A woman with long brown hair, wearing a teal coat and a black and white bag, stands on a bridge railing, looking out at the Tower Bridge in London at dusk. The bridge is illuminated with blue lights, and the River Thames is visible in the background.

Master's thesis title:

Entrepreneurship as lived experience. The voices of female business-owners of Bulgarian origin in London

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Entrepreneurship as lived experience. The voices of female business-owners of Bulgarian origin in London

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Abstract

Since the 1980s the discipline of entrepreneurial studies has started to include more and more perspectives from minority groups among others. Forty years onwards, the scholarly fields that have emerged, namely migrant entrepreneurial studies and female entrepreneurial studies, are rich in gathered data, created theories, and adopted approaches; yet there still exists knowledge gaps. One such gap is linked with the lack of research with a focus on female migrants coming from developing countries and initiating new business ventures in developed countries. Such studies are an important asset to academia because they shine a light on the complexity of the entrepreneurial process and entrepreneurial behaviour in general, and illustrate that both phenomena are in a state of constant *flux* due to the stronger impact of globalisation nowadays.

The current master's study addresses this knowledge gap by focusing on the lived experiences of 10 female entrepreneurs of Bulgarian origin in London who have initiated their own business venture. It explores their motives to start a business in the English capital and not in their own country, i.e. Bulgaria. Meanwhile, the study also explores if they actually fit in the entrepreneurial framework as created by prominent scholars such as Schumpeter, Ajzer, and Shapero and if not, why their experiences should nonetheless be included in the field of entrepreneurial studies.

The study starts with a historical overview of the Bulgarian diaspora in the UK and in London in particular and includes a partial mapping of the businesses of Bulgarian women in London today. Considering the complexity of the research questions, the study adopts an ethnographic methodology and includes 10 in-depth interviews and participant observations.

The central finding from the study is that entrepreneurial behaviour can also be considered as *a lived experience*, which is not solely about aiming at higher incomes or improving economic development, but is much more about self-expression, self-confidence, and independence. The study tries to understand why the interviewees were not able to feel like this in their home country and presents an alternative view towards their experience as migrants and business-owners in their host country.

Keywords

Bulgarian diaspora, female entrepreneurship, migrant entrepreneurship, female business-owners, ethnography, global cities, London, Bulgarian women, entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial behaviour

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1. Introduction

International migration is a firm feature of the globalising world and although it has already been studied thoroughly from various perspectives and disciplines, there are still unexplored and difficult to access communities. One such group is the Bulgarian community in the global city of London. The current dissertation aims for studying the experience of a smaller segment of this community, namely Bulgarian women, first generation migrants in the UK, who own their own businesses in the city of London.

The initial hypothesis of the study is that these women have felt much more limited and pressured because they had to come up to the expectations of the traditional society within the Bulgarian context; and because they do not fit fully in the prominent entrepreneurial models, as we will see later on. They can also be considered as a marginalised group because what they do is not fully recognised since the Bulgarian language does not have a word for them. Theoretically, in Bulgarian all nouns are gendered, including professions, but in practice most of the female forms are used only in the so called 'gendered professions' in the fields of medical work, education, and low-paid services among others. In all other fields of professional development it does sound unusual (and in some cases even derogatory) to use a female form of the word, especially if the word does not have Slavic roots, which is the case with the word 'entrepreneur,' whose female form is not accepted and whose male form is also more linked with the Western European context than the Eastern European one. Nevertheless these women do have the characteristics of entrepreneurs since they are risk-takers and innovators in their fields and are much more connected with their business intuition and gut feeling. For them, at the moment, entrepreneurship is not solely an 'entrepreneurial event,' it is not just an aim for higher incomes or an aim to look better in society, it is more of an experience of liberation from the stereotypes and limitations that they have felt back in their home country - Bulgaria.

The current master's thesis starts with a discussion of prominent theoretical frameworks that have been used to analyse entrepreneurial intentions in the past 30 years and shows how they are not suitable for studying the experience of the chosen population, i.e. Bulgarian women, first generation migrants, who have initiated business ventures in London. After the literature review and the discussion of main concepts in the second chapter, a chapter that analyses the modern Bulgarian migration patterns, i.e. since the collapse of the Soviet Union, follows. It starts with a review of the general outward migration patterns of Bulgarians, moves to the migration of Bulgarian nationals to the UK, and finishes with a focus on the movement of Bulgarian women. After realising that using solely quantitative methods will not give an in-depth perspective to the main research question, an ethnographic methodology was adopted and the analysis of the data gathered in that way, is presented in the fourth chapter. Lastly, the fifth chapter shows the general conclusions from the master's thesis.

1.1. Aims

First, the master's research aims to summarise and discuss prominent theoretical frameworks for analysing entrepreneurial intentions. After that, I pinpoint the existing knowledge gaps in them by asking if the population and the sample for the study fit in those models. Hence, it suggests expanding of the models in order for them to include the Bulgarian female business-owners.

Second, the study aims to follow and analyse the 4 waves of outward migration of Bulgarian nationals since 1989 up until 2019 with a specific focus on the Bulgarian diaspora in London and especially the female migration that has been increasing in numbers and changing in terms of characteristics since 2017. *How is the most recent wave different from the previous ones? Why are the numbers of women increasing? How is the female migration of Bulgarian nationals different from the male one?* By answering these questions the study gives context to the reader and also adds to the broader academic discourse of the Bulgarian diaspora in the UK and in London in particular.

Third, the research aims to better understand the experience and more precisely the motivation factors of a sample of Bulgarian women, first generation migrants in the UK, who have initiated one or more business ventures in London. *Why have they chosen London as their base? How has that changed their entrepreneurial behaviour? How do they feel as business owners in London in comparison to Bulgaria?* These questions help us position these women in the broader discourse about female migrant entrepreneurial behaviour and more importantly to take a deeper look into the differences between their experience back in Bulgaria and their experience in London.

1.2. Research question

The dissertation focuses on exploring the entrepreneurial intentions of Bulgarian women who have already initiated a business venture in the English capital either by themselves or with a partner. Hence, the study aims to understand why these women have migrated to London and how that has affected their entrepreneurial attitude, which adds another perspective to the dynamics of the Bulgarian outward migration waves. According to the latest statistical projections of Eurostat, by 2080, the total population of Bulgaria will shrink to approximately 4m people, which in comparison to the current number of 8m people means a decrease of 50%.

At the same time, Bulgaria is becoming more stable economically and politically each year, which leads one to think that the reasons for the current migration are not purely economic and are instead much more complex. The master's thesis focuses on the entrepreneurial intentions that emerge before and during the entrepreneurial act of a segment (women) of a marginalised migrant community (Bulgarian) in order to tackle down the triggers for their migration and the triggers for their business initiation. Bulgarian women are marginalised within the Bulgarian context due to the traditional structure of the Eastern European society and Bulgarian nationals are marginalised in the UK due to the

high amount of stereotypes that have been created by the media, especially around 2014 when the labour restrictions for Bulgarians and Romanians were lifted. Henceforth, the central research question is formulated as follows.

→ ***RQ: What are the main motives for Bulgarian women, first generation migrants in the UK, to initiate a new business venture in London and not in Bulgaria?***

The research question is addressed using ethnographic methods due to its complexity. In order for it to be explored, a series of sub research questions are kept in mind during the observations and the ethnographic fieldwork; they form the backbone of the semi-structured interviews and are used to analyse the gathered data. The sub research questions are formulated as follows and they aided in answering the central research question.

- *Sub-RQ no.1: Are the Bulgarian women, first generation migrants who have already initiated their own business venture in the UK, entrepreneurs by the scholarly definition?*
- *Sub-RQ no.2: Do the Bulgarian women, first generation migrants who have already initiated their own business venture in the UK, feel like entrepreneurs?*
- *Sub-RQ no.3: Why did the Bulgarian women, first generation migrants who have already initiated their own business venture in the UK, chose London as their base?*
- *Sub-RQ no.4: How is the entrepreneurial experience of the Bulgarian women, first generation migrants who have already initiated their own business venture in the UK, in Bulgaria different from their entrepreneurial experience in London?*

The first sub-question is discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis whereas the other ones are on focus in the ethnographic fieldwork and are addressed in the last chapter of the thesis.

1.3. Methodology

The population included in the study is female migrants of Bulgarian origin in London who have their own business in the English capital. There was no pre-existent list of such companies, so I started my research by gathering data using the database of Companies House, which is UK's registrar of companies and is an executive agency and trading fund of Her Majesty's Government. During this initial stage of the study, I created a database with businesses initiated by Bulgarian women in London that are currently open and I positioned them on several maps of the city itself in order to give an indication of their development throughout the years and their relation to the Bulgarian diaspora in London. It is true that the initial list of female business-owners includes not only entrepreneurs, but also just women who own a business, which as we will see further on, is slightly different from possessing an entrepreneurial behaviour. Nevertheless, I do argue that the chosen sample includes women who show traits of entrepreneurial behaviour, considering that they do take personal and professional risks consciously, although in none of the cases the main reason is capital accumulation. My main hypothesis

is that their motives for business initiation are different from the ones already discussed in other academic studies, but they do start their own SMEs in the chosen host country and they do seek new opportunities and have ideas for future business development.

From the total population, I chose a random sample of 10 women and took 2-hour-long in-depth interviews and gathered ethnographic observations from the headquarters of their companies when possible. In the cases when it was not possible I met with the interviewees in cafes or restaurants. I chose the participants based on the idea that I wanted to include diverse profiles in the study so all respondents come from different fields and have developed in a different way throughout the years. The fieldwork was carried out in February 2020 and contact was kept with the respondents after that. While collecting the data I decided to adopt the conceptual framework suggested by Zhao, Davis, and Copeland as a foundation to analyse the entrepreneurial intentions of the 10 women that I had previously chosen. My decision was based on the understanding that Zhao, Davis, and Copeland's theory is the most recent and detailed one in comparison to the Entrepreneurial Event Theory (EET) and the Theory of the Planned Behaviour (TPB) and it takes into account a more extensive list of exogenous factors. Considering that my population and sample have a migrant background and are women, I also decided to add two more layers of analysis in order to eventually try to construct a theory about their entrepreneurial intentions myself. In sum, the questions that form the backbone of the semi-structured in-depth interviews are built on the framework created by Zhao, Davis, and Copeland, which aims to measure the entrepreneurial intent of the individuals, but it also has elements of Waldinger et al.'s Interaction Theory, which aims to highlight the importance of ethnicity for the operation of migrant entrepreneurs, and lastly, it is influenced by the concept of mixed embeddedness suggested by Kloosterman et al. and reformulated by Chreim in order to highlight the role of gender for the development of female migrant entrepreneurs.

After the ethnographic fieldwork was done, the conducted interviews were transcribed and translated from Bulgarian to English, which resulted in about 50 pages of primary source data. The data analysis was done using the procedures for theory-building research suggested by Miles and Huberman in the *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*.¹ The data was analysed for recurring themes and these themes were coded using the guidelines for constant comparison techniques suggested by Glaser and Strauss in *Grounded Theory: The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.² While shifting back and forth from primary data to emerging themes, I also decided to apply the three steps suggested by Gioia et al. in *Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology*, namely

¹ Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (UK: SAGE Publishing, 1994).

² A. Strauss and B. Glaser, "Grounded Theory: The Discovery of Grounded Theory," *The Journal of the British Sociological Association* 12 (1967).

delineating first-order codes, sub-theoretical and theoretical categories, and aggregating theoretical dimensions within the data.³

Ethnography was chosen as an approach because it enables the researcher to capture the rich complexity of the research question and to analyse it through an interdisciplinary perspective, e.g. by integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines such as social psychology, sociology, cultural studies, gender studies, entrepreneurial studies among others. The overlapping of the fields of ethnic entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship is a segment that is in a state of *flux* and presents a complex and dynamic mosaic that usually moves too fast for statistics to keep up, as marked by Thierry Volery, since more and more research is being undertaken and various cases from communities that have been neglected thus far are published.⁴ Ethnography as an approach depends a lot on mutual trust and honest communication between the researcher and the participants in the research. I do have benefits in this regard since I speak the Bulgarian language and I am a woman; I can become an insider in the Bulgarian community in London and showcase and translate the stories of the 10 participants from the local context to the global one.

Very helpful for the setting up of the ethnographic fieldwork were the reflections of Bruni et al. summarised in the Appendix of *Gender and Entrepreneurship. An Ethnographic Research*.⁵ The reflections are based on American sociologist Harold Garfinkel's questions that every researcher should ask themselves after the end of the fieldwork, namely: What has been done? What information has been learnt? How can that information be translated in an understandable way for a given audience?⁶ The Appendix also resembles the backbone to Clifford Geertz's understanding of ethnography as a 'thick description' of a given phenomenon, which is also adopted in the current study.⁷ As the opposite of 'thin description,' which only takes into account the physical reality, 'thick description' tries to capture the meaning behind the physical reality and also its symbolic import in society or between communicators.

³ Dennis A. Gioia, Kevin G. Corley and Aimee L. Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology," *Organizational Research Methods* 16, no. 1 (2013), 16, <https://doi.org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1177%2F1094428112452151>. (Accessed June 29, 2020).

⁴ Thierry Volery, "Ethnic Entrepreneurship: A Theoretical Framework," *Handbook of Research on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship* 1 (2007), 34, https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/39658/1/Volery_Chapter_03_Ethnic_Entrepreneurship.pdf. (Accessed June 29, 2020).

⁵ Attila Bruni, Silvia Gherardi and Barbara Poggio, *Gender and Entrepreneurship. An Ethnographical Approach* (Oxon and New York: Routledge. Taylor & Francis Group, 2005).

⁶ Harold Garfinkel, "Ethnomethodology's Program," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (1996), 7, <https://www-istor-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/stable/2787116>. (Accessed June 29, 2020).

⁷ Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," *The Cultural Geography Reader*, eds. Timothy Oakes and Patricia L. Price (New York: Routledge. Taylor and Francis, 2008), 42.

1.4. Limitations

Part of the limitations to the study come from the complexity of the research question combined with the fact that the topic has not been researched before, which made necessary the creation and organisation of primary data such as the datasheets of (1) outward Bulgarian migration (1989-2019) created by using official data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria; (2) migration of Bulgarian nationals by area in London (2001-2019) created by using data provided by Annual Population Survey of the UK; and (3) business ventures initiated by Bulgarian women in London (2012-2019) created by data provided by the Companies House. The complete data is not provided in the thesis itself, but the charts and graphs based on the data are. Considering that statistics in both countries are gathered in different ways there are cases in which the data from Bulgaria is not extensive or detailed or is lacking. Lastly, the fact that one has to search through the database of the Companies House by keywords means that my finding cannot be extensive in any way since I cannot search by origin of the founder.

Another limitation to the study is inherent in the essence of the ethnographic methodology, which aims at understanding the subjective experience of an individual and interpreting it without imposing one's own perspective as a researcher. Therefore, the in-depth interviews do not aim to generalise the experience of the interviewees and what they have been through might be just a unique sequence of events and might not be valid for other individuals who are part of the general population of the study. Nevertheless, that is the only way for us to actually understand and get closer to the core of their entrepreneurial thinking, meaning that this limitation is also one of the main strengths of the study.

Another limitation to the study comes from the fact that all interviews were carried out in Bulgarian language and although I did translate them using the idea of a 'thick description,' i.e. focusing more on the general context and not on the specific words that are used, some information can still be lost in the process of translating. For example, I did not use the word entrepreneur while conducting the interviews because the Bulgarian language does not really provide a female form of it and I thought that it would just confuse the interviews if I mention it in the beginning. Furthermore, the word 'entrepreneur,' in general, is a buzz word that is associated with the Western European attitude of the successful and popular individual who initiates businesses or invests in the business ventures of others; therefore, during the interviews, I most often used the term 'business-owners,' which has a neutral connotation and refers to the legal status of a person and not to their personal characteristics and behaviour. Nevertheless, in the end of the interviews, we discussed the idea of female entrepreneurs and the new word really had an impact of the behaviour of the participants and the flow of the conversation.

The final limitation is linked with the international travel restrictions taken as measurements due to the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, which started in April, 2020. If that had not happened the current study would have included at least 10 more in-depth interviews and much more field observations, for example, from the events of the *Young creative Bulgarians in London* group or the *Bulgarian business awards in London*. Unfortunately, the finding from the study are based only on the data that I gathered during my trip to London in February.

1.5. Context

London was chosen as a location for this study because it is one of the newer Bulgarian communities in Europe and since 2017 more Bulgarian women than men have migrated to the English capital. Furthermore, they have re-located without a family or a partner, which is a difference in comparison to the previous migration waves of Bulgarians to the UK. The study aims to explore these changes by capturing the lived experiences of 10 women who have migrated because of their personal aspirations and need for freedom and liberation from the traditional Bulgarian culture and who eventually have initiated their own business ventures in the city.

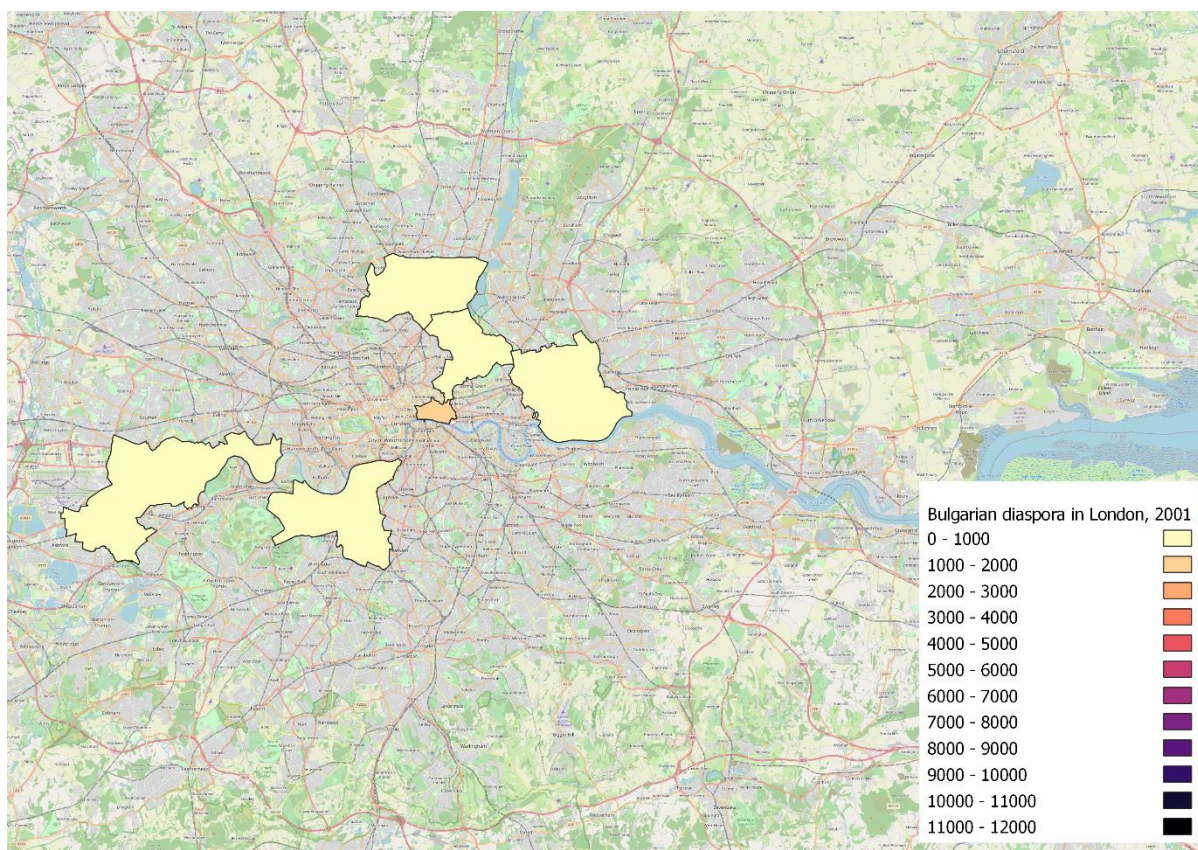


Figure 1 Bulgarian diaspora in London as separated by neighbourhood, 2001

The Bulgarian diaspora in London is a recently developed one in comparison to the other big Bulgarian communities in Spain or Germany, which became attractive destinations for Bulgarians already in the 1990s. Ethnic communities, which have existed for a longer period of time, usually have

a better developed ethnic economy, i.e. a better developed social network and ethnic resources like knowledge, know-how, and ethnic businesses that provide ethnic goods or services. The migration of Bulgarians to the UK started in the beginning of the 2000s, but in very limited numbers due to the visa regime, at that time the Bulgarian diaspora in London started to grow in number when the Eastern European country joined the EU alongside Romania on 1 January 2007 as part of the A2 enlargement of the Union. The residents of both countries received a much more guarded and cautious welcome to the UK, in comparison to the countries part of the previous A8 migration, i.e. the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia; considering the restrictions on the access of the labour market that the British government imposed on them. The labour market access was organised under temporary working schemes, e.g. the Seasonal Agricultural Working Scheme and the Sector Based Schemes; the European Community Association Agreement, which facilitates the migration of self-employed workers; and the highly skilled migration programme.

The national census in 2001 reported 5,350 Bulgarians living in the UK with 2,965 that were granted residency, the majority of which were located in Inner London (See *Figure 1*).⁸ Other areas where Bulgarians were particularly attracted to are situated in the eastern part of the city. This first

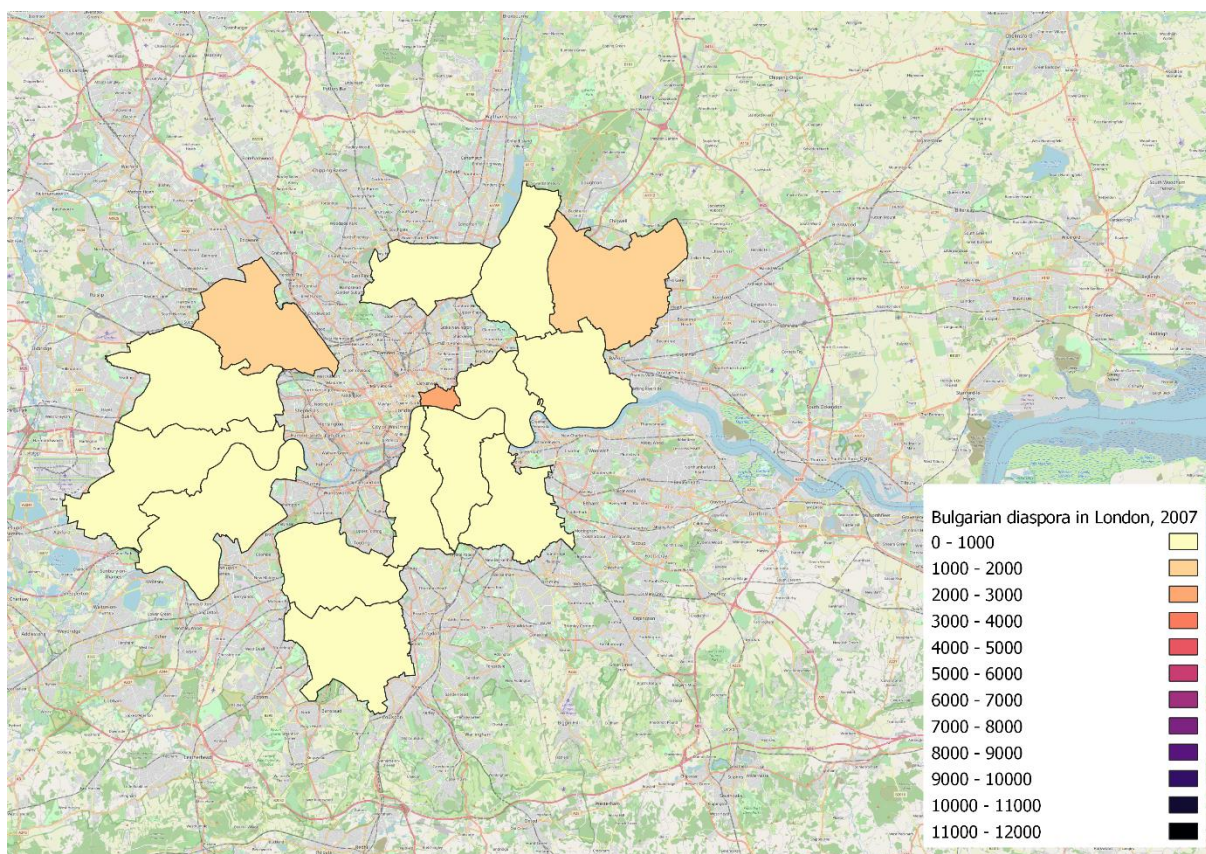


Figure 2 Bulgarian diaspora in London as separated by neighbourhood, 2007

⁸ Office for National Statistics, *Population of the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality: Individual Country Data (March 2000 to February 2001)* Office for National Statistics, [2001].

flow of migration is characterised by mostly highly-skilled professionals, e.g. economic migrants, who felt limited by the unstable political and economic conditions within Bulgaria and decided to relocate to a place that offers more professional possibilities.⁹

The accession of Bulgaria in the EU in 2007 stimulated the migration of Bulgarian nationals to the English capital and, thus, by the end of the same year the Bulgarian population in London was already estimated to be between 20,000 and 24,000 with 9,000 in Inner London and 11,000 in Outer London (See Figure 2).¹⁰ The migrants who arrived after that point included either low-skilled labourers or individuals who had decided to downgrade, i.e. to have a lower return on their education achievements.¹¹ These groups of people were likely to engage in temporary, circular, and undocumented movements.¹² Still the area of highest interest was the central one and there was already a balanced spread in all other sides of the city.

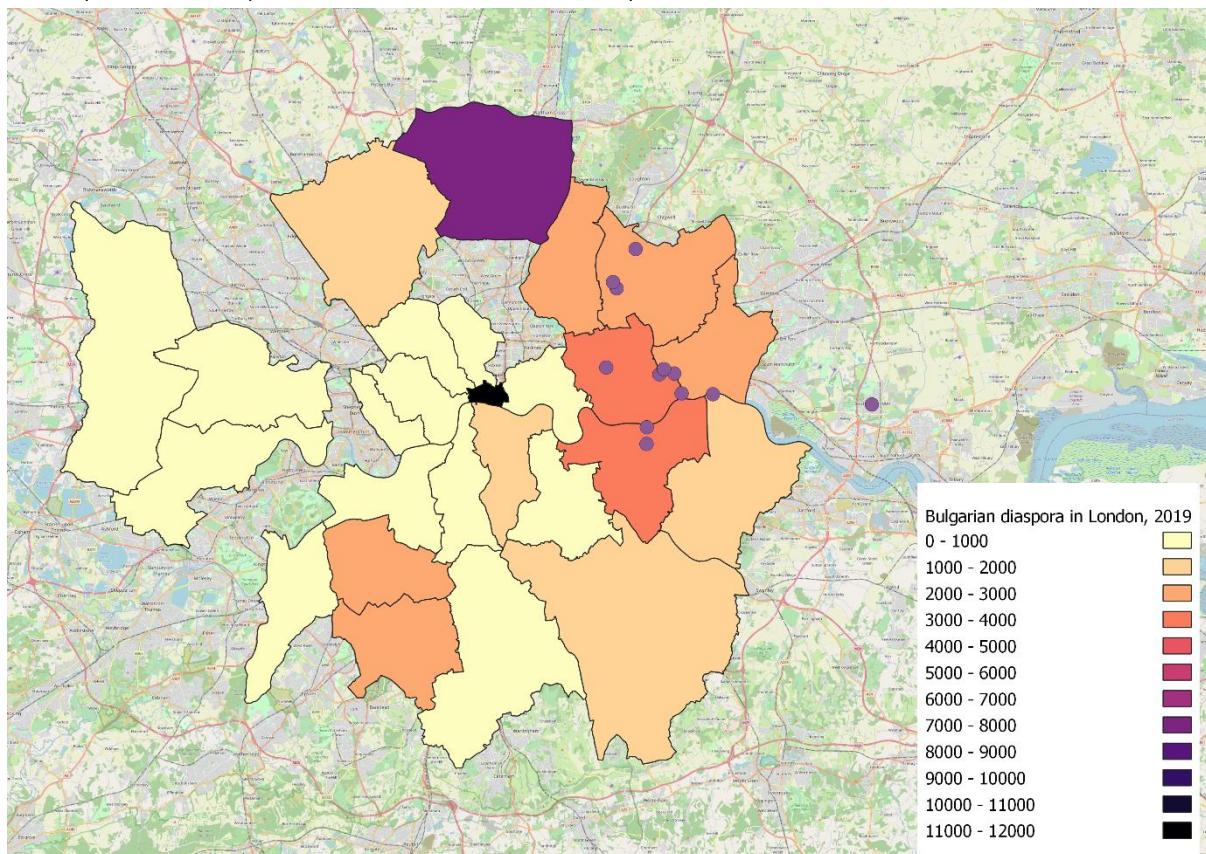


Figure 3 Bulgarian diaspora in London as separated by neighbourhood and the violet dots are the headquarters of the female-owned business ventures included in the study, 2019

⁹ Eugenia Markova, "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: Lessons from Bulgaria," *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, no. Gree SE paper no. 35 (2010). <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28438/>. (Accessed June 29, 2020).

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics, *Population of the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality: Individual Country Data (January to December 2008)* Office for National Statistics, [2008].

¹¹ Madeleine Sumption and Will Somerville, "The UK's New Europeans," *Equality and Human Rights Commission*, [2010].

¹² Markova, "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: Lessons from Bulgaria," *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, no. Gree SE paper no. 35 (2010). <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28438/>. (Accessed June 29, 2020).

At present, there are officially 52,000 Bulgarian residents in London: 39,000 of which are located in Outer London with the highest density in the areas of Enfield (8,000), Greenwich (4,000), Barking and Dagenham (3,000), Merton (3,000), Redbridge (3,000), Sutton (3,000), and Waltham Forest (3,000) among others.¹³ The area with the highest density is again the central one, but it is also evident that there is a big population of Bulgarians in north-eastern London where the neighbourhoods are coloured in orange, red, and violet (See *Figure 3*). As remarked by one of the Bulgarian newspapers in London, BG Ben, the North-Eastern neighbourhoods of Enfield (in violet), Waltham Forest (in orange), Redbridge (in orange), Barking and Dagenham (in orange), Waltham Forest (in red), and Newham (in red) are well-known within the Bulgarian community as densely populated with fellow nationals.¹⁴ Various businesses of Bulgarian migrants are clustered in those areas, which results in an existing ethnic economy, i.e. more Bulgarians who are offering ethnic goods and services and a better connected Bulgarian social network.¹⁵ The participants in the study all have their businesses in these areas, although they do vary in terms of field of specialisation, i.e. some of them offer ethnic goods and services for the Bulgarian community, but others are focused more on international clients, although they are situated in areas with a higher Bulgarian population.

2. Concepts

In the following chapter the main concepts and models are introduced, i.e. ethnicity or culture, ethnic groups, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intent and behaviour, ethnic entrepreneurship, and female entrepreneurship. The pros and cons of the existing models are discussed and eventually a new model is created and suggested as the most suitable combination of factors to be considered in order for the central research question to be answered in-depth. This new model is later used as the back bone for the structure of the questionnaire for the interviews (See *Appendix 1*).

2.1. Ethnicity/culture and ethnic groups

Culture and ethnicity as phenomena have been studied by various disciplines throughout the years and hence defining them can be a daunting task. Their complexity and multi-layeredness might make them fuzzy concepts as defined by economist Ann Markusen¹⁶ meaning that their characteristics sometimes lack conceptual clarity, which can make the definition hard to use at times. For the purposes of the

¹³ Office for National Statistics, *Population of the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality: Individual Country Data (July 2018 to June 2019)* Office for National Statistics, [2019].

¹⁴ BG Ben, "Българска карта на Лондон (A Bulgarian Map of London)," *PA Events Ltd*. Feb 07, 2020.

¹⁵ Companies House, "Database of Companies House," <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/search?q=> (Accessed June 29, 2020).

¹⁶ Ann Markusen, "Fuzzy Concepts, Scanty Evidence, Policy Distance: The Case for Rigor and Policy Relevance in Critical Regional Studies," *Regional Studies* 37, no. 6-7 (2003), 710, <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/0034340032000108796>. (Accessed June 29, 2020).

current study I have chosen to use the perspective of sociologist John Milton Yinger who suggests that an ethnic group is a small segment of a bigger society whose members are either self-identified or identified by others to have common origin and to share a common culture.¹⁷ The ethnic group that is explored in the current research consists of first generation immigrants with Bulgarian background who currently live and have their own business in London. All participants in the study were raised in the Eastern European country and share a common language, culture, and customs; they identify themselves as Bulgarian by origin, but as ‘citizens of the world’ by choice.

As for defining culture itself I have chosen to use another broad framework, namely Samuel Pufendorf’s adoption of Cicero’s metaphor from *Tusculanae Disputationes* about culture as the cultivation of the philosophical soul. By putting the term in a modern context and separating it from the Ancient idea about philosophy as man’s way to perfection, Pufendorf suggests that culture includes all the ways in which human beings are trying to overcome their original barbarism, e.g. theoretically, they are cultivating themselves through artifice in order to become fully human.¹⁸ Anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor adds that culture includes ‘knowledge, believes, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits that an individual acquires as a member of a given society’.¹⁹

Thus formulated both definitions, for an ethnic group and for culture, exclude individuals whose families have been living in the host country for centuries without preserving their home culture. On the contrary, they refer to the early stages of the development of ethnic entrepreneurship when an ethnic group is still rather new in the host society and its members are clearly seen as immigrants. Such is the case with the Bulgarian community in London, which emerged in the beginning of the 1990s, but gradually increased in size over the recent years and is currently the 5th most populous migrant group with 39,000 Bulgarian nationals who registered in the UK in 2019 (See *Figure 4*).

EU		Non EU	
Romania	136 (+1%)	India	78 (+71%)
Italy	53 (+23%)	Pakistan	20 (+43%)
Poland	41 (-10%)	China	14 (+24%)
Bulgaria	39 (+16%)	United States	14 (+29%)
Spain	38 (+23%)	Nigeria	14 (+44%)

Figure 4 Top EU and non EU individual nationalities by number of NINO registrations (in thousands) in the year to December 2019 and annual percentage change. Data provided by the Department for Work and Pensions

¹⁷ John Milton Yinger, *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* (NY: Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

¹⁸ Richard L. Velkley, "The Tension in the Beautiful: On Culture and Civilization in Rousseau and German Philosophy," in *Being After Rousseau: Philosophy and Culture in Question*, ed. Richard L. Velkley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 11-30.

¹⁹ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, Vol. 2 (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1871).

2.2. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intentions

The term entrepreneur might seem vague and imprecise at times due to the fact that it can be interpreted in different ways, especially when it comes to its link to intentions. It is especially daunting for the difference between a business-owner, a self-employed individual, and an entrepreneur to be explained since all of these terms are interconnected and possess similar characteristics. For example, Michael Crant implicitly equals entrepreneurial intent with owning a business venture²⁰ and Frank and Lüthje highlight the connection between entrepreneurial intent and self-employment²¹. Furthermore there are various additional terms such as 'emerging entrepreneurs,' 'developing entrepreneurs,' 'potential entrepreneurs,' 'nascent entrepreneurs' that both enrich and present more perspectives toward the phenomenon of entrepreneurship, but they also shift the focus away from understanding entrepreneurship as planned behaviour and emphasise more on the notion of it being a personal predisposition.

Nevertheless, successful entrepreneurship is considered key for the rise and decline of cities as marked by van Delft et al.²² Austrian political economist Joseph Schumpeter argues that entrepreneurship is the opportunity-focused behaviour of an individual or a company that are willing to take considerable risks during a long-term learning process of innovation and 'creative destruction,' which means that entrepreneurship is planned behaviour, i.e. it does not happen by accident.²³ The abilities of the entrepreneur are shown during the 'entrepreneurial event,' as suggested by Shapero and Sokol, in which internal and external determinants come together.²⁴ The model of the Entrepreneurial Event is conceptually similar to Ajzen's 1991 Theory of Planned Behaviour²⁵ with the difference that the first comes from the field of entrepreneurial research and the latter, from the domain of social psychology.

Entrepreneurial intent refers to the self-acknowledged conviction of an individual to set up a new business venture or to do so at some point in the future as highlighted by Professor of International

²⁰ J. Michael Crant, "The Proactive Personality Scale as a Predictor of Entrepreneurial Intentions," *Journal of Small Business Management* 34 (1996), 42.

²¹ Nikolaus Franke and Christian Lüthje, "Entrepreneurial Intentions of Business students—A Benchmarking Study," *International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management* 1, no. 03 (2004), 270. <https://doi.org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1142/S0219877004000209>. (Accessed June 29, 2020).

²² Hadewijch Van Delft, Cees Gorter and Peter Nijkamp, "In Search of Ethnic Entrepreneurship Opportunities in the City: A Comparative Policy Study," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 18, no. 4 (2000), 430. <https://doi.org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1068/c9873>. (Accessed June 29, 2020).

²³ M. L. Ndoen et al., "Migrant Entrepreneurs in East Indonesia: A Schumpeterian Perspective," *TI Discussion Paper*, no. 2000-082/3 (2000).

²⁴ Albert Shapero and Lisa Sokol, "The Social Dimensions of Entrepreneurship," *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship* (1982), 72. <https://ssrn-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/abstract=1497759>. (Accessed July 10, 2020).

²⁵ Icek Ajzen, "The Theory of Planned Behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50, no. 2 (1991), 179.

Management at the University of Bath Edmund R. Thompson.²⁶ As already mentioned, much of what we consider as entrepreneurial activity is intentionally planned behaviour that focuses on opportunities over threats. Hence, the business entry decision, which follows the entrepreneurial intent, is a centrepiece to entrepreneurial behaviour since it can best be used to predict planned behaviour as argued by Bagozzi et al.²⁷ Understanding intentional behaviour can help explain and model why entrepreneurs decide to start a business long before they start scanning for opportunities and on the contrary, why entrepreneurs give up on some of their ideas during the process and never actually initiate any new business ventures. This master's thesis explores how the entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour of a sample of Bulgarian women changed after they migrated to London.

Even though individual entrepreneurial intentions have been used as a variable in various studies and most likely will remain an important construct in research related to entrepreneurship, no uniform approach to defining and measuring them has emerged, as argued by Edmund R. Thompson.²⁸ Furthermore, the term has been used rather loosely to capture related, but nevertheless different concepts; and as marked by Autio et al. the existing research on individual entrepreneurial intentions is still scattered and fragmented and no uniform and validated measurement scale has been developed so far, which makes progress in both theoretical and empirical studies difficult.²⁹

Ajzer,³⁰ Shapero and Sokol,³¹ Zhao et al.³² among other scholars have emphasised on the importance of the intentions for the whole entrepreneurial activity; they argue that the decision to start a new business can be triggered either by a specific situation or it can also be a result of cumulative events over time. In the next section Shapero and Sokol's 1982 Theory of the Entrepreneurial Event, Ajzer's 1991 Theory of Planned Behaviour, and Zhao et al.'s 2018 model are discussed. The first two ones, although they have emerged a long time ago, are still the most often applied theoretical frameworks for studying entrepreneurial intent; the latter one is a recent framework that I chose to adopt during my study of the Bulgarian female business-owners since it does take into account more external factors than the previous models such as personality traits, support from family and friends,

²⁶ Edmund R. Thompson, "Individual Entrepreneurial Intent: Construct Clarification and Development of an Internationally Reliable Metric," *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 33, no. 3 (2009), 669. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00321.x>. (Accessed July 10, 2020).

²⁷ Richard P. Bagozzi, Johann Baumgartner and Youjae Yi, "An Investigation into the Role of Intentions as Mediators of the Attitude-Behavior Relationship," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 10, no. 1 (1989), 37. [https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1016/0167-4870\(89\)90056-1](https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1016/0167-4870(89)90056-1). (Accessed July 10, 2020).

²⁸ Thompson, "Individual Entrepreneurial Intent: Construct Clarification and Development of an Internationally Reliable Metric," *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 33, no. 3 (2009), 670. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00321.x>. (Accessed July 10, 2020).

²⁹ Erko Autio et al., "Entrepreneurial Intent among Students: Testing an Intent Model in Asia, Scandinavia and USA," (1997).

³⁰ Ajzen, "The Theory of Planned Behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50, no. 2 (1991), 179.

³¹ Shapero and Sokol, "The Social Dimensions of Entrepreneurship," *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship* (1982), 72. <https://ssrn-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/abstract=1497759>. (Accessed July 10, 2020).

³² Li Zhao, Lizhu Davis and Lauren Copeland, "Entrepreneurial Intention: An Exploratory Study of Fashion Students," *Journal of Enterprising Culture* 26, no. 01 (2018), 27.

prior exposure to entrepreneurial experience, entrepreneurial education, and social network. Considering that the sample of the study includes individuals with a migrant background other factors linked with these aspects of their life must be taken into consideration such as the characteristic of the host city, the resources that the ethnic group already has, the already existing ethnic strategies, and the opportunity structure of the host country; they will be discussed in sub-chapter 2.3. Lastly, the sample focuses on women and therefore gender-specific factors should also be included such as the image of women in the home-country, i.e. is it stereotyped and if yes, what are the stereotypes for the female roles and what happens if an individual takes another role that is not common, the image of women in the host-country, and gender-based discrimination; such factors will be discussed in sub-chapter 2.4.

2.2.1. Entrepreneurial Event Theory (EET)

The earliest theory that gathered the scholarly attention and was adopted by many researchers with an interest in studying entrepreneurial intentions was the Theory of the Entrepreneurial Event from 1982. The model was founded in the assumption that human behaviour is guided by inertia until the moment when something disturbs or interrupts this inertia, which means that entrepreneurs become such only if they interact with the wider social, political, economic, and cultural context (See *Figure 5*).³³

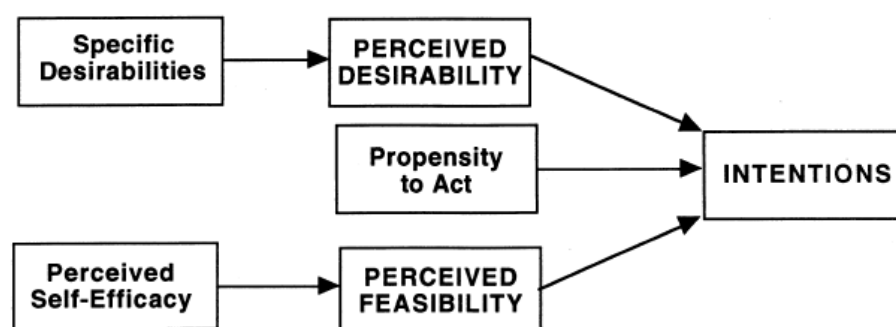


Figure 5 Shapero's Theory of the Entrepreneurial Event (EET)

This 'displacement' is often considered as something negative as an experience, for example job loss, divorce or death of a close person, but it can also be a positive event such as winning the lottery, having a baby or getting a promotion. Such interruptions cause a change in the behaviour of the individual; the change depends on the 'credibility' of the alternatives amongst which the entrepreneur can choose from and on some 'propensity to act,' i.e. the personal disposition to act on one's decision such as saying: 'I will do it!' ³⁴ A well-known conceptualisation of the 'propensity to act'

³³ Shapero and Sokol, "The Social Dimensions of Entrepreneurship," *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship* (1982), 78. <https://ssrn-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/abstract=1497759>. (Accessed July 10, 2020).

³⁴ Norris F. Krueger Jr, Michael D. Reilly and Alan L. Carsrud, "Competing Models of Entrepreneurial Intentions," *Journal of Business Venturing* 15, no. 5-6 (Nov-Sep, 2000), 411. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(98\)00033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(98)00033-0). (Accessed July 10, 2020).

is the 'learned optimism' coined by psychologist Martin Seligman, which can predict commitment to goal-directed behaviour in various settings.³⁵ Hence, the Entrepreneurial Events emerge due to a potential to start a business, namely a combination of both feasible and desirable behaviour and the propensity to act, and exist long before the events that have interrupted the inertia.³⁶

The EET model has been criticised for being overly focused on the figure of the entrepreneur and for not taking into account the external factors coming from the environment, in which they are situated. In 1991 the Theory of the Planned Behaviour is introduced and rapidly becomes much more popular among scholars since it includes more factors into consideration.

2.2.2. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The Theory of the Planned Behaviour is still the most prominent model for the studying of entrepreneurial intentions and even when new theories are being suggested nowadays they lie on the foundation of the TPB. It identifies three attitudinal antecedents of intent; two of which reflect the perceived personal desirability of performing the entrepreneurial behaviour, namely the individual expectations toward the outcomes of the behaviour and the perceived normative beliefs; the third one reflects the perceptions of situational competence, i.e. the self-efficacy of the individual (See *Figure 6*).

According to the TPB the personal attitude towards the entrepreneurial act is a key pillar and taps the expectations and beliefs of the person, e.g. do they see themselves as an entrepreneur, what type of an entrepreneur would they be, what would they want to achieve as entrepreneurs, and etc. Some of the factors that have been highlighted among scholars are linked with factors such as capital accumulation, stress and uncertainty, popularity and higher social status, financial independence and autonomy, as summarised by Kruger et al.³⁷

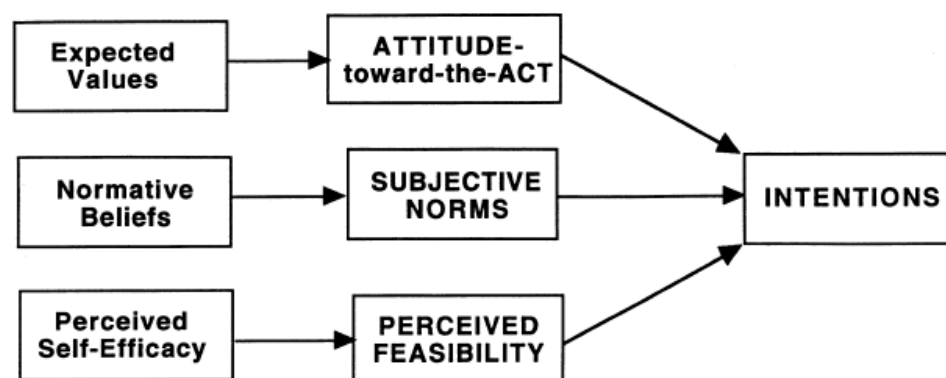


Figure 6 Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour

³⁵ Martin EP Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Life*, New York: Pocket Books, 1990).

³⁶ Shapero and Sokol, "The Social Dimensions of Entrepreneurship," *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship* (1982), 72. <https://ssrn-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/abstract=1497759>. (Accessed July 10, 2020).

³⁷ Krueger Jr, Reilly and Carsrud, "Competing Models of Entrepreneurial Intentions," *Journal of Business Venturing* 15, no. 5-6 (Nov-Sep, 2000), 411. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(98\)00033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(98)00033-0). (Accessed July 10, 2020).

The second pillar of the model encompasses the subjective norms, i.e. the influence coming from the family of the person, their social circle, and other individuals who are a further away from the entrepreneur, but still play a role for them such as role models or mentors. According to social psychologist Icek Ajzen the impact of the social norms is harder to predict for individuals with a highly internal locus of control or for individuals who are strongly focused on taking action.³⁸ For analysing such cases qualitative methods come in handy since they can capture the complexity of the subject.

The third element of the TPB is the perceived self-efficacy, which reflects how an individual initiates and persists a behaviour when they are not certain about the outcomes, how they set higher goals, how they reduce threat-rigidity and learned helplessness, as argued by Krueger et al.³⁹ The perceived self-efficacy is linked with the feasibility perceptions, which drive the choices related to the professional development of the individual, including the decision of one to become a self-employed entrepreneur, and in general opportunity recognition, and risk-taking. The feasibility perceptions predict the goal-directed behaviour when control is problematic, as highlighted by Ajzen.⁴⁰ Although the TPB is still considered as the best predictors of entrepreneurial intentions by scholars such as Krueger et al.⁴¹ it cannot take into account all factors that have an impact on the entrepreneurial behaviour of individuals coming from minority groups, which is the case with the Bulgarian women who have their own business in London. In order for their entrepreneurial experience to be understood in-depth, a model that pays more attention to the intersection between ethnicity and gender must be used.

The EET and the TPB are very similar to one another since they both take into account the perceived self-efficacy and the perceived desirability. Furthermore, in both theories exogenous factors do not affect the entrepreneurial intentions or the behaviour of the individual directly; instead they operate through the person's perception of desirability (attractiveness of starting a business) and feasibility (the degree to which one feels capable of starting their own business) as defined by Shapero and Sokol.⁴² All factors taken into account in both the EET and the TPB act as motivation and emotional tendency and influence and direct the entrepreneurial behaviour. The key difference between the theories is that the EET pays attention to the 'propensity to act,' which can conceptually be linked with the 'learned optimism' of Martin Seligman or the opposite behaviour, i.e. the 'learned helplessness', and the TPB emphasises on the importance of the subjective norms, i.e. the environment around the

³⁸ Ajzen, "The Theory of Planned Behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50, no. 2 (1991), 179.

³⁹ Krueger Jr, Reilly and Carsrud, "Competing Models of Entrepreneurial Intentions," *Journal of Business Venturing* 15, no. 5-6 (Nov-Sep, 2000), 411. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(98\)00033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(98)00033-0). (Accessed July 10, 2020).

⁴⁰ Ajzen, "The Theory of Planned Behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50, no. 2 (1991), 181.

⁴¹ Norris F. Krueger, "Entrepreneurial Intentions are Dead: Long Live Entrepreneurial Intentions," in *Revisiting the Entrepreneurial Mind. International Studies in Entrepreneurship*, eds. M. Brännback and A. Carsrud (Cham: Springer, 2017), 15.

⁴² Shapero and Sokol, "The Social Dimensions of Entrepreneurship," *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship* (1982), 72. <https://ssrn-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/abstract=1497759>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

entrepreneur. Nevertheless, both models seem insufficient for the analysis of the intentions of ethnic or female entrepreneurs. As argued by Zhao et al. they should be reformulated so that they can encompass more variables such as personality traits and talents, the resources of the individual's social network, their entrepreneurial education or their prior exposure to entrepreneurial behaviour.⁴³

2.2.3. Zhao, Davis, and Copeland's theory

The model constructed by Zhao, Davis, and Copeland in 2018 uses the methodology of grounded theory for the analysis of qualitative data gathered amongst fashion students with the aim to measure their entrepreneurial intentions.⁴⁴ The scholars came to the conclusion that the most adequate way to assess the entrepreneurial intent of the chosen sample is to continuously keep in mind both external and internal factors that might have an impact on the individuals' willingness and readiness to initiate a new business venture. The external factors refer to prior exposure to entrepreneurial behaviour, previous entrepreneurial education, support from family and friends, and influences from the person's social network; among the internal factors are personality traits, and creativity and artistic talents. The internal and external factors both shape the perceived desirability that they students have towards the entrepreneurial act, i.e. their vision and idea about how being an entrepreneur would be like; and the perceived feasibility, i.e. their readiness and willingness to act as entrepreneurs (*See Figure 7*).

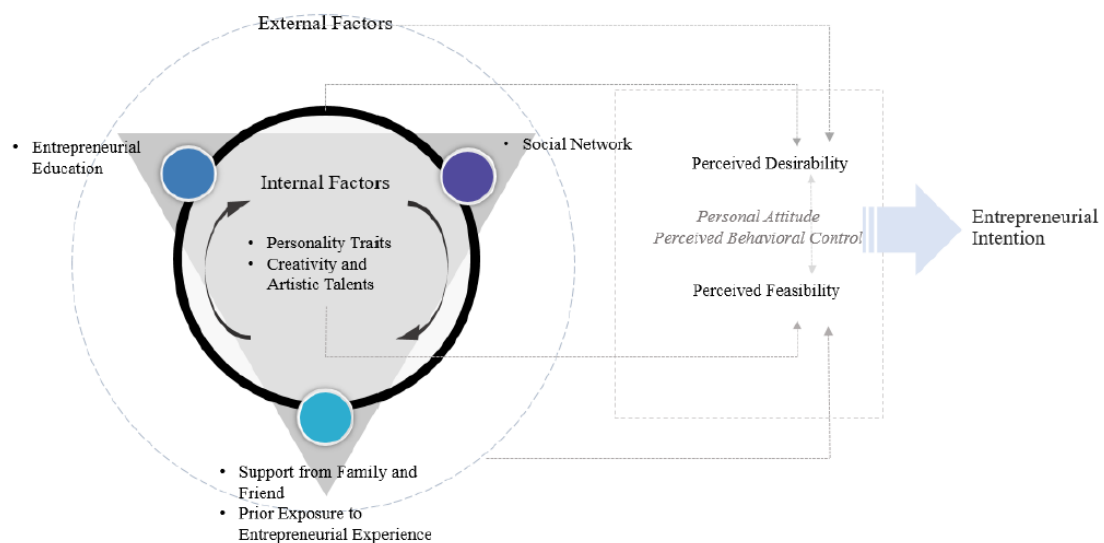


Figure 7 Conceptual model for analysing entrepreneurial intentions generated by Zhao, Davis, and Copeland

After briefly introducing the development of the models used to study entrepreneurial intentions and motives for business initiation, I argue that none of them are sufficient for the analysis of the entrepreneurial experience of individuals coming from minority groups. Especially if the sample

⁴³ Li Zhao, Lizhu Davis and Lauren Copeland, "Entrepreneurial Intention: An Exploratory Study of Fashion Students," *Journal of Enterprising Culture* 26, no. 01 (2018), 27.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

that is studied is an intersection between the populations of ethnic and of female entrepreneurs, the theoretical framework should be expanded in order to encompass more factors such as the local context, including the labour policies and the structure of the host-country's economy, the characteristics of the culture of the migrant, discrimination, stereotypes, and etc.

2.3. Ethnic entrepreneurship

Ethnic entrepreneurship can broadly be defined as a set of connections and interaction patterns between people of common national, including cultural and ethnic, background or migration experiences, as suggested by Waldinger et al.⁴⁵ It particularly refers to economic activity from the members of a specific ethnic group who are situated in a foreign context. Scholars have argued which activities exactly should be considered as ethnic entrepreneurship and in this study I will refer to the typology suggested by Matanova and Penchev.⁴⁶ In their research on Bulgarian ethnic entrepreneurship in German-speaking Europe they differentiate 3, sometimes overlapping, characteristics of a business that make it ethnic. Firstly, businesses whose owner is of migrant background and is registered in a foreign host-country. Secondly, businesses that offer products or services that can be considered as cultural heritage, e.g. food, souvenirs, art works, and etc. Thirdly, businesses whose customers are mostly migrants or compatriots of the entrepreneur. All of the participants in this study have the same cultural and ethnic background and are situated in a foreign context, which makes them part of the Bulgarian ethnic economy in London. Although only 2 out of 10 sell ethnic products, all of them are located in areas that are densely populated with Bulgarian nationals (See *Figure 3*) and they do know about each other, i.e. they are part of each other's social network.

Ethnic entrepreneurial activity and ethnic businesses are a major part of any migration and as a phenomenon are by no means new, but they started gathering scholarly attention in the end of the previous century in the United States with the research of Barret et al.⁴⁷ One of the early and very prominent theories in the field suggests that ethnic businesses are a natural reaction to blocked opportunities in the labour market, which in many cases still holds true today. This theory is also analysed by Thierry Volery, Professor of Entrepreneurship, who argues that ethnic entrepreneurship is a form of socio-economic adaptation that happens when a migrant has insufficient or unaccepted professional skills and needs to mobilise or re-organise their inner resources in order to make a living

⁴⁵ Roger Waldinger, Howard Aldrich and Robin Ward, "Opportunities, Group Characteristics, and Strategies," in *Ethnic Entrepreneurs: Immigrant Business in Industrial Societies*, eds. Roger Waldinger, Howard Aldrich and Robin Ward (London: Sage, 1990), 15.

⁴⁶ Tanya Matanova and Vladimir Penchev, "Ethnic Entrepreneurship among Bulgarian Communities Abroad and Cultural Heritage," in *Cultural Heritage in Migration*, ed. Nikolai Vukov and others (Sofia: Paradigma Publishing House, 2017), 295.

⁴⁷ Giles A. Barrett, Trevor P. Jones and David McEvoy, *Ethnic Minority Business: Theoretical Discourse in Britain and North America*, Vol. 33 Sage Publications Sage UK: London, England, 1996), 784.

for themselves in their host country.⁴⁸ This has already been discussed in the hyper-diverse population of the USA, but the European context is different.

The European population stayed homogeneous until after World War II when immigrants came to the Western Europe as temporary workforce to cover up for the losses of the war. As they settled down over time, the foundations for the emergence of ethnic businesses slowly started to build up. The Bulgarian diaspora is a rather new phenomenon since it started to spread only after 1989 because in 1945 the Eastern European country started being ruled by the 'administrative socialism' according to which individuals could leave the country only under a very strict regime. The Bulgarian diaspora in the UK is an even more recent phenomenon since the numbers of the Bulgarian nationals raised only after 2007 when Bulgaria joined the EU and accelerated after 2014 when the labour restrictions imposed by the British government to the Bulgarian nationals were lifted. Therefore, the Bulgarian community in London has not yet formed a solid ethnic social network with ethnic resources and although there is obvious clustering in particular areas of the city (See *Figure 3*), still the community is spread all around the city and tends to be fragmented, which is linked with the characteristics of the Bulgarian culture itself, as mentioned by the participants in the study.

Rath and Kloosterman discuss that markets occupied by ethnic entrepreneurs usually have lower entry barriers in terms of initial capital investment and educational qualifications; that is why the competition is higher in them since it does not require much for one to enter considering that they already possess the knowledge of the insider. They also usually start with small-scale production, e.g. a lot of start-ups emerge, and occupy high-labour intensive sectors and add low additional value. That is why in order to be competitive, ethnic entrepreneurs usually adopt informal practices that would lead to lower expenses and higher revenue, e.g. minimum wages, unfair working conditions, employment of workers without valid documents, avoiding taxes and labour regulations.⁴⁹

According to sociologist Ivan Light 'ethnic economies' enable immigrants and ethnic minorities to reduce the disadvantages and exclusion that they encounter in their host country.⁵⁰ They are either unable to find desired work in the general labour market, unwilling to accept the opportunities that the labour market is offering, or are just sceptical to mix with foreigners; which leads to two options: employment or self-employment in the 'ethnic economy.'

⁴⁸ Volery, "Ethnic Entrepreneurship: A Theoretical Framework," *Handbook of Research on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship* 1 (2007), 31. https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/39658/1/Volery_Chapter_03_Ethnic_Entrepreneurship.pdf. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

⁴⁹ Robert Kloosterman and Jan Rath, *Working on the Fringes. Immigrant Businesses, Economic Integration and Informal Practices* (Stockholm: NUTEK, Stockholm, 2002), 177.

⁵⁰ Ivan Light, "The Ethnic Ownership Economy," in *Ethnic Entrepreneurship: Structure and Process (International Research in the Business Disciplines, Vol. 4)*, eds. C. H. Stiles and C. S. Galbraith (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2003), 4.

According to Thierry Volery the terms 'ethnic entrepreneurs' and 'immigrant entrepreneurs' can be used interchangeably.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the word 'entrepreneur' was not used during the ethnographic fieldwork since it is not a very common Bulgarian word and it might have added more confusion than clarity; instead it was replaced by the legal status of the participants, i.e. business-owners. Although an entrepreneur might not always be a business-owner and a business-owner might not always be an entrepreneur all 10 participants have showed some entrepreneurial intentions since they have taken and plan to take more personal and professional risks in the future

The entrepreneurial intentions of ethnic minorities expressed in their host countries have been discussed either by exploring the cultural or the structural factors that stimulate the rise of the phenomenon. The supporters of the first approach suggest that ethnic groups have culturally determined features that stimulate their members to become self-employed, as argued by Masurel et al.⁵² In the structural approach more attention is paid to the external environment; for instance, the structure of the host economy. The intermediate approach between the cultural and the structural theories is the Middleman Minority Theory developed by sociologist Edna Bonacich who argues that the source of ethnic entrepreneurship is a combination between socio-economic exclusion and the individual's entrepreneurial spirit.⁵³ One of the most prominent theoretical frameworks that is used to study ethnic entrepreneurship is Waldinger et al.'s Interaction Theory, which is discussed in the next section together with Volery's suggestion for an enhanced interactive model in order to shine a light on the development of the field of ethnic entrepreneurial studies and to emphasise on the importance of the entrepreneur's ethnic background.

2.3.1. Waldinger et al.'s model

As already mentioned, a combination between the culturalist and the structuralist theory is the Interaction Theory from 1990, which argues that ethnic entrepreneurship cannot be traced back to only one characteristic that would always guarantee the emergence and development of an ethnic business venture; instead it depends on the complex interaction between the opportunity structure of the host country, which the migrants have to adapt to, including the market conditions, the access to ownership, the conditions of the job market, and the legal framework of the host country; and the group resources, which the migrants carry with them such as their cultural traditions and their ethnic social network.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Volery, "Ethnic Entrepreneurship: A Theoretical Framework," *Handbook of Research on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship* 1 (2007), 33. https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/39658/1/Volery_Chapter_03_Ethnic_Entrepreneurship.pdf. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

⁵² Enno Masurel, Peter Nijkamp and Gabriella Vindigni, "Breeding Places for Ethnic Entrepreneurs: A Comparative Marketing Approach," *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 16, no. 1 (2004), 77. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/0898562042000205045>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

⁵³ Edna Bonacich, "A Theory of Middleman Minorities," *American Sociological Review* 38, no. 5 (Oct, 1973), 583. <https://www-jstor-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/stable/2094409>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

⁵⁴ Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward, "Opportunities, Group Characteristics, and Strategies," in *Ethnic Entrepreneurs: Immigrant Business in Industrial Societies*, eds. Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward (London: Sage, 1990), 18.

The entrepreneur should balance both domains in order to produce ethnic strategies, which they will implement while trying to build a sustainable business (See Figure 8). The ethnic strategies include all mechanisms used by the ethnic group to cope with the peculiarities of the foreign context in regard to business matters.

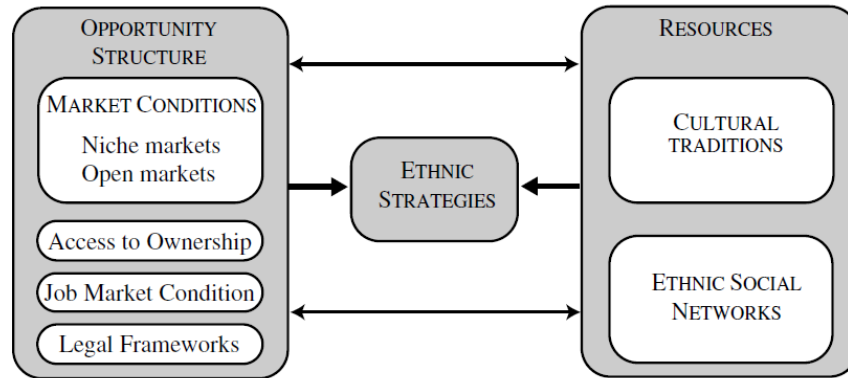


Figure 8 Interactive model of ethnic entrepreneurship development; adapted from Pütz and Waldinger et al. by Volery

The opportunity structure usually emerges with the development of a new ethnic community, which is the case of the recently expanded Bulgarian community in London; the bigger the difference between the host culture and the migrants' culture, the bigger the potential niche market that the ethnic entrepreneurs can occupy because the needs of the migrants can be satisfied by their co-ethnics. The opportunities in this niche market are limited and the access to other markets is usually blocked because the positions there are already taken up by the native population and they have higher entry barriers. Nevertheless, markets with low economies of scale such as taxi driving, on the one hand, and underserved or entirely abandoned by the locals markets such as agricultural work, cleaning services, care-taking or construction work, can open up new places for migrant workers as well.

In regard to the opportunity structure for the Bulgarian migrants in London, we can say that they have faced the same restrictions as the Romanian ones since both countries joined the EU in 2007, thus, becoming part of EU-A2 group. Barrett et al. suggests that the economic milieu in Britain is more favourable for the entry of immigrants into small and medium enterprises in comparison to continental Europe, but mostly in niches that do not create opportunities for upward economic mobility. This institutional framework leads to the clustering of immigrant entrepreneurs in trades that are either in decline, labour-intensive or both, which combined with the growing presence of corporate rivals in various markets makes it really difficult for the migrants themselves to break out of their traditional niches both sectorially and geographically.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Barrett, Jones and McEvoy, *Ethnic Minority Business: Theoretical Discourse in Britain and North America*, Vol. 33 (Sage UK: London, England, 1996), 783.

The domain of the resources includes the cultural traditions that the ethnic entrepreneur shares with their co-ethnics and also the social network and connections that they might have within the community. The cultural traditions can also be considered as fostering certain predispositions in the members of the community such as specific way of behaviour or tendency to perform in a certain way, as argued by Robert Pütz.⁵⁶

Although this model tends to be static since it does not take into account the fact that some migrants integrate faster than others and after the process of adaptation they lose a part of their ethnic resources because they gain new ones that come from the culture and the nationals from the host country. Furthermore, the ethnic traditions also change through time as they are no longer situated in the context of the home country where they come from. Also, as remarked by Razin, the impact of the economic context of the host country on the entrepreneurship of the immigrants is group specific and the specific embeddedness of the individual has to be considered.⁵⁷

2.3.2. Schaper and Volery's enhanced interactive model

The enhanced interactive model uses the ideas of Waldinger et al.'s Interactive model, but also expands and combines them with the stages of the entrepreneurial process.⁵⁸ It suggests that the 'entrepreneurial dimension' develops and functions independently from the individual's ethnic, cultural, and religious resources, social capital, the opportunities that the host country provides, the

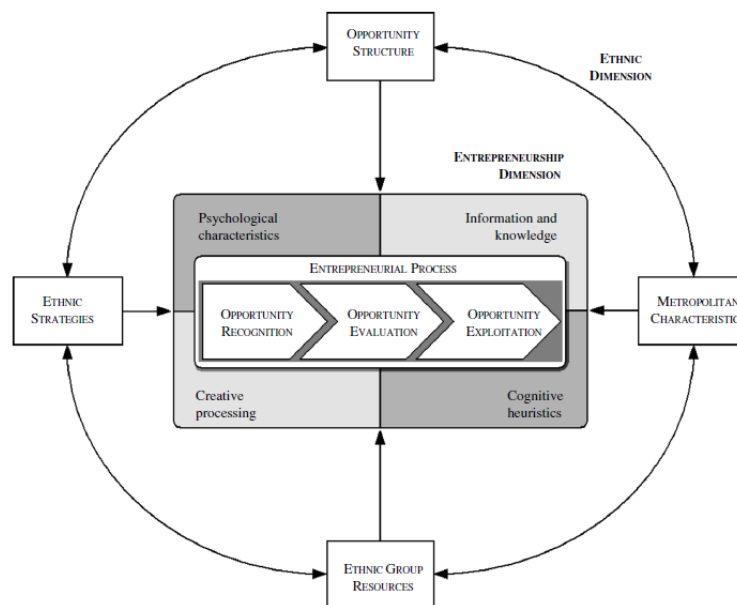


Figure 9 Enhanced interactive model in the context of entrepreneurship conceptualised by Schaper and Volery

⁵⁶ Robert Pütz, "Culture and Entrepreneurship - Remarks on Transculturality as Practice," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 94, no. 5 (2003), 554. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1046/j.1467-9663.2003.00282.x>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Volery, "Ethnic Entrepreneurship: A Theoretical Framework," *Handbook of Research on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship* 1 (2007), 30. https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/39658/1/Volery_Chapter_03_Ethnic_Entrepreneurship.pdf.

characteristics of the metropolitan area, and the ethnic strategies, which can be considered as an 'ethnic dimension'; but it also is affected and reshaped by the latter (See *Figure 9*). On the other hand, the latter is entirely independent from the first since it is not pressured by the individual's entrepreneurial characteristics. This multi-layeredness of the model can be illustrated by the idea that two ethnic entrepreneurs can be quite different in terms of their entrepreneurial behaviour even though they come from the same ethnicity, culture or religion, as argued by Schaper and Volery.⁵⁹ Although their ethnic strategies and group resources, on the one hand, and the opportunity structure and the metropolitan characteristics, on the other hand, are shaping their individual characteristics and entrepreneurial intentions, it does not happen vice versa.

After going through two of the most prominent models from the field of ethnic entrepreneurial studies, I argue that they are better suited for the aims of the current study, but still not sufficient for an in-depth analysis of the entrepreneurial experience of female migrant entrepreneurs or female migrant business-owners situated in a foreign context since they cannot capture the gender perspective towards the subject. Therefore, in the next sub-chapter I discuss the development of the field of female migrant entrepreneurial studies and the model of the mixed embeddedness, suggested by Kloosterman and colleagues and reformulated by Chreim et al.⁶⁰

2.4. Female migrant entrepreneurship

Female migrant entrepreneurship is entrepreneurial activity undertaken by women with an ethnic minority background based on their re-location to a host country, as argued by Chreim et al.⁶¹ Although studies on female entrepreneurship, on the one hand, and studies on ethnic entrepreneurship, on the other hand, have seen a surge in the recent years, the intersection between them still has knowledge gaps yet to be filled. The publications that exist thus far focus mostly on specialisation in lower skilled, lower financial capital activities such as domestic help, beauty, and food services. The current master's thesis includes a diverse sample of business fields, including marketing and communications, coaching and consultation in the cultural sector, financial consultation, education, counselling, restoration of antiques, graphic design and 3D animation among other.

A theoretical framework that is gathering more and more scholarly attention and is used for the study of female migrant entrepreneurship is the mixed embeddedness model, which argues that cases that fall in the intersection of ethnicity and gender are best explored from the point of view of the resources and the embeddedness of the entrepreneur into the social network of immigrants, on the one hand, and their embeddedness in the politico-institutional and the socio-economic

⁵⁹ M. Harvard Schaper and T. Volery, "Entrepreneurship and Small Business: A Pacific Rim Perspective. Milton," (2004).

⁶⁰ Samia Chreim et al., "Review of Female Immigrant Entrepreneurship Research: Past Findings, Gaps and Ways Forward," *European Management Journal* 36, no. 2 (2018), 212.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

environment of the host country.⁶² The emphasis of this model falls on the interaction between the actors, i.e. the female migrant entrepreneurs, their resources, and their strategies; and sociocultural, political, and economic structures of the host-country and the co-ethnic context within which the actors are situated.⁶³⁶⁴

Empirical research specifically on the motives of female migrant business owners, which has used the mixed embeddedness model as a theoretical framework, suggests a list with *push* and *pull* factors for business initiation. Common pull reasons for women to start a new business venture are looking for job satisfaction, personal challenge, independence, a 'need of achievement,' flexibility between their personal and family life, the opportunity to make their own decisions, and the freedom to manage their own time. On the other hand, common push factors can be the need to generate more income for the family, the need to become independent from their spouse or family, divorce, death of a family member, dissatisfaction from a previous employer, inequality and gender-based discrimination, gender pay gap, and low earnings.⁶⁵

The second chapter of the current master's thesis summarised the complexity of the research question and the sub-questions. The main points that derive from all theoretical models that were introduced will be further discussed in the next two chapters. The third part of the thesis focuses on the modern Bulgarian migration, i.e. from 1989 onwards, the development of the Bulgarian diaspora in the UK since the 2000s, and the most recent migration wave of Bulgarian women to London; it also shines a light on the role and position of women within Bulgaria. After discussing the sociocultural, political, and economic structure that the Bulgarian nationals come from and discussing the conditions in the host-country, I will proceed with interpreting the ethnographic data that I gathered in February, 2020, in order to focus on the figure of the female Bulgarian entrepreneurs in London, i.e. of the participants in the current study, in chapter 4.

3. Bulgarians on the road

Robin Cohen's perspective towards the phenomenon of the diaspora is multi-layered and describes an expansion from a homeland in search of a higher quality of life in tolerant host countries; a dispersal of an original homeland. It is a continuous process of formation and reformation; of coming together and drifting away; of uniting and falling out.⁶⁶ Through this perspective we will look at the modern Bulgarian

⁶² Robert C. Kloosterman, "Matching Opportunities with Resources: A Framework for Analyzing (Migrant) Entrepreneurship from a Mixed Embeddedness Perspective," *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 22, no. 1 (2010), 25.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ José María González-González et al., "Women, Immigration and Entrepreneurship in Spain: A Confluence of Debates in the Face of a Complex Reality" (Elsevier, 2011).

⁶⁵ Panagiotis Piperopoulos, "Ethnic Female Business Owners: More Female or More Ethnic Entrepreneurs," *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* (2012).

⁶⁶ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, Second ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

diaspora, which started with the changes of the political regime in the end of the 1980s.⁶⁷ The following chapter will introduce the Bulgarian migration waves by providing information about the sociocultural, political, and economic context of the Eastern European country, and by exploring why the UK is particularly attractive to Bulgarian nationals.

3.1. Overview of the modern Bulgarian migration patterns since 1989

From a global perspective the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s are rich with historical events that mark the end of one era and the start of another one: the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union among others. In Bulgaria the communist regime collapsed on 10 November 1989 after 45 years of uninterrupted rule; the date is symbolic and marks the beginning of the country's transition from communism to capitalism. A transition with a start date, but without an end date. At that moment, the Bulgarian nationals gained the democratic rights and the government started being focused on the country's integration to Western Europe, thus, facilitating the understanding of the four freedoms of the European Union, e.g. free movement of goods, capital, services, and labour. Prior to joining the EU in 2007 the country went through turbulent times in the 1990s due a collapse of the economy in 1996-7. Although the acceptance of Bulgarian to the EU brought about a number of positive changes, in 2009 the Eastern European country recorded another economic meltdown due to the global financial crisis. All of these events, among others, form the push and pull factors that shape the dynamics of the Bulgarian migration of since 1989.⁶⁸ The migration can be explored via 4 distinct, but also overlapping, waves as formulated by Markova.⁶⁹

The first migration wave took place immediately after the changes in 1989 and according to the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria some 218,000 Bulgarian nationals left the country (See *Figure 10*); most of which were Bulgarian Turks who moved to Turkey because they did not have the freedom to migrate during the communist regime when a number of restrictions were imposed on them.⁷⁰ This wave was strongly driven by the ethnic and social tension between the Bulgarians and the

⁶⁷ Jordan Kolev, *Bulgarians Outside of Bulgaria (Българиите извън България)* (Sofia: Тангра ТанНакРа, 2005).

⁶⁸ Tanya Dimitrova and Thede Kahl, "Foreword," in *Migration from and Towards Bulgaria 1989–2011*, eds. Tanya Dimitrova and Thede Kahl (Berlin: Frank & Timme GmbH, 2014).

⁶⁹ Markova, "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: Lessons from Bulgaria," *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, no. GreeSE paper no. 35 (2010). <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28438/>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

⁷⁰ Rossitsa Rangelova and Katia Vladimirova, "Migration from Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Bulgaria," *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs* 3, no. 2004 (2004). <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=214138>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

Turks, which is a common determining factor behind population movements.⁷¹ It is the strongest wave of outward migration from Bulgaria that has been recorded thus far.⁷²

The second migration wave started by the turn of the decade and was stimulated by the

Year	Men	Women	TOTAL
1989	106,432 (48.8%)	111,568 (51.2%)	218,000 (100%)
1990	68,759 (78.2%)	19,136 (21.8%)	87,895 (100%)
1991	19,112 (47.5%)	21,152 (52.5%)	40,264 (100%)
1992	Figures for these years are not broken down by gender		65,250
1993			69,609
1994			64,000
1995			54,000
1996			66,000
...			
2007*	1,119 (37.8%)	1,839 (62.2%)	2,958 (100%)
2008*	766 (36.3%)	1,346 (63.7%)	2,112 (100%)
2009*	8,353 (43.9%)	10,686 (56.1%)	19,039 (100%)

Figure 10 Bulgarian migration 1989-2009

worsening economic conditions within the country and the unrealistically high expectations that the people had for democracy. The first democratically held elections in Bulgaria took place in 1990 and were won by the renamed communist party.⁷³ Around 88,000 people migrated just during that year and simultaneously the official number of unemployed people reached 77,000, which is not a significant number since the entire workforce of the state was about 4m people, but it did have a certain psychological impact of the self-esteem and the self-perception of the Bulgarian people.⁷⁴ This wave is a separate one because the push factors for the migration are different from the ones that form the first wave and the profile of the migrants is different.

The second migration wave included workers with advanced skills that were looking for professional development in their field, but were challenged by the reorganisation of the Bulgarian economy, including the closure of a number of governmental institutions and the redundancy in the management positions in the public sector.⁷⁵ The neighbouring countries of Turkey and Greece welcomed mainly low-skilled Bulgarian nationals and the OECD countries received the comparatively higher-skilled professionals. In 1993 various restrictions were imposed on the migrants coming from Bulgaria, which changed the flows of migration significantly, with Austria and Germany being the only two Western European countries that did not change their policies. Therefore, the official migration

⁷¹ OECD, *Trends in International Migration 1997* (Paris: OECD Publishing, [1997]).

⁷² Georgi Angelov and Marin Lesenksi, *10 Years in the EU. Tendencies in the Bulgarian Migration („10 години в ЕС, Тенденции в българската миграция“)* (Sofia: Open Society Institute - Sofia, [2017]).

⁷³ Markova, "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: Lessons from Bulgaria," *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, no. Gree SE paper no. 35 (2010). <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28438/>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ OECD, *Trends in International Migration 1997* (Paris: OECD Publishing, [1997]).

towards other European countries started to decrease, but undocumented migration increased, for example, the mobility of Bulgarians to Italy and Greece.⁷⁶

During the second migration wave important pull and push factors were the desire to prosper and to have better living standards. In 1996-7 Bulgaria underwent a severe political and economic crisis and, thus, necessity was still the main determinant for the relocation of the Bulgarian migrants. Between 1997 and 1998 migration was facilitated by the Central European Free Trade Area, which stimulated the mobility between countries in transition, thus, the flow of Bulgarians was directed to the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania and in the second half of the 1990s Spain also became a popular choice.⁷⁷ The Bulgarian diaspora in the UK became more significant in the end of the 1990s when the Bulgarian nationals started to make use of the ECAA visas that allowed them entry in the UK as self-employed individuals. After 1 January 2007 Bulgarians did not need a visa anymore to enter the UK and Ireland since they started being accepted as EU nationals, nevertheless as already mentioned the restrictions for entering the labour market in the UK stayed active until 1 January 2014.⁷⁸

Between 2001 and 2004 the number of migrants from Bulgaria declined and encompassed approximately 60,000-100,000 individuals, which in comparison to the period 1998-2001, marked a considerable slowdown for which estimates are around 210,000.⁷⁹ The return migration for the period 1992-2001, on the other hand, did not exceed 19,000.⁸⁰ During that period the Bulgarian government carried out a number of changes in its legislation policies in attempt to fulfil the EU accession criteria, which ultimately led to the acceptance of the country into the European family on 1 January 2007.⁸¹ Since then the income per capita of Bulgaria increased by an average of 6% in comparison to 1998 and the unemployment rate was reduced from 20% in 2000 to below 7% in 2007.

The third wave of migration was linked with the impact of the global financial crisis on Bulgaria's economy that became evident in 2009 when it caused a deterioration in the country's economic conditions and led to a 3.5% decline in the GDP and an increase in the unemployment rate with 1%. Hence, the push factors of migration in 2009 were very similar to the ones from the 1990s, e.g. a search

⁷⁶ Markova, "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: Lessons from Bulgaria," *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, no. Gree SE paper no. 35 (2010). <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28438/>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

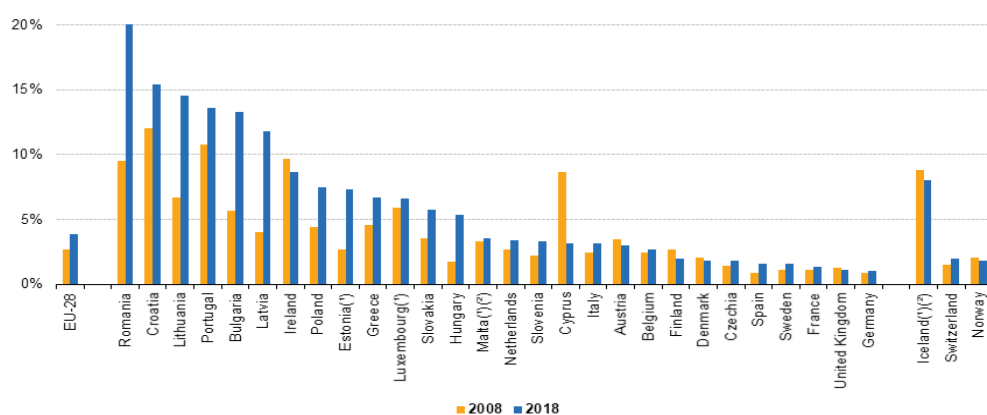
⁷⁷ OECD, *Trends in International Migration 1999* (Paris: OECD Publishing, [1999]).

⁷⁸ Angelov and Lesenksi, *10 Years in the EU. Tendencies in the Bulgarian Migration („10 години в ЕС, Тенденции в българската миграция“)* (Sofia: Open Society Institute - Sofia, [2017]).

⁷⁹ National Statistical Institute, *Population and Demographic Processes (Население и демографски процеси)* (Sofia: National Statistical Institute, [2005]).

⁸⁰ OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2006* (Paris: OECD Publishing, [2006]).

⁸¹ Markova, "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: Lessons from Bulgaria," *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, no. Gree SE paper no. 35 (2010). <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28438/>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).



In descending order of % in 2018

(*) Figure of low reliability for 2008

(*) Figure of low reliability for 2018

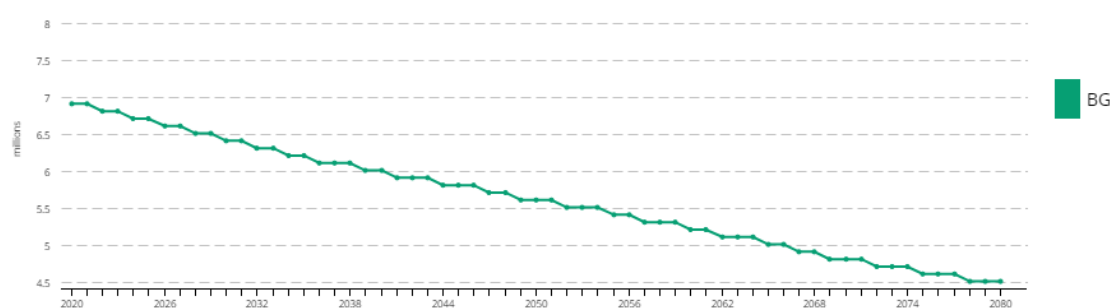
Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfst_lmhcita and demo_pjangroup)

eurostat

Figure 11 EU mobile citizens of working age (20-64) by country of citizenship, % of their home-country resident population

for a better quality of life, professional development, and access to education. The numbers of Bulgarian students abroad and seasonal workers increased, but also most of the European countries had already imposed labour market restrictions for Bulgarian nationals and the one way around them was by becoming becomes self-employed.⁸² The total amount of Bulgarians who moved outside of the country in 2009 was 19,000, which marks an increase of 802% in comparison to the data from the previous year.⁸³ In 2010 there was another increase of 46% in comparison to the previous year.

In the year of 2011 there was a drop in the number of people who migrated from Bulgaria with 66%, but in 2012 the number rose again, which marked the beginning of the fourth wave of outward migration of Bulgarian nationals that has gradually increased up until today with 39,941 individuals who



Source: Eurostat - [access to dataset](#)

Figure 12 Projections about the population of Bulgaria 2020-80 (Eurostat)

⁸² Migration Advisory Committee, *Review of the Transitional Restrictions on Access of Bulgarian and Romanian Nationals to the UK Labor Market* Migration Advisory Committee, [2011]).

⁸³ National Statistical Institute, "Population - Demography, Migration and Projections: International Migration," https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=3&lang=bg (Accessed April 24, 2020).

have migrated in 2019.⁸⁴ In 2018, Bulgarians in the age bracket 20-64 were among the 5 largest national groups of mobile EU citizens, which was not the case back in 2008, according to the statistical data analysed by Eurostat (See *Figure 11*).

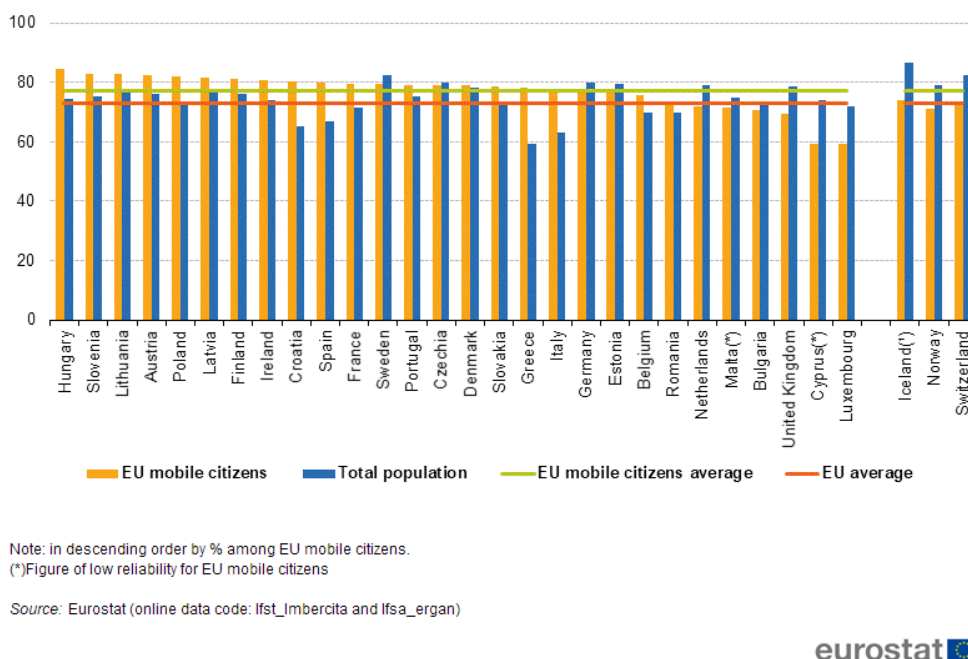


Figure 13 Employment rate of individuals aged 20-64 by country of citizenship, 2018

Although more and more Bulgarians are moving abroad each year and the projections of Eurostat are suggesting that by 2080 the population of the eastern European country will shrink down to approximately 4.5m people (See *Figure 12*), in 2018 the employment rates of Bulgarians within the country were reported to be higher than the ones of the mobile Bulgarian nationals, which means that the reasons for their re-location might not mostly economic anymore (See *Figure 13*).⁸⁵ Indeed, as will be discussed in the next chapter, many migrants coming from less developed countries choose to downgrade upon moving to a country with a more stable economic and political situation, which means that earning a higher income is not their main motive for migration anymore.

3.2. Bulgarians in the UK. Profile and main characteristics

The Bulgarian diaspora in the United Kingdom has slightly different roots; it started in very small numbers in the period 1944-5 in response to the uprising of the communist party in Bulgaria and since then the UK has always been valued by the Eastern European migrants because of its rapid cultural and economic development, and because of its political stability – all features that the Bulgarian country could not and still cannot provide to its citizens.⁸⁶ The modern Bulgarian migration in the UK is linked

⁸⁴ National Statistical Institute, "Population - Demography, Migration and Projections: International Migration," https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=3&lang=bg (Accessed April 24, 2020).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Kolev, *Bulgarians Outside of Bulgaria (Българите извън България)* (Sofia: Тангра ТанНакПа, 2005).

with the last two migration waves of the Eastern European country since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989; it is influenced by three policy developments in the UK that attracted different types of individuals over the years. The report on the Bulgarian and Romanian migration by the University of Reading in 2013 profiles the Bulgarian migrants in the UK as divided into three periods 'pre-2004', 'A8 EU accession 2004-2006', and 'A2 EU accession 2007 and later'.⁸⁷

The 'pre-2004' period highlights the 2001 provision in the UK migration policy as the first document that allowed Bulgarians to enter the UK by obtaining a working visa; this policy was further elaborated in 2002 and has since then included separate conditions for the Bulgarian and the Romanian nationals.⁸⁸ The results of these policy implications are visible through the rising numbers of Bulgarian migrants after 2004; at that point the main pull factor is the higher change for professional development, especially in sectors that were not that developed yet in the Bulgarian economy.

	Arrived before 2004	Arrived 2004-2006	Arrived after 2007	Census 2011 (all UK)
1 Managers and Senior Officials	11.1%	4.4%	3.0%	10.8%
2 Professional occupations	15.2%	4.7%	5.8%	17.4%
3 Associate Professional and Technical	10.7%	6.0%	6.1%	12.7%
4 Administrative and Secretarial	7.2%	5.4%	2.8%	11.4%
5 Skilled Trades Occupations	20.9%	24.7%	20.3%	11.5%
6 Personal Service Occupations	7.8%	17.1%	11.2%	9.4%
7 Sales and Customer Service Occupations	1.8%	4.7%	4.1%	8.4%
8 Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	6.7%	7.9%	9.2%	7.2%
9 Elementary Occupations	18.7%	25.0%	37.5%	11.1%

Figure 14 Occupational profile by arrival cohort of Bulgarians that fall in the age bracket between 16 and 64 years of age. Data gathered through the Annual Population Survey 2005-12 and analysed by the University of Reading

The highest percentage of Bulgarians that have arrived before 2004 were occupied in skilled trades, elementary, and professional occupations, which changed during the next two periods when the percentage of workers in elementary occupations raised. In 2006-7 the employment rate of 16-64 year old Bulgarian residents reached a peak and according to the report on the Bulgarian and Romanian migration by the University of Reading, the A2 workers provided a supply of labour in hard-to-fill sectors that were important for the development of UK's economic development such as construction and caring, leisure, and agricultural industry. It is evident from the census data from 2011 that the number of highly skilled Bulgarian migrants in the fields of professional, associate professional occupations has increased in comparison to the migrants that have arrived pre-2004 (See Figure 14).

⁸⁷ Christian Nygaard, Adam Pasierbek and Ellie Francis-Brophy, Bulgarian and Romanian Migration to the South East and UK: Profile of A2 Migrants and their Distribution: University of Reading, [2013]).

⁸⁸ Migration Advisory Committee, *Review of the Transitional Restrictions on Access of Bulgarian and Romanian Nationals to the UK Labor Market* Migration Advisory Committee, [2011]).

Nygaard et al. highlights that the Bulgarian migrants in London tend to be more educated than the Romanian ones and, for example, in the cohort of migrants, who arrived after 2007, some 21% of the Bulgarians had degree level education compared to only 14% of the Romanians; on the other hand, some 18% of the Romanians that have come after 2007 did not report any qualifications and only 13%

	Arrived before 2004		Arrived 2004-2006		Arrived after 2007	
	BG	RO	BG	RO	BG	RO
Degree or equivalent	25.7%	25.5%	16.8%	12.6%	21.4%	14.3%
Higher education	6.8%	4.9	7.6%	5.2%	2.6%	6.2%
GCE A Level or GCSE grades A-C	11.7%	15.4	5.0%	13.1%	9.7%	12.8%
Other qualifications	43.8%	41.3	54.6%	52.4%	52.6%	48.5%
No qualification/ DK	12.1%	12.9%	15.9%	15.8%	13.6%	18.2%

Figure 16 Highest education attained by arrival cohort. Data gathered through the Annual Population Survey 2005-12 and analysed by the University of Reading

of the Bulgarians, e.g. within the first nationality the number is increasing and within the second - it is decreasing (See Figure 15).⁸⁹ The 10 participants in the current study all have higher education diplomas for either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree and they also possess other qualifications and 3 of them are still studying at the moment in order to obtain GCE A Level, which they believe will make them more qualified in their sectors.

	Arrived before 2004		Arrived 2004-2006		Arrived after 2007	
	BG	RO	BG	RO	BG	RO
Employee	59.9%	61.5%	64.3%	67.9%	54.4%	55.2%
Self-employed	40.1%	38.5%	35.7%	31.6%	45.6%	44.8%

Figure 15 Employment status main job. Data gathered through the Annual Population Survey 2005-12 and analysed by the University of Reading

Nygaard et al. suggest that the numbers of self-employed Bulgarians in London have been rising over the years (See Figure 16). Although the study of the University of Reading does not separate female from male migrants, it does include an equal sample of participants from both genders.⁹⁰ In 2010 it was recorded that 60% of the Bulgarian migrants in the UK are predominantly young and fall in the age bracket 18-35,⁹¹ the average age at which they tend leave full-time education was 19 and they show low rates of unemployment and high labour force participation.⁹² In comparison to the previous wave, the one of the A8 migrants, the A2 migrants work in more skilled occupations, e.g. in the top two (out of four) occupational skill groups,⁹³ which is most likely a result from the labour market restrictions that

⁸⁹ Christian Nygaard, Adam Pasierbek and Ellie Francis-Brophy, *Bulgarian and Romanian Migration to the South East and UK: Profile of A2 Migrants and their Distribution*: University of Reading, [2013]].

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Sumption and Somerville, *The UK's New Europeans*, Equality and Human Rights Commission, [2010]].

⁹² Migration Advisory Committee, *Review of the Transitional Restrictions on Access of Bulgarian and Romanian Nationals to the UK Labour Market*, Migration Advisory Committee, [2011]].

⁹³ Sumption and Somerville, *The UK's New Europeans*, Equality and Human Rights Commission, [2010]].

the Bulgarian and Romanian migrants faced until 2014.⁹⁴ Before the restrictions were lifted, the A2 migrants could not work freely in the sectors of their choice, but were limited either to work in highly skilled occupations or to become self-employment; lower-skilled work was permitted, but limited through the Sectors Based Scheme and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme Quotas.⁹⁵ The finding from this study confirm the ones of the University of Reading and point out the fact that the entrepreneurial activity of the Bulgarian migrants in London has been increasing due to the restrictions to the participation in the labour market imposed by UK's government.

Another study that outlines similar profiles of the Bulgarian migrants in the UK is *Bulgarian Immigrants in England: Past and Present*, which includes more than 200 in-depth interviews with current Bulgarian migrants in England. The analysis of the gathered data is multi-layered and touches upon the various stages that the British policies brought about for the Bulgarian waves of migration.⁹⁶ The first stage, starting in 1993 mostly accepted political migrants, students, and children of mixed British-Bulgarian marriages. The second stage, starting in 2001 is linked with the adopted policies by the UK Home Office for 'controlled migration' that allow Bulgarian nationals to apply for working visas, but only if they were 'high-skilled' workers, self-employed or they were able to initiate a business. The last stage started in 2007 with the acceptance of Bulgaria in the EU when the UK government imposed the restrictions to the labour market for the full period of 7 years, e.g. until 2014. In my research, after analysing the data from the 10 interviews that I make, I argue that because of the restrictions of UK's government the Bulgarian female migrants who moved to London multiplied their entrepreneurial ideas since they started feeling more comfortable with the role of being self-sufficient and independent and being able to make their own decisions. Their separation from the Bulgarian context, where they had felt limited and judged because of the fact that they could not fit in the stereotypical image of the woman in Bulgaria, let to them feeling liberated and free.

The first extensive survey on the Bulgarian community in London, which included qualitative data about the experience of the migrants in the host country, was carried out by the London Bulgarian Association in 2018 and was supported by the Mayor of the city, Sadiq Khan. Dean Bezlov's study⁹⁷ did not aim to reach a representative sample, but rather to outline a comprehensive picture of the Bulgarian diaspora in London using data gathered from 151 respondents through snowball sampling. The research explorea the Bulgarian immigrants' social status, when and why they migrated, and the

⁹⁴ Angelov and Lesenksi, *10 Years in the EU. Tendencies in the Bulgarian Migration* („10 години в ЕС, Тенденции в българската миграция“) (Sofia: Open Society Institute - Sofia, [2017]).

⁹⁵ Markova, "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: Lessons from Bulgaria," *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, no. Gree SE paper no. 35 (2010). <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28438/>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

⁹⁶ Mila Maeva, *Bulgarian Immigrants in the UK - Past and Present* (Българските емигранти в Англия - Минало и Съвременност), 1st ed. (Sofia: Paradigma, 2017).

⁹⁷ Dean Bezlov et al., *Bulgarian Immigrants in London: A Community of Strength, however in the Shadows* (London: London Bulgarian Association, [2019]).

extent of their integration in the UK society; the data was analysed and used to profile and pinpoint migration patterns by dividing the profiles by age brackets: 20-year-olds who are aiming at receiving a high-quality education and exploring the world; 30-year-olds who are focused mostly on their professional development, the opportunities that London provides in terms of networking and doing business; 40-year-olds who are also aiming at professional achievements, but do think more strategically about their future; 50-year-olds who are focused on reaching a satisfactory financial situation; and 60 year-olds who mostly work as support personnel and have moved to London to join their children. The sample of the current master's thesis consists of 3 women in their late 20s, 6 women in their 30s, and 1 woman in her 40s and they do fit in the profiles suggested by Bezlov et al.

Other than highlighting some general trends about the experience of the Bulgarian migrants in London, Bezlov et al. also point out some more specific topics like finding the inter-cultural transition and adaptation reasonable, feeling an emotional pressure because of the language barrier, a general feeling of happiness and a feeling of being 'a citizen of the world'. One of the findings of Bezlov et al. is that Bulgarian women who held higher qualifications prior to moving abroad usually migrated on their own, without the support of a partner, friends or family members. In general, all female respondents reported feelings of self-reliance and liberation because they could cope on their own and even send money back to their families. Although this study is community-led and lacks both the accuracy and the recognition of academic texts, it nevertheless can give a perspective on the community of Bulgarians in the English capital.

The latest data from 2019 provided by the Department for Work and Pensions shows that during 2019 the Bulgarian nationals were the 4th highest European migrant group that has registered in the UK and the 5th migrant group worldwide, which means that exploring their development and integration is a worthwhile endeavour that might lead to important policy suggestions (See *Figure 4*). The next sub-chapter will focus more closely on the existing research on Bulgarian women in order to emphasise possible migration pull and push factors.

3.3. A network in the network. Bulgarian women in and out of the UK

The research about Bulgarian women, in general, is still fragmented and scattered. It is mostly focused on explorations of the life of women in the Soviet Union and the dominant narrative at the moment is linked with a criticism of the well-spread perspective about the liberation of the Soviet woman, which during the time of the Iron Curtain was portrayed as equal to the man. This discussion is important for understanding the modern Bulgarian stereotypes about women since they have their roots in the Socialist way of thinking. For example, Professor Krassimira Daskalova's study about Bulgarian women through feminist perspective in the book *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism* is key to understanding the roots of the image of the women in the Eastern European country.

In the publication she highlights how the Bulgarian government had pushed women towards monotonous and undesirable occupations throughout the years of the socialist administration.⁹⁸ Krassimira Daskalova further explores the professional development of Bulgarian women within the Eastern European country in the period 1992-94 by using data from the National Statistical Institute and concludes that women were mostly occupying low-paid positions in the sectors of education and medical care, which also explains why in Bulgaria these occupations are considered as the most 'feminised' ones at the moment.⁹⁹

Bistra Anachkova discusses the social roles and activities of the modern Bulgaria society and focuses on the participation of women in the labour market. Especially during the period 1945-89, e.g. the time of the 'administrative socialism' in the Eastern European country, even though women were not only offered the opportunity to enter the labour market, but were obliged to by the government, they often held positions that offered fewer opportunities for professional development; and even though there was an increase of the representation of women within the labour market, still the working and payment conditions for men and women were unequal.¹⁰⁰ In her contribution, Bistra Anachkova deconstructs the concept of gender equality and female empowerment during Socialism, which has often been brought up, and criticises the positivist perspective towards being 'a woman during Socialism' by analysing already existing reports and data and gathering additional data from surveys. Anachkova highlights that in general women were under-represented in most sectors, with the exception of education and medical care, and were also under-paid on average with 20%. In regard to private entrepreneurship in 1991: only 22% of all private companies were owned by women; and out of all private entrepreneurs who occupy a managerial position only 14% were women.¹⁰¹ This confirms the findings of Daskalova that the concept of the empowered women in the USSR is just another propaganda used by the republics in order to boost the productivity in specific sectors.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Bulgarian women faced a number of challenges while adapting to the political and economic changes in the beginning of the 1990s. Dobrinka Kostova suggests that the high unemployment rate had a major impact on the position of Bulgarian women in society and particularly in the overall quality of life and satisfaction.¹⁰² This dissatisfaction and frustration with the life in Bulgaria and the lack of resources turned into a push factor for outward migration in the 1990s. Although the 10 participants in the current study did not share any economic

⁹⁸ Krassimira Daskalova, "Women's Problems, Women's Discourse in Bulgaria," in *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*, eds. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Bistra Anachkova, "Women in Bulgaria," in *Family, Women, and Employment in Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. Barbara Łobodzińska (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 55.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Dobrinka Kostova, "The Transition to Democracy in Bulgaria: Challenges and Risks for Women," in *Democratic Reform and the Position of Women in Transitional Economies*, ed. Valentine M. Moghadam, (Oxford University Press, 1993), 92.

reasons for their migration, they did share that they felt a lack of satisfaction while living and working in Bulgaria.

Another push factor is the stereotypical image of women that the Bulgarian media and popular culture are still constructing nowadays. Elza Ibroscheva conducted a content analysis of 127 Bulgarian television advertisements in 2004 with the aim to explore the predominant portrayals of gender in the media environment. She concluded that overall sex role stereotypes and sexualised depictions of women dominate Bulgarian TV ads; women rarely appear as voice-over compared to men; and are predominantly showed as product users, and not authorities; women are found to be advertising mostly domestic use products.¹⁰³ Such commercials and advertisements create specific role models and aspirations for younger girls and although organisations like the Bulgarian Fund for Women are putting effort in organising events and supporting project that would aid the development of women as independent individuals within the modern Bulgarian society, there is still a lack of positive female role models. During the 10 interviews that were conducted for this master's thesis, the lack of strong and positive female role models and general support in Bulgaria was a repeating topic. Three of the interviewees shared that they had not felt the need for such support and seven of them shared that they had felt its lack. The latter group also elaborated that they felt much more support and acceptance in London, whereas in Bulgaria they felt judged and objectified.

Although the gender pay gap in Bulgaria is not considerable, there are specific sectors that women tend to work in and entrepreneurial activities that include high risks, fast decision making, and high responsibility are not very common for women. In general, the noun 'entrepreneur' is translated into Bulgarian as *предприемач*, which literary means a person who takes action. It is mostly associated with the wave of start-ups and the rapid initiation of SMEs when usually one individual either invests or comes up with ideas about various business ventures. In that sense, it is associated more with Bulgarians who have studied outside of Bulgaria, usually in Western Europe, and have already adopted a more westernised behaviour. Entrepreneurship is connected, but not the same as starting a new business venture, because as already explained it is more about the behaviour of taking action and risks in order to develop ideas into working businesses. From two different perspective Bulgarian women are excluded from this type of behaviour and while some of them have decided to stay in the country and change the make space for themselves, others have just decided to relocate in countries where the stereotypes for business women are already less. On the one side, since in Bulgaria women are associated with specific sectors, it is unusual to find strong female leaders and business-women in other sectors. On the other side, since every noun has a male and a female form that should be used

¹⁰³ Elza Ibroscheva, "Caught between East and West? Portrayals of Gender in Bulgarian Television Advertisements," *Sex Roles* 57, no. 5-6 (2007), 410. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9261-x>. (Accessed July 14, 2020).

depending on the person who is carrying out the action, the female form of the noun *предприемач* should be *предприемачка*, but it is not a common way to describe a woman even if she carries all the traits of an entrepreneur. Not only that, but it also sounds derogatory as if the entrepreneurial woman is being mocked for trying to adopt an entrepreneurial behaviour.

On the other hand, the migration of Bulgarian women has been barely explored, but there are some valuable examples of research of Laleva who adopts an ethnographic methodology and aims to capture the experience of Bulgarian women in London, which is also an inspiration for the current study.¹⁰⁴ In her study, Laleva also uses the feminist standpoint theory to analyse the multi-ethnic workplace in Kilburn, London, which is one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in UK's capital. Both the findings from her research and the data from the participants of the current study suggest that there is a predominantly female support network within the Bulgarian economy in London. Although the current research does not deal with the relations within this hidden network, it does acknowledge its existence and importance for the experience of the Bulgarian women who open their own business in the London. While analysing the data of the current study, I realised that although only 2 women from the sample have a business that targets the Bulgarian community, 8 of them actually know other Bulgarian women who have their own business or are free-lancers in the city. They also shared that they meet with other Bulgarian women from their sectors to network and exchange good practices.

4. Ethnographic fieldwork

The population of the research is female migrants of Bulgarian origin who have their own business/es in London and the sample includes 10 different women with whom I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews (See *Appendix 1*) in February, 2020. The interview questions aimed at touching upon the main factors for the decision of the 10 women to migrate and to initiate a new business venture in London and, in general, to explore their migratory and entrepreneurial experiences in both countries. Other than the 30 hours of recorded material, I also observed the headquarters of their companies whenever possible. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and the global COVID-19 pandemic I had just one trip to London and I took the last two interviews, with Nina and Marina, online. Although I did not fulfil my whole research plan, which included attending events organised by the Bulgarian community and smaller niche Bulgarian networks such as the *Young creative Bulgarians in London* group or the *Bulgarian business awards in London*, I did keep in contact with the participants online from February until May, which enabled me to gather more ethnographic data. In the following chapter I will, firstly, briefly present all participants and, secondly, suggest my interpretation of the gathered material.

¹⁰⁴ Stephanie Laleva, "The Importance of Small Victories: The Migratory Experiences and Narratives of Bulgarian Women in London."

4.1. General information about the interviewees

No.	Name of Founder/s	Age bracket	When did she migrate?	How did she migrate?	Date of incorporation of first business venture	What kind of business does she have?	Previous entrepreneurial experience?	Does she consider herself as an entrepreneur?	Most common words used to describe London?	Most common words used to describe Bulgaria?	Interaction with the Bulgarian community?	Knows other Bulgarian women who have their own businesses?
1	Elina	30s	2012	With boyfriend	2016	Bulgarian bookstore	Yes	No	Peaceful, calm, diverse	Wild nature, grey, sad people	Yes	Yes
2	Monica	20s	2015	Alone	2019	Marketing consulting	Yes	Yes	Diverse, cosmopolitan, friends	Envious, grey, pretentious	No	Yes
3	Milena & her male partner	40s	2000	Alone	2005	1. Education 2. Organiser of events for the Bulgarian community 3. Chain of food stores	Yes	No	Polite, accepting	Good for a vacation, dead, grey, sad	Yes	Yes
4	Ivanka	20s	2002	Parents migrated before her	2015	Fashion design	Yes	No	Friends, community, professional life	Poor, jealousy, sad	No	Yes
5	Petia	30s	2008	Alone after her studies	2019	Coaching & facilitation; Project design & management; Consulting	Yes	No	More competition, a lot of people, great professionals	Better for families with kids,	No	Yes
6	Yulia	30s	2010	Alone	2010	Restoration of antiques	N/A	No	N/A	N/A	No	No
7	Marieta & her male partner	30s	2014	Alone for studies	2017	Consulting	Yes	Maybe	More business opportunities, more people, clustering	Less business options, everybody is doing the same, no space for creativity	No	Yes
8	Galia	30s	2014	Alone	2014	Hipnosis, counselling, hypnotherapy, and regression therapy	No	Maybe	Indirect	Direct way of communicating, different culture, honesty	No	Yes
9	Nina & her male partner	30s	2009	Alone for studies	2019	Ltd for short animations or live-action films for marketing and advertising agencies	N/A	No	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
10	Marina & her male partner	30s	2008	With boyfriend	2015	Product design	N/A	No	N/A	N/A	No	Yes

Figure 17 General information about the interviewees

4.2. Profiles of the interviewees

4.2.1. Elina's chitalishte¹⁰⁵

Elina, now in her 30s, opened the first and only Bulgarian bookstore in London (in the Walthamstow borough) in 2016. She moved to the city in 2012 with the help of her boyfriend and with the need to change her life. Due to the labour restrictions back then she could not apply for any jobs and started working in a Bulgarian cleaning company. By education she was an interior designer and upon graduating she initiated an interior design studio with one of her female classmates back in Bulgaria, but at some point she decided that she had had enough, so she packed her belongings and migrated to London.

During our time together she kept telling me how she had always felt different from the others in London, but it did not make her feel like she was less than them; whereas in Bulgarian she felt just uncomfortable to be herself. She said that she changed a lot during her adaptation and she pointed out how one must learn how to let go of their ego and only then they will take the right track. She described Bulgaria as gloomy, grey, sad, and poor. She shared that she did not plan to move back to Bulgaria in the future. Ever since she moved to London she had the idea that she will start her own business and had been waiting for a suitable opportunity while saving up money. Elina initiated the bookstore together with another Bulgarian friend (F), but eventually they split up and now she is managing everything on her own.

From various individuals around the borough (it is one of the most densely populated areas of the city) I kept hearing how important Elina was for the whole community. I was told that it was not just the bookstore as a space or the events that Elina had been organising for the last 4 years, but it was her whole attitude about life that was attractive for the visitors. During my interview I felt how positive, empathetic, and caring she actually was. She shared how either she organises or rents the space to somebody from the community to organise an event each week.

Elina is a down to earth woman who does not aim at achieving massive things; she would never want to get a higher income by putting down somebody, instead she believes in solidary work and collaboration that would benefit a bigger group of people. When I was speaking with her I thought about the theory that one's business cannot grow more than the aspirations of the founder and that women tend to have lower expectations towards their work and the expenditure of their business/es. Elina is not driven by financial means, but by her ideals and what she feels will make her feel more comfortable with the image that she has for herself and the world. In London she feels that the

¹⁰⁵ The chitalishte (in Bulgarian: *читалище*) is a multi-functional venue in the USSR that is situated in every city and village and is meant to facilitate all artistic and cultural activities of the region.

anonymity is something that liberates her because she is not obliged to play by the rules; she misses the wilderness of Bulgaria, but will not give up on her freedom to go back just for that. Elina knows other Bulgarian women who have their own companies in London.

4.2.2. Monica, the marketing guru

Monica, in her late 20s, grew up in Bulgaria, but studied in the States for her bachelor's. Upon graduating she realised that she did not want to stay in the US any longer, so she chose London as her next destination because she already knew the language and the location was very convenient for traveling around the world. Nevertheless, she shared that she was not sure what she was doing or what she wanted to do exactly. During her first week in the city she snuck into a graduation job fair and gave her CV out and that is how she got her first job in the field of marketing. Since then she has been working constantly and has progressed and developed as a specialist until a certain moment when she realised that she had enough and that it was time for her to follow her intuition by initiating her own marketing company. Currently she works with a couple of international clients and offers them a one-time package of services and if needed provides further support. If her start-up takes off she plans to have a bigger team, but it all depends on how things go in the next months.

What I found striking about Monica was her positive attitude and the support that her parents and her brother were giving her. They all have their own business and have initiated various ventures before as well. Her brother lives in the States and gives her pieces of professional advice; her parents currently own a hotel in Bulgaria, so they also try to share their experience whenever she needs. In my conversation with her it became clear that she needed to be praised in order to perform in a better way and her main asset was the fact that she knew that and she was looking for ways to be praised in order to develop her own business. That is why she was advertising her project a lot, she wanted to feel accountable in front of the publics.

During the past 5 years she has tried setting up other businesses, but she has never put this much effort as she puts right now in building a company. She also has a couple of more ideas about new start-up companies for the near future. She has a partner in London and they do not plan on moving to Bulgaria in the future. She described her home country as a bit boring since it does not provide that many professional opportunities. Monica knows other Bulgarian women who have their own companies in London and she also told me about some informal private events that some of her Bulgarian girlfriends are organising with the aim to meet each other and eventually collaborate or initiate new projects.

4.2.3. Milena and the small Bulgaria in London

Milena, in her 40s, moved to London twenty years ago without a plan and without speaking fluent English. In her opinion, she had a lot of luck because she did not have a concrete plan and so many

things could have gone wrong. Her best friend had moved in the city before that and she always encouraged her to join; in the beginning they lived together. She worked various jobs and after a year she met her future husband; 4 years after that they initiated their own business of imports of Bulgarian products. Currently, they own the oldest and biggest chain of Bulgarian supermarkets and an online shop that sells not only food and beverages, but also all kinds of ethnic products such as traditional pottery, cosmetics, artisan artworks, and etc. They also organise various cultural events for the Bulgarian community in London such as concerts, exhibitions, readings, and other celebrations. Their headquarters are located in Barking, which is an area in the North side that is densely populated with Bulgarian nationals.

Her husband is dealing with the financial aspects and she is taking care of the marketing and everything that requires soft skills. Milena is passionate about arts and culture and initiated 2 Bulgarian schools, which are the biggest ones in the UK. In her opinion, even back in Bulgaria it is not that usual to have that many kids in a school. Other than that they have organised cultural events, e.g. concerts, theatre performances, arts bazaars, and etc. She shared that she changed a lot for the past 20 years and now she and her husband have included almost their whole families in the company; in general, they have a team of around 50 people.

Milena and her husband are a power couple that is at the core of the Bulgarian community in London. They are rather pragmatic and don't take irrational risks for their business. They created an extensive network around their companies and the events that they organise. They go back to Bulgaria for vacations sometimes, but they will definitely not move back. Milena knows a lot of other Bulgarian women who have their own businesses in London and she often goes out with them.

4.2.4. Ivanka Hristova fashion design

Ivanka Hristova, in her 20s, is a young fashion designer who moved to London with her parents back in 2002 when she was ten. She studied fashion design in the city and decided to develop her own brand after graduating. Both of her parents have their own companies in London, her father has a construction firm and her mother - a beauty salon. Although they are working in different sectors she often asks them for business advice. She has a Bulgarian fiancé and they are not planning to return to their home-country any time soon. She mentioned that they would only go back, if they own properties in the UK and can work remotely, but she does not think she will look for a job in Bulgaria since she cannot see any opportunities there.

As she was sharing her story with me, I realised how her education did not offer her a lot of business tips for developing her own company in the field of fashion and how she went through all financial and organisational struggles all alone. She told me that she has always wanted to be independent, ever since she was a child, so she started working very early on. Currently, she is both

working on her fashion collections and on side projects in the field of interior design as a freelancer. She would really like to focus more on developing her own brand, but she cannot afford it right now.

I met her in her studio in East London. She came to pick me from the entrance and told me that there were a lot of Bulgarians around. She didn't know about that when she first found the place, but she was okay with it because they had been very attentive and she had a Bulgarian intern recently as well. She told me about the Instagram group of the *Young creative Bulgarians in London*, which includes Bulgarians who work in the creative sector and have graduated from universities such as CSM. She mentioned that they often collaborate together since they are in very similar sectors. Her ideas about the future are more focused on how she will build a name for herself and how she will make her fashion brand more popular.

4.2.5. Petia is all about the arts and culture

Petia, in her 30s, moved to London in 2008, exactly when the recession started. Currently, she has her own coaching and consulting agency in the field of arts and culture. Before that she studied her bachelor's and master's in Warwick University and prior to that, she lived in Sri Lanka with her parents who are both Bulgarian. Her father was a pilot and their whole family used to travel around with him; in Sri Lanka her mother did not have a work permit, so she was mostly taking care of her while growing up. She chose the UK because her high school was international and her diploma was recognised almost everywhere, so she had the opportunity to make a more conscious choice about her future. She decided to go for the UK because it was cheaper than the States and was closer to Bulgaria; she also had some classmates who continued to study in the UK as well.

She is a very active individual and while studying she initiated the Bulgarian society in Warwick; in the beginning they were just 8 people, but eventually they grew in numbers. Upon graduating she moved to the English capital and struggled for a couple of months before finding a job. Eventually she became the communications manager for the Clore Leadership Programme, which is one of the biggest organisations in the field of cultural management worldwide. Recently, Petia opened her own business that offers 3 different services to companies. Firstly, coaching and facilitation, secondly, project design and management, thirdly, consulting. She recently gave birth. She shared that she finds female role models and mentors important and that she has always had strong and professional women around herself that she looked up to.

4.2.6. The mysterious Yulia and the craft of restoration

Yulia, in her 30s, moved to London in 2010 because of work. She did not want me to record the conversation so all I have are my notes. Currently, she has a company that does restorations of antique objects - artworks, furniture, interior, and exterior – she works on individual projects with private clients and manages a team of professionals that help her. She has graduated Fine arts in the National

Academy of Arts in Sofia and then she pursued a master's degree in Decorative art at Institut Supérieur De Peinture Van Der Kelen-Logelain, which is the most prominent European school for preservation and restoration. Ever since she graduated she has been working together with one of her professors from the academy in Sofia, who is a prominent Bulgarian painter. Apparently he has a very vast and extensive network and has worked on projects with clients from the Middle East, the Balkans, East Asia, and Europe so she started traveling with him all around and eventually she developed her own network.

Yulia moved to the city because she can find a lot of clients in the UK and also because it is easier for her to travel around the world from here. She said that there are a lot of antiques in the UK, but the schools that are teaching restoration and preservation are not preparing the future professionals very well so she has a lot of work because of that. Her parents have not supported her and they do not have their own businesses. She wants to find a bigger studio in which she can work in London, but she said that that is a really hard quest. In her story, she opened her own business as a natural continuation of her passion for arts and her professional practice. She does not keep in touch with other Bulgarian since she is focused on the niche that she is occupying.

4.2.7. Financial consulting at its finest by Marieta

Marieta, in her 30s, is the founder and main person in charge of Consulthon. The business venture launched in March, 2019, and since the beginning until now they already have around 410 users without any paid advertisement. The start-up is actually a platform, a network, for financial consultants and representatives of SMEs who have questions or issues that they would like to solve and instead of hiring a whole team of consultants for a period of time, they have the chance to just book a 1-hour consultation for a lower fee. It took Marieta 3 years until she is ready to launch the platform and after she made it public her partner became interested in investing in it as well, so currently they are co-directors and share everything 50/50.

She moved to London to pursue a master's degree and after she graduated she moved back to Bulgaria because she already felt like she wanted to have her own business. At that time, she launched 2 different start-ups in Bulgaria, but eventually fell out with her partners. She shared that the lessons that she learnt back then were really important for her current business. She mentioned that her father had his own business and that at some point she wanted to join him and develop that business, but he turned her down for some reason. She prefers being independent and being able to organise her own time the way she like to. Marieta values experimenting a lot and whenever she hires an employee or an intern she always encourages them to do things the way they would like to because that is how they will learn. She has never felt discriminated against in London and she would go back to Bulgaria in the future, but for now she is living in London with her partner who is Romanian.

4.2.8. Galia's hypnosis, counselling, and regression therapy

Galia, in her 30s, is specialised in hypnosis, counselling, hypnotherapy, and regression therapy. She moved to London in 2014 and immediately started her own practice. She has a studio in Walthamstow, although she does not work solely with Bulgarian clients. In her opinion, it is fate that brought her to the city and to hypnotherapy and a neuropsychology; even since she moved to the city, she has had clients. He studied law back in Bulgaria because her parents wanted her to specialise in that field. Until one day she enrolled in a course about hypnosis because she wanted to learn how to relax since her job was really stressful. Eventually she started teaching in the academy where she took the course and for 3 years she worked both as a lawyer and a therapist. She strongly believes in energy and signs and is confident that if one follows the direction that is meant for them, they will feel good along the way. She moved alone to London and the only person that she knew in the city back then was her cousin, but they were never close enough and she has not received any help for her relocation from her.

Galia shared that in the beginning it was really hard for her to adapt because of the cultural differences between the English and the Bulgarian people, their ways of communicating and expressing themselves. Nevertheless, her intuition was telling her that she had to stay in the city and, in her opinion, it was the right decision since she never had any financial difficulties; she always had more than enough clients and she kept experimenting in various directions. In the future she would like to have a physical space in the centre of the city with a café that offers raw vegan meals and a relaxation zone.

4.2.9. Welcome to the animation studio of Nina

Nina, in her 30s, is an animator and motion-graphics designer who as of May, 2019, has her own limited company in London that is founded together with her partner. She moved to the city in 2009 when she was 20 years old for a foundation year in Farnham, Surrey; back then she also got accepted in other universities, but she finally chose the UK because it had always been her dream to relocate there. For it is just her and her partner who are employed in the studio, which gives them enough income to sustain their business and have a decent lifestyle, but Nina hopes that in the future she they will hire more staff and will have more work. Currently, in terms of expenses they share everything 50/50. Before starting their own business they talked about it with their dads because both of them have their own businesses.

Nina does not imagine going back to Bulgaria because she does not think that she will have the same opportunities and freedom as she has right now in London. She does not communicate that much with other Bulgarians in the city since there are not that many professionals in her field that are Bulgarian, but she does communicate with a couple of other Bulgarian women for example, a wedding dress designer or other professionals in the field of fashion, beauty, and lifestyle.

4.2.10. Marina and Studio Furthermore

Marina, in her 30s, is a co-founder of studio Furthermore, which is specialised in product design. She moved to London back in 2008 for her studies and 5 years ago she opened Studio Furthermore with her partner. They usually work full time and their plans for the future are about producing more products and becoming more popular with their design. In the beginning, when they opened their studio, they did not really had a business plan about how it will be developed. In her opinion they just started working for themselves because they enjoyed it and at some point they started receiving more and more orders until they eventually turned it into a business venture. Marina shared that she is not part of any networks of Bulgarians, but she does know a few Bulgarian women that are in the same field as her such as the fashion designer Marina London.

Marina said that she has always felt welcomed in the UK and she does not imagine moving back to Bulgaria since she has already built a stable life for herself in London. She is confident that being Bulgarian in London has only been a benefit for her since there are not that many women like her and it is something that made her unique. Currently she is on maternity leave because she gave birth 3 months ago.

4.3. Interpretation of gathered data

The next sub-chapters are the themes that the participants have brought up during the interviews. I clustered them, suggested my own interpretation, and included some quotes from the respondents themselves.

4.3.1. Entrepreneurial dimension

4.3.1.1. *Internal factors*

As suggested by Zhao, Davis, and Copeland the internal factors that are important for the entrepreneurial intentions of the individual are linked with their personality, skills, and abilities. What I found fascinating during all interviews is the positivity and optimism of the women that I was speaking with. They felt confident in themselves not because they thought that they were doing amazing and were full of themselves, but because they felt comfortable with their lives. They did not feel pressured or limited by anything.

Oh, yes, I really do feel very comfortable... Here I have never felt discriminated against... neither because of my accent, nor because I am a woman... or because of anything else. I am free to dress the way I want and to behave the way I want. The business is going well. I am happy that I had the opportunity to work on additional projects like the 2 schools that I am running and I am happy that there is always something different going on. – Milena

All of them had either plans about expanding their current businesses, about starting a new one in the near future or about doing both.

We're currently making enough revenue to sustain us, our mortgage, and a decent lifestyle. I am hoping to double our current revenue in the next year or two, and be able to take on junior designers. – Nina

Usually when they were thinking about a new project they were mentioning Bulgaria as well either as a place for production, a place for inspiration or a source of new materials.

I want to start another business. I have always wanted to invest time and money in something that is a product and is from Bulgaria so that I can export it to the UK and I can do the marketing for it as well. – Monica

The importance of their Bulgarian roots will be discussed further in chapter 4.3.2. *Ethnic dimension*, but for now, I want to remark how while describing their comfort in London they also tended to compare it to the harsh life back in their home country where everything felt grey, sad and miserable. It felt like they felt a certain liberation because they were not there anymore.

One day I told myself: "I may be a weirdo, but I belong here, I can be anyone and the people around wouldn't care that much." Also, if you don't like something, you can just go to another neighbourhood and everything would be different. I think that is quite liberating and gives you space to breathe and to just be yourself without worrying how you look like while throwing out the trash. [She laughs] It's not the same in Bulgaria. – Elina

They all had something that, in my opinion, is close to the concept of *learned optimism* and especially Galia who had learned to trust her gut feeling throughout the years.

I do believe that when you see the right direction, the one that's meant for you, you have to follow it... and that's also what happened with me. I was fascinated by the fact that I can help somebody to such an extent... I learnt that usually what's stopping us is our own anxiety that comes from inside of us... – Galia

There was an overlapping between their personal and professional lives and they organise both of these spheres in the same manner. The perspective that one has to lose all emotions while working does not fit these women because the way that they do business is by feeling.

This is the other thing that I would never regret - showing who you really are... I believe that if you do that, you will always attract the same type of energy back... That's how things in life happen. You do something, you show your true self, you say: "This is me and this is what I can do!" and then you start attracting your clients like a magnet. – Elina

Of course, all of them had different stories, but something that they had in common was the lack of fear from failing. They felt comfortable with starting a company without a crystal clear plan about its development.

It looks like I have written a business plan, but my approach is very agile. Everything changes the whole time! – Petia

They were confident in initiating a new business venture without actually considering it as a business, sometimes in the beginning it felt like a hobby.

I developed the school as a hobby, but now it's one of my main priorities and everything else revolves around it... It is a huge project... even in Bulgaria there aren't many schools with more than 600 children... – Milena

Or it felt like a personal space, in which they could experiment and be free, which sounds a bit like Virginia Woolf's metaphor about the *room of one's own* that a woman needs in order to develop herself and to become something.

I didn't have a business idea in the beginning. I opened a design studio which eventually turned into a business. – Marina

The idea of experimenting did not disappear after the initiation of the business, but was a consistent part of the philosophy behind the company.

I also really like the fact that you can experiment so much with your own business and big corporations that's not possible. There you are spending so much time thinking how to say something... whether you will offend somebody or not... because with them usually everything is connected with the ego and not with the product that they are offering... and I have always been driven by the product... and yeah, I love the freedom of being my own boss. – Marieta

Furthermore, having your own business was referred to as something beneficial for becoming closer to yourself, understanding yourself, your values, skills, and abilities. It was not though as something that

comes after and because of those personal characteristics, but as something that lets these women see their identities and lets them build them further.

I think that working on your own business is a very interesting endeavour because it helps you understand yourself better. It lets you see a different part of yourself and to develop it. The whole time you have to be focused on something that's more than you... – Galia

Other than liberation, independence, and self-exploration as main motives for business initiation a common theme was the idea of helping other people develop or achieve something more.

I really want to help people that want to be independent and want to make a difference, I don't want to be helping somebody that would be like: 'Oh, yeah, I just want to make a bunch of money' and then do nothing else. I want to work with people who are really passionate about what they do kind of like... like me. Someone that loves their job or works on something that matters. – Monica

For these women it was important to actually see the results of their work and they did not measure the outcomes in financial terms, but more in building a community and network around themselves with like-minded individuals.

I have never been so ambitious as to just say: "Now I will open my own business!" I am just very organised... That's my main skill and I like that. I like organising events, exhibitions, gatherings, seminars for the Bulgarian community here. I love it! I get bored if I do humdrum work. That's not for me. Also, I like seeing when our clients take the initiative at some point as well. They start organising their own meetings and events as well... they just need a little push in the beginning and then they become active themselves. – Milena

My hypothesis about the hidden support network of Bulgarian women will be discussed further in 4.3.3. *Gender dimension*, but I would like to highlight it here as well since it is connected with the concept about having a community-oriented and supportive mind-set. This mind-set includes not considering your business competitors as such, but rather as collaborators. All 10 of the participants of the study agreed to this perspective by giving their own views about their competitors.

I don't think I have any competitors... I see the people around me as collaborators, I think there is enough work for everybody... I am lucky that I have good partners in the sector, mainly women, and we do a lot of... for example, when there is a big

grand we apply together because we know that we can't do it if we don't unite. –

Petia

The other companies that offer similar products are seen more like bodies of knowledge and know-how that these women would like to learn from. Therefore, the question is not about over-powering and falling apart, but about coming together.

I do not believe in the concept of competition. Clients can sense you and your product and if they feel like you are the right provider, they will not go to anybody else. The thing is that you have to give them enough information about yourself and your product, so that they can choose you... you shouldn't focus that much on the competitors. You should learn from people with more experience than you... and, in my opinion, the fear of competition is just the fear of failure. – Galia

4.3.1.2. External factors

4.3.1.2.1. Prior exposure to entrepreneurial behaviour

As highlighted in Zhao, Davis, and Copeland's model prior experience with initiating a business venture can be considered as a factor that will enable the individual to take faster and more confident decisions in regard to their future business ideas. In the sample of the current study there are seven interviewees with previous experience with starting their own business before either in Bulgaria, in the UK or a collaborative Bulgarian-English project.

I studied Interior design in Bulgaria... and when I graduated I and one of my classmates [also female] founded a studio for interior design, I was 24 back then and then at 26 I came here... I have actually always thought about having my own business, I just didn't feel like I was entirely ready for that before coming here... so for example, I didn't put that much effort in developing my first firm, but now it's different. – Elina

Elina shared that when she initiated her first business, it was more like a *game* than a real business for her. At first she did not take it seriously, which is definitely not the case with the English-Bulgarian bookstore that she is developing right now. Another interviewee, Marieta, had started two other start-ups back in Bulgaria before she moved to London, but in both cases she fell out with her partners because they had different perspectives on how the companies should be run. During our conversation, she highlighted how those experiences thought her a lot and made her stronger and more confident about being the founder of the start-up that she is developing right now.

In Bulgaria I initiated two businesses. In the first one I had one female partner and in the second one we were three people and, basically, I was investing my salary from [the name of a company that she used to work for] for both of these endeavours... So yeah, both times it didn't work out because we fell out with my partners. – Marieta

Monica also has had previous business ideas that she has worked on. In her case she collaborated with a Bulgarian fashion designer and set up her store on the Internet, but eventually Monica decided that she was not that interested in the project itself, dropped out, and left her collaborator with all the profits from the online shop. Nevertheless, she did learn a lot from that experience as well in regard to marketing and business development, which made her a better director of her current marketing agency.

This is actually the second business that I have started. A few years ago I met this girl in Bulgaria who is a designer so she produces clothes but she used to sell them in those little garage shops in Bulgaria and she used to sell them for a profit of like 2 euro so she used to spend so much time and money on a dress and she would make just 2 euro in the end... and one day I was like: "We should start selling them in the UK!" so we set up a shop on Shopify, took a bunch of photos. That failed miserably! Nobody buys from a website they don't know. So then we went on Etsy and Amazon and one other... Depop. Etsy actually kicked-off and to this day it is going on, but to be honest, it wasn't working out. It wasn't something that I was interested in, but for her it's good because it's a UK profit that she can spend in Bulgaria and that's quite a lot. – Monica

4.3.1.2.2. Previous entrepreneurial education

Three of the interviewees shared that they had studied business or economics before initiating their own business ventures, but what I found more interesting is that six of them said that starting their own business was a natural decision that they took after their studies.

So, for our graduation we have to make one collection and I remember that for some reason I had a lot of exposure in various media and people really liked my line and I told myself: "Maybe I should start something and just use the buzz that I already have." and then I designed my first official collection... as my mom says: "You just jumped straight into it." and that's exactly what happened because with my degree, honestly, I had no idea how to run a business because we were studying more

creative things, we never studied the business part of fashion. I had to learn everything the hard way. – Ivanka

4.3.1.2.3. Support from family and friends

Seven of the interviewees shared that their parents and/or siblings were running their own business/es as well and that they were receiving support and advice from them. For example, Monica's parents had initiated various business ventures throughout the years and she usually asked them about a lot of business issues that she needed advice about; her brother also had his own business in the USA and he supported her as well.

When I have had issues with this business I have spoken with my parents. They have been running their own businesses in their 20s, not in the UK, but then when I want to hear the Western perspective I speak with my brother. – Monica

Ivanka's parents also both had their own businesses and whenever she needed to share or talk about her own career and business she usually went to them.

... My dad has a construction company together with my brother and my mother has a beauty salon - she is a hairdresser and a hair stylist and she opened her own business close to where they live. – Ivanka

In some cases the support was financial, but not in all.

I moved to London right after I submitted my master's thesis and during the first two weeks I must have sent about 80 CVs and called 40 places and, honestly, nobody called me back and I was like: "Oh my God!" I shared with my parents and they told me: "We can pay your rent for the next four months and if you don't find a job until then you will move back to Bulgaria." – Petia

4.3.1.2.4. Influences from the person's social network

A reoccurring theme in the interviews was that networking was beneficial and led to future business development or new projects when it was happening naturally, for example during work. The professional network of the women played the role of a foundation, a resource, in their own development as business-owners.

I don't think I could have started a business in the creative sector without having worked for the Clore Foundation. A lot of my friends started doing the same as me,

but they couldn't really push through the first months because they didn't have the same network as me. – Petia

Another theme that was being repeated in regard to networking is that after they initiated their own business they started feeling much more comfortable with introducing themselves during events and popularising their companies.

I started focusing a lot on networking recently... I used to hate networking, but it was because I thought of it as networking while recently I have been finding the means where you just go and interact with people and kind of the networking happens on its own. – Monica

Through network an entrepreneur could reach out to both new collaborators, teachers and clients, but again it is experienced in a very irrational way. If you are confident enough and produce your own energy then you will attract the right people and they would come on their own.

I wasn't looking for clients... they were the ones who were finding me... word-of-mouth works like a charm for me and the biggest number of clients comes from there... Also, sometimes I just meet them somehow through networking. That's how it happens... through creative energy. Also, if I am doing something that I like, I just attract the right people... it just happens naturally. – Galia

It is not only about business, it is also about having a mind-set focused on building communities.

I actually founded the Bulgarian community in Warwick... We were just 8 people at that point because it was before Bulgaria joined the EU. We had to gather 20 signatures in order to establish the society and we got some signatures from our flatmates. – Petia

4.3.2. Ethnic dimension

4.3.2.1. Ethnic resources

As suggested in Schaper and Volery's enhanced interactive model for exploration of ethnic entrepreneurial intentions, I argue that the ethnic dimension is independent from the entrepreneurial dimension of the individual. The ethnic resources include all assets that the ethnic community has that can aid the creation of ethnic business strategies. This includes the niche ethnic market that Milena and her husband occupied together with their families.

The business that we initiated 15 years ago is linked with importing and selling Bulgarian food and beverages... and Bulgarian products in general. For now, we have four physical shops and an online shop - people can buy either per piece or in bulk. Actually, we do everything that is connected with the Bulgarian community. – Milena

None of the women felt any ethnic discrimination and Marina mentioned that she found her ethnic root as a positive characteristic that made her interesting.

Most of the time I found that it was a benefit. There aren't that many product designers coming from Bulgaria, especially female. – Marina

As already mentioned although most of the interviewees do not work in the ethnic economy they do use their Bulgarian culture and traditions as a place for production or a source of inspiration and new materials.

In the beginning of my studies I was very influenced by my Bulgarian roots, yes... My cultural heritage was quite important for my graduation project. Nowadays I still see it as an opportunity to produce unique work. – Marina

Nevertheless, the ethnic resources, e.g. cultural traditions and customs, can also have a negative impact on a migrant when they are trying to adapt to the culture of the host-country. A theme that occurred a lot of times during the interviews was the outside image of Bulgaria and the way that the culture and attitude of the Bulgarian people is interpreted from distance. Elina shared that she felt much better in London because the people were much more tolerant and accepting to foreigners.

We, Bulgarians, have this self-pity attitude... we think that nobody wants us... that we have to fight for everything... that nobody understands us. It took me so much time, last year I realised that people here are really tolerant. Everybody accepts you here! Can you even imagine in Sofia [Bulgaria's capital] a Chinese person opening a Chinese bookstore? [We laugh together] I give him 2 months tops. Here nobody is against you, nobody is stopping you. – Elina

She was not the only one who kept referring to the Bulgarian culture with a negative connotation.

When I go back to Bulgaria I feel a bit... Not exactly bored, but there isn't much going on. What I don't like about Sofia, that's where I am from, is that when you go out and everybody is looking at you and I am not that much into fashion and when I go

back my younger sister, who is 19 at the moment, is dressing me and she always checks what I am wearing. She is like: "Oh, you can't go out dressed like this!" and I am like: "Come on, I am just going to go to the shop." Also, I feel like there is a general presence of judgment in Sofia. – Monica

Galia shared that changing her mentality was one of the biggest challenges that she had to face while adapting to the culture and values of the host country. In her narrative, Bulgaria did not have a negative image, but it was definitely in opposition to the UK. In terms of doing business the English culture was much more organised and respectful to hierarchical structures, rules, and laws, and also in terms of interpersonal communication, for Galia it was a surprise that there were differences between the Bulgarian directness and the English indirectness.

I think, as many other Bulgarians, the biggest challenge that I had was changing my mind-set... because we have this scepticism towards rules and laws, and structures, and hierarchies, and we just do not like that there are certain systems that have a specific way of being organised and that we have to adjust to those principles in order to be included and that it doesn't work the other way around. I believe that it's hard here for all Bulgarians because if you are focused mostly on changing the system you don't really focus on adapting... Another one was the fact that we have a much more direct way of communicating and here, people are much more indirect. It took me a long time to understand that Englishmen sometimes express negative opinions through positive statements. – Galia

Milena also talked about the differences between Bulgaria and the UK and described the first in a very grey and sad manner. She shared that she would not go back to Eastern Europe because of the mind-set of the individuals there who she feels are too 'negative,' and 'dead,' e.g. lacking energy, motivation, and inspiration.

I don't think we will go back to Bulgaria... maybe somewhere else, but not there. It's just so different there. I feel sad when I see the Bulgarian news, it's just so dead and the people are so negative. I understand that it's really hard there, but still the negativity is striking. It's not beautiful. I can go for a vacation, I can go to the countryside with my friends, but that's it. – Milena

Ivanka highlighted the difference between the attitude of the Bulgarian and the English people and described the first one as 'unwelcoming,' and 'frustrating.' Because of that negativity she had fallen off with a number of people throughout the years who she felt were only holding her back.

Chances of me moving there again are very low... because the attitude of the people is just different, on the street you can only see these really unwelcoming faces of people who have suffered a lot... That's why throughout the years I fell off with a number of people from my past... I let go of those relations because they were frustrating for me.... – Ivanka

For Galia moving from London back to Bulgaria would be a step back because she already reached a point in her life, in which she felt independent and empowered.

... I cannot go back to Bulgaria anymore and it's not because of the economy... For me going back would be like moving from Sofia [the capital of Sofia] to Varna [her hometown that is the third largest city in Bulgaria] again. – Galia

Another aspect of the ethnic resources is ethnic discrimination. A repeating theme in regard to this was that back in Bulgaria they felt more discrimination and scepticism toward themselves, but mostly because they were female or because they were young. On the other hand, in London they have not encountered any discrimination linked with their ethnicity.

I have never felt discriminated here... neither I nor my family have felt like that. Even if somebody has been rude with me I have never felt like it was because of my ethnic roots or because I am a woman. Everybody has been very polite with me and even if they are being hypocritical, I have never felt it. I have never felt judged because of my accent or anything. – Milena

4.3.2.2. Ethnic social network

The ethnic social network includes all individuals that are from the same ethnicity of the entrepreneur that can support with knowledge, resources, and know-how among other assets during the process of migration, on the one hand, and during the process of business initiation and development, on the other hand. A reoccurring theme in regard to the migration of the interviewees was that they took a rapid decision and that they did not have everything planned out.

*... I moved just like that. I didn't really know what I was doing or where I was going.
– Monica*

They were triggered by an event in their personal lives and they got the chance to migrate without thinking it through.

... but to be honest, I had never wanted to move out of Bulgaria, I wasn't like those open-minded people, I hadn't travelled, I hadn't even been on a plane before... I actually came by bus, but yeah, at the same time I didn't have anything that was tying me to Bulgaria... So things just happened, I didn't come here with a concrete plan. – Milena

As already mentioned, in half of the case the choice was entirely blind and was linked with the women's idealistic view towards the city of London. They did not know almost anybody and they did not receive much support from family and friends.

My life is a sequence of intuitive decisions, I am very empathetic and I was just following the signs... but actually when I moved here, I didn't know anybody... My cousin actually lives here, but I have never counted on her about anything... I remember that I asked her some questions about the city, but I have never expected that she will help me find a job or anything like that. – Galia

Of course, other than the network that had already existed before the migration of the interviewees, they can also create their own ethnic social network.

I do keep contact with the Bulgarian community here, but it happened entirely because of the bookstore. Before that I wasn't really communicating with a lot of Bulgarians... If I hadn't founded this place, I would have never realised who many intelligent and interesting Bulgarians with a passion for reading there are. Right after I opened I started organising events as well... and at some point some people from the community also took the initiative and started suggesting ideas for new events... they also started renting the place and organising workshops themselves. I think that's nice. – Elina

4.3.3. Gender dimension

4.3.3.1. The network of Bulgarian women

During the interviews none of the women shared that they were part of any female business networks and most of them had a sceptical opinion that it would be beneficial for their business. Nevertheless, during the course of the conversations I realised that they were connected with each other in one way or another. Even though they were not part of any official membership organisations they did participate in informal gatherings with predominantly Bulgarian guests. For example, Monica mentioned that one of her female friends organises different meetings that aim at connecting Bulgarian women from various sectors that can meet and potentially collaborate in a way in the future.

I am not part of any female networks, but I do have this one girlfriend that is usually very supportive to other girls and she invited me to this lunch once and she had invited several of her friends [Bulgarian women] that have their own business, which was very motivating. One of them runs a swimming clothes brand, another one is also in fashion, one if just a fashion blogger. – Monica

The same was shared by Ivanka who also invited me to a meeting of the Instagram group of the young Bulgarian fashion designers in London.

I have a lot of friends from the creative field who are Bulgarian... hair stylists, make-up artists, photographers... but yeah, we keep it a small circle... there was this girl who was my intern and on 1 March she is organising an event for the Bulgarians in London who are in our field, I gave her the contacts of the people that she invited and it's going to be a big networking event and also some other people will attend, it will be quite cool. Other than that, we often collaborate with those guys, for example, with Radiana, she makes accessories and I also design something at times and we present them together. – Ivanka

4.3.3.2. Female role models

Another reoccurring theme was the lack of positive Bulgarian female role models in the media and in the popular culture. Instead, some of the respondents suggested that getting an official female mentor was really helpful for them since they could discuss professional matters with them.

Most of my mentors have been women... in my old company I had this manager and it felt like she was on my side rather than the company's side. [...] And then my last company we actually had an official mentoring scheme and they matched me up with one of the directors of the company and it was a brilliant match. She was absolutely fantastic to talk to and I learned from her a lot, she helped me a lot with that confidence issue that I had. – Monica

Unofficial mentors are also found very helpful.

At the moment I don't have an official mentor, but throughout the years I have worked with different mentors, including my previous boss with whom I am working currently on a project for the British Council. For example, she and her husband have helped me so much... and if I have any questions, I can always call them and ask. I am also part of a couple of online networks and ask for advice there as well. – Petia

4.3.3.3. Power relations

No matter how good some of the interviewees were doing they still had confrontations with their male partners or colleagues. Other than managing her own business Ivanka worked with Thomas but she felt like he was afraid that she would become better than him in the field.

Well, he supports me, but to be honest, he's really afraid... because he knows what I am capable of... it's not just management, it's also design... and he's afraid that if I want, I could find a job even tomorrow. He is afraid that I will get away. We doesn't speak that much about my own business, but he often gives me good advice, especially in crucial moments, but I feel like his advice is always a bit distant... I feel like he wants to perform better than me. Therefore, I am trying to be a bit more discreet because I don't want him to feel threatened. – Ivanka

Monica shared something similar, but for her it was linked with the fact that she had started working at a very young age. In her opinion, it was a bit hard, especially for older men, to start taking her seriously in the beginning.

When I used to work in an office I used to feel like people were questioning my knowledge and expertise just because I was a young woman. – Monica

Petia shared the same from the field of arts and culture.

I have felt the attitude of some men who are supporting each other more, but it's also intersectional... for example, if you are a women, but also a person of colour or a foreigner and they are like: 'Oh who are you to be in this room and to make decisions and to express your opinion during this board meeting... but that's also changing and especially our sector is politically more careful about all of these power structures. – Petia

4.3.3.4. The imposter syndrome

Another repeating theme was about putting too much of one's emotional side into the professional matters, overthinking, and eventually feeling a lack of confidence at times.

There are a lot of challenges that I am facing... One is the confidence in my own value and I think that... and I have spoken to a few other women and it's often an issue... men as well... but I yeah: "Do I charge this much an hour or do I charge this much?" and this most recent proposal that I sent, they were a bit slower with responding and I was like: 'I asked them for too much money!' I actually had a

nightmare about it. But I think that is the biggest challenge. I think it's a little bit of that imposter syndrome as well. – Monica

5. Conclusions

The current study highlights the experiences of 10 Bulgarian women, who are running their own business in London, while exploring their main motives for business initiation. The main finding of the research is that these women have felt pressured, objectified, and limited in a way back in their home country either because of the image of the woman that has been built up during the Soviet Union times and that has continued to create false female role models in popular culture nowadays. All of them took a personal decision to move to London, which was not thoroughly planned and lacked a concrete idea about their future development, but it did bring about a feeling of liberation, independence, and a 'sense of belonging' to the global world. Therefore, I argue that the interviewees were motivated by the need for a change, the need to distance themselves from the traditional culture of their home-country in order to adapt and integrate to the more liberal culture of the global city.

The main reoccurring theme in the interviews was the understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour and business initiation as something much more intangible, fluid, and connected with the intuition and emotions of the entrepreneur. None of the participants in the study thought of themselves as entrepreneurs, but my argument is that the reason for that is that they did not feel like they fit the entrepreneurial discourse, although they do possess the traits of an entrepreneur. These characteristics, e.g. comfortability with constant risk taking (not only in regard to initiating a new business venture, but also in their personal lives), innovative thinking, and not being afraid of failing as an entrepreneur among other factors; they already possessed back in Bulgaria, but due to the business environment in London and the policies and the economic structure of the UK they developed them even further and managed to use them in their benefit.

Although the sample of female-owned businesses used in this study is random, the owners knew each other and were sometimes referring to each other's businesses. Furthermore, each interview ended with a request from my side for more contacts and all interviewees were really enthusiastic to share with me more and more women that have their own business in the city. Therefore, I do think that there is an informal support network of Bulgarian women between them that helps them deal with the hardness of migration and adaptation to the new environment, which is a topic that is worth exploring further.

Apparently, for the interviewees London felt like the most comfortable destination, although they did not have a crystal clear plan on how they will migrate or develop professionally in the city. Other than the common reasons for migration to the English capital such as more professional

opportunities, higher chances of becoming financially independent, cheaper and closer for travelling all around the world, diversity, high tolerance towards foreigners among others, the interviewees also had a specific romantic view of the city. Of course, their entrepreneurial experience from both places were different and all 10 of them shared that moving back to Bulgaria was not an attractive option for them since they felt much more comfortable and free in London.

Can this group of women be considered as representative for all women part of the Bulgarian diaspora in London? Probably no, since each story would be unique. Nevertheless, this master's study highlights the changes in the migration and work patterns in female migrant entrepreneurs. Would the Bulgarian women who have their own businesses in other European countries such as Spain and Germany have the same experience? Probably no, since the structure of the host country would offer different conditions; the Bulgarian ethnic economy, resources, and social network would not be the same; and the role of the woman in the specific country would be different. Nevertheless, the current thesis is valuable since it captures the migrant and entrepreneurial experiences of a specific group of women in a specific moment of time.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview guide

The following *interview guide* is part of a dissertation required for the successful completion of the 'Global Markets, Local Creativities' master's degree in Erasmus University Rotterdam. The thesis itself focuses on the motivational factors of female business-owners of Bulgarian origin in London and includes two parts: (1) a mapping of as many such businesses as possible; (2) semi-structured in-depth interviews with owners of such companies.

The *interview guide* introduces the structure of the in-depth interviews that are conducted. Their main goal is to capture the subjective experiences of these women and to mark the main determinants because of which they decided to develop professionally in the UK and not in Bulgaria. Before or after an interview has been conducted the interviewee must sign a consent form designed by the interviewer.

The *interview guide* is designed to be used flexibly and further questions can be added in if needed. The questions can be asked in any order to allow the conversational flow of the interview to progress. The *interview guide* includes open questions that can be answered in any order. They could be answered in either Bulgarian or English depending on the preference of the interviewee.

Personal questions

- Could you please describe yourself briefly?
- When and how did you move to London?
- When you decided to move to London did you have to make a choice between it and other locations? Why did you choose London in the end?
- Did you move alone or with somebody else?
- What area is your education in?
- Could you please indicate your marital status?
- Do you care for any dependents, for example, children or relatives?

Questions regarding the business

- Could you please describe your business?
- When did you establish your business?
- What was your initial capital?
- Are your current revenues enough for you to take care of your living expenses in London or do you need help from your relatives or your partner?
- Who would your major competitors be?
- Who owns the business? Is it solely yours or are you part of a collective?

- Do you operate the business from a commercial premise or your home?
- Do you operate the business on a full-time basis?
- Approximately how many hours per week would you spend on your business?
- Does your business have any other employees?
- What are the main channels of communication that you are using in order to promote your business?
- What is the target audience of your business?
- If you could change one thing in your current business in order to improve it what would it be?
- What are your future business plans?

Questions regarding the motivation of the business-owner

- What was your motivation for starting your business?
- How did you come up with the idea behind the business?
- How do you measure and evaluate the performance of your business?
- How do you judge the success of your business?
- Could you please describe your previous work experience?
- Do you have professional experience from Bulgaria?
- Did these skills help you in starting your business?
- Did you seek any advice on starting a business? From whom?
- Have you been involved in any other business endeavours?
- Are you a member of any networking organisations?
- Do you find networking useful for your business?
- Who do you usually network with?
- Do you have a mentor? Do you wish you had one?
- Who are your role models?
- Did you encounter any obstacles in launching your business?
- What are your biggest challenges at the moment?
- Do you feel like you need help with something at the moment?
- If you had to give advice to yourself when you first moved to London from your current perspective what would it be?

Links with Bulgaria

- Do you have friends who are Bulgarian?
- Have you ever felt discrimination against yourself or your business in London? For example, because of your cultural background or your accent or your visual characteristics?
- Would you say that you are influenced by your cultural roots in your work?

- How do you feel about the Bulgarian community in London?
- What was your main motivation behind starting a business in London and not in Bulgaria?
- How does it feel for you to have your own business in London?
- Do you go to Bulgaria often? Do you plan to move back there one day?
- Is there something that might convince you to go back to Bulgaria? What is it?

Final questions

- Do you know any other women of Bulgarian origin that have their own business in London? If yes, please share your contacts with me in order to aid the reach of the whole study.
- Are there any other areas that you would like to discuss?

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