how immigrants, in different cultural settings, construct and de-construct their identities and what are the main elements through which they define themselves.

The article explores some key areas. Firstly, we aim to provide empirical examples from the field of immigrant entrepreneurship, specifically immigrants' entrepreneurial efforts. Secondly, our purpose is to develop ideas about the processes of identity construction, and its key components, in the context of immigrants' entrepreneurial activities. We depict the ways immigrants describe themselves, and reveal their multidimensional identity.

Identity research is quite popular in organization theory, however, identities of entrepreneurs have been largely underexposed (Essers & Benschop, 2007, p. 49). Moreover, in the field of entrepreneurship, there is a constant need to use differentiated methods and perspectives (Jennings, Perren, & Carter, 2005) to grasp the dynamic phenomena that are connected with entrepreneurial processes. As Kärreman and Alvesson (2001) pointed out some years ago, for various reasons functionalist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) still dominates in organization research and thus our understanding of specific processes of reality construction is poor.

A growing number of studies based on different paradigms and ontological foundations has been conducted in recent years in almost every field of organization studies. However, we think that there is still a need to enhance our contextual understanding of the dynamic nature of many aspects of organizing, and immigrant entrepreneurship is definitely one of them. To understand entrepreneurial activity is to avoid static descriptions of entrepreneurs' population, caught in reified categories. It is also to understand how entrepreneurs, in different context make their decisions and construct their identities and to bring our knowledge closer to their everyday practices.

International migration is one of the most interesting social issues. It creates important challenges, and raises vivid questions in different dimensions - political, economic, and social. Immigrants establish families, participate in political life, create networks, work or create jobs for others (Castles & Miller, 2011). Moreover, as recent discussions (i.e. about immigrants in UK) have revealed, immigrants and immigration may cause many controversies and social tensions. For these reasons, more research about the nature and dynamics of immigrants functioning is needed.

In this article we focus on one face of immigration - the immigrant entrepreneurship. This phenomenon is usually connected with immigrants' business activities, and defined as the process of new venture creation by immigrants (i.e. individuals who were born abroad, or at least one of their parents was born outside the host country). Research on immigrant entrepreneurship includes a vast variety of areas, where the following may be

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[1] The main goal of our research was to examine the immigrant entrepreneurship; we concentrated only on main factors pointed out by the entrepreneurs, and we did not take under consideration issues connected more directly with immigrant private lives, i.e. family and friends. These areas should be further researched.

considered to be most popular: motives of migration and migration strategies, factors influencing a creation of a new venture in a host country, forms of entrepreneurial activity and strategies of venture development.

We pointed out that identities of entrepreneurs and processes of identity creation have been underexposed in entrepreneurship researches. It is even more visible in the field of immigrant entrepreneurship – ethnic identity of migrants has been widely investigated, but not much of these researches have taken entrepreneurial dimension under consideration.

The following part of this article is structured in four main sections, in which we will show various ways of defining and using the concept of identity and identity creation. We will also point out some connections between identity and entrepreneurship identified by researchers. In the next part, we will present the methodology adopted for field studies on immigrant entrepreneurship used as an empirical foundation of this text. The description of research results will constitute the next section. Finally, we will discuss our results and present concluding remarks.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Identity Construction Processes

The study of identity and identity formation is not new on the agenda of researchers. The term "identity" is often used in organization studies on different levels of analysis: individual, groups of individuals, and organizational (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001; Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014). Some studies tend to go further into the macro-level analysis, and reflect the meaning of context in identity construction and re-construction. Below we will describe some of the streams and controversies in identity studies within organization theory, and particularly – within the field of entrepreneurship.

The term "identity" is not only often used, but also abused in contemporary research. It is one of these buzz words that attract researchers. Due to its broad and differentiated meaning, it can evoke criticism as well. For example, Brubaker and Cooper claim that identity tends to mean too much, too little, or nothing at all (2000). The same authors point out that "identity" is an ambiguous term and it shouldn't be used as a category of analysis[2].

> *If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere. If it is fluid, how can we understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallize? If it is constructed, how can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications* (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 1)?

Despite the criticism, we decided to follow long symbolic interactionists' and social constructivists' traditions (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Goffman, 1963; Strauss, 1959), and apply the term "identity" to describe the processes through which immigrants define

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[2] Brubaker and Cooper propose to use alternative categories for analysis, such as: a) identification and categorization, b) self-understanding and social location, commonality, c) connectedness, groupness (Brubaker, 2006; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000); from our perspective, these are partial substitutes, that refer to some aspects of identity, and thus, are not enough to explain its complexity. On the other hand Brubaker refers to "overcomplexity" of a concept and offers the way to simplify the conceptualization.

their place and role in a host society, make sense of themselves and their actions. In fact, we do not mind ambiguity, and fluid character of the concept, which is "blurred but indispensable", as Tilly (1996, p. 7) accurately described it. As far as ambiguous nature of identity is concerned, we also agree with Kärreman and Alvesson who declare that

> *it is both potentially fruitful and economical to have a concept that is capable of addressing sameness and difference at the same time* (2001, p. 62).

### Identity Construction in Organization Studies – a Short Review

Probably the most visible tendencies in identity studies are connected with the switch from a very concrete, coherent, stable, and reifying vision of identity to more relative, subjective, fragmented, and processual understanding of the concept. This tendency is, at least partly, rooted in classical social constructivists' understanding of identity.

There is no doubt that in recent years identity studies have been marked by different trials to escape ambushes of simplification and rigid categorization. Some new "identity stories" were introduced, but part of them also has a potential of reifying and "creating a new shade of universalism that contains its own inevitable exclusions" (Somers, 1994, p. 613). So, the quest for creating open and flexible concepts and theories of identity is still vital.

Researchers' interest focuses on the way the self is manufactured, created (recreated) in various social processes (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001, p. 63). Stable and coherent self-representation is a myth, as individuals tend to create multiple, inconsistent, and context-dependent self-representations that may shift over time. As Ewing puts it

> *at any particular moment a person usually experiences his or her articulated self as a symbolic, timeless whole, but this self may quickly be displaced by another, quite different "self," which is based on a different definition of the situation* (Ewing, 1990, p. 251).

Ewing claims that individuals may be unaware of shifts and inconsistencies, whilst some other scholars claim that actually individuals can choose their identities (see e.g. Casey & Dustmann, 2010; de Munck, 2013). In both cases, an assumption exist that there is no single, unchanging, and stable identity. Multiple identities are widely recognized on both personal and organizational level. Referring to multiple identities, Massey (1993, p. 65) stresses the fact that they are constructed in relation to multiple locations, when people move, and live in different contexts (economic, social, cultural).

Contextualization of identity creation processes is another powerful (yet not new) tendency in the field. The classical assumption that context, as well as social interactions, shape one's identity (Mead, 1934) is now widely recognized. For example, De Munck (2013) proposes an instrumental model of relations between self, identity and cultural context. He stresses that a function of self is to serve "as an active symbolic device" mediating between context and identity, and selecting an appropriate identity (de Munck, 2013, p. 182). We tend to agree that self, identity and culture are interdependent, but in our opinion de Munck's model treats them as far too concrete entities, and in addition – indicates that identity is purely a question of one's choice. For us identity is a less instrumental entity, a construction, a relational concept, or as Kärreman and Alvesson (2001) put it "social accomplishment", rather than naturally occurring phenomenon.

Shifts in contexts, frames of reference may cause inconsistencies in beliefs and opinions of an individual, which, in consequence, may be "leading to a 'forgetting' of one's previous point of view" (Ewing, 1990, p. 268), and triggering construction of a new self-representation.

As Somers points out, identity-formation takes shape within the "relational settings of contested and patterned relations among narratives, people, and institutions" (Somers, 1994, p. 626). She stresses the narrative nature of identity and maintains that narratives, and accordingly relational setting, must always be explored over time and space, only then can we understand this area of study. Following the idea of narrative identity allows us to grasp the ways people use to "preserve their sense of continuity and unity of self without losing their plasticity" (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001), or, in other words, to understand how people deal with identity re-constructions.

Also McAdams observed that narratives, and particularly life stories reflect identity, and in this view, life phases may be considered 'chapters' in a person's evolving autobiography (2001). In addition, the same "identity material" can be crafted differently into "life stories, and have a different impact on people's social identity, depending on how it is related to other identity material" (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001, p. 65).

Identity addresses concepts of sameness and difference. It means that when analyzing identity construction and re-construction, one must refer to some kind of distinctiveness, i.e. individuals' (groups) self-definition as being different from someone else, or other groups. People show a tendency to classify themselves and others into various social categories, which help them in ordering social environment and define their place in it (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001; Turner, 1984). Through these processes categories emerge, as well as boundaries; Bauman describes it as the formation of a sense of belonging which results from boundary drawing, ordering and othering (Bauman, 1991). Among some typical categories there are those connected with nationality and ethnicity; these categories have a special meaning for immigrants.

### Identity Construction and Immigration, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship

The question of national and/or ethnic identity is often raised in discussions about migration. This seems to be quite obvious, as migrants, by definition, are involved in interactions with two countries, two contexts and two cultures. Cultures they interact with, very often differ a lot, create different frames of reference and require some reaction: building (or re-building) and negotiating new "immigrant identity". Immigrants construct their ethnic identity through constant ongoing interactions and dialogue with other individuals: from the host society, from other minority groups, and from their own ethnic groups – living abroad and in a home country (Buitelaar, 2002; Essers & Benschop, 2007, p. 53).

In identity stream of research, US ethnic groups identities are often investigated (Kibria, 2002; Lai, 2004), which is not a surprise due to long traditions and mass scale of migration to that country. Galush, when referring to migrants in the US, emphasizes that most of them could be characterized by dual sense of national identity in many aspects of social life. Immigrants wish to preserve important characteristics and values of their home country culture, but at the same time wish to be "good Americans" (Galush, 2006, p. 89).

For Alba ethnicity is a symbolic entity concerned with the symbolic dimension of culture only, not the culture itself, as he expresses it (Alba, 1990). Ethnicities are easily re-

constructed as a result of varying situational contexts. National or ethnic boundary building processes tend to be both interactive and selective.

> *Out of the large universe of potentially relevant cultural differentiae, only a few – and not necessarily those most salient to an outsider – are selected by actors as diacritical markers, signs or emblems of ethnic difference* (Brubaker, 2009, p. 19).

Pozniak (2009) explores another dimension of selectivity, i.e. the hegemonic discourses that inform popular perceptions of immigration and immigrants, and the ways in which immigrants both adopt and negotiate these discourses to construct their experiences and identities. She shows that newcomers do not uncritically internalize hegemonic representations of immigrants, and central narratives

> *serve as a prism through which newcomers construct their experiences and identities. They may accept and reproduce certain elements of a narrative while negotiating, subverting or outwardly rejecting others* (Pozniak, 2009, p. 188).

DeHart (2004) argues in a hegemonic discourse national (ethnic) identities may be imposed, as in the case of "Latino" immigrants. In this construct, strongly supported by the US media, Latin America is shown as a monoculture, "post national space characterized by cultural homogeneity, market integration, and technological underdevelopment" (DeHart, 2004, p. 268)[3]. On the other hand, Alba (1990) explains that unification (e.g. being "European") can be one of the forms of the renegotiation of ethnicity that brings significant social benefits for those it encompasses.

The body of research on immigrants identity is quite significant, but the economic dimension, and in particular entrepreneurship, is rarely a central point of disputes[4]. Accordingly, the publications referring to entrepreneurial identity (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2003), in most cases tend to stress issues other than nationality/immigration. Stuart (2009), for example, refers to entrepreneurs' identity construction processes and points out that space (in case of his research - territorial stigmatization of Skid Row area in Los Angeles) may play a crucial role in those processes. Falck, Heblich and Luedemann (2012) who apply the points of view of economics, call for intensification of research on identity, as it may provide "additional explanatory power" to the field of entrepreneurship. It would be an exaggeration, however, to say that the intersection between immigration (or being a member of an ethnic minority), entrepreneurship and identity does not exist in the literature.

For example, Heberer (2008) discusses the dual role of entrepreneurs – as carriers of ethnic symbols and agents of modernization. He claims that time (history) and space are crucial markers of identity, but also suggests that economic success influences the process of new identity development.

Transnational theories, popular in migration studies, are also reflected in research concerning identity/entrepreneurship relations. Ray (2009) provides an example of such studies and concentrates on transnational aspects of identity of entrepreneurs of Indian

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[3] To some extent "Latino" category resembles "Eastern Europe" – also very often perceived as a unified, post-communist land of underdevelopment but new market possibilities. One of us experienced the practical side of his label while living in the US – was expected to at least understand Eastern European languages (which obviously may be tricky – compare Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian to understand why).

[4] With one general exception - whenever immigrants from Asia (e.g. China or Korea) are investigated, economic aspect tends to be emphasized quite strongly.

origin operating in the US and India. He claims that transnational connections expand, and their role grows, also in the field of identity creation. Entrepreneurs who were studied by Ray describe themselves as being Indian, treasuring this sense of belonging, and nurturing common identity as well as memories of India. On the other hand, entrepreneurs of Indian origin did not find it problematic to incorporate their Indian identity with their American citizenship – they also described themselves as Americans (or Americans born in India).

Pécoud (2004) offers a little different approach and shows how German-Turkish entrepreneurs in Berlin live and work in culturally mixed context and rely on co-ethnic and non co-ethnic resources. As a result, they create a cosmopolitan identity pattern that is based heavily on their cultural competencies.

In this article, we define identity as a dynamic, processual, multilayered phenomenon that positions an individual, and defines his or her "being" in the world, and belonging to certain groups or categories (professional, ethnic and others). Our understanding of the concept is similar to this proposed by Kärreman and Alvesson (2001).

As we pointed out earlier, identity issues are investigated from both micro- and macro level perspectives. Researchers often show benefits arising from the connection of both perspectives (Cerulo, 1997; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001), and thus we try to bridge those levels in our research. There are potential links between these levels, which can be effectively used to study identity issues. Some examples were presented in previous sections, e.g. those linking individual identities with certain elements of group functioning – professions or ethnic communities. In this article, our concern is to show identity construction and re-construction from the perspective of immigrant entrepreneurs of Polish origin in the US, and of Vietnamese origin in Poland. In order to understand this subject, we decided to take into consideration not only individual motives, beliefs and capabilities, but also to contextualize the process by referring to different settings. Here, the profession (entrepreneurs) and migration between two contexts is crucial. For us, identity is useful as a bridging concept between individual, professional and national-ethnic levels.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Some authors stressed the need to investigate relations between entrepreneurship and identity (Pécoud, 2004), as this topic has hardly been investigated. With our research we wish to contribute to filling this gap. Moreover, we concentrate on immigrants, as we perceive them as a very interesting group from identity construction point of view: coping with different contexts, building life stories in two cultures, under influence of various internal and external factors. This multiplicity of layers makes the process more complex, but also very fascinating for a researcher. In this article we base on two research projects conducted in two different groups of immigrants. We decided to combine two very different groups because of couple of reasons: a) their life and professional situation is similar – members of both groups run their own businesses outside of their home country, b) both groups have to face differences in cultural frameworks (home and host country), and the situation of being de-placed, c) in both cases immigrants perceive substantial differences between values and symbols of a home and host culture. Thus, immigrant entrepreneurs under investigation have to rethink and re-construct their

identities in different dimensions. In both cases, we use the same methodology to enable comparative analysis.

According to the UN data, there are more than 210 million international migrants today worldwide, and probably this number will grow within the next decades (in 2000 there were about 160 million migrants) (Vorderwulbecke, 2013). For over a century the United States of America had been one of the major destinations of migrants from all over the world, and one of the major destinations of Polish migrants. Later, especially after accession of Poland to EU, the USA lost most of its attractiveness as a migration destination. Still, the population of the US inhabitants who declare Polish ancestry (single or mixed) is quite substantial: 9.5 million (3% of population) of Americans reveal their Polish origin (U.S.CB, 2010). This group has a significant economic power and influences (not only) American economy; 3.3% of American business owners declare Polish ancestry.

The population of Polish immigrant entrepreneurs – not only in the US – was seldom analyzed and described from the point of view of economics or management science. Many stereotypes exist in that field, both in Poland and in the US: usually when we think about Polish immigrants, all we can imagine are very simple, traditional businesses (for some empirical evidence see: Glinka, 2013, pp. 123-124).

Poland is not a popular destination for international migrants. Most of them chose Poland only as a transit country, on their way from the East to the West. Usually immigrants residing in Poland are from neighbouring countries like: Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. In the first place in the ranking are Ukrainian, then surprisingly Vietnamese and next Russians and Belarusians. (UDSC, 2010). It is very interesting considering the fact that the three of the mentioned countries belong to the same cultural area. Only Vietnamese people are from a very distant culture. As a consequence, the story of their arrival is interesting.

The first wave of Vietnamese immigrants to Poland took place in the '60s and '70s of the 20th century. This group of immigrants consists mainly of students and Ph.D. students who came to Poland in order to study at the Polish Universities. They came to Poland under the agreement between two communist governments: Polish and Vietnamese. It was assumed that the understanding should be that after graduation they would return to their host country. However, many of these students have stayed in Poland permanently. It is believed that these people (being well educated, knowing Polish and Vietnamese culture) helped the other groups of Vietnamese immigrants in entering Poland, and in building migration network (Górny et al. 2007). The prevailing form of economic activity amongst the Vietnamese, contrary to other immigrants, is self-employment. That is why, the Vietnamese constitute such an interesting group in terms of entrepreneurship (Wysieńska, 2012).

The field under investigation (identity creation by Polish and Vietnamese immigrant entrepreneurs) is grounded in culture, very dynamic and not well described in the literature, so the choice of qualitative methods was natural as leading to potentially interesting results and a better understanding of the subject of entrepreneurship (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004; Jennings, Perren & Carter, 2005). The main goal of both research projects was to examine entrepreneurial activities of immigrants: Polish in the US, and Vietnamese in Poland. Our projects were not focused directly on identity construction processes

– this category emerged from the field. In this article, the results of our studies are presented to address some main questions we formulated during the project, i.e: how is the identity of immigrant entrepreneurs created and what constitutes it?

## Project 1: Polish immigrant entrepreneurs in the US

Over 40 interviews (1/2 – 5 hours each) were conducted between October 2011 and July 2012. The snowball sampling method was used to identify potential subjects in study. Most of them were done in the US, mainly in the regions with the highest number of Polish immigrants (Chicago and Illinois, New York and New Jersey), but also in Florida, Wisconsin, California, Washington DC and Virginia. The gathered data was recorded and subsequently transcribed (around 800 pages of transcribed text were analyzed). Most interviews were conducted in Polish, as the vast majority of interviewees were first generation immigrants who spoke Polish fluently. The method of research used in the research was a semi-structured interview with set of open questions. The interviews were combined with observations and visits to entrepreneurs' companies. Additionally, secondary data sources which completed the data set providing context and reference were: entrepreneurs' internal analysis of documents, analysis of immigrant press, as well as analysis of survey data.

## Project 2: Vietnamese immigrant entrepreneurs in Poland

Over the period of April 2012 and April 2013 there were 20 interviews done with the Vietnamese entrepreneurs who run their companies in Warsaw. Mix of a snowball and diversity sampling method was used to identify research subjects. Objective was to collect the stories of not only typical immigrant entrepreneurs who lead restaurants or sell textile, but from people from different social groups, with different education, with different level of acculturation etc. The interview technique was semi-structured with set of open questions. All interviews were combined with observations, recorded and then transcribed. The interlocutors belonged mainly to the one and a half generation[5]- i.e. people who came to Poland with their parents as 2-4 year old children, and were brought up in this country. There were only 5 participants from the first generation of Vietnamese immigrants. Like in the first project, an analysis of documents, as well as analysis of survey data were used.

In both research projects we applied the procedures of grounded theory (open coding and *in vivo* coding) (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hensel & Glinka, 2012) in order to analyze the collected material (Charmaz, 2006). The procedures of interview analysis were followed twice, with the help of IT tools (Atlas TI software). After coding central categories were created. In the end, the comparative analysis of results obtained in both researches was performed.

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[5] The term 1.5 generation refers people who immigrate to a new country in their childhood and they grew up in a new country so it is difficult to define them as the first generation, on the other hand, they do not belong to the second generation born in the new country.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

What was observed while doing the research was that immigrant entrepreneurs' identities have the same main elements. They are constructed from the following: being immigrant, being entrepreneur and the sense of nationality. Going further, the last mentioned element can be considered on different levels: individual, social, national and even transnational. In our work we will focus on individual level of nationality, which is shaped by culture. At this point, it is essential to remember that in the case of immigrants, we have to consider two cultures forming nationality, home and host country. It is the collective imagination which builds the frame of a group.

All the three elements have a huge impact on the process of identity formation within immigrant populations. In the following section we would like to present how each element functions, and how our interlocutors construct and de-construct their identities. We will show identity as presented by immigrants; they belong to the ethnic community to which they feel they belong (Kolakowski, 2003).

**Nationality: Diasporas, Home Country and Host Country**

Our research has revealed, that nationality is crucial in immigrant entrepreneurs' self-definition. It is strongly connected with two other elements of identity construction process: being an immigrant, and being an entrepreneur. We start from describing nationality component, as for our interviewees it constitutes a foundation of the process of constant construction and reconstruction of identity.

**Polish Americans or Members of Polonia?**

Self-definition, in terms of nationality, was very important to immigrant entrepreneurs of Polish ancestry operating in the USA. Some of them, at the beginning of an interview, explicitly pointed out who they feel they were.

> *I treat myself as a Pole. And I always say: I'm Polish, I am not American. I am Polish-American, but you know, first of all I am Polish. I make no secret of it.[6]. [A30][7]*

> *I am an American of Polish ancestry. [A29]*

Most of the interviewees draw attention to their great sentiment to the home country. In some cases it is a romantic vision: they depict it as the country where their grandparents or parents lived, some of the immigrants spent great youth there, some of them had experiences in the fight against communist rule. Those memories are quite vivid, but on the other hand immigrants notice significant changes that take place in Poland – most of them like the changes, but some of them highlight their negative side. Most of interviewees maintain regular contacts with home country, visit it, sometimes start businesses in Poland as well.

> *I have great feelings for Poland. My ancestors, grandparents lived there. [A21]*

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[6] In origin, this was said in two languages: Polish mixed with English.
[7] "A" in quotations stands for Polish immigrant entrepreneurs in the US, and "V" – Vietnamese in Poland. The numbers were ascribed randomly.

> *Poland has changed. Now Poland is amazing, it's beautiful. Every year I go to Poland. [A27]*

In addition, most of the immigrants have at least a part of their family in Poland, which also influences the way they construct their everyday life, as well as self-definitions.

> *I am kind of torn, I have my family here and there. So I fly to Poland again, and again, as often as I can. [A28]*

These, in most cases, positive immigrants' feelings for Poland, do not exclude the US as an important part of their identity. They seem to seek for a balance between their embeddedness in the home country, and their appreciation of the host country.

> *I am here. I have an American citizenship. But I didn't forget about Poland as you can see [A8]*

> *When I came here for the first time, I just didn't like America. [and now] after two weeks [in Poland] I miss an American air. It's no secret, I start to suffocate. [A16]*

> *I keep thinking about Poland. When I fall asleep I recall my school years. I think about streets. I walk the streets in my dreams, and this country will always be the most precious for me. But on the other hand, this is my country as well, I adapted it as my country. (…)f Beata, I am so happy in his country, really! I keep telling it to everyone: I love this country, I love this country. Such a beautiful country. I made my life in here. [A4]*

The perception of nationality becomes much more complicated when it comes to the diaspora – traditionally called *Polonia.* The most part of interviewees had mixed feelings about *Polonia,* and were very reluctant to define themselves as a part of it.

> *Poles here cannot unite. [A28]*

> *'Polonia'is a very hard group of people. They seem to be envious [A1]*

> *We've always been a huge group, but not a strong group [A23]*

Moreover, some negative stereotypes of *Polonia* (existing both in Poland and in the US) are stressed, and – at least to some extent – agreed upon. Some of the interviewees contrasted themselves (and their friends) with classical *Polonia*, some – pointed out that *Polonia* is very differentiated, and pigeonholing is an inappropriate simplification.

> *Here [in California] the Polonia is very distinct from the one that is subject to irony and derided in Poland. Distinct from Chicago-like or New York Greenpoint-like Polonia. [A19]*

> *The stereotype exist in Poland that Poles in the US are primitive beetroots. I wouldn't agree with that. [A31]*

No matter to what extent interviewees agree with negative stereotypes of *Polonia*, they put importance to one thing: it is not a coherent and united group that can participate in political or social life of the host country. *Polonia* seems to be more interested in the home country and its political life.

> *The huge problem is that Poles do not participate in the political life of the United States. But every time there are elections in Poland, our consulate is crowded. [A24]*

> *There are so many Poles. But we have 138 organizations, 424 clubs and 8656 opinions (…) and everybody attacks one another. [A6]*

Having mixed feelings about *Polonia*, most of Polish immigrant entrepreneurs believe that there is a need to sustain Polish traditions, and have some places to gather – at least from time to time. Some factors were pointed as those which increase the coherence of the Polish group, among them language, church and events. Using the Polish language, enforces the Polish part of their identity. For many immigrant entrepreneurs it is also crucial in business, as they address at least part of their offer to the Polish ethnic group.

> *Here in my company everybody speaks two languages. They speak Polish and English. [A5]*

> *Every worker needs to speak Polish. No matter what's his race, but must speak Polish. I do not mind the race. [A8]*

> *We are an American company. But we speak Polish, and our staff speaks Polish. And that is good. If I would hire an American who doesn't speak Polish, this person wouldn't manage the job. Because we are a bilingual company. (…) And our customers are bilingual. [A10]*

On the other hand, limiting oneself to the Polish language can cause many problems with functioning in the host society. That mode of action (functioning without English) used to be very popular in the past, however, there is still a group of immigrants that speaks only Polish and manages to get around thanks to moving to the Polish districts.

> *I moved downtown Chicago where I didn't have contacts with Polish language, and it helped me to learn English. [A4]*

> *Now more and more people know how to use their abilities. They speak English, and get around easier. [A3]*

The Catholic Church has always played a very important role in *Polonia*'s life. It has long traditions, and well developed structures. Polish churches and priests can be found in every state, in almost every large city all over the US. Churches are (or used to be) central points of Polish districts, like in Chicago and New York.

> *You know, I think that it is the Saint Hyacinth'schurch that saves Jackowo[8]. A lot of people go to this church. (…) and you know, wherever you live, there is always a Polish church, and a Polish mass. [A7]*

> *In average, Polonia here in the US is much more religious and practicing than an average individual in Poland (…). Most of my local Polish friends I can surely meet in church at 11 or 12 o' clock. And I wouldn't meet any of my friends in church in Warsaw. These are the differences. Yes. Polonia is quite religious here. [A33]*

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[8] Jackowo is a custom name of a Polish district in Chicago. Its name comes from Saint Hyacinth's Basilica – In Polish it is St. Jacek.

Poles participate in various events organized not only by the church, but also by local governments, entrepreneurs or immigrants' organizations. Some of them have patriotic dimension (like parades) and help to sustain (or define) the concept of "being Polish", some promotes Polish culture, some serve for amusement (picnics, popular music concerts).

In the past Polish districts served as hubs where traditions were cultivated, everybody spoke Polish, cooked Polish food and watched Polish TV. But it seems that these enclaves are becoming weaker, as people tend to spread, and move to either suburbs or city centers. Moreover, Polish districts, like *Jackowo* (Chicago) or *Greenpoint* (New York) were perceived equally as helpful places, and stigmatizing places. It was easier to start in a Polish environment, which confirms classical thesis of Breton on institutional completeness (1964). But those who came here, tended to stay here with limited development possibilities.

The interplay between a Polish and an American element of self is reflected in immigrant nationality discourse in many ways. The place of birth is not necessary the most important factor defining nationality.

> She's got a very nice husband from Poland. Born in here, but with Polish highlander roots. [A16]

One of the most visible aspects of Polish-American interplay, is how immigrants define the concept of "we". A huge part will refer to Poles as "we". It becomes more tricky when *Polonia* is considered: in most cases *Polonia* means "they" (or at least "we" and "they" mixed up in one group). When referring to America, immigrants tend to use "we in America" rather than "we Americans". It supports directly expressed opinions of many immigrants: they are first of all Polish, but also citizens of the US, Americans (of Polish ancestry); quite seldom they refer to themselves as members of *Polonia.*

### Identification with Vietnamese and Identification with Vietnamese Diaspora

Nationality constitutes an important element of identity also in the case of Vietnamese immigrant entrepreneurs living in Poland. The Vietnamese from the first generation are more confident in relation to the sense of their nationality. Although they stay in Poland and cope with its reality, they miss Vietnam immensely. Other studies, that used ethnosizer to assess the identity and integration of the Vietnamese in Poland, indicate that the Vietnamese are undecided about further plans to stay in Poland and choose separation strategy of integration (Brzozowski & Pędziwiatr, 2015).

Still, it does not matter how long they are in Poland. All interlocutors have some feelings for Vietnam, but the first generation has the strongest bond with the country.

The Vietnamese from the second generation are in a difficult situation. They feel that they are half Vietnamese and half Polish and seem to understand both cultures and, thereby, build their dual identity. On the other hand they do not belong to any culture entirely. They try to answer the question: am I Vietnamese or am I Polish? Some of them cannot cope with this discontinuity and it brings to them many problems in relation to family issues:

> For example me, I was raised here, I came here when I was three years old, so I am a mixture: half Polish, half Vietnamese. Here and there I cannot find myself in 100%. [V10]

*Our first year was horrible. My Mum doesn't allow herself to think that I can be with the Polish guy. But I told her, already being at junior high school, I would be with Polish, not Vietnamese (...) I had so many battles with Mum. But she is used to this idea and gave up... because how long can you fight? Especially that we have been together for 1,5 year. And we went to Vietnam together. My Dad accepted him out of hand. He accepted him as he is. And whole my family accepted him well. [V9]*

There is a group of Vietnamese who maintain their tradition and their Buddhism practice. For instance, when it comes to business issues, it is important for the Vietnamese to have an altar to be taken care of. They believe that without one, there would not be any success. What is more, they contact a spiritual teacher (who is Vietnamese) in order to get an advice on various aspects ( e.g. how they should behave and what they should do to achieve their business goals). Some of them treat omens as crucial signs in decision making process.

*Tao is a person, who knows tradition and know a lot of things. We call him at 6 or 2 in the morning, we call our teacher and we ask him what we should do. And even when he is 10 thousands kilometers from us he says: listen to me, you put incense wrong! Because dragon changed its position. Put him more on the right side. [V12]*

*So they can refuse to sell meat to a pregnant woman when she comes on the first day of a lunar month. My sister-in-law told me that previously they had never sold it. At present they sometimes break their rules. There is superstition about pregnant women, who bring bad luck. [V9]*

The Vietnamese who are involved in carrying on trade often have their own place where they gather. Until very recently they could assemble at a stadium in the centre of Warsaw. However the stadium was rebuilt and they were forced to move to two different big halls where they created the shopping centre[9].

*You know, there is no stadium anymore. Now is Marywilska and Maksimus* (market halls). *[V5]*

Vietnamese immigrants are different from each other, with various life stories, educations and motives. Sometimes they do not accept the way other Vietnamese behave, and as a consequence- they do not identify themselves with the whole community.

*So from when I am here, I think that Polish are very hospitable. But slowly, slowly there are going to be more Vietnamese here. The working class is coming and because their manners and culture is of lower level, so that is why Polish people rather do not like Vietnamese. [V11]*

However, Vietnamese see the difference between the second and first generation. It is hard for them to classify these two into one nationality. They even describe young generation as being more Polish than Vietnamese.

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[9] 10th-Anniversary Stadium build in 1955 and for many decades it was one of the largest stadium in Poland. After 1989 was used mainly as an open-air market where people could buy a whole range of goods like clothes, CDs, souvenirs. Traders were from many countries also from Vietnam. In 2007 market was closed. Now Wólka Kosowska, Marywilska marketplace located near Warsaw, serve as a such markets.

*In Poland they are like real Polish. They can cooperate with Polish, not like their parents who were afraid. They finished Polish higher education and they can work at the Polish administration or companies in Poland. They know the local habits. They are shaped like Polish and they have qualifications like Polish people. This generation has everything to lead their life in a Polish way. Probably they are even more fluent in Polish than in Vietnamese. [V8]*

The fact that the Vietnamese and Polish culture differ, makes the cultural gap even wider. In certain ways, they belong to two different worlds. In the Polish world they have friends, business partners, even life partners, and in the Vietnamese reality there are family, friends and also business partners. Both worlds have different order, beliefs and perceived values.

### Nationality as Part of Identity – Final Comments

In both research projects nationality emerged as a crucial part of identity. In both cases we could observe different interplays of two components: home, and host country identity. In the case of Vietnamese in Poland, the identification with Poland and Polish values seems to be lower than identification of Poles in the US with their new country of residence. But both groups – while building bridges with the host country – tend to maintain their home national identity. Kolakowski (2003) identified five elements constituting the process of construction of national identity: national spirit (manifested in collective set of behaviours), historical memory (memories about the home country that do not have to be true, but may be imaginative), anticipation and future orientation (includes opinions about the future, and what will happen with the nation), national body (connected with territory and artefacts shaping environment), and nameable beginning (legends of the beginning of the nation dated somewhere in the time). Those elements are clearly visible in our study, however they seem to take different forms, evolve over time and to some extent – serve different purposes. For example, national body seems to be more important for Vietnamese, than to Poles. Vietnamese created shopping centres where they are the main traders, and these places have become some kind of small cities for them. Moreover, there are some districts in Warsaw where the Vietnamese prefer to live (Górny *et al.*, 2007; Bieniecki *et al.*, 2008). At the same time Polish ethnic districts in the US have tended to lose their central role and significance.

For both groups historical memory and connections with the past are very important. Just like Kolakowski claims – legends and own interpretations of history tend to be more important than "historical facts". As Kolakowski states: *We learn history not in order to know how to behave or how to succeed, but to know who we are* (1990, p. 158).

The national dimension of identity is not simple and clear: it is composed of different elements connected with two settings, and can be seen as a result of self-reflection and perceptions, trade-offs between different (sometimes conflicting) elements. Moreover, as immigrants' perceptions of home and host country changes over time – this element of identity is being constantly reconstructed. To that crucial dimension, two others are added: experience of migration, and professional dimension of identity.

### Being an Immigrant

Polish immigrant entrepreneurs generally like the American environment, and find it

quite easy to live in. Their first impressions were, however, mixed. Most of them admired the easiness of the economic system (little bureaucracy), but were surprised by some elements of American culture. Some of them found it difficult to switch to the American way of life, which is according to their perception: being more optimistic, self-believing and always smiling. Some of them appreciated open attitude of Americans.

> *In immigrant's life it is very important to believe in yourself, and not to give up. You cannot think that you are an immigrant, so you have accent and you are afraid to speak up! Absolutely not! Americans admire you! [A4]*

> *I didn't have problems because of being an immigrant. I am not an American born here, I do have a strong Polish accent that can be instantly recognized. So I can be easily recognized as an immigrant, but I've never felt any distress, in contrary, sometimes appreciation. [A10]*

Positive attitude of Americans was very often underlined by interviewees, but they also pointed out that some stereotypes about Poles do exist. Those stereotypes are connected with professions mainly; as immigrants claim working in construction companies (man) or cleaning companies (woman) is still perceived as a typical Polish professional career by Americans. This picture is evolving, as Poles tend to choose more and more differentiated professions.

In general, interviewees perceive America as a country that is very friendly for immigrants - a relatively good place to be an immigrant, as this is a special mixture of races and cultures constituting the US. In that mixture one does not feel extreme alienation and is allowed to do what he or she wants to.

> *America is based on immigrants, isn't it? [A14]*

> *America is very friendly for immigrants. Nobody asks questions. Everything is alright. [A24]*

As we explained above, some immigrants are torn between Poland and the US. But in the case of Polish immigrants it seems to cause problems more on the level of perceiving one's nationality than on the level of self-definition as an immigrant. As America used to offer (and still offers) a relatively easy start for newcomers, some appreciate a possibility to have a new beginning in life. Obviously, not everyone is so optimistic, and some interviewees claimed that first years were marked by extremely hard work, sacrifices, and a fight for survival. Dealing with novelty can be perceived as source of opportunities and difficulties in the same time.

> *I generally think that immigrant's life is very easy. Particularly for those who leave their country alone, because they can get rid of their old environment and everything that influenced them. If immigrants have a little self-consciousness they can easily make a new start – ok, I begin, carte blanche, nobody knows me and I have new people around. [A15]*

What can be found out from the Vietnamese (among other things) is the first impression from their early days in Poland. They described, for instance: the weather, food, people, language, habits, what made them feel strange and alienated and generally culture. They felt incongruous in Poland and more like guests - not inhabitants. Everything was surprising.

*Beautiful streets. On the middle were trees. And I am thinking I do not know why, but I am happy. And then… I did not know Polish… I am staying on the street. I do not know where is the Vietnamese embassy. I ask some woman. She left her things and led me to the embassy.* [V11]

It was, and still is, very hard work to create their own places. These were especially people belonging to the first generation who were the pioneers. They could rely on nobody. Everything what they built, was created from the beginning. Finding themselves in a new environment and creating something from nothing was a huge challenge. However they managed to accomplish it. They built their community and prepared space for their children to live in advantageous conditions.

*So we create everything by ourselves, our place, where we work and we help each other somehow. [V12]*

It is worth noting that they are proud of their work and what they have constructed so far. They are aware of changes, the conditions in which they lived and what kind of immigrants they were and are.

Before '60s and '70s of the 20th century, there were no Vietnamese in Poland. Polish residents were more homogenous. It makes Vietnamese feel different and out of place. They are aware of the fact that Poland it is not a place to where they fully belong.

*Young people are open… but in Poland there is still racism, especially this hidden racism. I see it. Fortunately it is better now than before, but still it is hidden. I do not what to go deeper, because it looks bad. [V8]*

*Generally we can exist at home and among Poles. This is not a problem. But when we come back to our homes we can be very Asian. We exist in two worlds. We know how to behave like Poles, and how to behave like Vietnamese. [V10]*

The immigrants are in a difficult situation also in relation to their home country. They remember the way Vietnam looked in the past and they long for living there, but their fatherland has been changing. When some of them come back to Vietnam, they are disappointed, and they do not accept new rules and culture. Their dream about improving the situation in the country is destroyed by the new reality. This is a specific longing for home, where home is Vietnam, even if they do not live there anymore.

*For 15 years I did not have any special feelings for homeland, that me and country... Poland ... I like living here. I have never thought about Vietnam. However it came, I felt I have to go to Vietnam and built the power grid. (...) I went there and my idea about power grid gone... generally I lost... [V12]*

*(*about her older sister*) She was trying to do something in Vietnam, but she failed so she came back here. [V2]*

The above-mentioned facts show a tendency among the Vietnamese that they do not match fully to any culture. They are between two worlds and they do not feel that they belong to one place. It is a very difficult issue in relation to building their identity. As Kubitsky (2012) writes: it is a trace left in immigrants' psyche forever. Being in between is characteristic feeling of the immigrant identity. Idealisation of the home country and then clash with the reality is a common situation. For some individuals this is a very hard

experience.There are many factors affecting immigrants' imaginations of the homeland (Morawska, 2011).

All of the immigrants are familiar with nostalgia, the feeling described by Ritivoi (2002, p. 14) as "*an important element in the experience of immigrants".* She draws attention to the fact that all immigrants struggle with alienation, self-estrangement, changing their personal identity. Nostalgia is an immanent element of immigration. It connects past with the present and fills the gap in personal history. It is the feeling about belonging to some place.

Both Polish and Vietnamese immigrants feel nostalgia to their home country, which we discussed above. Being an immigrant – longing for a home country, living abroad, trying to find appropriate place in the society is a natural part of their identity. It appears that these are the most important elements which construct their identity as immigrants. For the Poles it seems to be the part that causes less problems, than for the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese managed to overcome a sense of outsider status. But instead they re-constructed their identities by creating two parallel identities: Polish and Vietnamese. Everything is done to avoid the uncomfortable feeling of being immigrant. Polish immigrants find themselves in the land of immigrants – the US, where being an immigrant is rather a rule than an exception.

No matter what strategies are used in constructing identity, in both cases being an immigrant means mixing different meanings, symbols, values and patterns (Fenton, 2007). The outcome is ambiguous, „identity under construction", a patchwork composed of different migration experiences, symbols, rituals and values, embedded in host and home traditions and strongly connected with national dimension.

### Entrepreneurship as a Part of Identity

In theories of immigrant entrepreneurship different reasons of establishing own businesses are described (Volery, 2007). Two most popular point out that: i) disadvantage situation pushes immigrants to open a new business (Chrysostome, 2010) or ii) cultural qualities of immigrants and operating between two different settings make them more willing to create new ventures (Sahin, Nijkamp, & Baycan-Levent, 2007). Our research indicates that both theories can be useful in explaining immigrants entrepreneurial behavior – the first one may be applied to Vietnamese immigrants ($1^{st}$ generation in particular), whilst the second one seems to explain entrepreneurial processes initiated by Polish immigrants.

Polish immigrants often perceive the United States as a land of opportunities. In that context being entrepreneur may be perceived as an important completion of self definition.

> A lot of people [of Polish ancestry] here (…) is raised to have a vision and motivation to reach for the American Dream. [A29]

This dream may take many forms: from a local, small ethnic enterprise to a big, growing company. In most cases Polish immigrants had a choice even if they didn't speak English. A lot of Polish entrepreneurs on the market created some job opportunities. Most of the jobs offered to Poles by Poles were not very attractive, but also not very demanding in terms of competencies and education. That might serve as an impetus for creating a business – sometimes also quite simple and not demanding in terms of com-

petencies and education. Another quite strong impetus comes from the environment, institutions, legal system and culture, perceived by immigrants as helping, and favorable for businesses. In other words, entrepreneurship constitutes an interesting and attractive way of constructing professional self-definition. The interviewees maintain that the entrepreneurial way is not the easy one, and requires a lot of time, effort, and even sacrifice. Fortunately in most cases pay-offs are adequate, in particular social recognition and financial status.

> *[own business] means big sacrifices. Especially in personal life (…). But if you love what you do, that is definitely the best option. [A11]*

> *There are always downs in business (…) but you have to believe in yourself, believe that you do the right job! No matter what you need to stand by your principles, always! [A4]*

Most of immigrants connect entrepreneurship with freedom and independence. Entrepreneurship also holds the promise of satisfaction, and confirmation of unique skills and abilities, with few exceptions (entrepreneurs feeling himself/herself "chained" to his).

> *Nobody has to support me. I know how to make money. [A6]*

> *I like what I do. I built a great managerial team in my company. [A21]*

Business very often overlaps with ethnicity. What is interesting, as far as business is concerned, opinions of interviewees about *Polonia* are more positive, or at least mixed. Only some of entrepreneurs operate on a typical ethnic market, i.e. hire Poles and targets Polish ethnic customers group. But most entrepreneurs cooperate with the Polish ethnic group in one way or another: by choosing Polish business partners or addressing job offers to Poles first. The opinion that Polish immigrants cooperate much better in business, than in politics is quite popular, however there is a group of entrepreneurs that avoid this kind of cooperation as a result of previous bad experiences.

> *Here in Chicago there is an opinion that we are not united. But I think it is not about business issues. It is more about politics among Polonia, not so much about business. [A5]*

> *I prefer cooperation with Polish companies. If I have a possibility to buy, contract something (…) I always prefer a Pole. I think that we should help, support one another. [A23]*

> *Work with ours is a very complicated issue. [A6]*

The first generation of Vietnamese immigrants felt they had no choice: they had to become entrepreneurs. As far as the motives are concerned they seem to be very different from Polish immigrants in the US; the self-employment was often the only perceived option for them. They were not able to find a job at Polish companies because of the language barrier. At that time, and even now, the Polish law, economic and social situation forced some of Vietnamese immigrants to set up their own companies.

> *…on the other hand it is the result of formal issues. The labour market in Poland is still closed for the Vietnamese people… [V2]*

*Because it is not that we have a chance of working at Polish companies...this chance is so tiny. So seeing that we do not count on anybody's help, and we have no choice. [V3]*

That is why, most entrepreneurial immigrants opted for self-employment; and they hired members of their ethnic group at their companies. It is a natural ability for the first generation to become entrepreneurs. They even do not think about themselves otherwise than independent businessmen. Working for someone else is not a path, which they consider any more. Running their own business is a natural preference, that supports a decent life. Moreover, they do not persuade their children to follow their career choices. They dream about a better future for their descendants and they think that doing business is very difficult, saddled with high level of stress.

*But it is very hard to run these restaurants.(...) My parents want better future for us... [V4]*

The second generation is not convinced that they want to become entrepreneurs. They are aware of being highly skilled and well-educated, and hence, competitive on the Polish labour market. Better future for some of them is to have stability and a certain salary every month.

*Here I grew up... second generation. Let's say, I am well qualified, I am highly skilled. I do not see the future like that, I judge my career choices whether it brings me the development (but primarily money) (...) If business is going well, I will go in this direction. I will leave my job and I will focus on this. If not, I will close the business down and I will go to a well-paid job. [V5]*

*I have to work somewhere. I wouldn't be able to have just my own business. You have to deal with your company 24 hours per day. And I don't want to live like that. I want to have a job, and after my shift I do not have to think about work. I want to have my salary every month. I don't want my income to depend on customers. [V9]*

Some immigrants use their parents' experience to become successful entrepreneurs. They have a strong will to shape their future by being independent.

*I put into my head that I am either the one who hands out the cards or that one who receives the cards. [V10]*

The second generation, people who were brought up in Poland, are very confident about their business skills.

*I have my business network and all suppliers and good, fixed prices. [V10]*

All interviewees agreed that they want to have a business. It does not have to be the main source of income. Some of them worked in companies, before setting up their businesses, but now they think that having own companies is the best option.

(about his Father who is the owner of the restaurant) *sometimes he tells me that it is better to work for ourselves than for someone else. [V11]*

To sum up, older Vietnamese immigrants were forced by the life situation to become entrepreneurs. They cannot imagine working as employees now. However, the second generation has a wide range of job opportunities. There is a group of immigrants for whom self-employment is an opportunity to make some extra money, and to verify their

capabilities as entrepreneurs, without taking the whole risk (still working as employees). Another identified group of young Vietnamese have the ambition to create a new original businesses, more modern than their parents have.

Following the "self categorization theory" proposed by Turner and Oakes (1986) it can be noticed that our interlocutors: both Poles and Vietnamese immigrants categorize themselves as independent people. Even if they are employees, they still want to have something on their own. This attitude influences their actions, making them construct their own, professional reality. Polish immigrants (both first and second generation) tend to show more will towards developing their business, and their businesses are more differentiated, ranging from traditional shops on the corner, to multinational IT companies. This can be, at least partly explained by longer tradition of Polish immigration to the USA – many types of businesses have been created, and many different role models exist within this ethnic group.

Finally, we must put emphasis on the fact that our research has revealed that professional dimension - being an entrepreneur – can be perceived as a stabilizing one, at least comparing to national/ethnic and immigrant dimensions. This may be observed in both groups under investigation, however we feel that this tendency is more visible among Polish immigrants. Most of our interviewees were self-confident, proud of being entrepreneurs. They emphasised that it is a hard work, but it gives a lot of satisfaction, self-fulfilment, and helps them build their position in a society. Being an entrepreneur brings immigrants closer to their American dream, or Polish dream in the case of Vietnamese. Additionally, they feel that the host country citizens (especially Americans) appreciate their success. That, in turn, helps immigrant entrepreneurs feel more "at home" and give the host country elements a better place in their self-definitions.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has explored what elements constitute immigrants' identities in two cultural settings (Poland and the US). It has developed theoretical and empirical insights into how specific groups of migrants in host societies refer to different dimensions of their self definition: national (being Polish, Vietnamese, American), professional (being an entrepreneur) in the context of perceiving themselves as immigrants. Recognizing the nature of processes of identity construction and reconstruction is essential for gaining in-depth knowledge of their actions, decisions they make, and relations they build with other immigrants as well as other people.

Our research illustrates identity construction and re-construction as a multidimensional, complex and dynamic process. Even second generation of immigrants faces the problem of being connected to two different frames of reference, longing for their home country and, at the same time, trying to define their place in the host country. Immigrant and national/ethnic dimension of identity are inseparably connected, as being a migrant leads to many dilemmas connected with belonging and self-categorization. Many of our interviewees spontaneously started the conversation with self-defining statements: I am Polish, I am Polish-American, I am Vietnamese… This self-attribution changed, however, during the interview, and the concepts "we" and "they" were used in many meanings. What we saw was a flux, and not a concrete, stable system of elements. Thus our findings support tendencies identified by prior identity studies.

Immigrants see themselves as conquerors trying to grasp new lands in a somehow romantic fight for recognition or acceptance. Those from the first generation very often had to change their professional life – like Vietnamese coming to Poland, and feeling that they are not fitted to the labour market, or Poles who found out that their Polish managerial experiences have no value for their potential American employers.

Others define themselves as transnational travellers – constantly living between two countries, but one day willing to come back to their homeland. They try to build intercultural competencies (Magala, 2005) in order to grasp two different contexts and build bridges between them.

There is also a group of hobos, exiles, who feel misplaced and strange, and do not deal too well with the process of identity reconstruction. Amongst our interviewees – immigrant entrepreneurs – it was not a common case, and one of the possible explanations is the nature of professional identity reflected in immigrants' discourse.

Entrepreneurship, according to our research, is the most stable dimension of immigrants' self-definitions. It delivers a kind of counterpoint to liquid definitions of "we" and "they", and constantly re-constructing a sense of belonging. Instability of other dimensions of identity causes a lot of actual and potential tensions and stress, whilst being an entrepreneur provides a self-assuring element.

The identity of immigrant entrepreneurs must be re-constructed due to several reasons. Those reasons are connected with personal characteristics (beliefs, preferences, competencies), as well as with context. In the case of immigrants, what makes the process unique is the radical switch in that context: moving from one country and culture to another, sometimes very different from the one an individual is used to. In the article we delivered an empirical illustration of important aspects of that process.

### Limitations and Further Research

The process of the construction of identity of immigrant entrepreneurs is a relatively new field in the entrepreneurship studies. Our research contributes to the better recognition of this phenomenon, but it has several limitations. First of all, our research is limited to relatively small group of interviewees. The extension of the group of interviewees would allow to investigate this issue deeper. Secondly, the comparative analysis may be enhanced, e.g. the analysis could be conducted amongst immigrant entrepreneurs from other ethnic groups. It is noteworthy that the process of constructing immigrant identity differs little between culturally distinct groups. The differences are not significant yet still some groups construct their reality in host countries differently. Also, it would be important for further research to study the second or even third generation of immigrant entrepreneurs and compare the results with the first generation. Moreover, it would be crucial to examine family and school as factors affecting the process of identity building. The study of the process of raising in a host country could be particularly interesting.

For further research it would be also useful to consider mixed embeddedness concept (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, Leun & Rath, 1999) where analysis covers the following interacting areas: economic, social and institutional context. It shows that immigrants are involved in an complex environment and it would be necessary to study the various issues in a broader context.

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