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**A QUALITATIVE LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE POLICY AND
PRACTICE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS REGION OF ENGLAND.**

DEBRA ANN BLISSON

Doctor of Philosophy

ASTON UNIVERSITY

October 2020

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Thesis Summary.

This research investigates how women's activism and organisation influenced strategy and policymaking in the arena of business support over twenty-three years in a region of the UK. The research focuses specifically on the West Midlands region of England, between the periods of 1988 and 2011. The study explores the process of originating an idea and the evolution of that idea into a regional policy debate, implementation and practice.

The study explores an area of contemporary theory. Public policy analysis and female entrepreneurship are relatively recent disciplines from the latter part of the twentieth century (Brush *et al.*, 2003; Lasswell, 2018). Women's enterprise policy research develops and applies theoretical concepts across both disciplines, to address the specific concerns of policy practice for supporting female entrepreneurship across the world.

The research adopts a qualitative longitudinal analysis approach to public policy study. Feminist and critical realist frames are applied to documentary data, gathered over the study period in order to develop three case studies. The chronological cases detail the activities of women's groups advocating for regional strategic interventions in support of women's enterprise. The Advocacy Coalition Framework approach (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993) is then applied to the case studies in order to provide analysis of the policy process. This is supplemented with critical realist analysis to provide further perspectives on the research data.

The research provides a comprehensive assessment of the policy process over time and illustrates how women organised in order to create policy change, as a form of entrepreneurial feminism (Orser and Elliot, 2015). It contains detailed insight into advocacy coalitions and their operations in the creation and implementation of female entrepreneurship policy and practice in the UK; highlighting the importance of political will and strong coalitions in successful policy practice.

Keywords.

Female entrepreneurship policy, policy process analysis, Advocacy Coalition Framework, Critical Realism, Entrepreneurial Feminism.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|--|
| AWM | Advantage West Midlands – Regional Development Agency |
| ACF | Advocacy Coalition Framework |
| BCC | British Chambers of Commerce |
| BERR | Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (UK) |
| BIS | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (UK) |
| BLWM | Business Link West Midlands |
| BME | Black and Minority Ethnic |
| BSSP | Business Support Simplification Programme |
| BWEDA | Birmingham Women's Enterprise Development Agency |
| CREW | Centre for Research on European Women |
| CWEDA | Coventry Women's Enterprise Development Agency |
| DCLG | Department for Communities and Local Government (UK) |
| DETR | Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (UK) |
| DTI | Department of Trade and Industry (UK) |
| DWP | Department for Work and Pensions (UK) |
| EAS | Enterprise Allowance Scheme |
| EMBTf | Ethnic Minority Business Task Force (UK) |
| EO | Equal Opportunities |
| ERDF | European Regional Development Fund |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| EU | European Union |
| GEM | Global Entrepreneurship Monitor |
| HMRC | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (UK) |
| IJGE | International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship |
| ICSB | International Conference for Small Business |
| ISBE | Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship |
| LEGI | Local Enterprise Growth Initiative |
| MAFF | Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food |

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| MEECOE | Minority Ethnic Enterprise Centre of Expertise. |
| NDPB | Non-Departmental Public Body |
| NAWO | National Alliance of Women's Organisations |
| PAT 3 | Policy Action Team 3 |
| PDF | Phoenix Development Fund |
| PROWESS | Promoting Women's Enterprise Support |
| QLR | Qualitative Longitudinal Research |
| RDA | Regional Development Agency |
| RES | Regional Economic Strategy |
| RWEDA | Redditch Women's Enterprise Development Agency |
| SEWM | Social Enterprise West Midlands |
| SBS | Small Business Services (UK) |
| SFWE | Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise (UK) |
| SME | Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise |
| SRB | Single Regeneration Budget |
| SWEDA | Sandwell Women's Enterprise Development Agency |
| TEC | Training and Enterprise Council |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| US(A) | United States (of America) |
| WBDA | Women's Business Development Agency new name for CWEDA (post-1994) |
| WBOA | Women's Business Ownership Act (USA) |
| WE | Women's Enterprise |
| WECOE | Women's Enterprise Centre of Expertise |
| WEETU | Women's Employment and Enterprise Training Unit |
| WMCC | West Midlands County Council |
| (N)WEDA | (National) Women's Enterprise Development Agency |
| WETF | Women's Enterprise Task Force (UK) |
| YPCOE | Young People's Centre of Expertise |

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This thesis would not have been possible without the contribution made by thousands of women in the West Midlands region that I have either worked with in person or represented in my career to date. I hope that this research shines a spotlight on the history of the diverse range of talented, enterprising women who contribute to our regional economy.

Finally, and importantly, I dedicate this thesis to the memory of the wonderful, late Julie R. Weeks. A true powerhouse in the world, and a global advocate for female entrepreneurship. Julie left this world too soon on February 18, 2017, aged 59, but those she left behind will honour her memory and continue her 'Womanable' ways. Thanks for the encouragement and advice, Julie.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Research overview

This thesis explores how women's agency and activism influenced strategy and policymaking in the arena of business support over twenty-three years in a region of the UK. The research focuses specifically on the West Midlands region of England, between the periods of 1988 and 2011. The study explores the process of originating an idea and the evolution of that idea into a policy debate, implementation and practice. Both the region and the period analysed are chosen because of the author's involvement in the process over this timescale.

1.2 Purpose and rationale of the research

The research explores an area of contemporary theory and practice. Research into public social policy practice is a relatively new area of study, having its origins in the middle part of the twentieth century (Lasswell, 2018). Theories of policy practice are increasingly used in studies across a range of disciplines, including, for example, environment policy (Ingold, Fischer and Cairney, 2017) and public health policy (Brooks, 2018). Entrepreneurship policy (in areas such as public support provided to businesses, in forms of consultancy, grants and loans) has historically been studied in terms of evaluation of policies and programmes in financial terms, noting their effects at the micro-level on individual firms (Curran, 2000). More recently, a range of approaches to analysing enterprise policy has developed, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. These explore more than merely the financial impacts of such policies and take into account more qualitative aspects of policy interventions, such as social benefits and costs (Lenihan, 2011).

The study of female entrepreneurship is also a relatively recent discipline from the latter part of the twentieth century (Brush *et al.*, 2003). In its recent history (and similarly to generalist entrepreneurship research), it also studied at the micro-level of the firm, or of the individual female entrepreneur (Carter *et al.*, 2007; Marlow, Henry and Carter, 2009). Given an increased range of global initiatives encouraging women into business, in both developed

and developing economies (Kelley *et al.*, 2016), policies for the development of women's enterprise are now being explored at an increased rate (Henry, Foss, and Ahl, 2016; Orser, 2017; Coleman *et al.*, 2018). This both expands the range of female entrepreneurship study (Hughes *et al.*, 2012), and increases understanding of the range of policy interventions and their consequences for women in society (Ahl, 2012; Pettersson *et al.*, 2017).

This research adds to this understanding of policy through the analysis of policy development by women supporting women's enterprise in the United Kingdom. The research explores the question: *How did women influence policy change directed at supporting women's businesses in the West Midlands region of England over three decades between 1989 and 2011?*

In order to investigate this, the research aims to address the following points:

1.2.1 Aims of the research.

1. Explore the antecedents to the development of the gender-focused policy for the promotion of women's enterprise in the West Midlands region.
2. Analyse the processes over time of this specific 'black box' of Women's Enterprise policy formation in the region, by developing longitudinal case studies that focus on 'female entrepreneurship development.'
3. Utilising the contents of the developed cases, devise an exploratory conceptual framework for this policy formation, using the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Weible and Sabatier, 2017) as its basis.
4. Further analysis of the Framework, utilizing critical realist practice, to explore underlying mechanisms that occurred over the period.
5. Provide a detailed personal reflection on the process, uncovering how the praxis of developing feminist policy is experienced by a woman tasked with creating and implementing such a policy.
6. Explore potential implications for research and praxis, resulting from this analysis.

The study then explores women's contribution to the policy process in the West Midlands region by providing three sequential case studies, spanning three decades between the late Nineteen Eighties and Two Thousand and Eleven (1989–2011). Each case study builds upon the latter, thus providing a situated account of circumstances related to the case at that time, providing a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). The cases present a narrative account of mechanisms and practices at that time. The research, therefore, can be situated in current female entrepreneurship policy research and contributes to this body of concern.

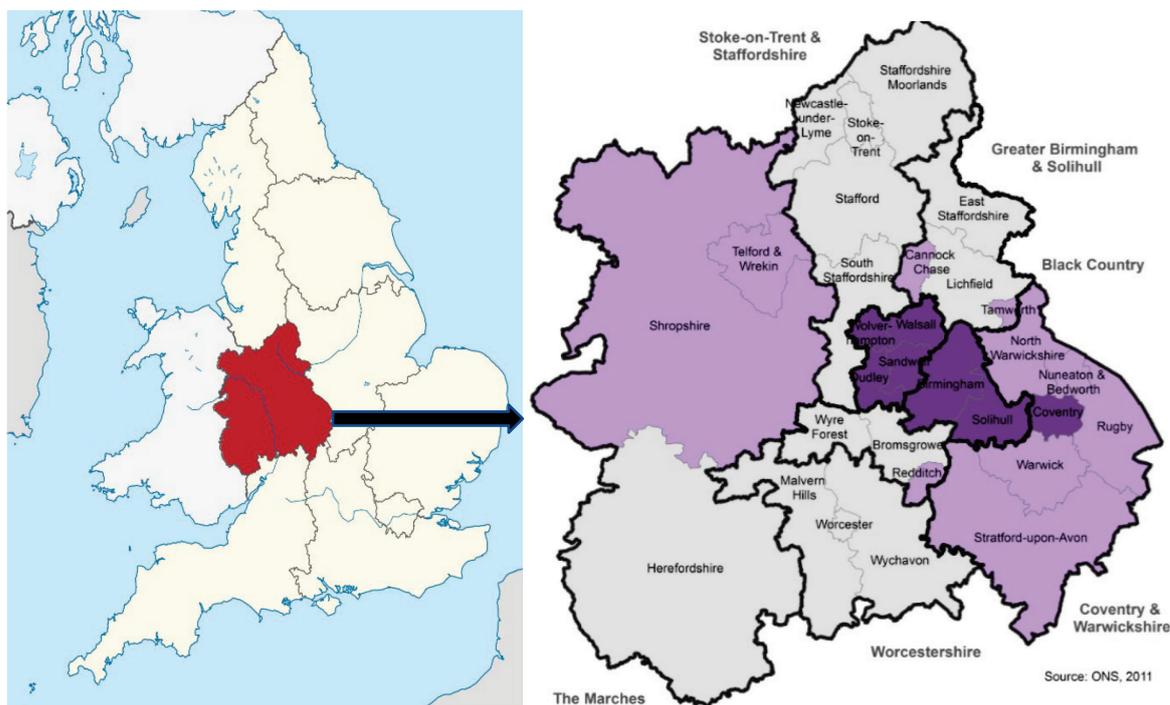
1.3 The author's interest and involvement in the topic under investigation.

For the purposes of transparency, the author declares that she held roles within many organisations detailed within this study. She has first-hand knowledge of establishing women's enterprise support organisations, working as a business advisor to women in communities, and was a Board member of two women's enterprise agencies. She has been a regional advisor working for the Government's Small Business Service in the South West of England on this agenda. She later became a consultant to Prowess in the West Midlands Region, established a regional Centre of Expertise for Women's Enterprise in the West Midlands and finally worked as the policyholder for enterprise within the Regional Development Agency (AWM) in the West Midlands, until its closure in 2012. This research draws upon a wide range of data sources, some of which are drawn from the author's personal archive material on this topic.

1.4 The West Midlands Region

The West Midlands region is often linked to industrial heritage and urbanisation, given its long association with the Industrial Revolution. Nevertheless, as a region, it comprises a vast landmass of rural farmland with its associated industries. The counties of Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire have large areas of land used for farming, horticulture, leisure pursuits, and other industries. A map of the area can be viewed in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: The situation and composition of the West Midlands region in the UK



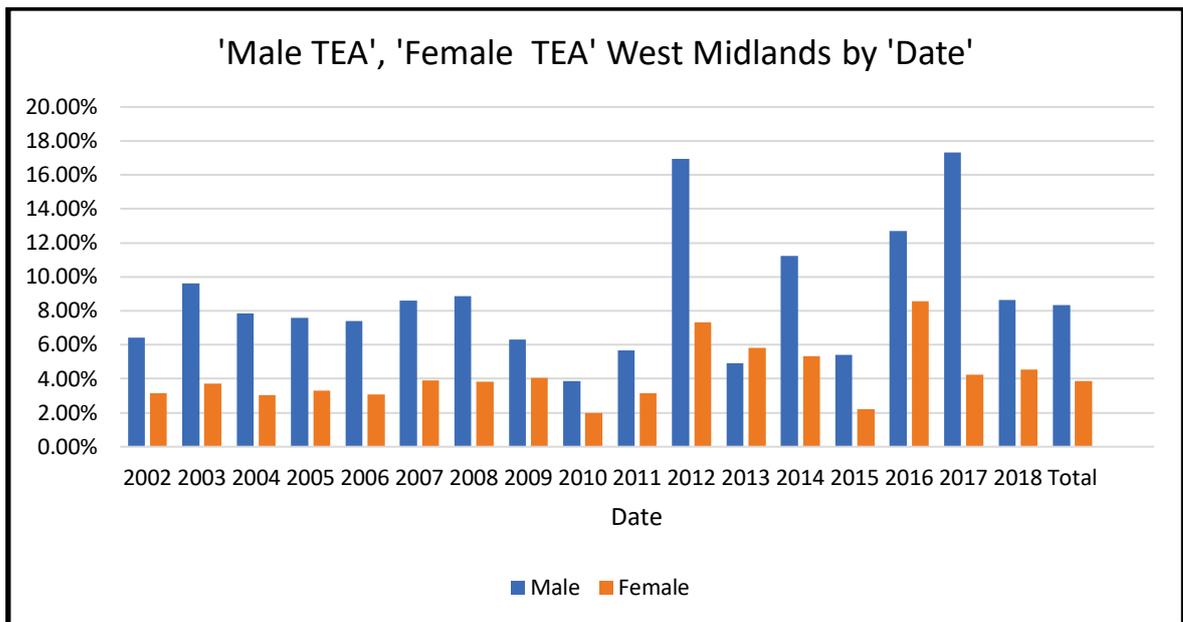
Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2011

At the end of October 2019, the region has a population of just over 2.9 million people, with approximately four hundred and fifty thousand businesses registered in late 2018. There is an unemployment rate of just above the national average at four per cent, and seventy-five per cent of the population are economically active. (Harari and Ward, 2019). The region is also ethnically diverse. For example, in 2019 the West Midlands, residents defining themselves as from the Asian and Black ethnic groups comprised 14.3% and 9.8% of the population, respectively. This is the second-highest rate in the UK; London being the highest (Office for National Statistics, 2019). It is, therefore, a region of cultural diversity.

With respect to female entrepreneurship, according to recent data collected for the Global Economic Monitor of the UK (2019), the female total early-stage entrepreneurial activity rate across the West Midlands has remained at around half of the male rate over a sixteen-year period. Figure 1.2 provides this comparative annual information.

Figure 1.2: Male and Female rates of Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity in the West

Midlands region: 2002-2018.



Source: GEM APS (2019). Pers comm.

The period under investigation within this research predates some of this data, but the years between 2002 and 2010 correspond with a portion of this research. Whilst this study does not include significant statistical analysis, this regional GEM data provides relevant contextual information on recent female entrepreneurship rates. The relative stability of these figures is worthy of consideration, in the light of the research data that that follows.

1.5 Theoretical Concepts

The study adopts a critical realist ontology and a feminist epistemological positioning. In exploring the research, a feminist standpoint perspective is posited (Harding, 1992), providing a feminist viewpoint on the research issues.

1.6 Methods adopted within the research

The research is developed using a multi-method approach. A qualitative, longitudinal, multiple-case research design is adopted (Haverland and Yanow, 2012; Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014; Bevir and Rhodes, 2018). Methods include the compilation of the case studies covering three decades of enterprise development in the region, utilizing archive

retrieval of policy documentation, organisational management information (e.g. meeting minutes), and published research from over the study period. Interviews with stakeholders in the process are given to provide validation to the case study material. Autoethnographic accounts from the author are also presented, to give additional insight into the process, as the author had direct involvement in many aspects of the process under investigation.

There then follow analyses of the cases, using theories of policy practice, namely the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The ACF is used as a method for systematic analysis of the policy situation, as well as identifying key policy stakeholders and actors.

1.7 The Conceptual Framework for the research.

The conceptual framework presented for this research examines various topics influencing the policy development and practice identified within the cases. The framework adopts critical realist theory (Elder-Vass, 2010) and gender analysis as frames. These frames encapsulate a process of case study development. These case studies are subsequently analysed with the adoption of a policy analysis model. The framework is introduced in Chapter 2 and used in detail in section three of the study. It is also used as a navigation guide throughout the sections of this document.

1.8 Overview of the following chapters.

A brief overview of the following chapters is now provided to assist with the navigation of the content. The study is divided into three sections. Section one provides theoretical support to the research study and contains four chapters. Details of these are provided below.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the conceptual and theoretical approaches to the research. The conceptual framework is introduced, which provides structure and underpinning theory for the research analysis. Following this, the feminist theoretical approaches are outlined, tracing the theoretical foundations for the gendered analysis supporting the study. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to critical realist theory, which is also used for the analysis of the research data.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide a literature review that situates this research Chapter 3 focusses on an exploration of the historical antecedents to the present feminist praxis in gender and enterprise (Al-Dajani et al. 2015; Carter et al. 2015; Orser et al. 2012). It also examines feminist standpoint theory concerning women's positionality as the 'subject' - as opposed to the 'object' - of study (Smith, 1987; Harding, 2003). This theory is situated amongst a variety of feminist theories that have influenced the academic debate on women's enterprise development over the decades of study. Chapter 4 provides a literature review positioning the research in relation to current theories of public policy analysis (Cairney 2013; 2012; Weible et al. 2009). There is a focus on contextualising the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which is adapted for use in this study.

Chapter 5 details the research design and methodological approaches used for the research process. The axiology of the research is presented, highlighting the theoretical justifications for the use of the methods adopted in the research. Case study development and case study analysis are presented, together with the practical application of the policy analysis framework. Ethical matters are also addressed. The chapter concludes positioning the research as adopting an engaged, active entrepreneurial scholarship approach (Rouse and Woolnough, 2018).

Section two provides case data concerning women's enterprise policy and practice over three decades in the West Midlands. It comprises one chapter, which is subdivided into three sections. These are detailed below in chapter six.

Chapter 6 contains three case studies providing data on the development of women's enterprise policy and practice between 1989 and 2011. The first case covers the early years of developing the concept of women's enterprise support in the West Midlands. It shows the women involved and the practical issues that were faced in their endeavours. The second case covers the 1990s and demonstrates the development of a network of support across the West Midlands and the increased national government interest in the topic. The third

case covers the period between 2000 and 2010 when strategic and policy level involvement in women's enterprise was arguably at its peak within the period of this research.

Section three covers the analysis of the cases using the methods outlined in Section two together with the findings from undertaking this analysis. Chapter 7 provides the case analysis, using the Advocacy Coalition Framework to interrogate the cases systematically. A narrative is provided on each of the stages of the framework analysis. Chapter 8 provides the findings from the analysis, adopting a methodical approach to summarising the information obtained during the analysis process. A critical realist model of analysis is also provided as an initial attempt to unmask the structural dynamics underpinning the case study data.

Section four provides personal reflection, conclusions and recommendations from the research. It is divided into two chapters. Chapter 9 provides an auto ethnographically reflexive account of the author's relationship to the research. This provides a personal account of the research and reflects upon the case study data, therefore enabling another aspect of the research to be presented. Chapter 10 concludes the research, detailing the contributions to knowledge and methodology made by the research, whilst also addressing its limitations.

Recommendations are also provided for practitioners and researchers with interests in this field.

SECTION 1 – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY

“We cannot assume that there is a pre-existing entity called ‘the policy process’; the task for analysis is to show how this construct is used in very different contexts and places in this world in both the practice of governing and the explanation of that practice.”
(Colebatch and Hoppe, 2018, p. 8)

2.1 Chapter Introduction.

The quotation from Colebatch and Hoppe at the start of this chapter challenges scholars to explore contextual and spatial aspects of policy practice. This research explores both aspects by examining how women contributed to policy development and policy change across a region in the UK. It identifies both individual and groups of women’s contributions to the process over many years and does so from a feminist perspective. It also explores theoretical causal mechanisms which can affect the way policy developments and policy change occurred in this context. The process of policy change is explored using a theoretical policy analysis framework, which in turn falls within a conceptual framework devised specifically for this study. This chapter introduces the theoretical concepts which provide foundational theory to this research.

2.2 A brief introduction to the theory of critical realism, and its relevance to this study.

Critical realism is an important theoretical frame for this study. As such, it will be briefly introduced within this theoretical chapter. However, this is merely an introduction, as the details of this are expanded upon within further sections of this research.

Critical realism is classed as a post-positivist philosophical approach with a range of scholars involved from across several disciplines. The philosophical theory is attributed to Bhaskar (2008); however, there is not one rigid approach to critical realism; rather the philosophy has a range of ‘familial similarities, or communities – it is heterogeneous in terms of positions. It is the work of Bhaskar which influences a theoretical position within this thesis, and it therefore requires further explanation.

Bhaskar’s work can be complex, but in his later works, he attempted to synthesize key

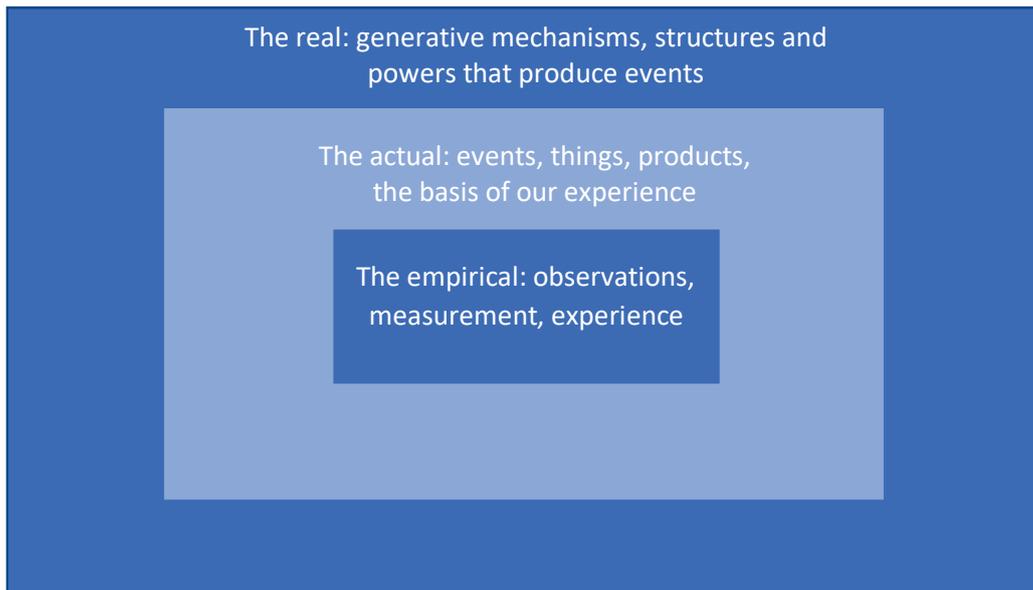
aspects of his writing. In his book, *Enlightened Common Sense* (2016) Bhaskar argues against positivist or empiricist philosophy and adapts the concept of transcendental realism from Hume – exploring “what would the world be like for such and such a human activity to be possible”(op.cit., p25); the laws causing events to unfold are independent from how we experience them. He views humans as ‘fallible’ in how they understand society, therefore not understanding or seeing ‘the whole picture’ of what is occurring; rather perceiving things through what humans believe that we know (our knowledge).He discuss this as the concept of ‘epistemic- ontic fallacy’(op.cit, p11).

Bhaskar’s approach is therefore to prioritise ontology over epistemology. His philosophy emphasises that *there is a world that exists outside of our knowledge and outside of our thoughts*. Reality is ‘intransitive’ – it exists independently of humans His view is that this world is highly complex and what he calls ‘stratified (or multidimensional), and importantly, that *this world precedes our knowledge of it, or our methods of attempting to get to know it* (namely our epistemological and methodologic approaches).

Critical realism is therefore concerned with the nature of what is real, or the ontological frameworks of society. It explores matters of causation, issues related to agency and structure (Elder-Vass, 2010), and how these affect the social world. Theoretically, the social world is viewed as an open system which can be understood through the many powers, structures and mechanisms that interact and come into play in the social world. Bhaskar posits that science addresses the powers, structures and mechanisms that under certain conditions can produce ‘law -like results in our social world. A multiplicity of factors interplay in order to affect circumstances and conditions, forming different events in the social world, in different ways.

According to Bhaskar, distinct levels interplay in order to create such events. These are illustrated in Figure 2.1 on the next page.

Figure 2.1: 'Three levels' model in critical realism.



Source: Adapted from Bhaskar (2008),

The model illustrates aspects of what Bhaskar refers to as '*depth ontology*'; that is the nature of the social world or the nature of what we are attempting to explain. His epistemological approach examines what it is that we can know about the world. What we can observe and measure in the world; that which we experience is known within critical realism as 'the empirical level'. The events that we see that which provides the basis for our experience is termed the actual domain. These features or events have underlying social relations, namely the 'real' or 'the deep' domain.

The concept of *emancipation* is important for Bhaskar's theory and is also important for this research into the policy and practice of entrepreneurial feminism. Bhaskar seeks to gain an understanding of the relations of dominance and power; if this understanding can be explored (always in a fallible way, as all human activity is fallible) then there is a capacity to understand how the relationships of dominance and power can be transformed, to the benefit of humanity.

These explanations of Bhaskar's philosophical approaches given above, go some way to explain what Bhaskar terms the 'Holy Trinity' of critical realism, namely *a realist ontology*,

epistemological relativism and *judgmental rationalism*. The aspect of judgmental rationalism within the 'Holy Trinity' for Bhaskar follows the ontological and epistemological stance. For Bhaskar, judgmental rationalism declares that there are ways of judging claims about what happens in the world. Therefore, as social scientists, it is important to explore difficult questions to both improve and hone our knowledge over time; yet always recognizing that knowledge can be relative and contingent upon context, time and history. In other words, for Bhaskar socially produced knowledge can lead to fallibilistic and relativist epistemology.

Bhaskar explicitly asks for social scientists to 'do the work' which will enable greater understanding of *how* the world operates, and importantly *why* it operates in the way it does, in a time and space. The act of doing this work, he calls 'underlabouring' (a term appropriated from John Locke). Bhaskar views underlabouring as a distinctive feature of the critical realist approach to philosophy. He states: "Critical realism aspires to clear the ground a little, removing, in the first place, the philosophical rubbish that lies in the way of scientific knowledge," (Bhaskar, 2016 p2). This aspect of underlabouring is important to this study, as it is the basis of the investigation undertaken on the social relations of public policy and practice. It is an example of a large task of underlabouring.

The process by which understanding from empirical observation and theoretical analysis is used to identify underlying social relations is known in theory as 'retroduction'. Events within the actual domain provide a partial view of what underlying relations are. They are not always activated or obvious. This is the same with experiences within the empirical level of the model. There is a need to explore epistemological issues within this process of retroduction, looking for how we know what we see and experience. In simple terms, what are the structures and mechanisms that are in action 'behind the scenes' that work together in some way to create the conditions that we experience within our social world? Do they have 'tendencies' or patterns in their operations that we may not 'see' or be aware of?

By means of theoretical explanation, Bhaskar posits that the model operates through what he calls 'laminated systems' (Bhaskar, 2008). Figure 2.1 shows the process as a multi-level

model. Each level must touch one another for properties to be activated. The term 'generative mechanism' is also important here. These mechanisms are the conditions of action that need to be activated across systems to activate phenomena. These generative mechanisms operate as the tendencies highlighted above and not as general laws.

The concept of 'emergence', as posited by Elder-Vass (2010) is another important explanatory concept in critical realism. In theory, emergence explains how a set of relations operate in a situation, i.e. how certain types of social structures can give rise to certain circumstances in the real world. For Elder-Vass, the explanation of this relies on the 'generative property' or 'power'; emergent properties are those that arise due to a particular organisation of entities.

The concepts of *Morphogenesis and Morphostasis* are the final theoretical terms explained within critical realist theory at this stage of the study. Morphogenesis relates the process through which emergence works, according to Elder-Vass. These terms are predominantly associated with the work of Margaret Archer (1995). These theories explain how an entity comes to have emergent properties. Described very simply, Morphogenesis is an explanation of forces that change the form of an entity, and Morphostasis is an explanation of forces that seek to preserve the shape or form of an entity. Archer views Morphogenesis and Morphostasis as a cyclical and iterative process, which individuals and groups can influence within the social world. This influence is achieved through the process of reflexivity. According to Archer, humans can make change occur within the social world through their agency – they are not just the product of history, for example. Actions may be culturally determined, yet they can be changed.

In conclusion, what is provided in this short section is a very brief overview of a complex theoretical concept. It is important to this research because it offers a theoretical frame of analysis that is adopted throughout the research. The theory will also be approached later within the methodology section of the research (Chapter 5), and the theoretical application to the research issues is provided in the analysis section in Chapter 7.

2.3 Theoretical framework for the research.

This research explores the social actions and influences of a group in society over a longitudinal period. It therefore, examines the individuals, the institutions that they develop and operate in, and aspects of the wider 'macro environment', for example, the political and economic factors in which these individuals and organisations operate.

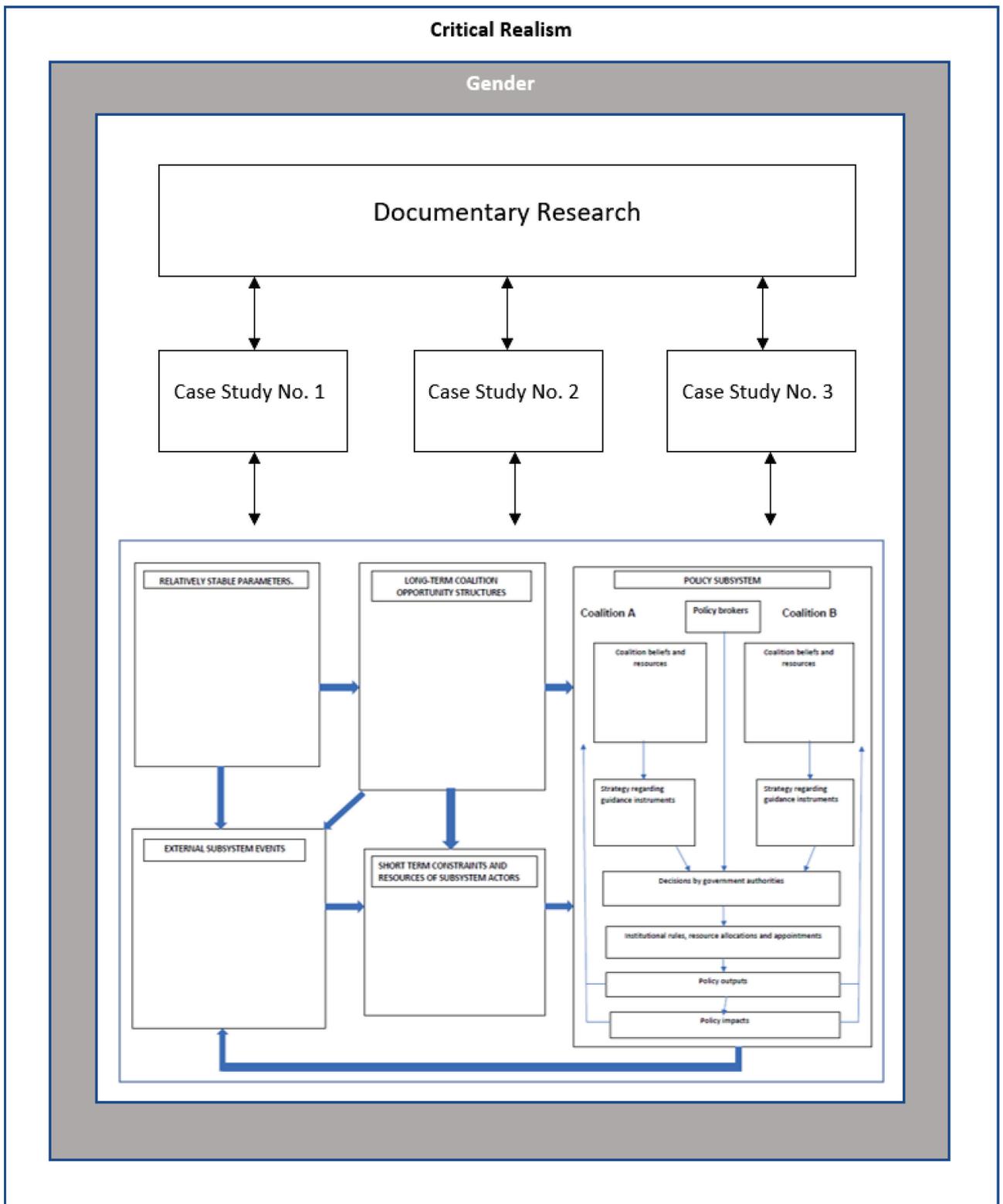
These factors occur within a wider or meta-level of analysis. The way of looking at these can be viewed as 'looking through frames', or framing (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016). This is a 'way of seeing' or 'making sense' of a policy issue.

Figure 2.2 provides the conceptual framework for the research, which will be used to assist in the analysis of women's involvement in the policymaking process over the study. The two outer circles of the framework represent the frames – the 'ways of seeing' the higher, meta or deep level of analysis that are undertaken in the study. The two frames within the model are 'gender' and 'critical realism'. More details on the approach to using these frames will be provided later in this chapter.

Within the centre of the diagram are two areas. The top area represents the process of bringing together data on the topic under study. The research partially draws upon over twenty-five years of documentary data which has been accumulated throughout a career operating in a variety of roles in support of women in business in the West Midlands region. This documentary data is highlighted at the top of the framework, below the frames.

This documentary data is then used to develop three chronological case studies, recording three decades of women's enterprise development within the region. This process is highlighted within the three case boxes below the documentary evidence box in the theoretical framework.

Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework for data analysis



Below the three case boxes in the framework is embedded a large box containing a theoretical framework for policy analysis. This is the Advocacy Coalition Framework or ACF (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993), which forms the process through which the case study data will be systematically analysed. The arrows within the framework represent the iterative nature of the case development, which involves a reflexive process between the documentary data and the ACF framework.

The ACF focuses upon the people involved in the process (termed as the 'actors') using their ideas and beliefs in order to change public policy. The focus is upon the shared beliefs that the actors hold within a specific coalition. The theory states that different coalitions, (comprising actors with shared beliefs) compete with one another in a policy subsystem, in order to get their views accepted and enacted in public policy. This approach accepts the complexity of modern policymaking and the protracted timescales under which policy evolves. External factors outside of the policy subsystem can impact upon policymakers and the coalitions, and according to the framework, these must be considered over a long period. One of the reasons for this longitudinal approach is that the model gives importance to the concept of policy learning. For example, coalitions can influence the way that the policymakers view externalities (external factors), and this can also be learned over time. They may address how externalities can then be reinterpreted in the light of the new circumstances that coalitions find themselves in. Such factors and many others are addressed through the process of case study analysis in this study.

The conceptual model will be used as an illustration throughout the chapters in the study, with various sections highlighted to assist the reader with the navigation of the research.

2.4 Feminist theory and its application to the study.

The literature review situates the research to current literature on the topic of women's enterprise. However, because this study adopts a feminist epistemological position to the compilation and analysis of the study data, it is necessary to explore relevant feminist theories, as they influence the conceptualisation of the principle to support women's

enterprise within the UK, and indeed on a global scale. In short, different interpretation of these theories can lead to different policy approaches being developed and adopted (Jacquot, 2015).

Firstly, there will be an explanation of the term 'feminism', which is a key aspect of this study. Secondly, the different feminist perspectives on women's enterprise development are expanded upon, as indicated in the literature.

2.4.1 Defining feminism in the context of this research

This research explores women's enterprise development and therefore investigates issues related to women and their role in regional economic development. In order to explore this, it is necessary to understand beliefs, practices and politics that relate to women's lives.

Feminist theories and approaches enable us to do this. The term 'feminism' is generally taken to have a relationship with the advocacy of women's rights (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Historically, in Western economies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women actively sought and campaigned for education, appropriate healthcare, political representation and other forms of legal rights that were not available to them at the time. It is important to note the context here, as globally, women struggled to gain access to such rights at different times from those in Western economies. For example, a recent UN report highlights the global effects of gender inequalities and gender norms on life expectancy, education, domestic workload, unequal labour market participation, power and decision-making and poverty on the lives of women and the societies that they inhabit (United Nations Statistics Division: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015).

Struggles for women's rights have some universal features. Nevertheless, it is very important to ensure that the diverse nature of women's lived experiences are considered within any study. While sharing similarities, women are not a homogenous group, and studies need to be sensitive to this point (Hesse-Biber, 2012).

By the late twentieth century, feminist theory related generally to power relations between men and women in western economies (Spike Peterson, 2012). In contrast to this, different conceptual accounts of theoretical approaches were being explored by scholars; focusing less on the universalism of feminist theory and offering a critique to the dominance of white feminist theory in feminist theoretical approaches (Phipps, 2016; Ahmed, 2017). The post-positivist concept of 'gender' also became more prevalent and has influenced feminist research and scholarship. The difference between sex and gender relates to issues of biology and social construction of what is believed to be a 'man' and a 'woman'. As this thesis relates specifically to 'women's' enterprise policy, a brief explanation of the terms and concepts used is apposite.¹

Sex, it is argued, relates to biological attributes of an individual (male, female, or intersex); it is biologically essentialist in nature as it takes human biology as the normative prescription of 'man' and 'woman' (and some born between the two, with chromosomal differences from the 'XX' female and 'XY' maleness (Fine, 2010)). The term 'gender' relates to a non-essentialist view; the categories of man and woman are not a case of being biologically determined.

Maleness and femaleness are ascribed to humans at birth. They may have distinguishing biological features, but much of what is perceived as 'maleness and 'femaleness' is attributed to a boy or a girl from their birth. The idea that girl babies are dressed in pink and boy babies are dressed in blue is one such example. This may appear a trivial example, but these 'ascribed' behaviours continue throughout life. Men are expected to be 'x, y and z': 'breadwinners', 'masculine', or 'tough', and women are expected to be 'pretty', 'feminine' and 'caregivers', in Western societies. Other societies also ascribe attributes and roles by gender. For example, in rural West Africa, women traditionally sold goods at the market, while men produce the goods for sale.

¹ This is a huge subject, which for some feminists is highly contentious. For detailed explanations on differences between sex and gender, see Fine (2010).

Men importantly own the land and cattle (the means of the production), which women are traditionally forbidden to do (Kiteme, 1992). These factors are culturally or socially ascribed to the man and women – they are viewed as gender ascribed.

The effects of theoretical debates on sex and gender increased in entrepreneurship research at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In her seminal work on the scientific reproduction of gender in entrepreneurship, Ahl (2004) brings a detailed perspective on entrepreneurship studies, through the prism of gender. Writing from a social constructivist perspective, she believes that ‘there is no way to get objective knowledge from the world, which is independent of the knower’ (ibid, p. 21). Social constructivism differs from the ontological approach of this research, but Ahl’s approach enlightens entrepreneurial studies with examples of the ‘gendering’ of specific occupations, and the subsequent diminution of their economic worth.

The ‘economic worth’ of female labour was to become an important aspect of the progress of policy in support of female entrepreneurship in the UK. The different approaches to addressing both feminist and economic theories underpinning policy on female entrepreneurship will now be addressed.

2.4.2 Feminist and economic theory underpinning women’s enterprise policy.

Studies have identified a range of feminist approaches to policy development targeted at women wishing to start, or develop, businesses (Ahl and Marlow, 2012, 2019; Aidis and Weeks, 2016; Orser, 2017; Pettersson *et al.*, 2017). What follows is an overview of the main feminist perspectives on women’s enterprise development in the twenty-first century, which provides a contextual basis for the study.

In their work addressing the concept of ‘feminine capital’, Orser and Elliott (2015) highlight traditional theoretical approaches to feminism and economics, namely neoclassical economics and socialist feminism and their associated values and principle. They then introduce the concept of entrepreneurial feminism as a longitudinal development from those other two categories. These concepts are defined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Theoretical foundations of entrepreneurial feminism.

| | Neo-classical economics | Social feminism | Entrepreneurial feminism. |
|--|--|---|--|
| Principles | The enterprise is autonomous. Firms relate to society only through the marketplace | Women are socialised to assume supportive, rather than leadership roles. Women entrepreneurs face other unique barriers such as being newcomers to the commercial marketplace | Egalitarian, partnership-based decision making is reflected in commercial transactions, webs of relationships, connectedness, cooperation, empathy and trust. Owners act to co-ordinate and share knowledge and skills rather than competing for resources. |
| Entrepreneurial values | Owner values are reflected in their profit-seeking orientation, i.e. maximising risk and maximizing return on investment. Entrepreneurs are characterised as heroic, self-reliant, assertive forceful, dominant and willing to take risks. | Entrepreneurial values are reflected in gendered definitions of entrepreneurial self and identity: power differentials in the home and marketplace; and levels of authenticity, self-efficacy and creativity. | Values are reflected in the mutuality of relationships, economic independence, social action and synthesis of opposites. Many women business owners act in accordance with internal wisdom and promotion of conflict resolution (such as intra-group support). |
| Dynamics of market exchange | Decisions are objective and distanced from personal bias and emotion | Commercial decisions are not distinct from, and therefore can conflict with ethical behaviour and values. Owners' values partially explain differences in enterprise performance. | Market exchange is predicated on social relationships and utilitarian |
|  Time | | | |

Source: Orser and Elliot (2015,) p. 20.

The concepts described within the table are addressed throughout this research study, so warrant introduction at this stage, as a precursor to their elaboration within the remaining study.

2.4.1.1 Neo-liberal economic theory and Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism and neo-liberal economic theory derive from the nineteenth-century philosophical tradition of liberalism, associated with “Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill” (ibid., p. 17), which promotes individual rights, freedoms and autonomy. Liberal feminists have endeavoured for equality of opportunity, equal rights and universal suffrage, for example.

Pettersson *et al.* (2017), in their feminist analysis of Scandinavian female entrepreneurship policies, posit that liberal feminism has traditionally defined male and female differences in employment or enterprise activity as resulting from institutional or societal influences. However, they also contest that much liberal feminist analysis in entrepreneurship has highlighted structural barriers to equality but have simultaneously focused upon the individual differences between men and women in doing so. Examples of liberal feminist policy change would be those directed towards removing individual constraints to labour market participation; the 'barriers to a level playing field' between men and women, through legislation, for example (Mayoux, 2001). Initiatives in support of this could be, for example, projects or programmes of training, providing childcare schemes for women, or developing specific funding streams to support female entrepreneurs.

According to Birch (2017), neo-liberal philosophies have their origins within the liberal tradition of individual rights and freedoms and neo-classical economic theory. Neoliberalism extends freedoms to independence for the individual from state intervention in their lives. The theory is associated in the UK with the philosophical foundations of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government. Thatcher was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from the late 1970s until the early 1990s and was responsible for state policy based upon neoliberal theory. Together with the privatisation and closure of state utilities, Thatcher introduced measures to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship as a strategic policy objective. The development of an 'enterprise culture' (as it was termed) encouraged individuals to create enterprises through a range of supply-side measures (Thompson, Scott and Downing, 2012). As highlighted in Table 2.1, this philosophy was an antecedent for female entrepreneurship in the United Kingdom, as it enabled women to initiate business opportunities within a conducive environment. It is important for this study, as it forms the antecedent policy environment at the commencement of the case study period analysed within this research.

2.4.1.2 Social feminism and radical feminism

The concept of social feminism in Table 2.1 relates, in part, to the liberal approach, in that it explores the barriers faced by women as entrepreneurs, due to institutional and structural issues. The idea was initially explored by Fischer, Reuber and Dyke (1993), and called for specific measures to be adopted, to enable women to gain greater exposure and experience in entrepreneurial business settings, such as networking, peer to peer learning and apprenticeships.

Social feminism is not to be confused with radical feminism. According to Pettersson *et al.*, (2017), radical feminism explores the development of 'female entrepreneurship culture' through a form of consciousness-raising (raising awareness of the actual potential to become an entrepreneur) for women. Radical feminist positions of policy development would be to explore the development of women's separatist provision. This is an important factor in this research, as the case studies compiled within this study are based upon the development of women focused provision, based partially on this theoretical standpoint.

2.4.1.3 Entrepreneurial feminism.

Orser and Elliot's concept of entrepreneurial feminism, illustrated in Table 2.1 posits a new form of entrepreneurship that is inclusive of more recent forms of feminist theory. The model illustrates the temporal nature of the female entrepreneurial practice, which accommodates subjective aspects of women's entrepreneurial experience, within the context of systems and processes which impact upon them. According to Pettersson *et al.* (op.cit), forms of feminist theory that have become more prevalent since the 1990s, (i.e. the early stages of the research period within this study) include postmodern and post-colonial feminist approaches. Postmodern approaches to feminism explore gender relations and how men and women are positioned in society. These approaches explore gender relations, as opposed to being exclusively female focussed, as would be the case for radical feminist approaches. Similarly, post-colonial feminism distances itself from predominantly 'white middle-class' feminism (possibly from liberal or radical feminist standpoints).

It does this through the exploration of how entrepreneurship normalises certain typologies of entrepreneurs within society and marginalises those who do not fit this norm (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012).

Entrepreneurial feminism encapsulates a modern and inclusive form of feminist theory that is important to the development of this study because it provides a synthesis of the various feminist theories on entrepreneurship, representing contemporary ideas within a strong contextual framework. It therefore, provides a longitudinal approach to female entrepreneurship policy and practice which provides a theoretical context for the case study development and analysis in the following chapters.

2.5 Approaches to gender-based policymaking in the UK and Europe.

From the exploration of feminist theoretical positions on female entrepreneurship policy, it is now necessary to use those theories to explore gender-based policymaking over the period analysed within the case studies. Table 2.2 below is taken from the work of Jacquot (2015), which examines the European Union gender equality policy.

Table 2.2: The transformation of EU gender equality policy

| | Exception model (1980-1990) | Anti-discrimination model (1990-2000's) | Rights model (2000's - 2010) |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Type of public policy | Regulatory and distributive policy. | Incentive-based policy. | Rights promotion policy. |
| Emblematic image, policy frontiers | A woman of European nationality, working full-time, exclusively considered in terms of her relation to the labour market. | A woman victim of discrimination in the public sphere. | A woman whose fundamental right to equality is not respected. |
| Institutions | Institutionalisation. | Professionalisation and normalisation. | Rationalisation and marginalisation. |
| Interests | Neo-corporatism. | Semi-corporatism. | Dependent pluralism. |
| Cognitive structures | Equality within the market (equality as an autonomous objective). | Equality for the market (equality as a conditional objective). | Equality despite the market (equality as a secondary objective). |

Source. Jacquot, 2015, p. 170.

The table categorises phases in European Union gender equality policy, which coincide with the periods investigated within the case studies in this research. These approaches to EU gender policy had an impact on the financial resourcing of UK gender-based policy development and implementation. These also have feminist theoretical foundations, which were explored in the previous section. The importance of these to this research is now contextualised.

a. The exceptions model period (1980–1990)

The first EU-funding for gender equality was granted in 1975 (Hoskyns, 1996; Jacquot, 2015), following equal pay and equal treatment directives, to provide funding to women's organisations, enabling them to research the position of women in their countries labour markets. This also mobilised grassroots activism from the women's groups participating in this programme. The European Social Fund (ESF) was then established in 1978 to enable greater desegregation of labour markets and for the provision of training for women in labour market areas in which they were under-represented. At the time, the directive specifically contained actions 'in favour of women', for five years between 1978 and 1983.

In the early 1980s, it is argued that the foundations formed by the women involved in the research and ESF programmes maintained robust policy initiatives on women's issues (Hoskyns, op.cit, p142). Those working within the research projects and on ESF programmes developed a body of research, which proved valuable in support of further programmes and in challenging the potential diminution of existing employment-related rights. The development of action programmes in the mid-1980s, which ran over several years, further entrenched equal rights initiatives into EU-related activity. While the programmes were relatively modest in sum and were Community Social Programmes (therefore shared between other 'disadvantaged groups', such as the elderly, people with disabilities and migrant), they were ensconced bureaucratically within the European Commission (within the Women's Bureau – later called the Equal Opportunities Unit). This gave them added legitimacy, with an administrative budget and internalised structure.

Two Action Programmes on 'Equal Opportunities for women' took place., the first from 1982-1985 and the second 1986-1990. These moved the agenda from equal treatment measures in law alone to the addition of equal opportunities. Importantly they also added a *market correction* to market construction, which was seen under the ESF regime. No longer were labour markets being desegregated and training being offered in 'non-traditional skills for women'. Positive measures were being taken to influence employment for the benefit of women. For example, matters such as childcare and maternity protections were directly addressed. As Jaquot (2015) states: "These measures were directed as women as a group, and taking into account their sexual and reproductive identity as a logical part of the development of the equal opportunity component of the gender equality policy"(p. 37).

b. The anti-discrimination model: a gender mainstreaming approach.

From 1999, EU policy changed its emphasis from one of equality of opportunity (a liberal feminist theoretical approach) to a more social feminist approach. It moved away from an emphasis on the individual women's approach to an institutional approach; that of gender mainstreaming. On this, Rees (2005, p. 558) states:

"Gender mainstreaming turns the focus away from individuals and their rights to equal treatment, and from groups and ameliorating their historical disadvantage, to address the ways in which systems and structures infringe those rights and cause that disadvantage in the first place. It is about embedding gender equality in systems, processes, policies and institutions."

A mainstreaming approach sought to add a gender dimension to all aspects of policy – not merely to those perceived as in the female domain. This was supported through the Treaty of Amsterdam (Rees, 2005) and sought to develop methodological guidelines to ensure that equality of opportunity was incorporated into all EU policy. This followed similar calls at the 1995 United Nations (UN) Beijing conference – a mainstreaming approach to promote gender equality in all areas of policy, as a women's empowerment measure. Woodward (2003) argues that a core group of women were involved in the UN (global), European Union (transnational) and national (country-specific) strategic development and guidance on this policy drive.

Woodward also argues that involvement in such a process gained those women involved in

the process legitimacy, and access to resources, which could be used at Member State levels. It appears to be a 'quid pro quo' relationship, with the EU obtaining social capital from those participating, (including intellectual capital) and the women obtaining access, influence and resources in return.

There was then the move from merely working 'in silos' (i.e. women working exclusively on areas of women's participation) to the wider environment of mainstreaming. However, according to Woodward, this created problems of marginalism for women, because of difficulties in the organisation, resourcing and administration and the policy changes. It was a costly administrative change, which had consequences of creating what she called a 'patron-client relationship'. Within the policymaking process, the roles of the female policymakers (the femocrats) and the roles of women's organisations within the policymaking process changed. The relationships were no longer equal, as they had been in the previous EU regime.

A further policy issue that was identified, and has relevance to this study, was the importance of the 'twin-track' approach to policy development. In effect, policies on equal treatment and positive action ran in parallel with the mainstreaming approach. However, in practice, this created further difficulty. Walby (2005) explains this dichotomy as "the holding of two aims, simultaneously" (p. 323); promoting gender equality and gender justice on the one hand, and on the other hand, improving existing policy using gender analysis. Casting a 'gender-lens' on the policy may highlight issues previously unforeseen concerning gender bias or unintentional outcomes from policy implementation, for example. Walby takes a pragmatic view of the range of policy approaches available. She views them: "as visions of the endpoint of gender equality from their use as policy and political tactics and strategy" (p. 331). It is the use of these tactics and strategy that are addressed in this study.

Implementation of policy also is addressed within this study. From their examination of gender mainstreaming implementation across the EU, Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000), examine five case studies of implementation in the policy areas of the European Structural

Funds, employment, development, competition, and science research and development. For each of the areas of policy, they identify the political opportunity available for implementation, how support was mobilised, how the policy was framed and the outcome to date. This structured process of analysis enables the political coalitions to be identified, the structures and processes utilised for the policy adoption, and how the implementation approach was framed. This has significance for this study, as it illustrates mechanisms that have been adopted for the implementation of gender-related policies at a transnational level. This example also highlights a variety of approaches to implementation that can be adopted within an administration.

c. The rights model.

The final area in Table 2.2 gender equality transformation model is to the rights model. During this period, it is argued that there was a resurgence of women-based activity, but this time based upon the rights of women.

Squires (2007a) argues that the mainstreaming approach was originally perceived by some (particularly femocrats) as having the power to transform equality matters by challenging policy norms and including a gendered perspective into all aspects of policy. As indicated in section b above, previous approaches to equality policy were multifarious, but essentially comprised those supporting individuals and their rights to equal treatment, and those supporting groups attempting to rectify gaps in structural biases of policy practice. The criticism raised by Squires is that neither of these approaches, as they stand, challenge the policy norms that create the bias that the policy measures aim to overcome. The liberal feminist rights (equal opportunity focus) and the radical feminist differences (positive action) approaches to a policy by their nature do not challenge the structural inequalities that lie at the root of discriminatory norms. Squires contends that the mainstreaming approach attempts, in theory, to 'displace' these norms; therefore, according to Squires, it is a strategy of displacement, rather than inclusion or reversal. It seems that the introduction of mainstreaming approaches into existing structures and systems has appeared as a compromise. It can be argued that compromise has come from the *transactional* nature of

the application of mainstreaming into the policy process, as opposed to the *transformational* potential of the process.

Across society in the UK over the last half-century, forms of governance within organisations in public and private domains have been established in a neoliberal environment. The predominant neoliberal regimes have therefore incorporated mainstreaming in a 'liberal way'; they have made the potential for the mainstreaming approach a liberal one in nature; moving from what Squires and Wickham-Jones call "equality of treatment to equality of impact" (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2002, p. 59).

Issues of the market and economics become important factors here. In adopting neoliberal market approaches, the displacement potential of mainstreaming becomes theoretically limited. Alternatively, what mainstreaming as a tool enables, is the opening of a dialogue, for the use of evidence to influence areas of policy-making that may not previously have considered gendered aspects of their policy domain. This aspect is explored in more detail in the analysis of the case studies later in this research.

d. Women's policy agencies.

A final point of consideration in the approaches to gender-related policymaking in the context of this research is the concept of 'women's policy agencies.' Squires (2007b) discusses this concept when exploring how women have created policy while navigating changes in the state bureaucracy. Aspects of this approach are relevant to this study when addressing how women's enterprise policy developed within the UK.

Squires contends that during the 1990s, the women's movement was fragmented, with new forms of feminism emerging (as highlighted in section 2.3). This period also experienced what Squires terms as "a hollowing out" of the state (op.cit. p. 115) through restructuring into a more neoliberal form, known as New Public Management (Bacchi and Eveline, 2003; Murphy, M., and Skillen, 2015).

Women's policy agencies negotiate a fine line between becoming subsumed in new forms of governance, or being viewed as 'essentialist'; given the diverse nature of the communities of women for whom such agencies attempt to speak, and represent. In times of public sector restructuring and civil uncertainty, such groups, at best, can be seen to be 'providing a voice' for women, but for who do they speak and what are they representing? Claims of accountability can be made, but how are they held accountable, in demonstrable terms for the representation, or perceived lack of representation for certain groups of women in women's enterprise policy (Forson, 2006)? Can they be perceived as merely tokenistic at best, and providing a convenient excuse for having been seen to be talking, and not necessarily acting, by 'the powers that be'? Similarly, in the context of the New Public Management agenda, increasingly women's groups have become more professionalised (as illustrated in the argument for the funding given by the EU earlier) and are better adapted to the increasing technocratic nature of administrations. Therefore, how representative are they of those that they purport to serve.

These are issues that will be returned to as the study progresses. The next chapter situates the research study within the body of literature on female entrepreneurship and policy process theory.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW PART ONE: WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE

LITERATURE.

3.1 Introduction

Given the longitudinal historical nature of this research, it is necessary to provide the context for the development of the academic literature on this topic. This is situated within the generic entrepreneurship literature over the case study period, to provide detail of the prevailing contrasting paradigms in the entrepreneurship literature. The importance of contextualisation in enterprise research is highlighted by Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, (2014), who emphasise that entrepreneurship research requires “multi-level thinking and analysis” (p. 495).

The review of the literature is divided into two parts. Section one situates the study concerning the literature on women's enterprise development, latterly with a focus on women's enterprise policy research. Section two develops the public policy theme with the exploration of generic literature on public policy analysis, again providing historical detail on the theories and practices involved. Specific focus is then placed on the Advocacy Coalition framework, as a main analytical framework adopted for policy analysis in this research. The review also provides contextual information in which the current research is situated².

3.2 The study of female entrepreneurship.

3.2.1 The early years – the 1980s. Economics of 'rational economic man' and developing an 'enterprise culture'.

Greene et al. (2003) locate the period during which there became an increased interest in studying the female entrepreneur to the mid-1970s when the Journal of Contemporary Business published the first academic paper on female entrepreneurship. The predominant view of enterprise and entrepreneurship authorship at the time had its foundation in economic theory. Methodologies used in the study of entrepreneurs were heavily influenced

² What follows is merely a short synopsis. For a detailed explanation of the history of entrepreneurial research see Carlsson *et al.* (2013).

by economic theory, with the application of quantitative approaches to economic analysis, for example, exploring the economic contributions of small business to the national economy, through national surveys (Hill and McGowan, 1999). Free market or neoliberal economics was prevailing at the time, as espoused by Friedman (2009). His theory was based on minimal state intervention in the economy and was a contrast to post-Second World War Keynesian economic theory that had prevailed in the UK.

As well as the predominant quantitative methodological approach to entrepreneurship, the language of the discipline was defined by biological sex distinction. Both Schumpeter and economic theorist before him generally wrote of entrepreneurs as 'male,' using the concept of by the 'rational economic man,' with its inherent masculine discourse. This notion of the 'male entrepreneur' found its way into the academic study of the subject of entrepreneurship, as interest in studying the discipline grew in the nineteen seventies in the USA and the UK (Brush, 1992). At this time, the approach to the entrepreneurial discipline was predominantly viewed as 'non-gendered', or 'gender-neutral' (Lewis, 2006), with the male model as the norm – the referent point upon which all forms of entrepreneurship were judged (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004a, 2004b; de Bruin, Brush and Welter, 2007). On this point, Mirchandani (1999) argues that the history of the study of entrepreneurship has traditionally been at the least 'gender blind' and at its worst could be described as deliberately excluding women (or matters of gender, or ethnic origin, for that matter). She states that: "Much of the literature on women and entrepreneurship does not address the consequences of adapting theories of entrepreneurship, developed through analyses of men's lives, to the experiences of women." (p. 226).

It can be argued that this male norm also excludes the difference from other typologies of entrepreneurs, namely Black and Minority Ethnic women (Forson, 2006), and those that did not conform to the single white male stereotype of the lone hero entrepreneur (for example those working in co-operatives or social enterprises).

Studies in entrepreneurship can, therefore, be viewed as androcentric, ethnocentric, and lacking in heterogeneity during this period.

It is claimed that this 'white male norm' was compounded by the classic entrepreneurial works of Joseph Schumpeter (1942) with his theory on 'creative destruction' ('births' and 'deaths' of firms)— a key component of entrepreneurial activity, consistent with Schumpeter. According to Orser and Eliot (2015), this Schumpeterian focus on theory led at the time to the typology and discourse of the classic entrepreneur as 'Entrepreneurial men, rational and heroic, epitomize success as "a will to conquer" '(p. 11), through business innovation and the creation of new markets.

This type of language is not untypical of the historical and social context in which such authors operated. Ahl (2004) points out that until the 1980's it was customary to refer to individuals as 'he' in scientific texts. However, Dean (2013) argues this view of Schumpeter's work as advocating masculine values is one perspective on a more complex approach. She interprets much of Schumpeter's work as 'emancipatory'; by differentiating between entrepreneurs and managers, 'the rational economic manager' of the neo-liberal approach, and the non-hedonistic entrepreneur that she views Schumpeter to be espousing in lesser-known aspects of his work. This view is also supported by Marçal in her work on women and economics (Marçal, 2016). Concerning Foucault's 'Biopolitics Lectures' of 1979 (Foucault, Davidson and Burchell, 2008), she posits that classical liberal economic theory focused on economic exchange with political actions as a form of citizen's exchange. She states, "Politics was seen as a series of contracts: citizens exchange certain freedoms for a guarantee of security from the state." (p. 142). Marçal argues that the opposite of this is neoliberalism, where the emphasis is upon individual competition. This competition pits individuals against one another, with the role of politics to intervene - ensuring that markets flourish – rather than providing forms of state security. That function is reserved for the individual. Within the context, individuals may seek to break free from traditional forms of labour; to form some different type of organisation to work within.

The idea of entrepreneurship as emancipatory action draws parallels to the work of Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen (2009), who redefine entrepreneurship as ‘entrepreneuring.’ This is the act of change creation, the making of something new (be that an idea, new opportunities, or new organisations). They view this as an emancipatory action, which they define as “the act of setting free from the power of another” (p. 478). What Orser, Dean, and Rindova et al. agree upon is that undertaking enterprise activity is not *purely* about the creation of wealth; that people may wish to pursue business ventures for reasons other than specifically making money. There may be other objectives or considerations that drive the act of ‘entrepreneuring’³.

In the 1980s in the UK, the enterprise literature was predominantly ‘gender-blind,’ in that there was little specific mention of women in most of the academic literature. Following the publication of the Bolton Report in the UK in 1971, there was increased policy and academic interest in the activities and role of small firms (Carter, Anderson and Shaw, 2001). There appeared, on the surface, to be little written about women’s role in small businesses, but several academics in the UK, US and Canada, predominantly working in Management Schools, were producing literature on women carrying out business activity.

The 1980s saw an increase in women in the labour market in the UK, US and Canada through economic necessity and a desire for paid employment outside of the home (Coyle and Skinner, 1988; Orser and Elliott, 2015). In the UK, Angela Coyle, at Aston University and Coventry Polytechnic, Sue Birley at Cranfield School of Management, Sheila Allen at the University of Bradford, Carole Truman at Manchester Polytechnic, Sarah Carter at the

University of Sterling and Susan Marlow at De Montford University (to name but a few) were all actively researching aspects of this topic (Birley, 1988; Coyle and Skinner, 1988; Carter and Cannon, 1992; Allen and Truman, 1993; Marlow and Patton, 1993). Male authors in the UK who were also investigating women’s business experiences included Robert Goffee and

³ Not all entrepreneurial activity can be viewed as emancipatory. For an alternative view see Al-Dajani *et al.* (2015).

Richard Scase, with John Heyes and Stanley Cromie building upon their work later in the decade (Goffee and Scase, 1985; Cromie and Hayes, 1988). In the USA, Robert Hisrich was developing literature on female entrepreneurs, often in conjunction with other female scholars (Hisrich and Brush, 1984, 1985; Brush and Hisrich, 1991). These men were in a minority when writing specifically about female entrepreneurship at this time (Dean, 2013). In the USA and Canada, authors such as Candida Brush, Dorothy Moore, Lois Stevenson, Barbara Orser, and Kiran Mirchandani were also publishing seminal articles on female entrepreneurship (Stevenson, 1986; Moore, 1990; Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Orser and Foster, 1994; Mirchandani, 1999). While relatively small compared with the dominant discourse at this time, from the perspective of this thesis it is important to note the work of numerous pioneering women who were seeking to expose women's contribution to the relatively new field of entrepreneurial study⁴.

Nevertheless, this dominant discourse and interpretation of enterprise and entrepreneurship as masculine, individualistic, cash-driven pursuits prevailed in UK society, and academic literature during this period. The focus was often on categories, characteristics, or typologies of business, determined by the underpinning economic models, policy requirements (both fiscal and employment legislation), and quantitative methodological analyses. Factors such as business size, sector, turnover, and, to some extent, ownership were studied together with experiential factors, such as motivation (Gartner, 1988). However, the literature from this era illustrates that women were both active in business and in the academic pursuits of researching women's activities (as evidenced in case study one and two from this period, that follow). Women were creating their own space to develop skills, generate enterprises, lobby government to heighten the profile of their requirements, and developed research on their activities; within the environment that was generally ambivalent towards them. They were, according to Rindova et al.'s definition 'Entrepreneuring'.

⁴ These women and men are named in full -which is unusual academic protocol - in order to recognise their contributions.

However, much of the research undertaken was predominantly heterogeneous – taking ‘women’ as a category that encompassed all women, irrespective of their race, class, disability, age or other difference. To an extent, this was predicated upon the narrative of most of the enterprise-related articles at the time; the discipline was yet to evolve and required greater methodological complexity and structure (Low and Macmillan, 1988; Davidsson and Wiklund, 2001). It can also be viewed as being a result of those authors accepted for journal articles; the authors' voices published in academic journals came from a limited socio-economic range of women (and to a degree, men). This can also be viewed as influenced by the prevailing feminist theory and practice at the time.

The second wave of feminism has been criticised for its apparent predominance of white-middle-class women ‘setting the feminist agenda’ (Hill Collins, 1998; Mirchandani, 1999; hooks, 2000). In the USA, Black women wrote about their lived oppression and how both gender and race had a part to play in that oppression. For example, following the work of Patricia Hill Collins (ibid) and The Combahee River Collective (1979), Kimberley Crenshaw explored multiple difficulties faced by Black women in the USA, highlighting the term ‘intersectionality’⁵ as a point where two structures of disadvantage converge. However, Black women and other women from different political, societal and economic backgrounds, were working to highlight their specific concerns (Inman, 2000)⁵. The intersectionality of sex and race is important within this research, as the women’s organisations and coalitions involved in the policy process show a range of women facing multiple individual and societal disadvantages, working together towards a common aim, over a long timeframe.

3.2.2 Women’s enterprise research in the early 1990s.

The early part of the 1990s saw an increase in the range and scope of research on women, as both self-employed and as business owners. To put this into context, Carter, Anderson, and Shaw (2001) were able to obtain over four hundred academic references on female

⁵ The topic of intersectionality is expanded upon at the end of this section.

entrepreneurship in this decade, together with a range of other associated media articles⁶. To provide some perspective on this figure, in the USA, Baker, Aldrich and Liou (1997) surveyed a range of American and European academic articles and found that whilst there were an average of around seventy articles a year featuring female entrepreneurs in academic journals between the years of 1980 and 1995, the number of articles actually fell in proportion to the numbers of overall articles on enterprise in these journals during that period. There was an expansion of the range and number of academic journals accepting enterprise-related articles over that timescale, which may account for the proportional decline (Curran and Blackburn, 2001).

Generally, enterprise research in this decade developed to encompass not merely the form of small businesses, but the roles of these firms in wider society. While the previous decade had seen a focus upon the typologies, characteristics and behaviours of small business activity, the focus in this decade expanded to include the functions of enterprise and entrepreneurship (Bridge and O'Neill, 2013; Carlsson *et al.*, 2013). The previous decade's work on female entrepreneurship was also developed, with major focus given to broadening the range of women studied, and those given a voice in academic literature. The range of papers at academic conferences widened (for example at the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship [ISBE] and the International Conference for Small Business [ICSB]), and subject tracks on women's enterprise increased. A range of practitioner papers from women working to support female entrepreneurship during this period began to emerge, as this activity became increasingly prevalent (Hartshorn, 1996; Pernilla, 1997; Forsyth, 2000).

While broadening the range of data available for study, it is recently argued that the prevailing topics and methodologies employed continued to stereotype women as 'underperforming' against the male norm (Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Marlow *et al.*, 2012; Henry,

⁶ A point of context: the World Wide Web was in its infancy at this time, therefore while some web-based articles may have been identified, this would not have been a major source of non-academic literature, as would be the case today.

Foss and Ahl, 2016). Numerous studies sought to highlight this myth by exploring, for example, the women's networks, and also firm performance (Foss, 2010; Watson, Stuetzer and Zolin, 2017). The 'under-performance' discourse was important in the provision of support to women in business, as related in the case study analysis in this study. Support to women wishing to start and grow businesses was viewed in some academic literature as somehow colluding with this implied 'deficit of women in business' compared with men. For example, Marlow *et al.* (ibid) identify the '*gender as variable approach*' - what Foss (ibid) calls 'feminist empiricism (p. 84); as one issue of focus taken when supporting women in business. They argue that this approach is based on the 'male norm' of the entrepreneur, and thus women in business are perceived to require specialist policies and support to 'fix them' – to be 'more like a man'.

However, it can be argued that the approach taken to policy within the case studies identifies a '*women as independent variable*' approach (or what Foss (ibid) refers to as a 'feminist standpoint approach', or 'gender as relation' approach) – namely as change agents in a regional economic system; seeking bespoke interventions to embed policy transformation. Such an approach does not view women as 'in deficit'; it is one which identifies women as having the agency to provide services that suit their needs – designed, devised and delivered in ways that meet their requirements, as opposed to those of the prevailing gender in business, that of men. This approach is similar to the approaches adopted in the USA and Canada, identified by both Weeks, and Orser and Elliot, respectively (Orser and Elliott, 2015; Womanable, 2016). Both authors provide detailed information on the outcomes of female- driven policy implementation in their respective countries.

While the prevailing norm of enterprise was undoubtedly a masculine one, women were organising to counter that narrative.

3.2.3 Research in the late 1990s.

Moving from the late 1990s into the early 2000s, the level of academic interest in enterprise, business support and women's businesses increased (with amplified political interest, as highlighted in the second case in this study).

In the UK, the works of Curran and Blackburn on researching small enterprises developed, with a specific strand exploring development being taken by the government to support small businesses (Curran, 2000; Curran and Blackburn, 2001; Blackburn, 2002). A National Small Business Service was being formed within the Department for Trade and Industry, with the purpose of uniting a range of business support services under one jurisdiction. This followed a plethora of support initiatives provided in the decade of the 1990s by the Training and Enterprise Councils and the Business Links, at local and regional levels across the UK.

Reviews of this provision had shown that services were disparate and, therefore, inconsistently delivered to SMEs in all parts of the UK (Bennett and Robson, 1999; Weller, 1999). This policy focus was also heightening for women's activity in business start-up and growth. Curran and Blackburn (ibid) considered that the policy practitioners (in their drive to develop relevant policy in the UK) might be driving the research agenda, and this was specifically noted as a plausible consideration for women's enterprise studies by de Bruin, Brush and Welter when they explored the need for more substantial conceptual frameworks, and greater coherence in the discipline in 2007. They argued that policymakers might be driving the enterprise research agenda, as opposed to developing evidence-based policy (de Bruin, Brush and Welter, 2007).

As expanded upon in the third case in this study, political pressure, combined with lobbying activity, led the Government and its policymakers to explore proposals under the Phoenix Development Fund (PDF) Initiative in the UK. As an example of this, the DTI's Small Business Service commissioned Carter and Shaw to undertake an extensive literature review into Women's Business Ownership in the UK as a scoping exercise, which formed the underpinning knowledge for future strategic developments (Carter, Anderson and Shaw,

2001). Specifically, the report made a recommendation to the Small Business Service for the development of a Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise. The framework was to form the basis of women's enterprise policy in the UK in the 2000s.

3.3 Diversity in entrepreneurship in the UK.

The policy interest in diverse forms of entrepreneurship and diverse typologies of entrepreneurs (as stimulated by the activities of the PDF) increased the focus on extant research in these fields of study. The UK government had been working with a national Ethnic Minority Business Taskforce (EMBT) since race riots occurred in the UK in the early 1980s. As a result, Minority Ethnic Business (and support strategies for them), have a history of research in the UK since the early 1990s (Ram and Hillin, 1994; Phizacklea and Ram, 1996; Ram and Jones, 1998).

Diverse entrepreneurship was also explored in the form of social entrepreneurship and co-operatives through the work of the Co-operative Research Unit at the Open University and the Co-operatives UK in Manchester⁷. The UK Government at the time showed increased interest in social enterprise, arising from the Government's Social Exclusion Policy Action Team remit. As a result, DTI developed its own Social Enterprise Unit in October 2001 with a government Strategic Framework on social enterprise development ('Social Enterprise: a Strategy for Success') launched in July 2002 (GREAT BRITAIN Department For Trade and Industry, 2002).

3.3.1 Increasing diversity in the study of entrepreneurship

The early 2000s also saw a widening of small business research beyond that of typologies, behaviours, and characteristics of small businesses seen in previous years. The previous decade had seen the growth of self-employment and small business formation in the UK, which provided a wider population of study for the academic and policy community to

⁷ See <http://cru.open.ac.uk/research-coop-projects.php> and <https://www.uk.coop/resources> for further information.

analyse. There was also a greater policy emphasis beyond business start-up to the exploration of ‘what makes businesses succeed’ and what makes ‘business grow’ – this emphasis is upon *the role of small businesses in the provision and furthering of economic growth and employment in the UK*. Businesses were seen to require business support as a means to overcome market failure, and continue to grow and subsequently employ more people (Greene, Mole, and Storey, 2004; Mole *et al.*, 2006; Bennett, 2008). Much general academic research focused upon the growth factors for SMEs as a whole and how supply-side measures could support such factors. For example, access to finance for SMEs, both globally and within the UK was investigated (Beck and Demirguc-Kunt, 2006; Heffernan, 2006); the role of clusters and networks of businesses in facilitating growth in regions and the role of enterprise education in enabling such approaches (Mitra, 2000; Matlay and Mitra, 2002). Similarly, these topics stimulated interest in how these factors impacted specifically on women in business, with growth in literature on topics such as access to finance (Marlow, Westall, and Watson, 2003; Wilson, Whittam, and Deakins, 2004; Carter and Marlow, 2005; Carter and Shaw, 2006), and the role of business networks (Blisson and Nelson, 2003; Warren-Smith & Jackson, 2004). The greater diversity in research became more important over this decade, as politicians and policymakers increasingly engaged with the topic.

3.3.2 The international context – the increase of data sets and entrepreneurial indices, and the development of further Women’s Enterprise research.

Internationally, the growth in research on enterprise and entrepreneurship at the start of this century was enhanced by the establishment of a range of data sets developed around this period. The need for wider data sources and a more nuanced approach to entrepreneurship research, in general, was also gaining traction from entrepreneurial scholars (Scott and Venkataraman, 2000; Davidsson and Wiklund, 2001; Busenitz *et al.*, 2003). The establishment of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor in the late 1990s saw a wealth of data on entrepreneurial intention and potential becoming available, initially in the G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, and the United States), plus Denmark, Finland, and Israel. (Bosma, 2013). Other indices also began development, including the Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEDINDEX) (Acs, 2014), broadening the

range of data available for analysis. These new data sets and greater levels of sophistication in the entrepreneurial paradigm moved the research agenda forward, but still in a way that was predominantly male and Western-society orientated (Brush *et al.*, 2003; Ahl, 2006). 1998-1999 saw the establishment of the DIANA project in the USA (named after the Roman goddess of the hunt, because it focuses on women hunting for money (Brush *et al.*, 2004)) - by a range of US-based female academics, namely Candida G. Brush, Nancy Carter, Elizabeth Gatewood, Patricia Green and Myra Hart. The project was started partially as a counter to the prevailing academic typologies of enterprise previously highlighted. The project also aimed to expand the focus of women's enterprise research beyond issues related to business formation (start-up) to the exploration of growth factors for female entrepreneurs (hence hunting for money while trying to grow the business). The project expanded into 'Diana Project International' in conjunction with the European Small Business Research Institute (Sweden), with a conference held in Sweden in 2003 (Greene *et al.*, *op.cit*; Brush and Cooper, 2012). Academic interest in women's entrepreneurship as a lens for analysing entrepreneurial activity was increasing, with conference tracks focused upon different aspects of women's business participation included in the International Conference on Small Business (ICSB) and the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE). These events (amongst others) brought together like-minded academics and practitioners who collaborated on papers for journals such as Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, the Journal of Business Venturing, Gender Work and Organisation and Entrepreneurship and Regional Development.

An example of an increasing focus on women's enterprise activity internationally is illustrated by the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), together with the National Women's Business Council (NWBC) in the USA, launching the Best Paper award for Women's Enterprise Development in 2004. The 2005 award was presented in policy development for Women's Enterprise in Nigeria (Weeks and Duffy, 2011). As a result of the Diana Project International conference activity, the International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship (IJGE) launched in 2009. This was an important step in the study of women in enterprise. It provided a vehicle for both the legitimacy of the topic and for the widening of the research

agenda, particularly on the development of global women's entrepreneurship policy.

3.4 Early developments in the study of Women's Enterprise Policy

Much of the earlier work on women's enterprise policy in Western Europe was driven by studies undertaken in the USA. As a result of the Women's Business Ownership Act 1988, a range of measures was introduced for supporting women in business in the USA (see case study one). The National Alliance of Women Business Owners lobbied for the Act, together with other Black women's groups⁸, which, when passed established a National Women's Business Council, which reported annually to the President, Congress and the Small Business Association on the progress of policy and programmes supporting women in business. The Act also enabled a programme of Women's Business Centre creation across the country – a model later adopted by the creators of WEDA in 1997. Because of the annual reporting requirements to government, there was increased activity in data collection and research on women as both nascent entrepreneurs and business owners in the USA.

A Centre for Women's Business Research was established by the Women's Business Council in Washington DC in 1993, to provide data sets for policy information. The validity of these programmes was contested from their outset, with authors disagreeing over the potential size, scale, and ultimate value for money of the spend on initiatives (James and Clark, 1995; Strickland and Burr, 1995). However, policies continued in the USA and formed an archetype that other countries attempted to emulate, including the United Kingdom (details of which are provided in case study three).

3.5 International Policy background

3.5.1 The United Nations Beijing Declaration and Millennium Development Goals.

The 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, brought together one hundred and eighty-nine national governments who agreed on a series of

⁸ See Inuzuka, (1991) on the invisibility of Black women in the narrative on the passing of the legislature.

principles on women's participation in all aspects of public and private life, including social, political, legal, and economic and cultural aspects of decision-making. The Beijing Declaration and Platform For Action was thus seen as a global assertion of women's empowerment, declaring equality between women and men as a human right (UN Women, 2014). This was a significant action in focussing governments on the need for policy developments in support of the measures within the declaration – the 'Critical Areas of Concern'; one of which was 'Women and the Economy', specifically citing "Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and access to resources." (ibid, p. 31). The strategic objective under this measure specifically stipulated that governments "Establish mechanisms and other forums to enable women entrepreneurs and women workers to contribute to the formulation of policies and programmes being developed by economic ministries and financial institution" (ibid, p. 131) Because of this, governments began to explore mechanisms to enable such policy developments. For example, the UK Government appointed a Minister for Women in 1997 (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2002).

In 2000, the United Nations Development Programme launched its Millennium Development Goals Declaration. This was a poverty reduction programme, with a series of eight aims, known as the Millennium Development Goals, with a target completion date for achievement in 2015. The third of the eight goals was to 'Promote gender equality and empower women' (United Nations, 2008). Under this goal, one of the key areas of concern was the global development of women's entrepreneurship, particularly for rural women. This UN initiative coincided with an increased policy interest in female entrepreneurship as a driver for economic growth in other countries. In 2001, the International Labour Organisation of the UN launched a programme on 'Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender in Enterprises' (WEDGE), which explored the policy implications of promoting women's micro and small enterprises (MSEs -businesses with fewer than 50 employees) as a form of economic growth, poverty alleviation, employment creation and economic empowerment for women across the world (Mayoux, 2001). This detailed report was feminist in its approach, highlighting feminist critique of underlying paradigms of the policy development process.

The report challenged policymakers to put women at the centre of policy decision making in order to overcome gender-‘malestreaming’ of policy practice⁹. A framework for adopting public policy measures ensuring inclusive economic growth and female participation in policymaking is presented in detail, providing clear recommendations on policy development and practice for women’s economic inclusion.

The examples above illustrate an increased policy focus on female entrepreneurship across the globe. Initiatives in Scandinavia, Ireland, the USA and Canada in the industrialised northern hemisphere were matched by initiatives taking place in sub-Saharan Africa, India, South East Asia and Australia (Weeks, 2009; Datta and Gailey, 2012; Obigbemi, 2015; Nziku, 2016; Hechavarría and Ingram, 2018). These factors encouraged the expansion and refinement of academic research on female entrepreneurship.

3.5.1 A lack of disaggregated data.

For many years, there have been global requests from academics and women’s business organisations for the widening of sex-disaggregated data collection as a component of policy planning. From the late 1980s, authors called for greater levels of disaggregated data on self-employment and business formation from official government sources. For example, in 1986, in a study to examine the effects of the Bolton review in the UK, Curran identified a lack of suitable data on women in business to develop adequate sampling frames (Curran, 1986). This was reinforced by Carter (1993), who stated that: “The lack of nationally collected data detailing information on female entrepreneurs makes the construction of a representative sample impossible” (p. 154).

Feminist scholars in other disciplines were also seeking to improve the visibility of women in

⁹ ‘Gender mainstreaming’ as a term is used to explore mechanisms for ensuring that gender is taken into account in all aspects of public policy (Jacquot, 2015). The term ‘malestreaming’ is therefore a pun on words; meaning that such policy practices are devised by men, for women, as opposed to including women in the development process of such practices.

the labour market and public policy related to this in the UK. The drive for heightening the visibility of women at work per se, gave rise to increased interest in the role of data in public policy. In the UK, an Office for National Statistics was established in 1996, and 'Social Focus on Women and Men' and a 'Brief Guide to Gender Statistics' were published in 1998 (Murgatroyd, 2000) which gave women increased visibility in official statistics. The Women's Budget Group (formed in 1989 as an independent body, to lobby on women and economic policy) also sought greater transparency in economic policy by increasing the visibility of women through gender budget analysis (Rake, 2002).

The drive for sex-disaggregated data improved with large global academic studies, such as the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), from the late 1990s, but the case of poor nationally collected sex-disaggregated data from Government sources in the UK remained (Forsyth, 2000). After ministerial involvement in women's enterprise policy promotion-together with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Policy Action Team measures on 'inclusive entrepreneurship with the commencement of the Phoenix Development Fund - in 2001, there were direct requests to government for the improvement of official data collection, distinguishing between male and female-owned businesses. Carter, Shaw and Anderson's report to the Small Business Service in 2001 recommended improved information and data sources on women in business. Across the UK, and the Northern Ireland specific mapping activity on women's enterprise in 2001 recommended the same (Anne McMurray Consulting Ltd., 2001). This became one of the key objectives of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework, suggesting policy measures for implementation across government departments.

The improvement in data and the range of reports on female entrepreneurs increased considerably in the UK after 2001. One of the objectives of Prowess (The national advocacy body for women's business support organisation -see case study three for further details on Prowess) was to heighten the visibility of women in business. Prowess commissioned a range of reports in the early 2000s to raise awareness to central government and the Regional Development Agencies in the UK and the devolved administrations in Northern

Ireland, Scotland, and Wales about the potential of women's enterprise in the UK (a list of selected data is provided in Appendix 1). The increased range of data was also important in policy development and implementation, as the Strategic Framework for WE encouraged the RDA's to provide gender-disaggregated data in their reporting on business support programmes, including Access to Finance programmes, Innovation programmes and Regional Clustering programmes.

3.6. Further theoretical expansion of female entrepreneurship from the 2000s onwards.

The range of research in the early to mid-2000s expanded, in part, as a result of the initiatives highlighted in the previous sections. Theory questioning the definitions of entrepreneurship took greater prevalence, with a widening of theoretical perspectives challenging predominant discourses (Ogbor and Avenue, 2000). Thematically, the shift from the emphasis of business start-up to business growth occurred, but also the influence of feminist theory grew within the literature. Much of the literature on women's enterprise before the turn of the 21st century in industrialised societies was based upon liberal or social feminist theoretical positions; that is if they were based upon any explicit feminist theory at all (Brush *et al.*, 2003; Ahl, 2004, 2006; Marlow, Henry and Carter, 2009; Marlow and Swail, 2014).

Following the seminal work of Helene Ahl in 2004, a body of work analysing female entrepreneurship from a post-structuralist perspective gained traction, providing an alternative and critical approach to previous literature on female entrepreneurship. Moving away from the 'male model of enterprise' previously discussed, Ahl argues that much of the extant female entrepreneurship literature focused on women's difference in business – thus emphasising behavioural, attitudinal and trait variances in women, that made them somehow 'lack' what it took to live up to the 'male models'. She posits that the concept of entrepreneurship had become a gendered concept (a point raised in the previous section). There was no distinction made between sex and gender. In adopting a post-structural perspective, Ahl builds on the concept of 'gender as socially constructed' thus refuting biological determinism (or essentialism) of the female sex. This point was also emphasised

by other authors, working in a post-structuralist tradition (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004a; Gherardi, 2015). The approach led to a more critical stance on defining women's enterprise, as 'the other,' and broadened the scope and framing of how women in business are studied (Marlow, 2014; Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016; Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018).

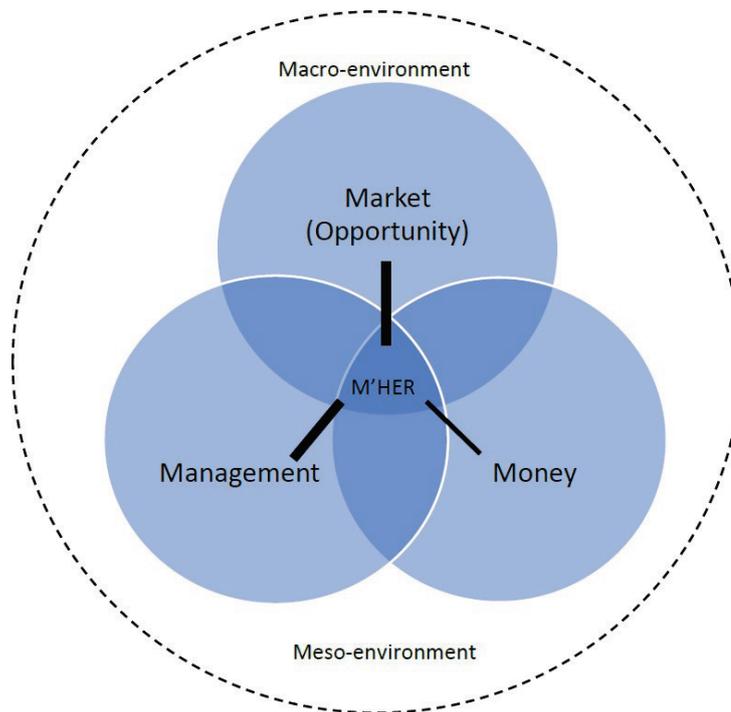
Other feminist authors have questioned the framing of the subject of entrepreneurship itself. Calas, Smircich, and Bourne (2009) approach this topic from a post-positivist perspective, exploring how different feminist theoretical approaches constrain the applicability of entrepreneurship theory to practice – which to an extent is also what Ahl argues. Her concern is that by defining 'women' in certain ways, it is limiting choice over what is studied under this term, and to a degree, what is acceptable discourse in female entrepreneurship study. Calas, Smircich, and Bourne extend the work of Ahl, by expanding on the term 'entrepreneurship' as a gendered concept. They argue that by defining this term in a limited way, are we not doubling the limitations placed on 'female entrepreneurship' as a topic of study? They explore the notion of entrepreneurship 'as social change,' rather than merely as an economic phenomenon, which has synergy with the concept of 'entrepreneuring' from Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen (2009), discussed earlier in the chapter.

By examining 'gender and entrepreneurship' (as opposed to 'women's enterprise'), it broadens the field of study beyond epistemological concerns of what is believed that women can, or cannot, do. It moves the debate from their behaviour and their alleged shortcomings, as related to the socially prescribed masculine model of what a 'woman' is, - and similarly what 'entrepreneurship' is (and *ipso facto*, what studying female entrepreneurship is all about). The authors also argue that to an extent, how this language is used crosses over into common parlance "for example, for "lay people"— who usually trust the veracity of "the experts." (ibid., p. 263). This could therefore affect the way in which stakeholders outside of academia view women's enterprise activity, for example those actors involved the policy process who hold normative values about the role of women in society.

As a result of the richness and variety of approaches that were being posited, scholars attempted to focus the debate on the study of female entrepreneurship, through the adoption of theoretical frameworks. The journal *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* published a special edition on Women's Entrepreneurship in May 2007. In their introductory paper to the journal, de Bruin, Brush, and Welter (2007) focused on advancing theory and method in the literature and called for a 'more coherent framework' for WE study, including the use of different theoretical concepts to expand upon studies in this domain. Two thousand and nine saw the launch of the first international academic journal focusing specifically on gender and entrepreneurship, *The International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship (IJGE)*. In the first edition of IJGE in 2009, Brush, de Bruin, and Welter developed their 2007 work, inviting researchers to be conscious of both individual and societal impacts upon women's enterprises. Importantly, they called for policymakers also to be more aware of the interplay between societal factors – structures/ systems and frameworks influencing women creating and developing businesses and tackling gender asymmetry (Brush, de Bruin, and Welter, 2009). They also advocated the potential for incorporation of a new analytical framework, which they named 'the Women's Entrepreneurship 5M framework'. This framework is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

The framework is important as it provides for analysis of the macro (i.e. the cultural aspects) and meso (i.e. the structural or institutional) environments in which women's businesses operate. In situating the businesses within the wider socio-cultural and socio-economic environments, the model encourages scholars to move beyond the more traditional micro-level and behavioural concerns of many studies on female entrepreneurship and links the micro-level female entrepreneurship literature together with the policy planning literature. This, in turn, links to the theoretical framework approach within this study, which addresses the macro and meso environments as a part of the case study analysis.

Figure 3.1: Women's Entrepreneurship 5 M framework



Source: Brush, de Bruin, and Welter, 2009, p. 13.

3.7 Recent women's enterprise policy studies.

From the early 2000s, there has been an increase in women's enterprise-related policy and practice globally. Global Institutions such as the United Nations, The World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development have encouraged wider participation in women's economic development, resulting in country-level policy development for the promotion of women into business (Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016; Henry *et al.*, 2017). As a result, scholars have emphasised the greater attention given to the development of women's enterprise policies, which are used to promote female entrepreneurship. For example, the Global Women's Enterprise Policy Project (Global WEP – a research group which developed from Diana International) analyses the centrality of women's enterprise policy to the development of an 'entrepreneurial ecosystem' within a country (Foss *et al.*, 2019).

Women's enterprise policy development and practices are not without their critics. Authors have been critical of the application of policy outcomes from a specific country to justify policy measures in a different country. For example, policy outcomes from the USA were used to influence UK policy measures (Marlow, Carter and Shaw, 2008). Other issues include how welfare states position entrepreneurship policy and how women's enterprise policy relates to the needs of women in such societies (Ahl, 2012, 2013; Ahl and Nelson, 2015; Ahl and Marlow, 2019). Additionally, authors also address the integration of gender into existing policy practices, where the introduction of a gendered dimension may be viewed as an afterthought into regional policy programmes (Kvidal and Ljunggren, 2014).

Other authors are critical of aspects of the predominant approach to women-focused enterprise policy. For example, authors criticise the lack of contextual specificity of policy (Marlow, Carter and Shaw, *op. cit.*; Henry *et al.*, *op. cit.*), with a lack of linkage to the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem (Foss *et al.*, *op. cit.*; Welter, 2011; Baker and Welter, 2018). The importance of the context, i.e. the macro and meso environments for women's enterprise are highlighted in the Brush, de Bruin and Welter's 5 M model, (as outlined above) and within more recent ecosystem models (Orser and Elliott, 2015; Orser, Elliott, and Cukier, 2019). Another long-standing criticism in this area of research relates to the process of policymaking, which scholars identify as a simplification of how policy is both developed and administered in practice. They argue that there is a heightened focus on both the impact and the evaluation of public policy, as opposed to the origin and process of policymaking. In the field of enterprise support, this has been specifically discussed over several years (Greene, Mole, and Storey, 2004; Hart and Lenihan, 2006; Mole *et al.*, 2009). Authors such as Acs and Audretsch have explored the role of entrepreneurship policy in the economic development of regions and nations (Acs and Storey, 2004; Gilbert, Audretsch, and McDougall, 2004; Acs and Szerb, 2007; Audretsch, Grilo and Thurik, 2007).

Exploring the state of entrepreneurship research in the UK, Blackburn and Smallbone (2007) noted the close relationship between policymakers and the academic community but reinforced the policymakers' focus on evaluating policy outcomes and impacts, as opposed

to making policy based on academic evidence. Therefore the effectiveness of policy and policymaking has been challenged (Greene, Mole, and Storey, 2004; Storey and Greene, 2010; Bridge and O'Neill, 2013). More recently, the discipline has distinguished between entrepreneurship policy development and SME policy development (Vega, Brown and Chiasson, 2012; Acs *et al.*, 2016). However, there remains concern over the lack of breadth of approach to policy research.

Following her in-depth participant observation of the policymaking process within the Department for Trade and Industry in the UK in the late 2000s, Arshed's work highlights the policy formulation and implementation process on the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework, that is important to this thesis (Arshed, 2012; Arshed, Carter and Mason, 2014; Arshed, Mason and Carter, 2015). Utilising institutional theory, the authors focus upon the ambiguity of policy implementation and delivery, with a lack of structural frameworks providing inefficiencies in the delivery of national programmes. The study is important because it provides another perspective on the topic under investigation within this work. It adds an institutional dimension to analysis – it is tangential to the understanding of agents and processes that are under investigation within the Advocacy Coalition Framework model.

3.8 Intersectionality – a central factor in the study of female entrepreneurs.

An underlying criticism of many female entrepreneurship studies over time relate to the combination of structural factors affecting women (for example the structural divisions of class, gender, ethnicity and disability), and the lack of focus of the complexity of women's lives in the majority of academic study (Squires, 2009; Yuval-Davis, 2015). This homogenisation and oversimplification of women's lived experiences as entrepreneurs can also result in a lack of 'joined-up thinking' in policy development. For example, it appears that policymaking is undertaken within specific institutional departments or divisions, and therefore the idea of 'cross-cutting' themes, or issues where multiple departments are involved, are often oversimplified or overlooked. This leads to so-called 'silo-thinking,' where policymakers produce policy, with a lack of consideration for the wider issues or contexts that relate to the matter of concern. For example, the Women's Budget Group in the UK

analysed UK Government budgetary issues and social policy, exploring the impact of measures on women and men, in order to discover inequalities in the outcomes of policymaking. They highlight potential unforeseen or unintended consequences of policy decisions or extraneous issues that may result from specific policy initiatives or the interplay of policies enacted together. A recent study on the impact of the UK government's austerity measures on Black and Minority ethnic women, for example, highlighted that:

“BME women face multiple disadvantages, including sexism and racism, in the labour market. They face discrimination and bias at every stage of the recruitment process – during the evaluation of CVs and application forms, at the interview stage, and once in post.”

(Hall et al., 2017, p. 1)

The multiple structural issues that are faced by women are explored in a range of academic disciplines, under the term 'intersectionality'. This term has its origins in a range of Black feminist writings, which developed over a similar timeframe to that of this study. Writers such as the Combahee River Collective, (1977); Kimberley Crenshaw, (1989), Angela Davis, (1981), bell hooks, (1981); and Patricia Hill Collins (1998) laid foundations for scholarship on the questioning and implications of the application of white feminist politics and theory on Black women. These writers originally looked at this from the context of the USA, but authors such as Southall Black Sisters were actively writing at the same time on such issues in the UK (as illustrated in more detail in case study one).

The perspective of intersectionality within the study of entrepreneurship is a relatively recent one. It is important to this study, as it is argued that issues of race, class and gender form the basis of 'meta-level' concerns in the critical realist analysis of the policymaking process; namely the experiences and events that bring about social relations.

The work of Harvey (2005), exploring Black women establishing hairdressing salons in the USA, was one of the first studies exploring intersectionality and entrepreneurship. This matter is relevant to this study, as several businesses established by WEDA in the late '80s and early 1990s were hairdressing salons and chains of hairdressers established by African

and African Caribbean women in the West Midlands. One such business remains, at the time of writing, the longest-running female salons in West Bromwich, Sandwell (see case study one). The findings of Harvey resonate with the activities in the UK at the time, namely that the experiences of minority women (particularly working-class minority women) were kept out of the discourse of women's enterprise scholars' accounts. Some work was being undertaken in the UK with such entrepreneurs; for example, Kaur and Hayden were working in the West Midlands with working-class Black and Asian women in the clothing industry, developing opportunities for self-employment and small subcontracting businesses to the larger garment manufacturers (Kaur and Hayden, 1993), but this went largely unnoticed in journals at the time. While work on race and class was being developed in the UK, exploring the embedded nature of such businesses into regions (Phizacklea and Ram, 1996; Ram and Jones, 1998; Barrett *et al.*, 2002), there was a limited focus on the women in such business.

More recently, the intersectional nature of women's enterprise literature has developed, with a greater breadth and focus on the heterogeneity of women and their experiences. A more critical approach to the study of women's enterprise (from poststructuralist, and critical realist feminist epistemologies) are now adopted. Tedmanson *et al.*, (2012) explain: "studies of women's entrepreneurship have begun to depart from previous studies of the 'biological differences' to pursue a more nuanced socio-political understanding of how gender difference is constructed." (p. 534). Intersectional studies exploring ethnicity, gender and entrepreneurship, diverse modes of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activity in economies outside of the Western world are now more prevalent, bringing greater breadth and depth to the discipline (Essers and Benschop, 2007; Essers, 2009; Hughes and Jennings, 2012; Hughes *et al.*, 2012; Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013; The Organisation for Economic Co- operation and Development, 2015; Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018).

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW PART TWO: ADDRESSING POLICY PROCESS ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This second section of the literature review explores public policymaking literature. The work examined mainly focusses on public policy process analysis, as opposed to comparative public policy research (Gomez and Kuronen, 2011; Yanow, 2014) or public policy evaluation (Mole *et al.*, 2008, 2011; Pawson, 2013). We are exploring the process of policymaking and how it is analysed.

Policy process analysis is said to have begun in the USA in the late 1930s, with the seminal work of Laswell (2018), which called for a distinct policy studies discipline. Public policy analysis is, therefore, a relatively contemporary field of research, as are the generic fields of entrepreneurship, and the specific fields of female entrepreneurship. The combination of the study of the public policy process in the context of female entrepreneurship policy is therefore novel and has applicability to current academic discourse.

This review is divided into three sections. Section 1 explores what public policy is and how it is addressed in the literature. Section 2 explores various theories of the policy process, and section 3 addresses the specific policy analysis process of the Advocacy Coalition Framework.

4.1.1 What is public policy?

There are multiple definitions of 'public policy', and indeed of the term 'policy'. Cairney (2012) identifies six definitions of public policy, ranging from 'whatever governments choose to do, or not to do,' to 'the actions of government and the intentions that determine those actions' (p.25). All of these definitions appear to have in common the involvement of government actions, and a form of intent on a matter of concern to that government. Birkland's (2016) definition of public policy is more explicit. Birkland defines public policy-making as 'public' (so not in the realm of the private sector), therefore government has some

formal involvement in it; and that 'policy' is "the statement by government of what it intends to do, such as law, regulation, ruling, decision, order or a combination of these" (p.9). Consequently, in relation to this research, we are focusing on the government's decisions about how to address government's perceived needs for female entrepreneurs.

The term 'perceived' is used above intentionally because it relates to the nature of what is being addressed within a policy. The work of Carol Bacchi (1999) is relevant here, as it explores the concept of the 'problem definition' – the perception of the issue that is to be addressed by the policy and its subsequent interventions. Writing from a poststructuralist feminist perspective, she asks: 'What does a policy mean?'

Bacchi explores the categorisation of the policymaking process. She defines the 'rational comprehensive model,' which she states is concerned with policy decision making over that of problem-solving¹⁰. According to rational choice theory, there is a rational neutral procedure that can be followed, which results from rational analysis for the public good. The concept of bounded rationality is also relevant to the theory. This is fundamentally the idea that policymakers can only do one thing at a time; that they make logical, rational choices in the context in which they operate. For Bacchi, the focus is on a more fluid process of problem- solving.

In her critique of rational choice theory, Bacchi cites Lindblom's exploration of the political aspects of policymaking. Lindblom (1959) states that there is no 'one best way' – that problems cannot be 'solved'; rather, there is a need to look for ways to 'improve the situation'. Rational choice theory formed the foundation of initial public policy analysis. The next section explores how this theory developed into different approaches to the study of the policy process.

¹⁰ Rational choice theory is adopted in public policy. It applies primarily economics theory to the understanding of political outcomes that are based on the choices made by individual citizens. For further details see Cairney (2012), Ch. 7.

4.2 Policy process theories.

4.2.1 The generic policy cycle.

The generic policy cycle is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below. It illustrates, in a simple way, a general staged approach to the process of developing and implementing policy. It is useful as a starting point to understanding a policy process, but it does not provide explanations of what happens, or explicitly provide the theoretical foundations upon which the process relies. As such, it is a descriptive framework, which provides a starting point into the topic. However, for some time, academic texts based upon the 'generic cycle' formed the basis of public policy analysis in democratic societies across the world (Howlett, Ramesh and Perl, 2009).

It has been highly criticised for its simplistic and linear approach by scholars. For example, Nakamura (1987) highlights the need to go beyond each of the categories within the model, in order to explore precisely what is being addressed at each stage. He specifically criticises the incremental nature of policymaking that is implied by the linear nature of the model, as too simplistic in practice.

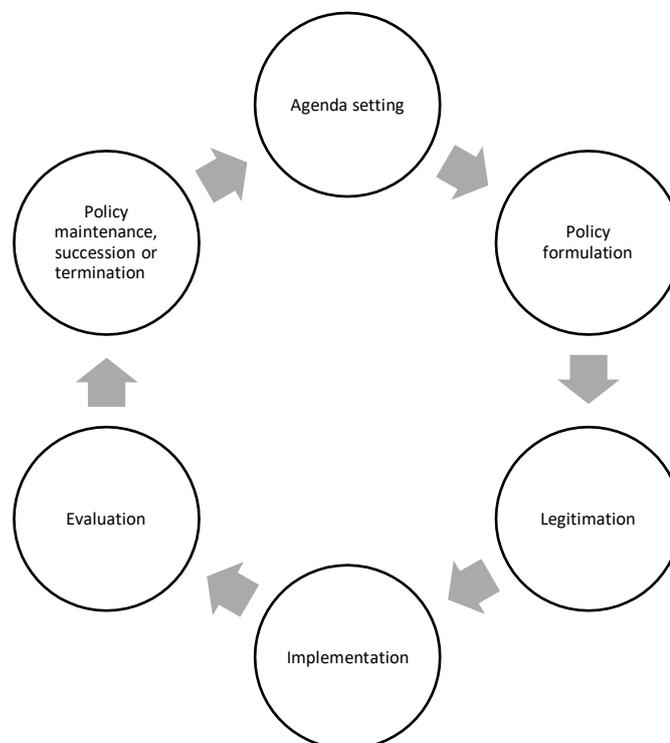
However, the policy cycle does provide a framework from which identification of a series of activities that policy professionals conduct, in the course of being a policyholder. These include agenda-setting or defining the policy problem. This policy definition relates to the issues raised by Bacchi, over who defines the policy issue and how this relates to political decisions. The activity of policy formulation requires analysis of how a solution to the problem is found, and how decisions about it are made. At this 'stage', there is a potential for disagreement and compromise with stakeholders involved with that policy. For example, the process of developing strategies and potentially changing legislature can be a lengthy one.

This can, however, create time, providing stakeholders to be consulted and amendments made. The concept of 'iron triangles' is relevant here (Hecklo, 1993). This concept describes a situation where lobbyists, public administrators and committees work together in the form of mutual support over time, in order to influence or support policy measures. Such a model

is criticised by Hecló as outdated, considering the complexity of current policymaking, given the wider range of stakeholders with interests in policy development. According to Hecló, in recent decades, 'issue networks' are now a more likely formation of policy stakeholders. Issue networks are deemed more fluid and more open to participation than the traditional roles considered influential within the iron triangle model. This idea has relevance to the Advocacy Coalition model used within this study, because the idea of networks forming together as coalitions is an important factor to policy influence, in the case of women's enterprise policy development.

Before addressing the Advocacy Coalition Framework in detail, there follows a brief outline of significant policy theories that bear some influence on the Advocacy Coalition Framework. These theories also provide additional contextual information to the study's Framework analysis.

Figure 4.1: The generic policy cycle



Source: Adapted from Cairney, 2012, p. 34.

4.2.2 The garbage can model and multiple streams theory.

The garbage can model of organisational choice was developed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972). They posit that the process of decision making in an organisation is not entirely based on the theory of rational choice. Concerning public policymaking, they might claim that policymakers are often unsure what they are doing, and not the rational, all-knowing individuals that rational choice theory might have us believe. In public policy making, the complexity of political culture, the variety of organisations and individual involved - with their associated beliefs and ideas - lead to a highly complex environment for decision-making.

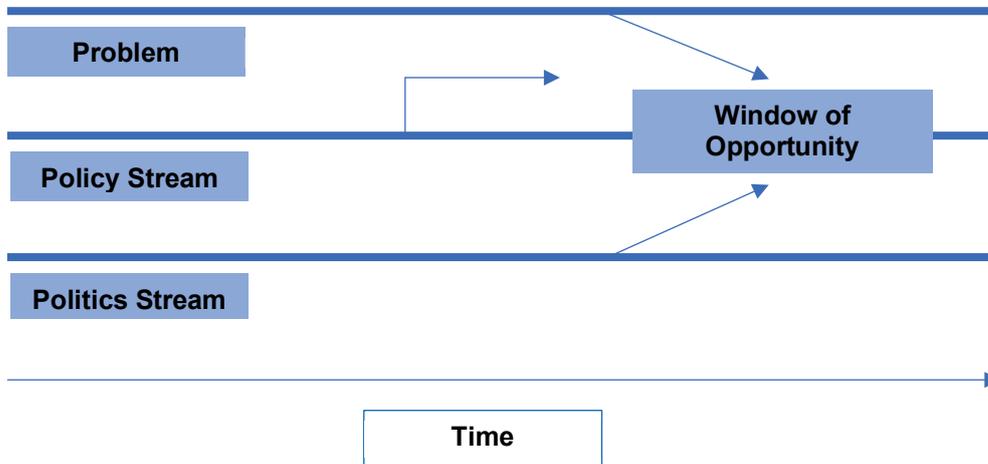
Within the garbage can model, all ideas, people, lobbyists, interested parties, in effect get thrown into a 'garbage can' – and the policy preference is the one picked out of the can. Cohen March and Olsen deem this a type of 'policy anarchy' as opposed to the rational choice models.

The model introduced the concept of policy themes into policy analysis; a concept that would be further developed by Kingdon, (and as indicated later in this section). The garbage can model has three elements, or 'streams', within it: the problem stream, solution stream, and the participants. The so-termed 'garbage cans' themselves are classed as opportunities. All these elements are disconnected and not linked in a cyclical way, as is the case with rational models – decision-making powers are distributed widely within the system. For example, within the model, there can be solutions in effect looking for problems to solve, and individuals looking for causes with which to align. A negative factor of this model is that it demonstrates a form of an irrational, ad-hoc and slow decision-making process. However, a positive aspect of it is that it allows for aspects of creativity in the decision-making process.

The idea of policy themes was further developed by Kingdon in 1984, with the concept of multiple stream theory, when looking specifically at the agenda-setting phase within the policy process (Kingdon, 1984).

Utilising the 'garbage can theory', Kingdon develops it in a more structured way by creating three streams of 'politics', 'problem' and 'policy' (see Figure 4.2 below)

Figure 4.2: Kingdon's multiple streams metaphor



Source: Birkland, 2016, p. 374.

As illustrated in Figure 4.2, each of the themes can be brought together to create what Kingdon called 'a window of opportunity', when policy agenda change can occur. This model also highlights the role of 'policy entrepreneurs' in bringing together a critical mass to create the 'window of opportunity' across the streams, resulting in the potential for policy change.

Streams theory is relevant to this policy study as it provides an opportunity to explore the different policy stakeholders (or 'policy actors', as they are referred to in the model) and their role in policy agenda-setting. The model also assists with problem definition and the identification of political aspects within the cases. These factors contribute to the exploration of this policy process over time. Birkland (2016) notes that while the multiple streams theory provides insight into the possibility for change, the Advocacy Coalition Framework develops this to enable the mechanisms for policy change to be explored. This provides the basis for an analysis of the study cases within this research.

4.2.3 Punctuated equilibrium theory (PET).

Punctuated equilibrium theory is relevant to this study because it is a policy study theory that addresses long-term agenda change and policymaking through the role of policy communities and agenda setting. It was developed by Baumgartner and Jones in 1993, primarily to address US national policymaking over time. The model has its foundations in complex systems theory, biology and bounded rationality. The theory explores periods of stability and change in the political process, and thus in public policy and mainly focuses on policy issue definition and policy agenda-setting.

Baumgartner and Jones explored the work of E.E. Schattschneider on conflict expansion and agenda-setting (Schattschneider, 1960). Schattschneider was interested in how unfavourable groups, or those with new ideas, manage to break through existing structures or systems and get their messages heard by policymakers. He argues that political structures wish to maintain the status quo, so are therefore structured in such a way as to resist change. Baumgartner and Jones develop this idea by exploring how the discussions of issues, in this case, are often broken down into what they term as “issue orientated policy subsystems”(Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen, 2017, p. 58). These can also be viewed as the aforementioned ‘iron triangles’, or as issue niches, policy subsystems or issue networks. An important factor about these groups is that much of their activity is completed out of the main political spotlight, but due to how the agenda around the issue is structured, some issues can gain traction. How this occurs is the focus of the theory.

The theory is useful to this study because it illustrates how system shifts can occur in what is otherwise a lengthy and bureaucratic process. Like the multiple stream theory, it shows how opportunities arise with new forms of policy thinking, or new policy entrepreneurs who mobilise existing groups, or form new ones, in order to ‘open up’ the system. In other words, it illustrates how new ways of thinking will, in effect, ‘punctuate the equilibrium’ of the existing system. This helps with understanding how groups can mobilise with a policy message; a point that is important in the framework that will be utilised in this study, and that is expanded upon in the section below.

4.3 An overview of The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF).

4.3.1 Development of the framework.

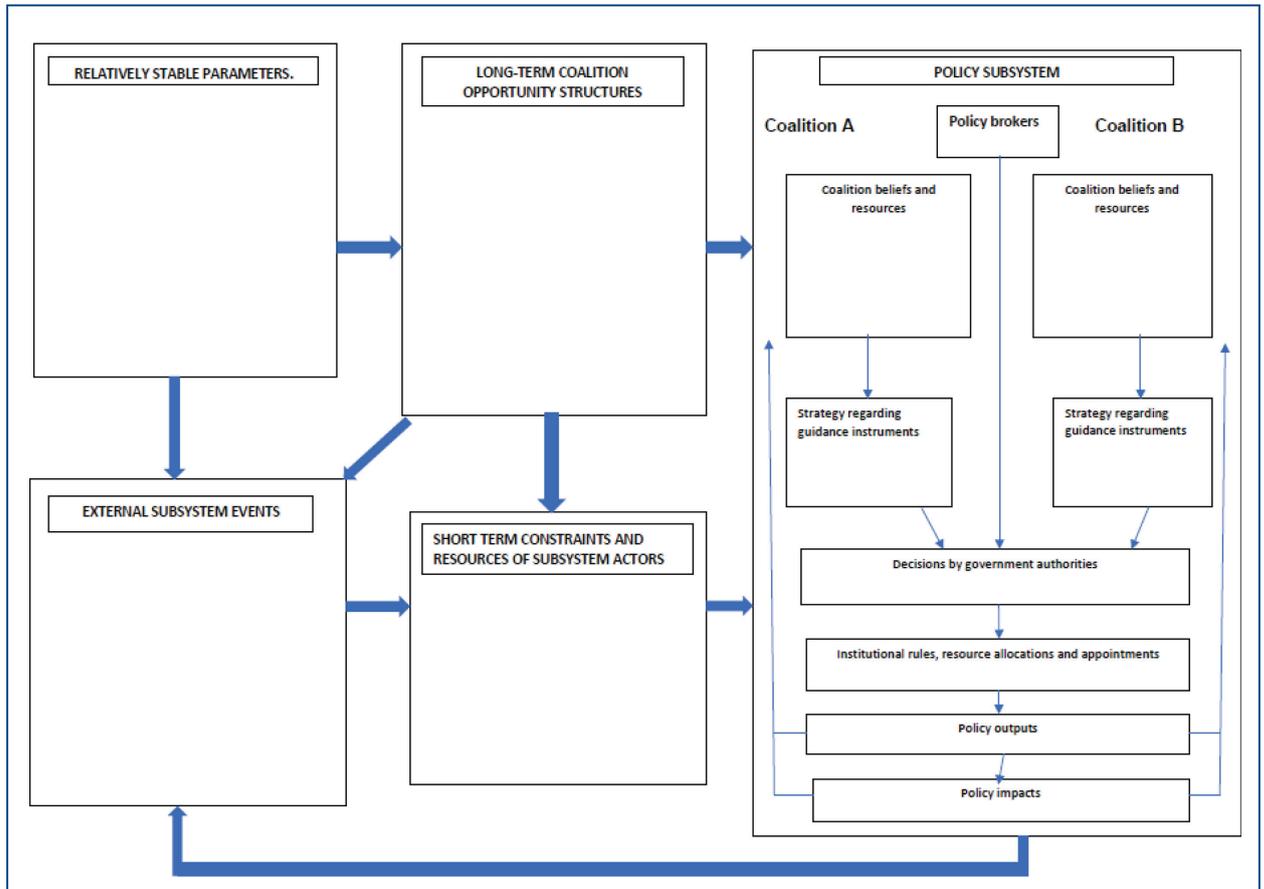
The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was initially developed and used for the analysis of public policy in the USA (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993a), but has subsequently been applied in policy analysis in European and UK contexts (Sabatier, 1998; Ingold, Fischer and Cairney, 2017; Brooks, 2018). The framework model developed over a long period of gestation, in response to several perceived gaps and unanswered questions in the existing policy theories, outlined in the previous section.

Sabatier (ibid) highlights three key aspects of the framework. Firstly, the study of policy change -and any subsequent learning that occurs from it – requires ten years or more of study.

Secondly, the longitudinal study is focused upon what is termed as ‘policy subsystems’, as opposed to analysing the institutions of government alone. Thirdly, the model defines public policy, or their associated policy measures, as ‘belief systems’, which have values associated with them. These points are expanded upon below.

The framework was developed to enable an empirically structured analysis of the policy process in a manner that incorporates a range of stakeholders, or ‘policy actors’, and the ways that they form together around shared ‘beliefs’ to influence the policymaking process. According to the theory, these ‘actors’ hold strong beliefs around a specific issue or area of concern and seek to translate these beliefs into policy action or policy change. These ‘actors’ come together and form ‘advocacy coalitions’ around their specific strong belief – according to Cairney, the beliefs “act as the glue that binds actors together” within their coalition (Cairney, 2012, p. 200). The primary purpose of the framework is to identify, explain and analyse the process used to develop advocacy coalitions, enable policy learning and facilitate policy change. The framework itself is shown in the form of a diagram – see Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Advocacy Coalition Framework¹¹



Source: Adapted from Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993b, p. 224.

There follows a brief overview of the model, which provides a simplified explanation of how the model is used within this research. A more detailed analysis of the practical adoption of this process can be found in the methodology section of this study.

The logic of the framework is indicated by the diagram, showing the various components of the framework, their relationships to one another and the variable factors influencing policy decision making. Within the 'policy subsystem' (on the right of the model), coalitions (holding their various beliefs) compete with one another using various strategies to influence governmental decision-makers. This policy subsystem process is the main unit of analysis within the model and can be affected by a range of other factors (indicated by the various

¹¹ For a highly-detailed analysis of the foundation, content, and operation of the model, please refer to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, (1993a); Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, (2018); Weible *et al.*, (2019).

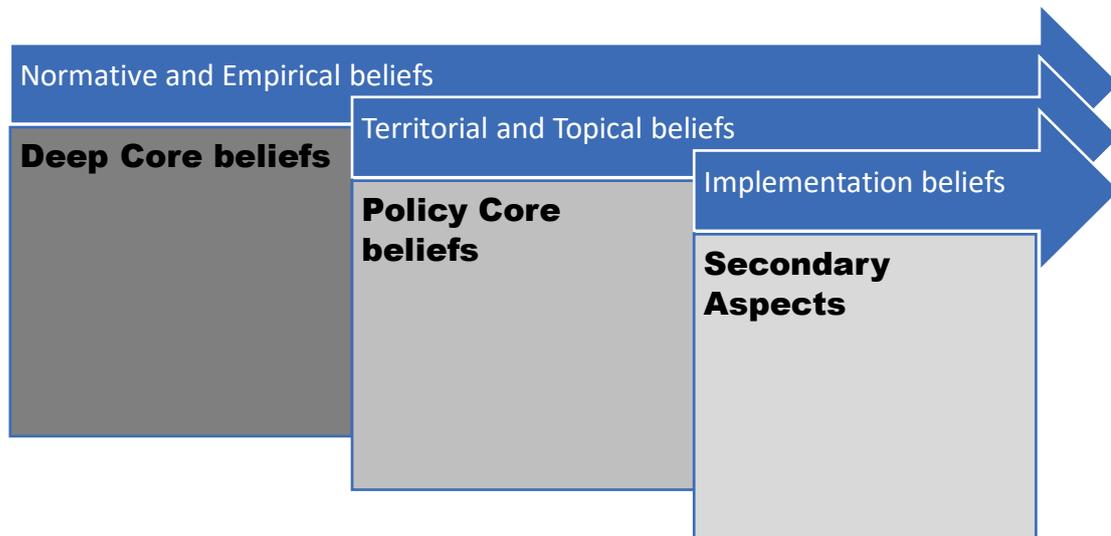
boxes in the middle and to the left of the diagram). These can include, for example, short-term resource issues, longer-term coalition issues, such as new coalitions forming, or changes in policy actors.

External events can also influence the policy subsystem; for example, major economic shocks, such as those seen with the global banking crisis in 2008 (Helbling et al., 2011). Changes in government are identified in the model as a potential external event that can impact upon the policy subsystem, for example with changes in the economic theory underlying political decision making by different political parties, leading to changes in priorities over public spending decision, which in turn can influence policy decision-making.

The box identified as 'Relatively Stable Parameters' (on the top left of the model) relates to factors influencing policy making that are likely to remain stable over time, such as legal systems within a country, the political governance, or the range of natural, or physical, resources available within a system. There are numerous feedback loops built into the model, which enable the consideration of policy impacts at various levels of the process.

As mentioned briefly above, within the policy system, coalition members form clusters, in order to compete around specific viewpoints or belief systems. Within the framework, it is posited that members of coalitions hold a common set of hierarchically structured belief systems around which they then coalesce. The framework categorises these beliefs, in hierarchical order as deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary aspects; These categories are illustrated in Figure 4.4 on the next page and detailed in the following section.

Figure 4.4: Advocacy Coalition framework belief systems.



4.3.2 Policy beliefs.

a. Deep core beliefs.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework model holds that coalition members work to maintain deep core beliefs. These are variously defined as the most basic, fundamental, or normative beliefs that individual members of a coalition hold, although the scope of these beliefs within the model are not fully defined (Ripberger *et al.*, 2014). These beliefs provide the personal philosophical underpinning of the rationale for engagement in the policy process. These may, for example, be personal political allegiances, free-market or state preferences, or societal welfare issues. They also provide perceptions of causal relationships that may be held on beliefs.

Concerning the critical realist aspects of this research, these issues represent a part of the 'deep' level of Bhaskar's depth ontology (Bhaskar, 2008). According to Jenkins-Smith, these deep core beliefs are least likely to change, in the event of new evidence being presented within the policy sub-system. They are therefore most resistant to any policy learning which may occur within the system (Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2018).

b. Policy core beliefs.

Policy core beliefs have some overlap with deep core beliefs, but what demarcates them is their direct relationship to the policy issue being addressed. While deep core beliefs are

defined as “normative and empirical”, policy core beliefs are defined as “territorial and topical” (ibid., p. 140). They are directly related to the policy problem or policy issue under investigation. This may include, for example, the scale of the challenge faced by the policy problem, problem causation, or potential problem solutions.

c. Secondary aspects

These beliefs relate directly to the means of achieving the outcomes desired by policy coalition members. These can include, for example, what and how information is compiled to support implementation, and administrative actions on the policy issue, such as delivery mechanisms and funding.

These belief systems are a core component of coalitions, as all coalition members share such beliefs, which hold the coalition together. How these beliefs can be altered is explored in the next section.

4.3.3 Policy learning.

As belief systems have such a central role in the framework, it is important to recognise how such belief systems can be influenced or change because this may have an impact on the policymaking process. The role of policy learning within the model is important here. An underlying principle of the model is that advocacy coalition belief systems are open to change, because members make decisions rationally, based upon scientific and technical evidence and analysis (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993a). The framework accounts for the role of such evidence and analysis in detail, including flow diagrams and decision trees illustrating how technical data and policy learning can be used to facilitate engagement within and between different advocacy coalitions, and government policymakers (ibid, pp. 41-56). For this study, it is important to note that policy learning formed a component of the policy subsystem, resulting in the development of policy and policy programmes, both regionally and nationally. This is discussed in detail in the analysis section of the study (Chapter Seven).

4.3.4 Policy Change.

Policy change is an area of the framework that has seen an increasing amount of research in the last decade. It is important, as it results from the dominant policy coalition's ability to make their beliefs end in policy alterations. To an extent, this aspect of the policy process was not comprehensively defined within the original iterations of the model, and therefore these developments have resulted from empirical studies that have adopted the framework for policy analyses (Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2018; Pierce *et al.*, 2019). The framework enables an analysis of the process of this change and highlights key approaches used by coalitions to enact their beliefs upon the policy.

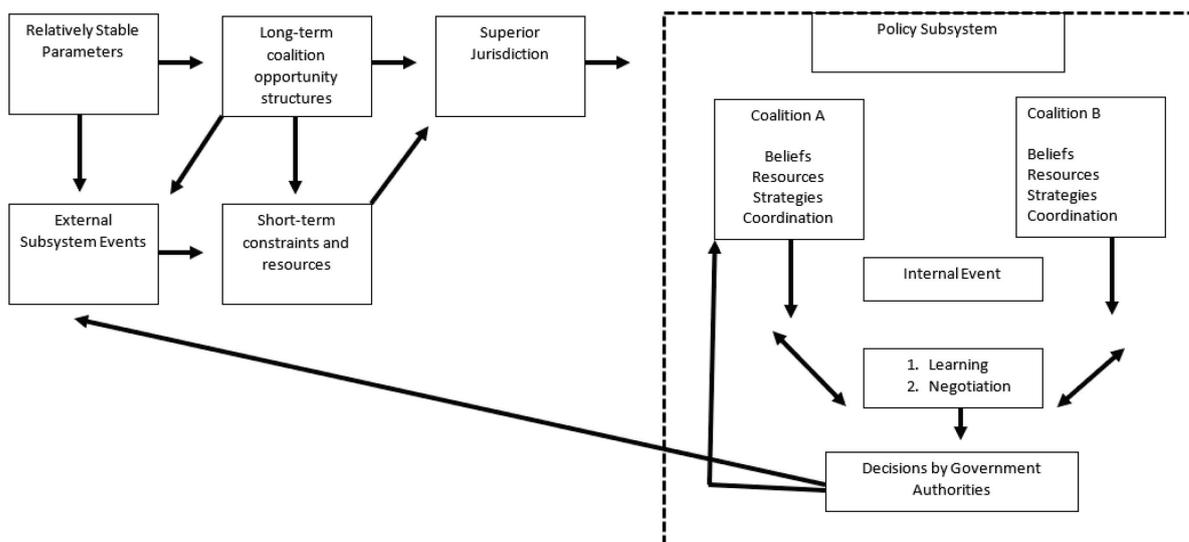
Sabatier indicates that within the framework, policy changes can occur either in a 'bottom-up or top-down' manner (Sabatier, 1986). He identifies four 'bottom-up' processes for policy change within the framework, namely:

- Events external to the system (so-called 'policy perturbations', or external shocks), such as changes to government agendas or major political crises.
- Internal events within the subsystem,
- Policy learning and
- Internal coalition agreements.

These are classified as 'bottom-up' because they are changes that result from the activity of actors within the system. They are not imposed from a government, in a formal influence on the policy.

Recently, scholars have attempted to explore policy change within the model in more detail. Pierce, Peterson, and Hicks, (2017) posit a model of policy change within the ACF, which is relevant to this study. This model is shown below.

Figure 4.5: Advocacy Coalition Framework change perspective model.



Source: Pierce, Peterson, and Hicks. (2017), p. 3.

The model above highlights the routes to policy change and the relationships, together with how these factors relate to one another over time. One point of note to this model is the inclusion of a section, entitled Superior Jurisdiction, which does not occur in the main framework model, illustrated in Figure 4.3. This was added to the change model because of the author's extensive research into the processes of policy change. The section of the model represents changes that can occur as a result of judicial decisions, which may have unexpected consequences to the policy process; for example as indicated in the case of state health policy in the USA (Miller, 2011). This illustrates a form of what Sabatier terms 'top- down' policy change.

4.4 Summary

This section has provided a review of the public policymaking process. It has outlined several key theoretical concepts that are important in the study of public policy and has related these to the main framework of analysis within this research, namely the Advocacy Coalition Framework. The framework has been presented in such a way as to identify key aspects of it which will have a bearing on the case study analysis, at the heart of this research. Current research on the framework has also been presented, in order to provide contemporary approaches to the application of the framework and to incorporate these into the case analysis, which follows in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

“Taking the standpoint of women means recognising that as inquirers, we are thereby brought into determinate relations with those whose experiences we intend to express. The concepts and frameworks, our methods of inquiry, of writing texts, and so forth, are an integral aspect of that relation.”

(Smith, 1987, p. 111)

5.1 Introduction

The quotation from Dorothy Smith above highlights the importance of ensuring that the whole approach to research is explicitly detailed if we are to consider our responsibilities to those that are both subject to, and beneficiaries of our research. In adopting this approach, if research is to be robust and valid, we need to make transparent the axiological framework, tools, techniques, and interpretations which form the foundations of the research. This chapter establishes the approach to answering the research questions on women’s enterprise and policy formation, which are at the core of this thesis.

The following provides both an explanation and a critical analysis of the rationale for the research. It then identifies how the research is operationalised; to what aims, and the processes by which it has been achieved. While the research progressed, there were also pitfalls and frustrations, and these also require addressing, if the complete picture of the fallibility of conducting research is to be precisely conveyed.

The content of this chapter is organised in the following manner, going from broad issues on the philosophical foundations of the research, moving through to granular detail of the specifics of conducting the research. It begins by exploring the research paradigm, the ontological and epistemological positioning of what is believed about the matter under observation, and what we trust that we know about it. There then follows an outline of the research design, namely how this was conceived, based upon the paradigmatic stance (the set of ideas that link together to define the research field). The architecture of the design is outlined - namely, the axiology and methodology - or the strategy lying behind the choice of ways of conducting the research. The methodological aspects of the research are then conveyed, illustrating how this follows from the theoretical concepts underpinning the

research. The means of conducting the research is through the methods utilised, and these are then explained.

Data collection is the next section of the chapter. Details of the types of data collected, mechanisms for archival and retrieval and organisational systems for the data are outlined. Issues of reliability and validity of the data are then discussed, detailing the qualitative nature of the data, the robustness of the data, and how its reliability and validity have been verified and reinforced.

The process of data analysis is then explored. The systematic analytical strategy adopted from the conceptual framework is explained.

Ethical issues of the research are then addressed. The ethical considerations of conducting scientific research are of increasing concern. In 2018, the case of He Jiankui editing the genes of two human embryos was found to have contravened scientific and ethical protocols, such as the European 'Oviedo Convention', which protects human rights in the biomedical field (Krimsky, 2019). Research is a human activity, and as such, it involves 'relationships' and these have consequences, even if only to those participating in the research (Maxwell, 2012). Ethical issues in research have consequences for society, and it is, therefore, vital that they are given careful consideration.

Finally, within this chapter, there is an exploration of the stance of the researcher. This is an important factor to this research, given the author's close involvement in the research domain over the period under investigation, and in many different roles. The perspective of the 'Engaged Active Researcher' is detailed to elaborate upon the critical and engaged nature of the research. Some aspects of the limitations of the research are briefly addressed in this chapter. They are expanded upon in Chapter Ten, where a separate section is allocated for discussion of these matters.

5.2 The research questions.

At this stage, let us remind ourselves of the question under investigation and the points that are being addressed.

How did women influence policy change directed at supporting women's businesses in the West Midlands region of England over three decades between 1989 and 2011?

The main question indicated above is a 'how' question; therefore, it is seeking to explain how matters have occurred for women's enterprise policy and practice over a period and what precisely occurred. It is an exploration of how women's enterprise policy has been formulated and enacted, exploring the evolution of policy and practice over time.

To investigate this, the research aims to address the following points:

5.2.1 Aims of the research

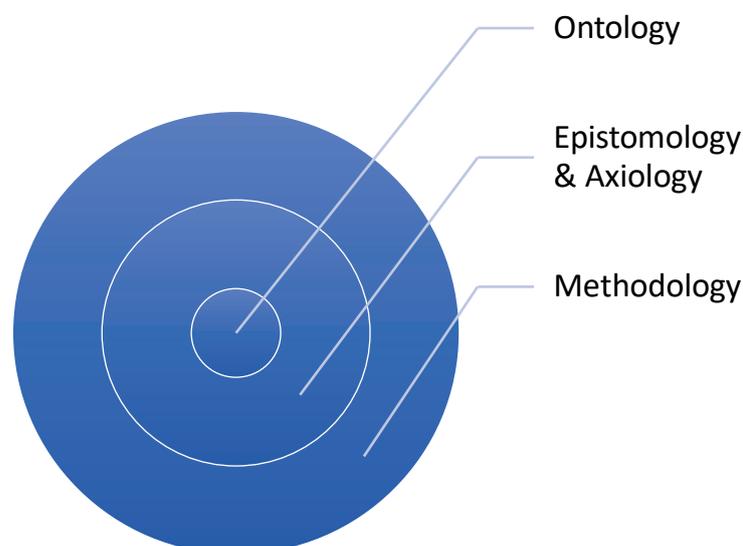
1. Explore the antecedents to the development of the gender-focused policy for the promotion of women's enterprise in the West Midlands Region.
2. Analyse the processes over time of this specific 'black box' of Women's Enterprise policy formation in the region, by developing longitudinal case studies that focus on 'female entrepreneurship development.'
3. Utilising the contents of the developed cases, devise an exploratory conceptual framework for this policy formation, using the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Weible and Sabatier, 2017) as its basis.
4. Further analysis of the Framework, utilising critical realist practice, in order to explore underlying mechanisms that occurred over the period.
5. Provide a detailed personal reflection on the process, uncovering how the praxis of developing feminist policy is experienced by a woman tasked with creating and implementing such a policy.
6. Explore potential implications for research and praxis, resulting from this analysis.

This is an empirical study in that it seeks to make women visible; it explores the role of women in enterprise and policymaking. It uses the term 'men' and 'women' as variables and also uses the term 'gender' to refer to biological sex. Foss *et al.*, (2019) argue that feminist empirical research can be viewed as emphasising a 'male norm' - that women are seen as the same as men and require equal treatment, However, this research has not taken this view of empirical research. This study alternatively emphasises the visibility of women (Ahl, 2004), through the adoption of a feminist standpoint position, which Foss et al. (ibid), view as 'making women's unique perspective and contribution visible' (p. 414).

5.3 The research paradigm.

The research paradigm underpins the theoretical and conceptual approaches taken to the research. They are the philosophical and knowledge-based foundations upon which this study sits – the sets of ideas and inter-linked concepts that define the research. In academic terms, these begin with the ontological and epistemological stances of the research and then explore the axiological and methodological approaches taken (Figure 5.1). To commence this section, the ontological position of critical realism and the epistemological approach of the feminist standpoint are now explained.

Figure 5.1: Linking the 'ologies' together.



Source: adapted from Lee and Lings, 2008, p. 12.

5.3.1 Ontological position

Ontology is the study of the nature of reality (Lee and Lings, 2008); how we specify the nature of the world that we are trying to explain as researchers and scholars. What we believe exists, and the nature of how that is constituted will affect how we view the social world and the activities and entities within it. This viewpoint may vary depending upon traditions, values, or norms from the culture into which one is born. For example, those born in Western cultures may view social phenomena (for example, families, relationships, law, and order) as essentially different from things in the natural world, such as rocks, or water, the air, or the human body). Different cultures may have different perceptions of what is social and natural, i.e., different ontological views, based upon their own religious or philosophical traditions (Ellingson and Green, 2013). An example of this are the terms 'sex' and 'gender', where sex is the biological determination of a body (being male or female), whilst gender is what is socially imbued upon that physical body (being a man or a woman) (see Chapter Two for further discussion on this matter). These terms are, therefore, 'normative' – there are value judgments associated with them, which depend upon the viewpoint of the individual or society. This research uses a critical realist ontology for its basic philosophical stance. Critical realism is mostly associated with its founder, Roy Bhaskar, and his extensive body of work devised in the UK over the latter part of the 20th and early parts of the 21st century¹². Whilst Bhaskar established the foundations of critical realism, the academic discipline has evolved through the application of theory and is now associated with scholars, such as Margaret Archer, Andrew Sayer, Dave Elder-Vass and Timothy Rutzou, in the disciplines of sociology, philosophical theory, and economics (Archer, 1995; Sayer, 2000; Elder-Vass, 2010; Rutzou, 2018). In the study of gender and entrepreneurship, critical realism has recently provided another approach to analysis. For example, Marlow (2014) cites the potential for critical realism as a methodological approach to gender-based enterprise research. There now exists a body of work utilising critical

¹² For this research, a brief introduction of CR is provided. For further detailed information on the foundations of critical realist philosophy, see Bhaskar (2008).

realism as a theoretical position when researching and analysing entrepreneurial policy and practice in general, and latterly gender and entrepreneurship (for example Mole and Mole, 2010; Kitching, Hart and Wilson, 2015; Ram *et al.*, 2015; Gunnarsson, Martinez Dy and van Ingen, 2016; Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018).

5.3.2 Critical realism

Critical realism is a form of post-positivism, which means that critical realism derives from a philosophical and scientific period when the concept of positivism as *the* theory of science had been surpassed. Positivism is an approach to natural sciences, that, it can be argued, most people assume is science itself (Newman, 2006).

With enduring traditional roots in the work of Comte and John Stuart Mill, positivist science emphasises the discovery of causal laws from an essentialist perspective (i.e there is a reality that exists, and it is awaiting discovery through detailed empirical observation and research, that is ‘value-free’, or objective), with findings being ‘verified’ by replication of experiments, for example. The scholars who originally developed the foundations of what many regard as ‘science’ were a product of their time – the early eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. Those scientists who were prevalent in their respective scientific fields were predominantly male, white, from higher class status, and often with theological education; thus, holding worldviews moulded by their backgrounds¹³. They perceived their philosophies to be ‘the best way’ to gain knowledge about the world, yet much of what was classified as scientific study at the time was focussed upon the natural world. There was little emphasis given to the social world of people, to social inquiry, their interaction, and their forms of organisation. Was it correct that world views and methods used to gain knowledge of the natural world were compatible with understanding the social processes that occurred? Can laws that relate to natural phenomena such as plants, or rocks, or chemicals, be the same as those applied to humans in a social world?

¹³ There were many female positivist scientists, but their endeavors were less visible. For British examples see Royal Society (2019), and US examples see Rossiter (1998).

Humans can learn and can communicate; they are self-aware. They can adapt and interact to shape and mould the environment in which they live. Some feminist authors argue that claims to objectivity in positivist research are not truly 'value-free' and that no amount of systematic procedures can alleviate some elements of subjectivity, through the interpretation of results by the person conducting the research (Harding, 1992; Sprague, 2016). For this research study, it is important to recognise that "feminists can have different ontological beliefs (and so different theories) about the nature of reality and the objects of their research" (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002, p. 12).

Positivist approaches view human action from a *determinist* perspective; by that is meant that the approach seeks external forces, causes, or mechanisms that act upon the individual, which create outcomes, in the form of attitudes, values, or behaviours. The approach relegates an individual's subjective viewpoint or internal desire, free will, or personal judgment to the influence of external forces or mechanisms. By this definition, theoretically, individuals have little 'human agency'. In practice, few social scientists working from a positivist perspective believe in an absolute or 'hard' form of determinism, as this extreme would lead to humans behaving as robotic agents, with no free will or choice. Positivists may, therefore, look at external natural laws and probabilities of events occurring, to determine how people may behave (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

From the mid-1930s, two other paradigms of social science developed; the interpretivist social science and critical social science (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In short, interpretive social science developed from the study of hermeneutics in the nineteenth century and was then developed further in the early twentieth century by the Chicago School of Sociology.

The interpretive approach to research is often subjective (as opposed to the alleged objectivity of positivism) and may use qualitative methods such as interviews or research 'in the field,' i.e., researching alongside the researched (Wagenaar and Cook, 2011). A positivist researcher may, by their ontological stance, choose to use surveys and statistical

analyses, i.e. quantitative methods as a part of their research, as opposed to an interpretive researcher, who may analyse transcripts of interviews, or study human behaviour in situ (in a workplace, for example) in order to interpret meaningful social action of people – not merely observing actions and behaviours.

A further important point about interpretivist research is that it may involve a 'social constructionist orientation' (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016). Social constructionism is an ontological position that explains social reality as being somehow created and shaped by the beliefs and meanings that people give to the world. There is no 'real world' out there – what we see is created by human thought and meaning (Cunliffe, 2011). Interpretivism, in its purest form (often called strong interpretivism, or irrealism (New, 2005)) also opposes positivism by advocating 'relativism' as a principle. Rather than being 'value-free and objective' in its approach, 'strong' relativism is value-laden and subjective. Those adopting a relativist approach, in theory, consider no individual point of view or value position as being any better than another. Each point of view or value is equally valid for those holding that view. At its extreme, this is a highly subjective approach. This is relevant to this study, as the importance of the biological nature of men and women is a determining factor in the development of public services in the UK context (Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018), gender is deemed as a policy criterion in the context of the present study.

In contrast to the other two approaches, critical social science can be traced back to the late twentieth century and the works of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, Theodore Adorno and Erich Fromm. It is also associated with the Frankfurt School in Germany in the 1930s and with aspects of feminist theory (Guba and Lincoln, op. cit). Critical realism also has its antecedents in critical social science theory, rejecting both the objectivist, value-free, predominantly quantitative approach of positivism, and the strong subjectivity and constructionist views of the interpretivist social scientists. Critical social science and realism within it can manifest in a variety of forms; Maxwell (2012) highlights the work of other authors working from a realist ontology who do not class themselves as critical realist; for example, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) working in the linguistic field, and the evaluator

Pawson (2013), who viewed the critical aspect of critical realism in a different way from that of Bhaskar. However, what all appear to have in common is the denial of 'objective' or certain knowledge of the world, what Archer (2016) refers to as 'epistemic relativism' - all theory or knowledge about the world originates from a particular perspective, and that our knowledge of it is "partial, incomplete and fallible" (Maxwell, op.cit, p. 5). Critical realists do not deny the influence of social linguistics and representations but explore the ways that these affect the actual and real domains of ontological structuration.

Having explored some of the origins of critical realism related to this study, why is it applicable as an ontological approach for this thesis? Its relevance to this study is that it is concerned with the nature of causation, agency, structure, and relations, and the implicit or explicit ways of being in the world that relate to circumstances that occur. In terms of this study, it assists in making explicit the underlying structures that act upon the individual's involvement in the policy process. This is done through the process of underlabouring. Through detailed, longitudinal examination of the processes and interactions occurring in the development of entrepreneurial feminism across the West Midlands region, the research uncovers causal mechanism which are not immediately apparent from the situational analysis. This can be classed, in critical realist terms, as 'underlabouring for emancipation'. By this is meant that the research engages with what Bhaskar (2016) claims as a 'dialectic of desire of freedom'(p 134); it is research which clears the ground for understanding ways in which women gain greater autonomy and agency in the realm of public policy.

Another rationale for adopting this meta-theoretical approach is that, as a philosophical approach, it is heterogeneous in terms of positions, but with common threads in different disciplines. It is not prescriptive in terms of the epistemological, axiological, and methodological approaches used within the research process. According to Archer (2016), "It is a 'meta-theoretical position: a reflexive philosophical stance concerned with providing a philosophically informed account of science and social science, which can, in turn, inform our empirical investigations."

The role of the reflexive, retroductive process is important to this study because it underpins the theoretical framework used as the basis of the research. Through retroduction, the social scientist contemplates on generative mechanisms, which if real would explain the phenomenon viewed in practice. The researcher moves back and forth between the theory and the evidence, developing models of how the action manifests from the research. This retroductive process is evidenced throughout the data analysis within this study; for example, both in the development of the case studies and within the analysis of the policy process. The underlying mechanisms influencing the policy process are thus being exposed. As a result, this forms an overarching conceptual approach, exploring the ontological aspects of this study.

5.4 Epistemological foundations

Epistemology deals with what we understand as knowledge – how researchers know what they know. Bryman and Bell (2007) define an epistemological issue as concerning “the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline.” (p. 16). The epistemological orientation of the research is influenced by its ontological approach. For example, if you have a positivist ontological approach and believe that stable pre-existing patterns can be found in the world, (which are logical and connected to laws or facts) it is unlikely (although not impossible) to follow a postmodern approach to epistemology, The reason behind this is that such an approach views the world as chaotic and without any real patterns, so searching for laws and facts would be futile if no one explanation has any greater validity or truth than any other. For this reason, epistemological concerns are linked to ontological concerns; the two are inter-related.

For this research, a feminist standpoint epistemology is adopted. This is compatible with a critical realist ontology because of the epistemic relativism of critical realist study. For critical realists, knowledge can be articulated from various standpoints depending upon various influences and interests. They state that “knowledge is context, concept and activity-dependent” (Archer, *op.cit.* 2016). Hence, knowledge is influenced by human activity.

Feminist standpoint epistemology has a relatively long history in feminist studies. Developing out of 'second-wave' feminism in the 1970s and 1980s, it was originally associated predominantly with a Marxist, or Socialist feminist theory, with the work of a variety of feminist authors such as Dorothy Smith (op cit), Nancy Hartsock (Hartsock, 1983, 1997), Sandra Harding (Harding, 1986, 1991, 1992), Patricia Hill Collins (Hill Collins, 1998; Collins, 2002) and Sylvia Walby (Walby, 2005; Verloo *et al.*, 2009)¹⁴. Sandra Harding's work on 'strong objectivity' is the most acknowledged term deriving from the feminist standpoint. Here Harding is drawing upon Marx's material dialectics to explore the validity of objectivity in scientific inquiry (Harding, 1993). According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), feminist standpoint is contentious in many ways (including a precise definition of what it is, or is not), but what feminist standpoint authors appear to have in common are "struggles to challenge authoritative knowledge of gender within the constraints of modern thinking"(p. 63). Rather than producing one definitive and universal approach to the challenge of power and authority in societies, standpoint enlightens and contributes to feminist experiences, ideas, reality, and attempts to see potential connectivity between these.

However, standpoint feminism in its early iteration was criticised for its apparent universalism and homogeneity of women and their experiences, and a biological essentialist approach by Black standpoint and postmodern feminist authors (Code, 1993, 1995; Hill Collins, 1998). This led to its philosophical decline as postmodern approaches to gender developed. For Collins, standpoint feminism was often perceived as 'white' standpoint feminism, whereas the postmodern feminist perspective developed the work of Foucault on sexuality (Foucault, 1990), and explored the discursive aspects of knowledge, concerning women. Butler (1990, 2010) argues that gender constructs sex and that sex is reinforced over time by performing social actions. For Butler, gender can be deconstructed and can therefore be viewed as a performance; thus, women 'do' gender. The 'doing of gender' takes the form of

¹⁴ Not all of these authors would claim to be socialist feminists, but all espouse feminist standpoint in some way.

'performativity', which has its roots in linguistics and language philosophy (Harrington *et al.*, 2008). This approach moves away from the idea of essentialism of women – in effect from this viewpoint, women lack homogeneity, and the importance of gender is foregrounded, as opposed to the embodiment of woman. The anti-materiality and relativism of feminist postmodernism appeared opposed to the embodiment and apparent absolutism of standpoint¹⁵.

This debate is important because it has enabled feminist scholars to overcome the essentialist 'biological determinism' of the state of being a woman, and not to view one form of feminist thought as universal. It was argued for many years that biological differences between the sexes resulted in women being unable to undertake tasks, due to their biological makeup (being weaker than men in manual labour roles, for example). Discussion about the socially prescribed characteristics of women is of benefit to overcome normative thinking. However, strong postmodern approaches negate the embodiment of women, and can (in extremis) negate the female human altogether (and the male, for that matter). This factor led feminist theorists to examine postmodern approaches to the sciences and to examine how different forms of research could be claimed as scientific. It sought to provide an alternative to feminist empiricism, which was deemed to be closed to the aspects of interpretivist epistemology (Code, 2014).

Subsequently, standpoint authors attempted to evolve standpoint theory to incorporate critical realist approaches. Caroline New (New, 1998, 2005) focusses on the similarities and differences between women and then between women and men, to explore new ways of approaching standpoint theory. She explores the materiality of women's oppression, as opposed to descriptive or discursive power, which she perceives as developing from strong social constructivist approaches to gender. She introduces the concept of 'ontological

¹⁵ The debate over the evolution of a feminist standpoint, is protracted, and this is merely a synopsis. Applicable to this research topic. For further detailed analysis, see Hekman (1977); Hartsock (1997); Hesse-Biber (2011); Olesen (2011) and Sprague (2016).

stratification' (ibid, 2005, p. 56) to explain the 'real' nature of sexual difference, which is clarified through the critical realist processes of stratification and emergence.

The work of New highlighted above forms the link between feminist standpoint theory and critical realism that is adopted within this research. Sprague (2016) argues that those working with a feminist standpoint epistemology must consider that knowledge forms from the situated circumstances that women are born into and immersed within. As such, the research adopts a soft interpretivist approach, as there is an underlying belief that knowledge is a 'social and historical product, and that 'facts come to us laden with theory' (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014, p. 7). The importance of aspects of meaning-making in social life is also intrinsic to this research. This links directly to the role of the researcher within this research, which is developed further in section 5.10 of this chapter.

Any standpoint is a position taken on an entity, and therefore feminist standpoint is a feminist position, but a position for what means? Harding (1983) made this clear when stating that "the concept of a standpoint rests on the fact that there are some perspectives on society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible" (p. 117). Dorothy Smith (as illustrated in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter) used standpoint to foreground the experiences of women; putting them and their life experiences at the 'centre stage' of the research (Smith, 1987, op.cit). Harding viewed feminist standpoint as a means of exploring power and knowledge, with the resulting requirement for feminist research to 'study up' in order to explore the conceptions of power for the needs of disadvantaged groups – researching how the powerful govern; their institutions, policies and practices - so as to facilitate opportunity for change for those facing disadvantage. Uncovering aspects of the 'real' relations between humans and the natural world, foregrounding the knowledge and experiences of women and exploring the political and social power relations in the process of policy formation and practice are all key aspects of this research and therefore provide the rationale for the epistemological choice.

5.5 Research Design

This section explores the architecture of the research - the basis upon which it formulated, the approach to the research, and the methods used to compile it.

5.5.1 Qualitative research approach

This research adopts a qualitative longitudinal research approach (McLeod and Thomson, 2009; Henderson *et al.*, 2012). The research is an exploration of human relationships, illustrating how a specific range of people, situated in a unique vicinity, in a bounded historical era, proceed to organise their activities to achieve their aims. In doing so, they must navigate their way through a variety of social institutions, organisations, cultural norms and practices which will both impact upon them, and in turn, upon which they will impact. Bryman and Bell (2007) define this tradition of qualitative research as Naturalism, as the research is looking to understand the social reality on the terms of those engaged within the social interactions under investigation. A qualitative approach is applied in this situation as opposed to a quantitative one, as historical documents and literature are analysed, interviews undertaken, and case studies developed.

This enables the compilation of a detailed narrative on the policies and practices developed over a relatively long timescale. This data (the literature and interviews and cases) could potentially be analysed quantitatively, so why specifically apply qualitative methods in these circumstances? This research is seeking both understandings of, and explanations for, what occurred, addressing how incidents happened and explaining (albeit fallibly) the processes and structures involved in women's enterprise policy development.

The research is also attempting to bring to the foreground the energy and efforts that women invested in this process. In doing so, this involves elements of interpretation and detailed focus, building what Geertz (1973) calls a 'thick description' of situations and circumstances. Critical researchers exploring issues of cultural diversity call for a range of methods in the ethnographic tradition (a 'bricolage approach) to be utilised for the benefit of developing a more detailed description (Kincheloe *et al.*, 2017). They view this approach to be similar to

'action research' which is seen in both entrepreneurship and policy studies, such as providing businesses with advice (Blisson and Nelson, 2003), working within state organisations (Ram *et al.*, 2015), or as a method for studying Advocacy Coalition Framework processes (Pierce *et al.*, 2019), which is also the case in this research. Such qualitative methods can be used to enable a more participatory and emancipatory form of research (Bhaskar, 2016). By adopting a qualitative approach, this research is seeking to contribute to this tradition within the field of female entrepreneurial and policy research; while expanding both the range of feminist standpoint and critical realist research in this field, as highlighted by Foss *et al.* (2019) in their review of thirty years of women's enterprise policy research.

As mentioned in section 5.3.2, this research adopts a soft interpretivist approach, in that it explores how individuals make sense of their world, within the mechanisms and structures in which they are bounded. Through the process of underlabouring, it provides the aspect of 'understanding the situation' that is required within the research, aiming to take account of events, rather than merely documenting them. Research aims to illustrate the structures, processes and mechanisms that are at the heart of the policymaking activities under investigation.

Reflexivity is an important feature of this qualitative research. When research sources involve people, researchers must interact with those people, which creates a form of human relationship. It is important to consider the researcher's relationship with those individuals and the potential power associations that can manifest themselves throughout the research period. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) define reflexivity as "attempting to make explicit the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process" (p. 118). The importance of what is termed as 'a holistic reflexive approach' in feminist research is also highlighted by Brooks, (2007) and Hesse-Biber and Piatelli (2011), who explore 'what can be known and how can we know it' (*ibid*, p. 559). Reflexivity relates to the researcher's positionality - knowing one's relationship to the object under research. Schön (2017) identifies a reflexive practitioner as someone who examines the assumptions, context and normative values of their work in order to be aware of the implications for these on the

outcomes of their work. Given the researcher's various roles within the West Midlands region over the period of study, this is a significant consideration in this research. A personal reflexive statement on this research can be found in Chapter 9 of this study.

Reflexivity is also of great importance in critical realist methodology. Schön's approach of reflexive practice is a core consideration for Margaret Archer in her theory of human agency (Archer, 2013). She views reflexivity as a power which humans possess; that which allows them to monitor their activity and navigate their personal and social identities – their sense of self in the world. She also views reflexivity as an important causal mediating power between the cultural and structural emergent powers that impact individuals' daily lives. She states that "It performs this mediatory role by virtue of the fact that we deliberate about ourselves in relation to the social situations that we confront, certainly fallibly, certainly incompletely and necessarily under our own descriptions because that is the only way we can know anything" (p. 23). This statement is an important factor to consider, as part of this research investigates the influence of structural powers on the policy decision-making process and the implications of decisions made by the various policy agents and practitioners through policy learning. These factors will be explored further in Chapter 8.

5.5.2 Axiology of the research

Axiology relates to the 'overriding goal of the approach' to the research (Lee and Lings, 2008). As highlighted within the previous section on the qualitative nature of this research, it aims to both explain and understand women's involvement in shaping enterprise-related policy within the West Midlands region of the UK over a twenty-three-year period. In doing so, it seeks an explanation of what has occurred through the development of three case studies, derived from archived material collated by the author over thirty years. These cases are then analysed using an existing policy analysis framework, namely the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2018). In order to obtain a deeper understanding of macro-level factors that may influence the policymaking process, the conceptual model is framed by two foci or two further ways of analysing what transpires over the years of study. These are the critical realist lens and the gender lens. Utilising both

critical realist ontology as a meta theory frame, and a feminist epistemological frame in concert in the research, enables different perspectives to be overlaid onto the policy process that is dissected using the ACF. The gendered lens will provide a gendered perspective on the actions of policy actors, while the critical realist approach will fallibly explore the real or the deep structural processes that interreact with the policy actors over time. This framing process enables the researcher to move beyond the data analysis resulting from the application of the ACF, to enable a deeper, nuanced understanding of structures and mechanisms that may be impacting upon the process of policy development and implementation.

This critical realist approach to research can be seen in literature in a range of disciplines, for example in the study of industrial marketing, nursing practice, and public sector evaluation (Easton, 2010; Parlour and McCormack, 2012; Pawson, 2013). Fletcher (2016) combines critical realist theory and method when examining the gendered effects of policy change on female farmers in Canada. Attempts have also been made in forging feminist standpoint and critical realism in the study of housing policy (Satsangi, 2013). Within the field of gender and entrepreneurship, there has been an increased interest in combining feminist and critical realist approaches from authors such as Julia Rouse, Sue Marlow and Angela Martinez Dy (Kitching and Rouse, 2017; Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018), challenging more traditional methodological approaches used by scholars in this field over a thirty-year period (Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016). One example of such an approach is the recent study of women digital entrepreneurs (Martinez Dy, Marlow, and Martin, 2017). However, it should be appreciated that the combination of such approaches is not without difficulty. Writing in the field of social welfare policy, Parr (2015) explains her dilemmas when seeking to reflect the centrality of participant's knowledge, with that of the 'expert researcher.' She focusses on the need to interpret participant's knowledge using critical realist theory to seek the real or deep structural issues impacting those research participants. As critical realist theory advocates 'judgmental rationality' (Archer, 2016), the researcher is required to make judgments over research participants' subjective experiences to relate these to theoretical concepts. Parr writes that rationalising these dilemmas involved obtaining clarity over the researcher's

stance in relation to the participants, ensuring transparency over the interpretations made by the researcher, and making full disclosure over the processes adopted to reach the research conclusions.

These factors are considered in the axiological aspects of this research, and their practical application is outlined in Section 5.9.4 within the ethical consideration of this research.

5.5.3 Research Methodology

As indicated in the conceptual framework diagram (Figure 2.1) the methodology of this research follows from the ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects of the research. Social Science methodology is defined as “the study of how a particular kind of investigation should proceed” (Schwandt and Gates, 2018). The methodology enables the process of realising the underpinning ontological and epistemological theories which the research design adopts. The axiology and methodology derive the precise method (or combination of methods) that will be adopted to investigate the matter under scrutiny.

In the case of this research, there is a longitudinal historical nature to that which is being analysed, i.e., the period between 1988 and 2011. It is, therefore, a form of qualitative longitudinal research (QLR), which, according to Thompson and McLeod, gained popularity from the turn of the millennium in the UK, particularly in the fields of social policy research, and policy evaluation (Thomson, Plumridge and Holland, 2003). Studies can be seen, for example, on family development over a series of years, or in policy planning (Corden and Millar, 2007; University of Leeds School of Social Policy, 2011). Longitudinal analysis has a history of use within entrepreneurship policy studies and those related to female entrepreneurship policy; for example Greene’s longitudinal analysis of business support to young people, Bridge and O’Neill’s work on enterprise and small business support, and more recently Foss *et al.*’s analysis of thirty years of women’s enterprise policy support (Greene, 2002; Bridge and O’Neill, 2013; Foss *et al.*, 2019). Nevertheless, the QLR method differs from these studies, as QLR is mainly case history-based, as opposed to the literature review, or statistical analyses methods used in these examples.

Qualitative longitudinal research utilises a variety of qualitative methods, all addressing temporal issues, i.e., the development of research over time (Thomson and McLeod, 2015). QLR also lends itself to a 'case history' method and a desire to highlighting the social history of research subjects, which has synergy with this research, as there is a desire to foreground the activities of the participants involved in the process of policy development within the region.

The research requires analysis to be undertaken in order to obtain a greater understanding of the processes which took place in the development of women's enterprise policy. Finally, given the critical realist and feminist approach to the research, a form of analysis is required to explain some of the underlying processes and mechanisms that emerge over the research period. Therefore, appropriate methods need to be adopted for the research to have validity as social science research (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

A mixture of qualitative methods is adopted in this research, utilising both primary and secondary data to provide the depth of analysis over a long timescale. The mixture of qualitative methods indicates a pluralist approach to this social world research. Schwandt (2001) explains that pluralist methodological approaches enable explanatory (naturalistic) and interpretive (antinaturalistic) approaches to be compatible within a research study because "each illuminates a different aspect of human *action* necessary for complete understanding" (p. 196, [author's definition]). While not being so conclusive as to undertake complete understanding within this research, there is an attempt to reach a 'deep' understanding, which can be fallible, open to criticism, and to further interpretation. Using a small number of qualitative methods enables the complexity of the processes under investigation to be dissected within the research scope: or, as Lee and Lings (2008) more simply explain: "some methods are best at getting different types of information which is needed to answer different types of questions" (p. 379 [sic]).

There is a long history of the use of this approach in management and business research. For example, in 1977, Rosabeth Moss Kanter explored the sex roles of employees in a large

organisation in the USA (Kanter, 1977). In the development of the case study that informed her book, she used a complex set of (predominantly qualitative) methods over five years. Doing this enabled her to obtain different perspectives on organisational issues derived from content analysis, interviews, and participant observations. In female entrepreneurship research, mixed methods research has utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods within the same research (for example, in Arshed,(2012); and Scott *et al.*, (2012)).

5.6 Research Methods

Details of the methods adopted in this study and the rationale for using them are as follows.

5.6.1 Case study development

This research seeks to explore, explain, and gain a greater understanding of a process over time. In these circumstances, the development of case studies facilitates this, particularly as the historical nature of the research means that it could be difficult to contact individuals to gain information from them through other methods. The use of archived policy documentation over that period, together with associated data sources, such as public documentation, books, video and websites, provides a wealth of data upon which to develop cases for analysis.

Case studies, according to Yin (2004), 'investigate real-life events in their natural setting' (p. xii), so this method enabled an effective way of providing insight into the policy process. The cases are developed for a variety of purposes – to illustrate and inform, to educate, and also as a tool for theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Yin (*ibid*) states a two-part definition of a case study method – the first part is the scope of the case study, and the second defines the features of the method. For the scope, Yin illustrates the case study as an empirical enquiry into an issue or concern, within its 'real-world context'. As for the relevant features of a case, he identifies that a case relies upon multiple sources of evidence, with data being brought together in a way as to reflect the ontological and epistemological aspects of the research. As a result, the cases represent 'the object of study.' (Yin, 2014, p. 14).

Creswell and Poth (2017) identify that, as the object of study, cases should be described and analysed. In the circumstances of this research, multiple cases are associated. They also state that a case should be 'bounded' - that is, defined within certain parameters. Within this research, the cases are timebound, over various decades. Stake (2005) classifies the typology of the cases used within this research as 'instrumental cases'; they are instrumental to this research because the series of cases are developed to provide a detailed, rich picture or 'thick description' of a situation, thus providing a situational analysis of the events and activities that occurred.

The key to generating descriptions in these cases is based on case themes – in this research, the themes are the process and practice analysis. Within this research, the cases provide analysis of the chronological picture of the various actors that were involved in the process and the circumstances to which they contributed. The cases are bounded with intent, as the intention is to both focus on the actors involved and the activities that they pursue. The research also adopts a collective case study method, where the individual cases develop into an overall longitudinal view. This builds a cumulative picture over time of the policy processes, procedures and measures, which then enables 'cross-case analysis,' using the Advocacy Coalition Framework as the analysis tool.

It is important to note that elements of interpretation are required when developing case material. Haverland and Yanow (2012) discuss case-methodology and emphasise that Yin's approach (ibid) to case study analysis is realist in approach and is not compatible with interpretive methodology. While this research utilises some aspects of interpretation in the development of the cases, its ontological and epistemological origins are in realist analysis, and therefore this is a recognised method to use within the body of this research.

The case study approach is regularly adopted in realist public policy research. Hecl (1972) explores its use in detail, noting its value in understanding the public policy process. More recently, Cairney uses case analysis in the examinations of public policy on 'fracking' in the

UK (Ingold, Fischer and Cairney, 2017), and Weible identifies hundreds of case studies used in the analysis of Advocacy Coalitions (Weible *et al.*, 2019). Case study analysis can also be found in critical realist literature, for example, in organisational analysis (Edwards, O' Mahoney, and Vincent, 2014) and female entrepreneurship policy research (Orser and Riding, 2006; O'Carroll and Millne, 2010; Henry *et al.*, 2017).

5.6.2 Interviews

In order to supplement the archived documents and textual data used to compile the case studies, interviews were undertaken. Interviews are a technique adopted in a wide range of qualitative studies (Schwandt, 2001). They can form the basis of research data or can be used to supplement other forms of data, enabling clarification on matters arising from textual analysis. They can also be used to obtain supplementary information on research questions. Bryman and Bell (2007) indicate a range of interview typologies that can be conducted; the commonality amongst them all is that they involve interaction between the researcher and the respondent (be it face-to-face, or through communication technologies). Interviews are, therefore, a form of human interaction and are subsequently open to interpretation. Nevertheless, if this interpretation is undertaken within the remit of the theoretical concepts of the study, this is a valid method of obtaining data (Sprague, 2016). Interviews can be adopted in qualitative research where the researcher wishes to give a 'voice' to the respondent, in what is known as 'participatory' research methods (Maxwell, 2012).

These methods are often found in policy and development research, where researchers are seeking views on policy activity (Mayoux and Johnson, 2007). Those researching from a feminist perspective have historically used interviews for this purpose. Authors exploring feminist knowledge and ethnographic methodology, including Dorothy Smith and Beverley Skeggs and more recent linguistic scholars such as Kate Harrington, Sara Mills, and Louise Mullany, all develop research activity based upon primary interviews. (Smith, 1987; Skeggs, 1994; Harrington *et al.*, 2008; Mills and Mullany, 2011). Interviews are also important, from a critical realist perspective, in providing the opportunity for 'experience' to be incorporated into analysis. The testing of theory and practice in everyday life is a key application for

critical realist theory and drawing upon interviews provides the opportunity for experience of the researcher and respondent to be a valid data source. On a practical note, interviews are also well suited to 'elite or high status' respondents, who may have concerns over answering questions in a group setting (Lee and Lings, 2008), which applies to some interview respondents within this study.

5.6.3 Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) analysis

A further method adopted for case analysis within this research is a framework analysis – namely the Advocacy Coalition Framework model of policy analysis. The application of this framework as a method for analysing the cases is shown in detail in Chapter 7 of the research, so the purpose of this section is to provide information on both the rationale for this choice of model and the method of its use.

When undertaking critical realist research, Bhaskar posits the use of the DREI(C) model of scientific discovery (Bhaskar, 2016). DREI(C) is an acronym, which stands for the following activity:

D – Description of patterns of events or phenomena

R – Retrodution – imagining the potential mechanisms, which if real would account for phenomena.

E – Elimination (of a variety of potential mechanisms imagined and investigated through retrodution)

I – Identification of the most efficacious generative mechanisms relevant in the specific circumstance.

(C) – Iterative correction of earlier findings as a result of the identification.

It is posited that throughout the analysis of this research, acknowledgement is given to this model for the higher-level (metalevel) orientation, or 'critical framing' of the research (as

illustrated in the CR 'frame' in Figure 5.3). The ACF model provides a tool specific to the analysis of the policy process, thus making the 'DREI' aspects of policy analysis more explicit to the reader. The incorporation of the ACF model within this research thus illustrates the appropriateness of the methodological pluralist approach espoused within critical realist theory. The ACF model, in this research, enables the level of granular detail of the policy process to be exposed, as a part of the underlabouring to make visible the systems and generative processes within the cases.

The ACF model was created by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith in the USA in the early 1980s after a long gestation period in the previous decade. It has subsequently been developed and amended in use, and therefore now has a long pedigree of research application (Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2018). According to Cairney (2012), it developed in response to unanswered questions in existing policy analysis theory. The model is built on the philosophy of science and the work of Thomas Kuhn (1962) and also Imré Lakatos and Musgrave (1970). From Kuhn, the model adopts the idea that scientific theories consist of a 'hardcore' of unchanging, accepted persistent propositions, surrounded by a 'protective belt' of more supplementary hypotheses that can be amended, or rejected, if found to be false. These factors are represented in the model by 'relatively stable parameters' that in effect 'anchor' the policy issue, such as cultural values and social structures. From Lakoff, the model utilises his amendment to Popper's theory of falsifiability – the idea of 'progressive problem shift'.

Scientific adjustments are made to theory based on new empirical approaches, therefore the theory underlying the model is open to expansion. These factors are represented, by 'external subsystem events', such as socioeconomic conditions, legislative factors and technology (Weible, Sabatier and McQueen, 2009), and are detailed overleaf.

For these reasons, the model is complex (by taking account of iterative revisions in use), but it is well used and based on adaptable theory. Initially, it was mainly applied in the USA but now has a worldwide application (Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, 2018).

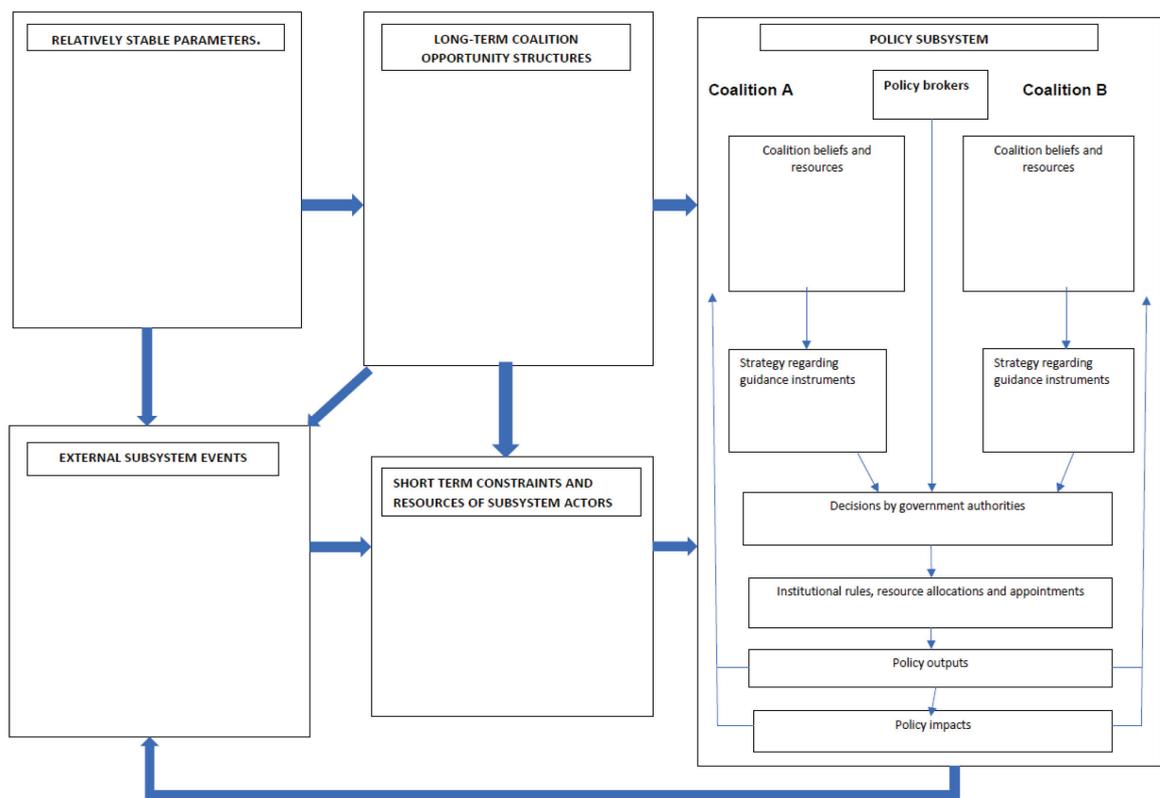
The scope of the framework is that of policy coalitions, policy learning, and policy change (Birkland, 2016). The model has a focus on the policy subsystem, that is impacted upon by iterative change, and takes a long-term perspective on the policy process. It also foregrounds the groups that coalesce around the policy issue and demonstrates the process by which these influence that policy. Some of the influence can result from 'policy-orientated learning' (Sabatier, 1988), a process whereby alterations to policy objectives can occur as a result of learning or new information that enters the system¹⁶.

5.6.4 ACF as a practical analysis method.

To show how the ACF is used for the case analysis, it is necessary to explain the various aspects of the model. What follows is merely an outline of the model; more precise detail is given in the analysis section, where the application of the process can be viewed in practice.

A diagram of the model itself is shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: The Advocacy Coalition Framework



Source: (Adapted from Cairney, 2012, p. 202).

¹⁶ This process is extensively investigated by Dunlop and Radaelli (2013).

The rectangular box to the right of the diagram indicates the policy sub-system, where coalitions are identified, with their shared beliefs and resources. The coalitions use 'beliefs, resources and strategies' to influence the subsystem (policy outputs and impacts) which, in turn, then feedback into the subsystem, but can also influence the external affairs that are indicated by the 'external subsystem events' box on the bottom left of the model.

On the top right of the model is a box entitled 'Relatively stable parameters. This box represents a range of variable factors that may impact upon subsystem affairs. External factors include the stability (or otherwise) of constitutional structures and systems that impact the policy subsystem (Weible and Sabatier, 2017).

The box below this relates to 'External subsystem events' (as briefly mentioned previously). These 'events' are factors primarily relating to so-called PESTLE (political, economic societal, technological, legal and environmental) factors (Aguilar, 1967) *external* to the policy subsystem, which may impact to varying degrees upon that system. So, for example, a change of government in a country could influence policy alteration, based upon the political agenda within an election manifesto.

The box entitled 'Long term opportunity structures' in the upper middle of the framework, identifies the nature of the structures that enable policy opportunities to be expedited. These include:

- The 'openness' of society in its acceptance of the policy being furthered,
- The level of 'consensus' needed to mobilise the policy change, and;
- The 'overlapping social cleavage,' or in other words, the coming together of different voting public's views on the specific issues (which links with the first point on 'openness' above). Those on the 'right,' 'centre,' and 'left' of the political spectrum having overlaid positive views on the policy issue under consideration.

This model helps us to explain periods of policy stability over time, together with periods of major policy transformation. It distinguishes between minor and major policy change; the

framework uses an approach that equates policy changes with changes in belief systems, which can then be “conceptualised and measured hierarchically” (Weible and Sabatier, 2017, p. 145).

What makes this analysis method relevant to this study is that the subsystems within the model can be impacted upon by any actors – not just the more traditional array of policy actors (such as local government committees, national government agencies or interest groups). The framework ideas are underpinned by the role of individuals and not institutions; therefore, this is not a model of institutional analysis. Individuals form ‘coalitions’ with beliefs, behaviour, and learning associated with them (metaphorically – it is the individuals within the coalition who learn and hold beliefs). This concept is that of ‘methodological individualism’: it incorporates the idea that contextual factors are important in people’s behaviour, e.g., nature of institutions, conflict situations, or oppositional threats.

All of these factors are taken into consideration in the application of this model as a method of analysis. Details from the cases are used to develop individual framework models for each case. The framework is then used to synthesise the whole policy process, in order to analyse it over time.

5.7 Data Collection

Data collection for this research was undertaken in several ways. These are detailed below:

5.7.1 Archival retrieval.

In order to develop a range of case studies for analysis of the policy process, it was necessary to research information that would form the basis of the chronological cases. Given the longitudinal timescale period of study, the initial part of the process involved cumulating personally archived material on the process, from over that period. The range of data sources is illustrated in table 5.1 below, with a random selection of examples provided in Appendix 2.

The mass of data was manually collated into folders and files, according to the time-period, initially into decades and then subdivided into years. They were not digitally scanned but remained as 'hard-copies' of documents but in date and subject order. For example, when compiling documentary data for case study one, archived meeting minutes, annual reports, and videotapes were collated to compile both the trajectory and activity over that time. Together with personal archive documents, data was sought from individuals who were involved in the process over the years. Some documents were passed to the researcher, while others were photocopied and returned or photographed.

In total, over 2500 historical documents alone were analysed over two years to provide detail for the compilation of the three cases. The material was then supplemented with archive searches online, such as the Office for National Statistics, Hansard, and The UK National Archives.

A review of the literature was included within the case study data to provide references for data sources that detailed or collaborated with the archived documents under review. A range of over 450 academic articles and documents were reviewed in this regard and classified into typologies utilising the reference management software 'Mendeley'.

Not all the documents are quoted within the cases; some were necessary to provide contextual information, or to validate the existing detail. This enabled different perspectives on data, through what Schatzman and Strauss (1973) term selective sampling.

5.7.2 Supplementary data gained for the case studies

Archived case data was supplemented by two additional forms of information – interview and personal data. These are detailed below.

5.7.2.1 Interviews

A semi-structured interview took place with a senior member of the policymaking team at the time of the development of 'the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise.' The interview took place over two hours and enabled the researcher to verify the timelines, key actors, and

the various groups involved in the process at a national level. This interview was transcribed, approved by the interviewee for use in the study and it can be found in Appendix 3. The content of the interview was used to supplement the case study data.

Table 5.1 Range of documentary materials used as data for cases

| Data source | Examples | Purpose of data |
|---|--|--|
| Public domain data | Annual reports, published reports, organisational pamphlets, organisational newsletters, website data, video, academic articles, conference proceedings. Office for National Statistics data UK National Archive data. | Archival records |
| Internal organisational data related to strategic and policy process. | Internal meeting minutes, internal reports, internal memos. | Archival records |
| Interview material | Interview transcripts. | Supplement and verify archival records. |
| Personal data related to the research topic. | Diaries, photographs, journals | Participant observation Auto-ethnographic material. |
| Personal data related to the research process. | Personal research journal and diary | Reflexive practice |

Interviews also took place with two groups of women. One was a group of existing businesswomen based in Scotland, in February 2018. The second interview was with a mixed- gender class of current business students in the West Midlands in April 2018. The purpose of these interviews was to discuss issues related to the research and to obtain their awareness of policymaking processes, particularly concerning female entrepreneurship.

These interviews enabled the researcher to contextualise the research and acted as a reflexive mechanism for considering the research as someone new to the topic might perceive it. The members of both groups were either running businesses or were studying enterprise and had a range of views on the topic. An example of the Scottish group interview can also be viewed in Appendix 3.

5.7.2.2 Personal data

The researcher's involvement in the process under investigation throughout the study period resulted in the accumulation of archived policy data, and also a range of personal historical records of activity. Items such as video, photographs, diaries, journals, awards, and other artefacts were available for study.

Some emails of a personal nature were also available, although social media communication was not relevant, as it was not prevalent in use until the latter stages of the period under investigation.

The researcher, therefore, developed procedures for collecting extensive data from multiple sources, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2017).

5.7.2.3 Compiling the cases

The cases were compiled using the documentary data illustrated in the previous section. They were organised chronologically over three decades (the 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s) although the cases do not cover the whole of these periods. The periods are chosen to illustrate the commencement of activity (the development of an organisation) and how the effects of that initiation manifested in future policy initiatives.

The cases aim to provide rich information for further analysis using the Advocacy Coalition Framework, overlaid with the frames of gender and critical realism, as identified in the analytical framework. This approach to qualitative analysis is making sense of what has been collected, based on personal experience, the experiences of others who were a part of the process, and the documentary data. This is a process that the interpretive policy analyst Yanow refers to as sense-making (Yanow, 1996). For Yanow, sense-making is always going on as a practitioner attempting to make sense of what is happening and unfolding (or happened and unfolded) in the field. This is also apparent when developing the cases. The sense is made when writing the cases so that the thinking 'comes together', but the 'data gathering' and the 'sensemaking' are not entirely partitioned. Yanow adopts the term 'interwoven' to explore the relationship between the two.

In developing the cases, the researcher is conveying the development of what occurred during the period under study and attempting to convey the complexity of it. The precise means of case development involved a retroductive method. This entailed working within, between, and outwith the data: moving from documentary material, literature, texts, and searches and then back to the data to search for information that both synthesises and enlightens the 'thick description' under review. To a degree, the development relies on the researcher's intrinsic understanding of the culture and wider environment in which the activity took place.

5.8 Research validity and reliability of the data

Validity and reliability are crucial factors of any research. Factors such as the rigour of the methods, the value, and the trustworthiness of the data are just some of the factors considered when undertaken research. However, each of these terms is open to interpretation; for example, to whom should the research have value? When addressing knowledge about the epistemology of race, Alcoff (2007) asserts that in addressing value, we always rely on our background assumptions and that these assumptions are the product of our culture and social statements. She, therefore, posits that science cannot be value-neutral (Sprague, 2016). Because of this, it is important to be transparent over the specific meaning of the terms used about this research. The following section explains how these matters are addressed in this study.

5.8.1 The validity of the research

The validity of the research relates to the integrity of the conclusions of the research. There are many debates over this term, with many forms of validity identified (Lee and Lings, 2008). One approach is that of internal validity (whether theoretical ideas match up with the data) supported by systematic procedural methodologies. This research followed suggested systematic procedures for the analysis of data, as suggested by Maxwell (2012), Yin (2014), and Sprague (2016) for realist research, and specifically Jenkins-Smith *et al.* (2018) for the Advocacy Coalition Framework analysis. For example, the cases were developed systematically using Yin's method for case construction, and the framework analysis was

highly detailed, following the details of the Framework. Such methods can be seen in use in other published research within the fields of environmental, health, and entrepreneurship policy analysis (Arshed, 2012; Ingold, Fischer and Cairney, 2017; Brooks, 2018).

However, Maxwell (2012) argues that validity is not merely derived from the use of methods alone. Rather, in realist research, he posits that aspects of validity are context specific. He states that: “Validity thus pertains to the account or conclusions reached by using a

particular method, in a particular context for a particular purpose, not to the method itself” (ibid, p130). This view is also supported by Guba and Lincoln (1994) when exploring the historically situated nature of critical qualitative research. For Guba and Lincoln, the issues in qualitative research rest upon the ‘trustworthiness’ of data. The criterion of trustworthiness is subdivided into credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1986), with a range of techniques for establishing each criteria. The means by which these are achieved in this research complement the systematic data analysis methods described above; thus, contributing to the research validity.

5.8.1.1 Credibility

The credibility of the research relates to the confidence in the data – do the findings result from it? This research has undertaken prolonged engagement with the data; the work has taken many years to complete. The observations on the topic have been developed over 25 years as a senior practitioner in the field, supported by documentary evidence. Points within the cases were cross-checked with other process participants via interview, to ensure consistency. The research was also discussed with independent third parties, in a ‘peer debriefing’ technique (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to accommodate different perspectives on the cases. Doing so also aided the reflexivity process for the researcher.

5.8.1.2 Transferability

The research case method involved the development of a thick description of the activities that occurred (Geertz, 1973), to ensure as detailed an account as possible. The rich account of what occurred provides the person making judgments on the case with a vast range of data on which to analyse the knowledge. While these cases are historically and culturally situated, they could, for example, be used to compare and contrast with other policy-based case studies in different periods or other cultures, and therefore the level of detail in the cases would enable the transferability of this information to be assessed.

This case approach, utilising a thick descriptive technique, has been adopted in various policy studies and has been written about as an appropriate method of use for validity. Examples include critical realist studies of the care sector (Lipscomb, 2009), a case study of a policy worker in sustainable development in Holland (Loeber, 2010), and in Qualitative Longitudinal Research studies previously mentioned (for example McLeod and Thomson, 2009). The literature on the appropriateness of this technique to assess validity includes Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) and Donmoyer (2012) and a feminist perspective on policy analysis from Fonow and Cook (2005).

5.8.1.3 Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (op.cit) posit the idea of a form of external auditing for detailed research records, as a means of testing the dependability of the research methods. This study has not specifically adopted that approach; rather, there has been an intensive collaboration with the research supervision team on the detail of this research process. Weekly meetings were held in the latter stages of the study period, with feedback provided on the content and process of the research, with documentary evidence provided at those meetings. Details of the cases were also discussed with other academic staff at a variety of universities, to elicit feedback on the content and process of case development. Additionally, sections of the study were deliberated upon with other policy practitioners involved in the policy process across the region at the time, to verify case facts.

5.8.1.4 Confirmability

This research has applied several techniques to illustrate that the researcher has acted authentically in the development of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Given the close nature of the researcher to the topic under investigation, it is necessary to take extra care to be as objective as possible within a situated study. This is achieved by being highly reflexive throughout the process (for further details, see the section on reflexivity in Chapter 9).

Aspects of triangulation of data have also taken place, by clarifying points with other member involved within the policy process and during the interviews. Presentation of parts of the research at two research conferences (Diana International Conferences, 2014 in Stockholm, Sweden and 2019 in Boston, USA) also led to the sharing of research values and theoretical frameworks in women's enterprise policy workshops at the events. This enabled peer review and feedback on the topics, which contributed to the theoretical and methodological development of the research. It also enabled the context of the research to be validated within a forum of global specialist scholars.

All the techniques illustrated above - both individually and in combination - have contributed to the validity of the research, and the reliability of the data.

5.9 Data analysis process

This section provides more details of the research strategy, namely the process through which data was analysed. This refers to the conceptual framework of the research and the strategies for data organisation. It also specifies the analysis approach on which the cases integrate analysis themes and contextual information: The conceptual framework for analysis is shown in Figure 5.3. The framework was used as a guide for the methods adopted. These are detailed as three separate phases in the following:

5.9.1 Phase 1. Assembling the documentary data.

The range of documents (identified in the methods section) was assembled to provide a basis for the cases. Holistic cases, i.e., entire cases (Yin, 2014), were developed for further analysis using the Advocacy Coalition Framework.

5.9.2 Phase 2: Compiling the cases.

The compilation of the cases necessitated an examination of the chronology of events that occurred. It is then necessary to focus on a few key issues to make the case manageable to use while remaining aware of bringing the participants activities and actions to the foreground and developing the thick description, using the process of retroduction. It is also important to draft the cases with the reader in mind, as technical details may be difficult to grasp.

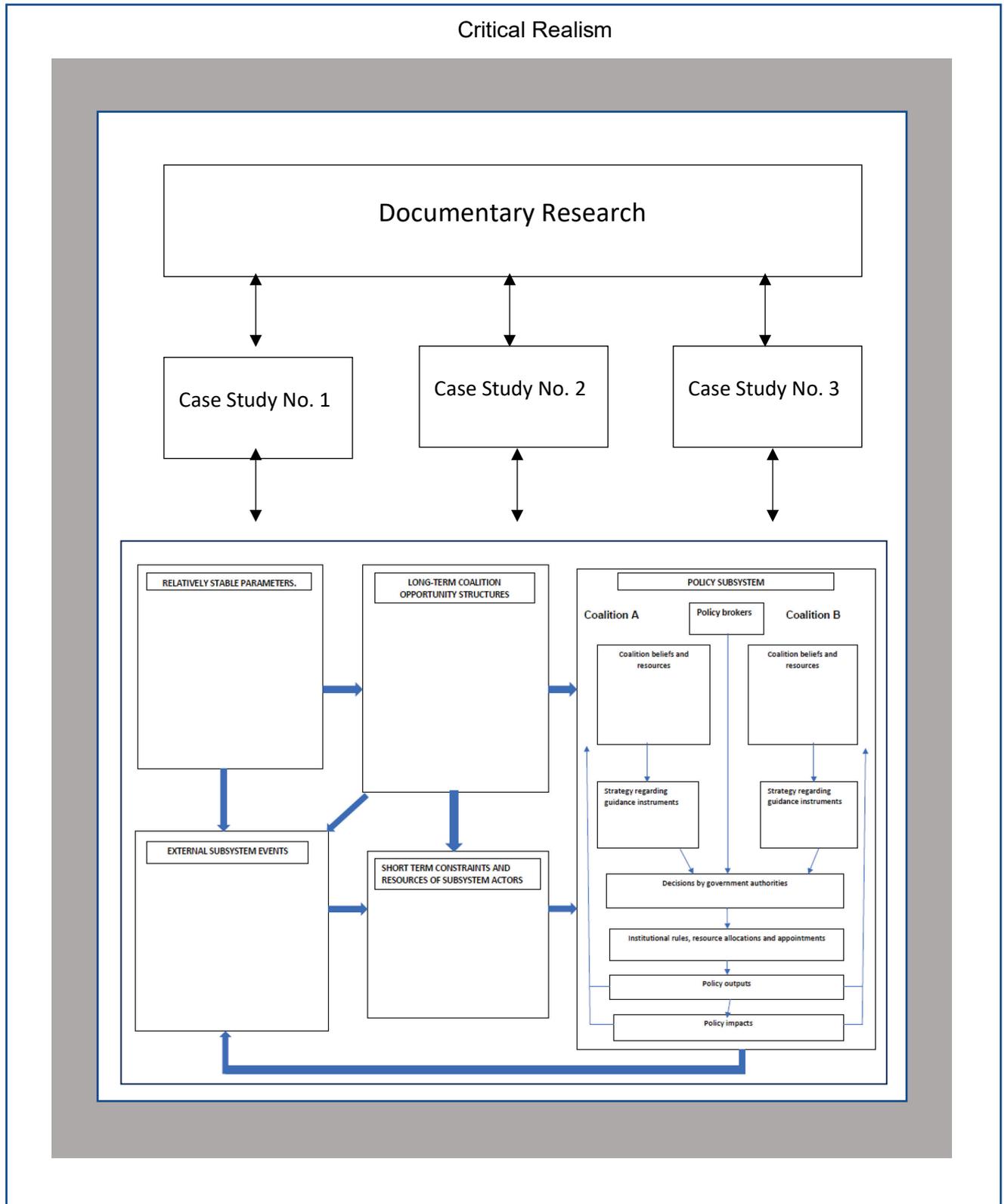
When developing the cases, the process identified by Yin (ibid) was applied. An introduction to the cases is given to familiarise the reader with the central features of the case. An extensive narrative description of each of the cases and their context is provided, including historical, organisational information important for understanding the case. Further information is drawn from additional data sources.

This is then integrated with the researcher's interpretations of the issues, supported by corroboration from third parties, interviewed as part of the research. Multiple cases are developed in this research. Therefore, this process is replicated three times throughout case development. This enables case material to be compiled and subsequently analysed using the ACF.

The activity indicated in the figure involves a case development process of 'systematic combining' (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). This is a retroductive process of moving between the documentary evidence and relating this to the policy process theory and is an iterative process of case development. A diagram of the systematic combining model is illustrated in Figure 5.4.

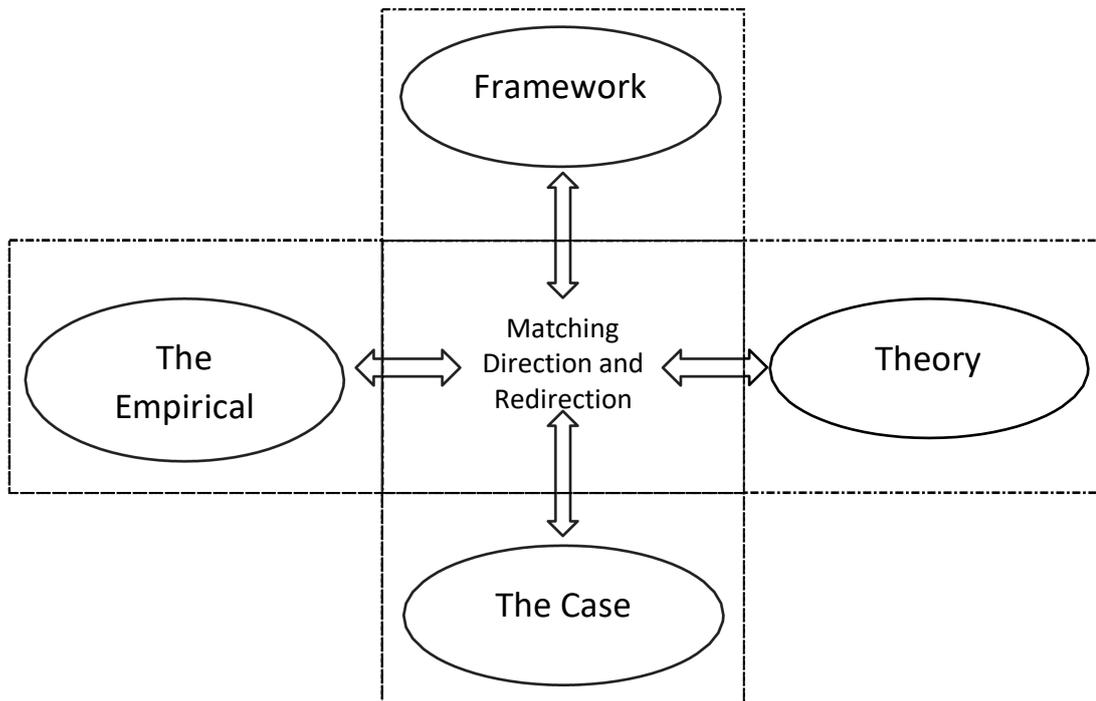
The method illustrates how the researcher moves between the documentary evidence (the empirical) and the conceptual framework (i.e. the ACF and the gender and critical realist frames). This involves engagement with the theory and repeatedly moving in a recursive way to engage with the empirical data, the theory, and the framework.

Figure 5.3: Conceptual framework for data analysis



Source: Author's own.

Figure 5.4: Systematic combining (retroductive case method).



Source: Adapted from Dubois and Gadde (2002), p. 555.

5.9.3 Phase 3. Case analysis.

The case studies were analysed systematically, according to methods identified by Yin, and by Stake (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). These are detailed below:

5.9.3.1 Within-case analysis

The approach adopted was to compile the cases, with a detailed description of each case, and identify themes within the case. This is known as 'within-case' analysis (Yin, *ibid*). This analysis explores the key themes in that decade of study and identifies key aspects of the policy process. Following this, a summary of key issues is provided, so that they can be supported by a thematic analysis across the cases (a 'cross-case analysis').

5.9.3.2 Cross case analysis.

Once the case studies were developed, the analyses at the end of each case were subsequently used to provide data for the next stage of analysis. This was using the

Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). A complete findings section is then developed, giving an overall explanation of the findings, as derived from the three cases. This involves the application of the conceptual framework, development of models of the ACF process, and details of findings in written form. This process is illustrated in Figure 5.2, and the findings can be viewed in Chapter 8.

5.9.4. Ethical aspects of the research.

Undertaking social research involves forms of interaction between the researcher and the 'something' or 'somethings' being researched, which results in a formal relationship of study between the two. All such forms of research will, therefore, have an aspect of ethical or moral value attached to that relationship – researchers bring themselves to the research process and can bring their values with them. Ethical considerations in research include such matters as power relations, social values, and moral behaviour in the conduct of the research process (Neuman, 2006).

Such matters have an impact on the whole research process, from developing research proposals to the drafting of the research and the dissemination of its content.

Processes related to ethics are now routinely conducted within formal research, and those conducting research should follow set standards and procedures. This research obtained ethical approval from an academic research institution, following a detailed approval process. A copy of the approval can be found in Appendix 4.

In gaining approval, the research application considered aspects of a research protocol, how the research would be conducted, and with whom – the relationship to those involved in the research and how this would be managed. Issues of data protection were considered.

Having worked as a data controller in a large organisation, the researcher was aware of the requirements of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) for confidentiality, storage, retrieval, and management of study data. These were all addressed through the research process, with data stored securely.

Risk management with participants was identified and managed. Matters such as the identification of research participants, gaining consent for participation, and the vulnerability of participants were addressed. Consent forms were issued to all participants involved in interviews, and all respondents were provided with details of the research before their involvement.

Ethical matters, however, go wider than following systems and regulations. The conduct of the research is increasingly important, particularly to those involved in critical research. Considerations over social and environmental impacts are also of concern. In qualitative studies, research participant protection is important to consider, as, depending on the type of research conducted, the researcher interacts with people, cultures, and societies. There are many examples of social research studies which have been ethically controversial, as they have been deceptive, or caused physical or mental harm to the wellbeing of participants (Milgram, 1963; Brady and Logsdon, 1988).

The conduct of the researcher towards those researched was at the forefront of this study. It was a part of the ethical consideration of the research but additionally formed part of the researcher's approach to the entire operation, because feminist critical research advocates deep questioning of the entire rationale for conducting research (Mills and Mullany, 2011; Olesen, 2011; Sprague, 2016).

The next section links the transactional nature of the ethical considerations of this research to the transformation potential of putting axiological considerations at the heart of the research process.

5.10 The role of the researcher: An Engaged-Activist entrepreneurship scholarship approach.

The role of the researcher within this research is one of 'Engaged Activist entrepreneurship scholarship' (Rouse and Woolnough, 2018, p. 443). From a critical realist perspective, Rouse and Woolnough challenge being merely engaged in research and argue that a view

on critical realist research is that it can be viewed as a theory of change or emancipation; hence engaged-activist scholarship can have a transformative perspective and therefore be used to enable change in social systems. Being in a position of social privilege as a researcher can be used to support those who are marginalised; and enable their voices to be heard and assist in overcoming their challenges. They provide examples of self-employed homeworkers who may be marginalised, without access to traditional forms of support (such as trade unions or worker federations) and highlighting how they can be better supported through policy and other means. This approach can be seen in some entrepreneurial studies, particularly in the fields of action research (Ram *et al.*, 2012, 2015; Carter *et al.*, 2015) and evaluation (Mole *et al.*, 2011; Kitching, Hart, and Wilson, 2015). It is also used in other disciplines, such as education (Davis, Kliewer, and Nicolaidis, 2017) and health services (Parlour and McCormack, 2012; Smirthwaite and Swahnberg, 2016), working in the field of critical social policy. These examples illustrate that critical realism as a theory of change can be explored through underlabouring, using Bhaskar's stratified ontology and laminated systems and the morphological cycles of Margaret Archer.

This links to the policy learning approach of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The ACF also provides a tool for examining aspects of layers of the empirical and actual levels within laminated systems, which can then be used to effect policy learning. This learning can, if taking an engaged activist approach, be used to effect change in policy and practice. A further dimension of the research approach is that of feminism. Adopting a standpoint epistemology adds to the critical aspect of the engaged-active scholarship because it heightens the importance of structural issues such as power and influence within the research.

In other words, who is conducting the research, for what purpose, and to whose benefit? Within the field of sociology, Dorothy Smith argues for a 'feminist sociology' that recognises that women have a specific and situated relationship to labour, due to their socially ascribed role as 'care-givers' within traditional family structures. Their standpoint on the world of work differs from that of men, as a result of what she terms bifurcation (Smith, 1987). By this,

Smith contends that men are free to create knowledge about the world, as their needs are taken care of by those caregivers, namely women. According to Smith, men are also free to give little concern to their embodiment and are therefore often disregarding of experiences of women; as a result, there is a split between that which is deemed as 'official knowledge' in sociology (created predominantly by men) and practical existence. That split is what she terms 'bifurcation.' Due to their practical experience as 'care-givers', Smith argues that women (and ipso facto female researchers) are more likely to fluctuate between the conceptual and practical worlds (in the case of critical realism, the ontological structures of society), by the nature of their being actively situated in, and engaged with both.

Smith offers standpoint as a research practice, providing insight into how 'the everyday world' can be viewed as a situation for research. Since her early work in the mid-1980s, Smith has been joined by feminists in other disciplines, seeking to provide feminist, engaged, and activist research. For example, Mills and Mullany (2011) explore the relevance of critical and action-centred research when exploring language and gender research, challenging gender-based norms, and how this can affect the perception of women. They term advocacy research as 'standpoint research,' which has a direct correlation to the form of research undertaken in this study. More recently, Sprague, (2016) emphasises the continued relevance of feminist standpoint to a methodological application, and specifically how this can be used when researching qualitative data sets.

This critical advocacy approach to female entrepreneurship policy and practise is now gaining greater traction through the work of such authors as Rouse, Martinez Dy, and Marlow.

Through her engaged, active entrepreneurial scholarship practice, Rouse is dynamically creating a body of research into the effects of pregnancy on women working in SME's (Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018) whilst Martinez Dy and Marlow are exploring intersectionality, critical realism and entrepreneurship in varying entrepreneurial contexts (Martinez Dy and Marlow, 2017; Martinez Dy, Marlow and Martin, 2017), while also

encouraging others to look beyond the 'traditional' approaches to the study of women in enterprise (Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018).

The importance of the standpoint of this research is that it focuses upon engagement with women's lived experiences of influencing policy and practice in support of women in business in the region. The active engagement of the researcher in the process is key to the situated nature of the research. This is emphasised by Bhaskar, who views the engagement of the researcher as an inclusive part of research. The experience of the researcher has a part to play in social research. Being an engaged activist entrepreneurship scholar draws upon the theory and practice described by Bhaskar, in order to provide insight into the situated practices of women over the decades. In this research, it is their quest to develop entrepreneurial feminist practices; namely creating relevant forms of support for their businesses, and those of other women in the region.

SECTION 2: CASE DATA CONCERNING WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE POLICY AND PRACTICE OVER THREE DECADES IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDIES – WOMEN ARE CREATING CHANGE IN REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

6.1 Introduction to this chapter.

The following chapter contains three chronological case studies that form the trajectory of specific women's participation in the economic development of the West Midlands region of England between the periods of the late Nineteen Eighties and Two Thousand and Ten. The origins of the organisations which were involved are outlined, and the development of their approach to the influence of mainstream regional policy and practice is presented. The cases also briefly discuss the economic and political antecedents to the positions that women faced at that time (and that are contextualised previously in Chapter 3). The purpose of these cases is to:

- a. highlight the women's agentic activity in shaping policy and practice for women's enterprise development, and
- b. provide a historical overview of their practice, which form the basis of detailed analysis using the Advocacy Coalition Framework.

Therefore, the case studies will be presented, followed by an initially brief analytical summary, which will subsequently be expanded upon in the analysis chapter of the thesis (Chapter 7). As detailed in the methodological section, the cases draw from both primary and secondary data sources.

The three case studies which follow provide descriptions of periods in time in a region of the United Kingdom. They illustrate situated examples of individual women - and groups of women - coalescing around emancipatory objectives; namely to gain greater participation and influence in the 'business of doing business'; the circumstances that they encountered, their approaches to tackling systemic societal challenges and their attempts at creating spaces for women to explore their economic and personal potential (O'Carroll and Millne, 2010).

Case one covers broadly the mid to late Nineteen Eighties providing contextual background and antecedents for the relevant policy and practices in the West Midlands in the following decades. Case two describes developments in those policies and practices as a result of two changes in the national government, and their impact upon the regional organisation. Case three builds upon the previous two cases and contains an account of direct and significant interventions by women in the enterprise policy development of the region.

6.2 Case One. The formation of organisations – antecedents for women’s enterprise policy development in the West Midlands.

6.2.1 The concept

As a part of the author’s undergraduate study on ‘Women in the Labour Market’ she was introduced to the work of academics Professor Angela Coyle and Jane Skinner – authors of ‘Women and Work – Positive Action for Change (Coyle & Skinner, 1988). Together Coyle and Skinner developed a project at Aston University Business School, Birmingham, in 1984 (op cit, p ix) entitled the ‘Women and Work Programme’. The programme (described by Coyle and Skinner as ‘a national centre for positive action in women’s employment’ [op cit, p. 1]) ran a series of workshops and events over three years, targeting women in senior management positions, and developing leadership and management skills and competencies. As part of this academic programme, Jane Skinner initiated research into women and self-employment. The project moved to Coventry Polytechnic in 1988.

During this period, academic research on the topic of small to medium-sized enterprise development was in its infancy (Bridge & O’Neill 2013; Blackburn & Smallbone 2007.). As highlighted in the literature review in Chapter 3, organisations such as the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE) and the International Council for Small Business (ICSB) began accepting papers on women in business, with resulting conference tracks on the topic. At this stage in the UK, work primarily focused upon ‘Women in Management, although some studies explored the experiences of female entrepreneurs (Goffee and Scase, 1985).

Following the completion of an undergraduate degree in the late 1980s (and while operating a seasonal holiday business), the author answered an advertisement to work for a new organisation, established by Jane Skinner and a colleague from her previous management role in Birmingham City Council, Olwyn Cupid. The role was as a ‘Network Development Officer for an organisation called ‘the ‘National Women’s Enterprise Development Agency’ – henceforth referred to as ‘NWEDA.’ The author secured this role and was employed by the organisation for three years.

This organisation was established in 1987 as a company limited by guarantee, by a group of women in senior management positions from the public, private and voluntary sectors, who had a direct interest in furthering the position of women in the labour market. These women were involved in the Women and Work Programme, and some of these formed the NWEDA 'Council of Management'. The composition of this council is notable - given the senior management nature of those involved and their subsequent progress - and it is shown in Table 6.1 (on the next page).

The detail provided in the table illustrates that these women were 'well-networked' with the ability to access both personal and professional connections across the world. They possessed what Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) term as both 'social' and 'cultural' capital. This enabled them to find mechanisms for financing and supporting their organisational objectives.

The mission of NWEDA was the establishment of a nationwide group of women-focused enterprise support organisations, to enable Black¹⁷, low-income and other women facing social and economic disadvantage to become self-employed or to start businesses. This concept was modelled on an American women's community-based initiative, viewed by the

¹⁷ The term 'Black' at this time in the mid 1980s was a self-defining term, used politically by collective groups of people from predominantly African, African-Caribbean and Asian descent who resided in the UK. For further information see Southall Black Sisters (1990); Sudbury (1998); Gilroy (1987).

Table 6.1 – The composition of the ‘Council of Management Members’ of the National Women’s Enterprise Development Agency (WEDA) in 1988 – 1990.

| Name | Position at the time 1988-1990 | Most current status (if known) - 2019. |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Angela Coyle | Aston University Business School - Director of the Women and Work Programme. | Emeritus Professor of Sociology – City University. London. |
| Jayne Skinner | Aston Business School – lecturer in Public Sector Management. Founder of WEDA. Associate Director of Birmingham Social Services Dept. | CEO Birmingham Settlement. Deceased. |
| Olwyn Cupid | Senior manager Birmingham City Council. Founder of WEDA. | Unknown. |
| Jenny Francis | PR Entrepreneur | Broadcaster - President's Award winner -European Federation of Black Women Business Owners. Lifetime Achievement Award at the Black Magic Awards 2017. |
| Angela Griffin | Chief Executive Officer of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council | Urban Sector Manager World Bank. ¹⁸ |
| Anne Watts | Head of Equalities and Equal Opportunities at Midland Bank. | CBE – Vice-Chair of the University of Surrey. |
| Carol Hayden | Coventry City Council Economic Development Manager | Ex-head of Research, Department for Communities and Local Government. Civil Servant. Independent consultant. |
| Davinder Kaur | Development Advisor West Midland’s Clothing Resource Centre. | CEO – Sandwell Skills Work and Enterprise Development Agency (a development of SWEDA). |
| Bismillah Weaver | Senior Lecturer/ Director of Access Course, Bournville College. Birmingham. | Unknown |
| Jane Slowey | Councillor Birmingham City Council | CEO – Foyer federation; Vice-Chair - National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO); CBE. Deceased. |
| Elizabeth Drysdale | First Black female Liverpool City Councillor and member of Liverpool Black Sisters (a Black women’s activist organisation). | Community activist. |
| Harry Nicholls | Chief Executive Officer of Aston Science Park | Deceased. |
| Rennie Fritchie | Director of Fair Play for Women – a Government Diversity initiative (a part of the Equal Opportunities Commission). | Baroness Dame Rennie Fritchie – a member of the House of Lords. UK Parliament. |

Source: Author’s own research.

¹⁸ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/local-papers/the-wellingtonian/8161286/Wellingtonian-editorial-The-overseas-infatuation>

founders of NWEDA in New York City, USA, in 1987. This point is pertinent to the subsequent structure of women's business support in the West Midlands of the UK. It, therefore, warrants further exploration.

6.2.2 Influences from the United States of America.

In 1988 in the USA, HR5050 - the Women's Business Ownership Act¹⁹ (WBOA) was passed. This legislation enabled small scale initiation funding from the US-government 'Small Business Administration'²⁰ to be provided for the establishment of business support organisations for women in business. These were known as 'Women's Business Centres' in the US. Their focus under the WBOA was primarily supporting 'socially or economically disadvantaged women.' The specific needs and requirements of Black women (or 'women of colour' as the various groups defined themselves at the time in the USA) within this Act had to be both lobbied and negotiated. This process of policymaking and its implications for 'women of colour' is critically examined by Inuzuka (1991). As a woman of colour, working as a lawyer in the policymaking process for this Act, Inuzuka clearly articulates the difficulties that were faced by women of colour in both the drafting and the subsequent enforcement of the Act. These issues are somewhat prophetic and pertinent to the basis of women's enterprise policy development in the UK and will, therefore, be returned to in case study three.

When visiting the US, the NWEDA founders discovered more about this proposed Act and sought to replicate the implementation of these Centres under the WEDA name in the UK. At the initial stages, there were no clear intentions of seeking to lobby central government (as had been the case in the USA) for funding for such initiatives. The funding for NWEDA was raised through sponsorship for core activities and events. Funders included donations from a wide range of private sector organisations and charitable Trusts, including National Westminster Bank PLC, British Telecommunications PLC, British Petroleum PLC, Cadbury

¹⁹ <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-102/pdf/STATUTE-102-Pg2689.pdf> (Accessed 10 Feb 2018).

²⁰ The Small Business Administration - or SBA, as it is more commonly referred to-is a US Government Agency, founded in 1953 to provide support to entrepreneurs' and small businesses.

Trust and the Urban Trust²¹. Charitable status was initially pursued by the organisation but was not ultimately concluded. The organisation was therefore established in a structure that was not in itself a commercial venture. This has implications for the future replication and development of the network of organisations for supporting women's enterprise in the West Midlands and the rest of the UK. The antecedents of policy issues related to the specific funding and development of organisations supporting women into business have their origins in the form in which these initial structures were established. This point will be returned to in case study three.

The UK did not develop its equivalent to the Small Business Administration in the USA until the late 1990s. Policy development was, therefore, maintained at a local level for some time. The history of the regional development of statutory business support services is important to explore if the implications for future women's enterprise policymaking are to be contextualised and understood.

6.2.3 The beginnings of regional economic development in the West Midlands

As a result of the introduction of the Local Government Act 1972, the political boundaries of the West Midland region were transformed in 1974. The Act ended the existing local authority structures across Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, and formed a two-tier system of local authority administration, namely Counties and Districts. New Metropolitan Counties were also formed. The West Midlands County Council (WMCC) was formed as a Metropolitan County in 1974 and covered an area that included the metropolitan district councils of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

The County Council in the West Midlands developed responsibility for Economic Development of the region between the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. Economic development was not a statutory role of local authorities in the mid-1970s, but local

²¹ WEDA Directors Reports and Accounts (1990).

authorities did have to prepare 'structural plans' from 1974, particularly to address the needs for planning applications for land use (Coulson 1990). Traditionally local authorities in Metropolitan Boroughs (e.g. Sandwell, Birmingham and Coventry) held responsibility for the promotion of the use of commercial land and buildings for industrial purposes and the development of infrastructure for the support of local industry and commerce. In these areas, the local authorities retained land and buildings for such purposes, and it was the traditional role of planning departments to encourage industrial developments across their Boroughs; it was a key activity for economic development by the Borough Council's in the early to late 1970s. At that time, Local Authorities also had limited powers to provide financial support to their local businesses. The powers derived from the 1972 Local Government Act, which enabled Councils to raise limited revenues by levying funds from the council rates, charged in their areas (Coulson,1990). However, with the industrial decline across UK regions in the mid-1970s, with coal mining, steel/ metal production and vehicle manufacturing industries particularly affected in the West Midlands (Spencer, 1987), the newly formed West Midlands County Council developed one of the UK's first strategic plans to attempt to co-ordinate actions to preserve employment in the regions.

The plan, entitled '*A Time for Action – Economic and Social trends in the West Midlands*' (WMCC, 1974), was published by economists and planners in the Research and Intelligence Unit of the County Council, with the purpose of signaling the need for changes to central government's policy on the regions in order to slow the economic decline of the region.

Local policies were advocated in a subsequent document on policy proposals in 1975 (WMCC, 1975). The significance of these plans is that this was one of the first such attempts by a regional administration to develop a regional developmental approach to the economic regeneration of their geographical area. Integrated within the report was the need for the development of skills, using funding from the European Union, under the European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 for labour force training.

The Government's training policy unit (the Manpower Services Commission) was also identified as a key stakeholder in the development of a workforce that could be re-skilled following the demise of the traditional skills required for declining regional industries.

In 1977, The West Midlands County Council administration moved to Conservative control after four years of a Labour council. This is important because, in 1978, the then National Labour Government introduced the Inner Urban Areas Act (1978). The Act permitted local authorities (including the Metropolitan Boroughs) to assist declining industrial areas, with the aid of new central government subsidies for the most deprived wards. A mixture of grants and subsidised loans were awarded, for example, for the renovation of land and derelict buildings, together with rent subsidies on business premises. (HMSO 1978). The Conservative administration of the WMCC looked very favourably upon the Act (although introduced by the Labour Government) and utilised derelict land grants for the rehabilitation of industrial land around the region (Coulson, 1990). The arrival of the new national Conservative Government in 1979 could have seen a political alignment between the metropolitan and national policy arrangements for regional economic development. As it was, the incoming Government, led by Margaret Thatcher, abolished Regional Economic Planning Councils (established in the previous Labour era, to realise the structural land plans previously highlighted). As a result of this action, the West Midlands County Council established its own body to take a strategic view of the economic development needs of the region. As Coulson (quoting Header) states:

A new Economic Development Committee was established, comprising the County Council, representatives of Industry and trade unions, and academics. Its stated aims were the promotion of the West Midlands in all its facets, the examination of current and future trends, the taking of positive steps to encourage industry and commerce as well as liaison with the metropolitan districts and shire county councils. (Header, in Coulson, 1990, p. 91).

Another factor influencing the development of enterprise support within the region was the denationalisation of the coal and steel industries in the 1980s. Because of this, the UK government introduced the Local Enterprise Agency Grant Scheme in 1986, which provided

small core start-up costs for Enterprise Agencies to stimulate business start-up and support through the administration of coal and steel grants schemes. In 1998, the Local Enterprise Agency Project Scheme (LEAPS) was also introduced, to support Local Enterprise Agencies in attracting/ leveraging funds via the public sector (local authorities, or European funds). This was successful to the extent that Local Enterprise Agencies were receiving the bulk of their funding from public sector sources (Bennett, R.J.1995).

The advancement of both a fledgling infrastructure of enterprise support provision, combined with political support for local economic development, provided a socioeconomic environment that was to be pivotal in the development of the network of women's business support agencies in the West Midlands that were to follow.

6.2.4 Developing the network

Through development work undertaken by the National WEDA organisation and the Metropolitan District Councils, several regional District Councils sought to develop the initiative, under their own fledgling 'Economic Development Departments.' Given the composition of the National WEDA Board, an influence was exerted with council members and officers, to explore the benefits of attracting more women into business formation, with implied subsequent business growth potential. The context of supply-side measures at the time is also important to note. Political and economic measures were introduced following the change of government of 1979 (as described in the previous section). The result of the macro-economic policy changes was the greater emphasis upon the concept of enterprise, and the 'enterprise culture'; the idea being that with the reduction of the size of the state came a resultant requirement for the individual to be responsible for creating and maintaining employment. One example of this was the national introduction of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme in 1981.

This initiative paid unemployed people a sum of £40 per week to start and run a business. At around the same time, the government encouraged a range of enterprise support organisations to be developed, initially run by civil servants through the Small Firms Service,

and later supplemented by a network of local enterprise agencies. These organisations were supported by the newly established Training and Enterprise Councils (TEC's), which had specific funding (known as the 'Block 3 grant') to support enterprise development (Blisson, 1992).

The desire for the need for a greater entrepreneurial climate to be adopted by the Government also led to several measures and initiatives to encourage and support Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises. The Small Firms Service developed as statutory service, as a part of the Training and Enterprise Councils. Running in parallel with this was a voluntary sector initiative. Business in the Community (under the stewardship of Julia Clevedon) developed a network of Business Support Organizations (Local Enterprise Agencies) across the UK, utilising secondees from larger corporations, such as British Coal and Shell Oil). Momentum was also growing for a wider 'equal opportunities' agenda for women in employment, with the launch of 'Opportunity 2000' by Lady Howe in 1991. This was a UK business-led campaign (also initiated by Business in the Community) to encourage a greater awareness of the barriers faced by women in employment (Hammond, 1992). In a speech at Lancaster House in October 1991, the Prime Minister at that time (John Major) announced that a Minister's group on Women's issues - which reported into the Home Office - would encourage all policymakers across government to 'consider the impact of their policies on women before they are put in place'²². This announcement provided additional momentum, with a further opportunity to justify the development of women-focused business support.

Schemes developed in Birmingham, Coventry, Redditch (with Jackie Smith as a then Redditch Borough council representative), Liverpool, Dunfermline in Scotland, as stand-alone agencies, but other organisations linked together as part of a wider movement. This was related to Black Sisters – following the model with Black Star Agency in Liverpool – Walsall Black Sisters and Southall. Other organisations that supported the initiative included the co-operative movement, which had several co-op members who later went on to become

²² (<http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1003.html>, accessed 10/09/18).

Co-operative Party MPs in Wolverhampton – for example, Ken Purchase OBE and Jenny Jones.

The Co-operative Development movement was at the time accessing funding to support women's enterprise activity. This was predominantly training activity, with funding from European Social Fund Objective 3 Structural Funding, under Priority 4 'Pathways to Equal opportunity'. Funding was also sourced under ERDF Objective 2 (ESF and ERDF - European Regional Development Fund) Priority Three for Business Development. Much of the work related to capacity building – training trainers to deliver business support training, advice and guidance to women seeking to start businesses or become self-employed. 'The Threads Project' in Smethwick was working to support female migrant homeworkers from Asian communities in Sandwell. West Midlands County Council (at the time) was also supporting the garment manufacturing sector in Handsworth in Birmingham (Allen and Truman, 1993).

6.2.5 The local WEDAs

The first local WEDA to be established in April 1986 was Birmingham WEDA, after a period of feasibility work undertaken with Birmingham City Council. A similar model was adopted in Redditch, with Redditch District Council, and the support of Jackie Smith, a local councillor in Redditch (and later to become MP for Redditch and Home Secretary in the Blair Labour government from 2007 to 2009). An initiative was also developed in Coventry, where feasibility study work was undertaken, part-funded through Coventry City Council, and supported by the Women and Work programme (then based at Coventry Polytechnic, now Coventry University). This feasibility work commenced in 1989, with an extended period of consultation amongst academics, business organisations, community organisations, local enterprise support bodies, and local women's groups. Because of the results of the feasibility study, grant funding was made available from Coventry City Council, and the Agency opened in 1990.

These agencies targeted Black (Minority Ethnic), low-income and unemployed women to “achieve their full potential and create a living for themselves and their families through self-employment” (BWEDA Annual Report 1987/88 p 7/8). The idea developed from a group of women experienced in business and community education. They stated that:

‘We are trying to avoid the type of training geared to white, middle-class women. We’ll try to demystify business and the training. Stereotypes affect women’s confidence because they say to themselves that they are not like that: white bank managers will also have this image” (Ibid, p 7/8).

The concept adopted was that these particular women were viewed as ‘creative survivors’ (op cit, p2), or what we might now consider as ‘necessity entrepreneurs’; those ‘pushed’ into entrepreneurship, due to other options of paid employment being unavailable, unattractive or unfeasible (Bridge and O’Neill, 2013).

A range of activities was adopted to achieve the WEDA objectives in support of these women, namely ‘Training’, ‘Business Development Support’ and ‘Promotion.’ Details of these activities are outlined as follows:

6.2.5.1 Training

The types of training available were based upon the vocational skills for small scale business operations. These included basic accountancy, sales and marketing, business planning, operational management, and people management. They were provided by practitioners, women who had started and grown businesses, as opposed to academics, or professionals who, at that time, bore little resemblance to the trainees. Both full and part-time business training courses were available, which were coordinated to ensure that they were accessible to women who had caring or domestic responsibilities (for example sessions commenced at 10.00 am, took a lunch break at mid-day and ended at 2.30 pm, during school term time).

Unusually, for that period, free childcare was made available to participants, through crèche facilities or payments to childcare providers. This was enabled using European Social Fund grants. Another unusual feature of the courses was the range of 'confidence building' and 'personal skills development' activities, which accompanied the vocational elements of the training. For example, courses would commence with a model about 'readiness for business', preparing participants for business in terms of their expectations, fears and desires from running a business. The inter-personal and psychological developmental aspects of running a business were given equal status with the vocational skills-based approaches of more traditional business courses available at that time from mainstream providers, such as colleges, local authorities, or banks. These courses (and the associated childcare payments) were part-funded by the WEDA organisations, through their grant-funding from local authorities, and were co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), under Objective 3.

6.2.5.2 Business Development Support.

The WEDA organisations did not merely provide women with business start-up support. If a woman was already a business owner, or as part of continued service to those who had recently commenced trading, business advice and guidance were provided, including signposting and links to other 'mainstream' sources of grant and loan financing. This also included support for women on the newly-introduced 'Enterprise Allowance Scheme' (EAS). This was a Government-funded initiative to support unemployed people into self-employment through the payment of a weekly allowance for 12 months (Greene, 2004). From the perspective of many of the women using the Agency, there were problems with the structuring of the scheme, which disadvantaged women. Structural issues related to the need for the claimant to have both a business bank account with also £1000 deposited in it. This was a problem for some women on lower incomes, and married women with joint family bank accounts. Another structural disadvantage of the scheme included a married woman being unable to access EAS if her husband had previously claimed this. Many married women were also unable to claim benefits themselves at the time, which made them ineligible for EAS.

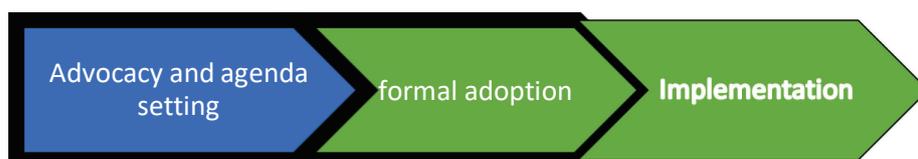
6.2.5.3 Seminars and conferences.

A range of seminars and conferences were developed to raise awareness and challenge the perception of the agency's female clients as businesswomen. Events such as the 'Bankers Forums' were developed. These events brought local bank managers and women together to learn from one another about banking and the client's needs. Roleplay was undertaken, where women acted as bank managers, and the predominantly male managers played the role of a woman approaching the bank for a small loan. Banks such as Barclays, Midland and Lloyds took part in these forums. Following this, the banks offered the National WEDA a secondee to work inside the organisation to improve the perception of businesswomen within the banks. In total, four years of secondee support was provided, plus financial grant aid and sponsorship of events and bank hosting. This concept was seen within the traditional 'enterprise agency' support network, part-funded by the Small Firms Service (a part of the DTI). This secondee practice was however unusual in a women led organisation at that time.

6.2.6 Initial Analysis.

The diagram below highlights the areas of the policy process covered by the case.

Figure 6.1: Policy stages for case 1.



Source: Adapted from O'Hagan (2015).

This case study provides detailed insight into the formation of an organisation that went on to have a significant impact on the development of women's enterprise support across the West Midlands region. It highlights the context in which the organisation was initiated and indicated the economic and societal drivers that facilitated the opportunity for such a development to occur. The case identifies the range of women, from a variety of community

development, academic and commercial backgrounds, who came together to form the foundations upon which the policy and practice of women's enterprise would develop. These women were also from diverse minority-ethnic groups and different classes. They also had differing feminist perspectives. Nevertheless, they worked together with a common goal to encourage women in the region to start, develop and grow businesses. Other regions in the UK were engaged in such activity - for example with community businesses and the Wellpark initiative in Scotland (Waring and Brierton, 2011) – but NWEDA acted as a catalyst across several local authorities at the time.

This was a period of formation for the WEDA organisation. The women involved called upon professional contacts (or networks) and friends in order to initiate services. The national focus was established, but it was easier to influence the establishment of WEDAs in areas (local authorities) which were in close vicinity to the national hub in Birmingham.

There were, however, inbuilt tensions and contradictions from the outset: the initiative was based on feminist principles, but with diverse feminist views. The premise was always of 'difference' but 'valuing difference.' The difference was at the time viewed as 'cultural, social and prescribed'. Matters such as 'educational attainment', family responsibility' and 'levels of confidence' were often raised. As one feasibility study stated when exploring the difference for women, it was about 'the social circles in which they mix and the social space which they occupy" (Wolverhampton WEDA Feasibility Study, 1990, p. 10).

The feminist approach of those women involved also differed. There were disagreements between liberal feminist approaches and socialist feminist approaches (Orser and Elliott, 2015). These manifested themselves in discussions over where funding for the Agency would be obtained, the types of secondees that should be accepted, and from which institutions.

Minutes of Management Committee meetings show a conflict between the National organisation remit (from its Memorandum and Article of Association), and the geographically

close 'local' organisations. Memoranda and Articles of Association in the organisations did not stipulate clear boundaries, and organisations were therefore apparently competing against each other in a close geographical location (50 miles radius) for limited resources. Although local agencies mainly relied upon grant funding from Local Authorities, they were expected to derive some additional income, and this sometimes brought them into conflict with the National Agency.

Issues relating to intersectionality also arose. The organisation was targeted towards 'Black and Low-Income women' although it catered for all women (and some men - for example, the male partners of female clients establishing micro-businesses within their family). Women are not a homogenous group (Greene *et al.*, 2003; Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004; Marlow, Henry, and Carter, 2009; Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018) and therefore the organisation was seeking to address women's needs, whilst focusing on the specific needs of two classifications of women. This was not without its difficulties, as all Black Women were not necessarily classified as 'low income'; they could have come from a different class (Knight, 2016), but in focusing on this group, the organization was attempting to take positive action to attract those women who defined themselves in such categories. There were women of colour from first and second-generation African, African-Caribbean, Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage involved in both the management and operations of the organisation, reflecting the client group that was being supported. At that time, many women's groups were developing to support the social and cultural needs of women in the region (such as Black Sisters in Walsall, or Bangladeshi women's groups in Birmingham). The WEDA organisation faced some difficulty in attempting to provide business services that were not specifically targeted at individual communities but attempted to serve the needs of all those that defined themselves as 'Black' or Low income', or both, or neither (Ram *et al.*, 2012; Carter *et al.*, 2015). This created a lack of clarity and, in some cases, conflict amongst those attempting to manage the service.

The typology of the business being formed by the women at that time was also viewed by mainstream or larger business support providers as mainly small scale. Women became

self- employed or formed what could be referred to as 'lifestyle businesses (Braidford et al., 2013)' - hairdressing, health and beauty, childcare, catering, metal and jewellery crafts (given the locality of the Birmingham agency within Birmingham's historic jewellery making area 'The Jewellery Quarter'). This is relevant to the future policy and practice decisions that were subsequently made – whether to provide support for such businesses and if so, how?

Nevertheless, these WEDA organisations were funded for several years. Those that closed had provided start-up support and training to women, and their staff went on to work on other enterprise support programmes in the city. These were the antecedents of policy and practice that followed within the region. It was a major achievement, based upon women's efforts and women's abilities to organise, be resourceful, and manifest support for a diverse range of women across the West Midlands, in at best an ambivalent, and at worst, a hostile, business support environment. Those women and their organisations that continued were influential in developing further infrastructural support into the last decade of the twentieth century in the region.

The next case study builds upon these foundations and describes how the surviving women's support organisations provided both business support and enterprise policy influence into the next decade and beyond.

6.3 Case Two: Maintaining momentum in the 1990s

6.3.1 Introduction

Case study two provides a detailed description of the activity that influenced policy and delivery of women's enterprise support in the West Midlands, during a decade of major political change; the change of Conservative Prime Minister in the 1992 General Election, with a subsequent shift in policy direction from the 'Thatcher Years'. This was followed by a new Labour government and Prime Minister in 1997. The role, the practices and the changing shape of the WEDA network in the region are explored. The role of WEDA, influencing local, regional and national government policy at the time is also addressed.

6.3.2 The national context at the time.

At the beginning of the 1990s, a national feminist magazine, 'Everywoman' developed a series of directories of women in business. Everywoman was a female cooperative business based in London, which had links to the co-operative movement in the UK, and the Industrial Common Ownership Movement worldwide. Their left-wing political stance about female entrepreneurship resonated with WEDA's philosophy at the time. This is illustrated in their business directory, in which is stated:

"The women's independent business movement crosses political and class lines. Although it is widely believed that people in business must be 'conservative', this is very far from true. The new wave of women's enterprises derive from many different philosophies; the co-operative and self-help movements, the libertarians, the liberals and the unpolitical, as well as the conservative. Above all, it is a claim to independence: by running our own businesses we decide. We are the bosses. We determine our own activities and our own priorities. And however hard it gets, many women in the movement will stick to it, despite overwhelming odds, because the freedom to determine our own destiny at work is well worth the low, or erratic income, the financial worries and the long hours of hard work."

Everywoman, 1990, p. 6 [(original emphasis)].

The quotation is important because it illustrates the heterogeneity of the women across the UK who coalesced around a goal of economic independence and autonomy. For them, their 'independent businesses' were seen to offer an alternative to working for 'bosses'. These women were creating opportunities for themselves, on their terms. They were a part of the 'enterprise culture' prevalent at the time but were harnessing the societal and political circumstances and defining their businesses, and their ways of being enterprising.

Meanwhile, the 'more mainstream' concept of 'Enterprise Culture' during this period (as encouraged by such programmes as the government's start-up business 'Enterprise Allowance scheme') was gradually becoming more prevalent for research by government and academia. The period at the beginning of the 1990s saw increased interest in the study of small businesses in the UK. In the North East of England, Durham University Business School (DUBS) was at the time active in the study of small firms in the UK. Professor Alan Gibb established the Foundation for Small and Medium Enterprise Development at Durham University in 1971 and was engaged with the Government's Small Firms Service and with Business in The Community (BIC). From this association, a variety of Small Firms Service advisors (direct business advisors employed from the government's civil service) and private sector secondees to BIC's Enterprise Agencies, were supported with training programmes for business start-up support, which DUBS both devised and delivered.

In 1991, the Scottish Enterprise Foundation at Sterling University, and also the Facility for Access to Creative Enterprise Ltd (FACE - a community group, based in Somerset) were commissioned to provide Women's Enterprise-related training materials (financed by the Department of Trade and Industry) for the newly established enterprise agency network. These materials were prepared to supplement the general advisory training provided by DUBS – offering what we would now see as 'gender-focused' information; the implication here being that the mainstream training offer disseminated across the small business support network was 'gender' blind²³.

A pack consisting of three types of guidance material was developed and issued, under the generic banner of '*Quality Training for Women Starting a Business*' (Parkinson, Freeney and Clay, 1991). These included a '*Directory of contacts and resources*' – so-called 'woman-friendly' training and resource materials, which was peer-reviewed for use by women. A

²³ For issue of awareness of other groups' specific business support needs at the time, see Deakins et al. 2003; Greene 2002; Blackburn & Rutherford 1999).

range of 132 different types of resources, including trainer resource packs, books, videos and cassettes were reviewed in the directory.

'A Guide to Policy' was also produced, together with *'A Practical Guide'* which was an accompanying training guide, providing support in the planning, execution and evaluation of training. The practical guide also listed a range of support agencies, identified as 'Women's Enterprise Agencies' (Richardson and Hartshorn, 1993). The policy guide was written by the Scottish Enterprise Foundation, based at the University of Sterling. It was the first document of its kind in the UK, developed in conjunction with the Business and Enterprise Branch of Employment Department of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI, based in Moorfoot, Sheffield). This guide highlights the potential for women to 'revitalise local economies through small business activity'(p2). It is the first time that this 'economic case' for women's enterprise development was addressed within a government-funded document.

The overall emphasis of the pack of documents was, for the first time, to view women as a credible growing client group for enterprise support and the methods by which that support could be structured, to maximise women's engagement with it. The document pack attempts to break down historically perceived stereotypes of women and to highlight their potential as business owners. It also addresses a range of measures to show how specific interventions, such as training can encourage more women to start businesses. The focus of the materials was on skills training for women; if trained and provided with relevant support, they could learn the skills necessary for business ownership and management.

The emphasis at that time was to utilise training funding to facilitate more women to start and grow businesses. At the time, funding for such training was heavily reliant upon funding from The European Union's Structural Funds. The European Social Fund (ESF) was one fund that had a specific remit to promote 'equality of opportunity' for women in the labour market, tackling under-representation of women in job roles, and industry. The fund was also used for tackling women's unemployment and business creation.

For example, the 1984 European Council Resolution states that concerning job creation and employment, Member States should:

“enable women to have equal access to financial and other facilities available for the creation of businesses, particularly in the context of local initiatives to create employment, including those taken on a co-operative basis, which offer women worthwhile employment prospects and working conditions”

(European Commission 2006, p6)

Many parts of the UK were eligible for ESF funding, including those covering the former West Midlands County Council conurbations. Applications for ESF funding were made for all of the regional WEDA organisations in the West Midlands. From its inception, National WEDA joined the Centre for Research on European Women (CREW) and used its network as a vehicle to participate in European programmes, lobbying for transnational partnership funding and accessing potential partners for local WEDA organisations across the UK.

6.3.1 The changing locality responsibilities of the Agencies.

The mid-1990s saw the regional WEDA organisations develop momentum and reach across the region. However, the National WEDA ceased its activity in the mid-1990s. This was as a result of a combination of factors. Firstly, the withdrawal of bank sponsorship (including a funded secondee) due to changes to banking policy left the organisation with a gap in both financial and human resource. Secondly, there were several changes of personal circumstances with founder members of the organisation (including bereavement and emigration) which impacted heavily upon the small organisation. The success of the regional WEDA initiatives led to a greater focus given to their initiatives, with their remit expanded to take over a national policy brief. National WEDA had forged links for regional WEDAs with national and international organisations such as the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) and CREW.

The national remit was therefore passed over to the local agencies, who subsequently formed an informally structured 'National Women's Business Development Network' in 1994.

The Coventry Agency also changed its name in 1994 from the 'Women's Enterprise Development Agency' to the Women's Business Development Agency – a change which distinguished itself from the disbanded National WEDA organisation, but which also was judged by their Board to have more resonance with women. Clients stated that they saw themselves as in business (as opposed to 'enterprise') and that the revised name better reflected their experience.

The importance of the multi-ethnic Board of Directors and emphasis of support to a wide range of regional women remained. All the local WEDA/ WBDA organisations had a majority of women on their boards, and those women were from diverse backgrounds. For example, SWEDA had Hyacinth Jarrett on their board; she is the first Jamaican woman to open a hairdressing salon in Sandwell (and her business is still operating, 25 years later). Coventry WBDA had a range of African women on their board, and Redditch WEDA had several older women from diverse communities working in the co-operative sector. The range and diverse nature of women on the boards were unusual at the time when the bulk of enterprise support providers were managed by predominantly male, white secondees from banks, or other corporate institutions (Blisson and Nelson, 2003).

In 1994, the WEDA Network comprised the Coventry, Sandwell, Redditch and Birmingham agencies, with associated links to community women's groups in Liverpool and Wolverhampton. This network organised two large exhibitions of women-owned businesses at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, in both 1994 and 1995. The September 1994 event was officially opened by the first woman leader of Birmingham City Council, Theresa Stewart, who called the event 'the first of its kind' (CWBD 1996, p6). The events also included Businesswomen of the Year awards from Midland Bank PLC, which was one of the first awards that highlighted the diversity of women in business in the West Midlands region. However, the Network had limited funding and drew mainly on the resources of the existing agencies, which themselves were grant-funded, primarily from their local authorities. The issue of funding for the agencies will now be explored.

6.3.4 Funding the agencies – maintaining activity through project-based initiatives.

Activities within the regional WEDA organisations were primarily project-based and funded through a variety of grants to the organisations. For example, between April 1994 and March 1995, the WEDA in Sandwell had income from the following sources:

- European Union - via the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Funding (ERDF),
- The Training and Enterprise Council,
- The Local Economic Development department in the council (primarily for staff salaries) Trust funding from the Barrow and Geraldine S Cadbury Trust as part match funding for European Funds

(SWEDA 1994, p. 6[stet])

Charitable trust funds had been important to the agencies from the outset. The National WEDA organisation obtained funding from the Barrow and Geraldine S. Cadbury Trust when it commenced, and the Trust provided support to Coventry, Sandwell and Birmingham WEDAs over the 1990s.

The UK National Lottery also provided grants to Coventry WEDA – the agency was one of the first beneficiaries of a National Lottery Fund application in 1994. The National Lottery grant was used for an innovative programme called ‘the Business Rehearsal Scheme’. The scheme was a pre-business start-up service, which had the aim of increasing the survival rate of new businesses by offering a comprehensive pre-trading programme to women. Women were able to ‘test-trade’ or trial trade’ while on the programme, without loss of state benefit entitlement.

The Scheme had the support of the Regional Employment Agency and the Training and Enterprise Council, as it was structured to maintain participants’ trading income in a separate bank account, held by the Agency on their behalf (CWBD, 1995). They were,

therefore, able to use their income from 'trial trading' to purchase capital equipment, or stock, but not for personal income. Whilst on the scheme, clients were also provided with bespoke, accredited business skills training, business and personal counselling and childcare support through the agency crèche (CWBDA 1999, p. 5) This programme was unique across the region and involved extensive liaison and negotiation with regional Civil Servants in both the Employment Department (DOE) and Coventry and Warwickshire Training and Enterprise Council.

Funding for the local WEDA's also came from grant applications to government's 'Single Regeneration Budget' (SRB). The Single Regeneration Budget started in the UK in 1994, to simplify the process of application to Government for grants allocated to Urban Regeneration; bringing together twenty different regeneration funding initiatives that were available within UK government departments. The Fund had a total of six bidding rounds, four of which were during the decade of the 1990s. The fund was at the time administered through the regional Government Offices (Tyler *et al.*, 2007; Gibbons, Overman and Sarvimäki, 2017).

At the time, SRB funding was utilised by the WEDAs for project-based activity. For example, the Coventry agency (CWBDA) developed a Childcare Centre in Foleshill, a multi-ethnic ward on the outskirts of Coventry city. The Childcare Centre was owned by CWBDA, which obtained a capital grant from SRB to purchase the building. The agency formed a community-based social enterprise in order to manage the business; the social enterprise received business support from CWBDA. As well as providing childcare to the local community, it also had several places available for women participating in the business courses delivered by the agency. The business ran the nursery and a creche until the start of 1999. It was the first bespoke childcare centre established for women in business in the West Midlands region at the time.

1999 was a crucial year for WEDA agencies. At that time, public sector investment in economic development fell, compared with previous years (see Table 6.2); and local authorities were additionally tasked with working alongside the newly established Regional

Development Agencies (RDA)²⁴. The DTI was also examining changes to the Business Link network and how public-funded business support would be delivered. As a result, local authorities in the West Midlands region made grant funding cuts to several voluntary sector economic development organisations. Details of spending reductions can be seen in the table below:

Table 6.2: Comparative public expenditure on UK economic affairs, specifically enterprise and economic development 1997 – 2001 (£bn)

| Function | Year 1996/1997 | 1997/1998 | 1998/1999 | 1999/2000 | 2000/2001 |
|---|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Economic affairs (total) | 23.4 | 21.6 | 19.6 | 21.5 | 23.8 |
| Of which enterprise and economic development. | 4.3 | 4.3 | 3.1 | 4.4 | 4.9 |

(Source – adapted from HM Treasury 2018, Table 4.2, p. 66)

During 1999, Coventry WBDA lost its grant funding from Coventry City Council's Economy Policy Committee (together with eight other economic development projects within Coventry City Council). As a result of this, the Agency Board launched a trading arm of the company to once again provide its services on a national basis.

The local authority funding cuts to economic development also occurred for Birmingham WEDA. They were a larger organisation than the other WEDA agencies in the West Midlands, with a heavy reliance upon core local authority grant, to match European funds.

As a result of the funding cuts, the agency closed in 2000. Nevertheless, some staff moved on to working within other enterprise support functions across the city and within Birmingham City Council. Some of the functions were transferred to these organisations, so the 'woman- friendly' nature of the support was not entirely lost.

6.3.1 The importance of the 1979 Labour Government election in progressing women's enterprise support – Ministerial involvement.

²⁴ Further details on the impact and involvement of the RDAs will be found in case study three.

Following the election of the Labour Party into Government in the UK in May 1997, there were to be various key policy issues that would see a change to the impetus for Women's Enterprise activity within the UK national government. These would ultimately have an impact on the delivery of the West Midlands' regional women's enterprise services.

Baroness Jay was appointed Minister for Women in Government in 1998, and in conjunction with the Women's Unit within the UK's Cabinet Office, visited several organisations involved in promoting women into business ventures. The visits included Wellpark in Glasgow, which was, at that time, the only managed workspace unit focused entirely on supporting women within the UK. Due to her investigations on these visits, Baroness Jay initiated a high-level event entitled 'Women in The New Economy' on the 11th and 12th of November 1999, held at 11 Downing St – the residence of the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer – who was then Gordon Brown. The high-profile event included several politicians, influential businesswomen, and policy academics from the USA (The Smith Institute, 1999).

This conference was to prove an important landmark in the development of future initiatives to promote female entrepreneurship across the UK into the next decade. It was at this conference that the idea of the development of a UK-wide organisation to promote women's enterprise was conceived. At this embryonic stage, there was little direct involvement from West Midlands' WEDA representatives within this idea. That was to follow later.

The catalyst for this embryonic idea was the coming together of a small group of women involved in women's enterprise development who were invited to the event; namely from Scotland, the North West, the North East and East Anglia. They identified that they were working in isolation within their regions but had organisational practices to share. They also identified that while they were all providing bespoke services directly to women, there was not an exclusive platform for advocacy and lobbying on behalf of the needs of women in business in the UK. Just before the conference (in the 9th November 1999 pre-budget

speech) the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, announced the development of the 'Enterprise Development Fund'.

The pre-budget statement was explicitly pro-job creation and pro-growth – with increased public investment to increase skills productivity and jobs. It was a time when the concept of 'Enterprise for All' was created; the idea being that the concept of business start-up, business growth and enterprise opportunity should be available to a wider range of British society than had previously been the case.

'The Enterprise Development Fund' was later implemented as the 'Phoenix Fund' in 2000.

The women's enterprise practitioners who met at the conference on the 11 & 12th of November 1999 identified the first stream of the Phoenix Fund as a potential facilitator for the organisation of a coordinated national approach to supporting more women into business. How this transpired is detailed in case study three.

6.3.2 Phoenix Development Fund policy background.

The Phoenix Fund was developed as a policy response to a range of policy issues, connected to social exclusion and enterprise. It was a direct response to recommendations made in an internal Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit, 'Policy Action Team 3' (PAT3) document on Enterprise and Social Exclusion, which was published in November 1999 (to coincide with the aforementioned pre-budget speech) (Ramsden, 2005; Maurey, 2006). The 'Enterprise and Social Exclusion' team was one of eighteen Policy Action Teams established in the Cabinet Office to explore a range of issues affecting social exclusion in the UK. The PAT 3 report was important because it formed the basis upon which a nascent Small Business Service (soon to be formed as a part of the Department of Trade and Industry) orientated its provision to support wider participation in enterprise from so-called 'disadvantaged communities'. As a Phoenix Development Fund briefing paper states:

As part of its wider remit to promote small business, the SBS should encourage enterprise and business growth in disadvantaged communities. The SBS should develop a strategy to achieve this goal, and in particular, it should:

- Aim to give a clear sense of direction to the many organisations involved in business support in this area;
- Identify and promote best practice
- Look at how to develop new service that add value;
- Increase its own capacity in the field by building a centre of expertise and commissioning research into enterprise in deprived communities.”

(SBS, 'Thematic workshop briefing paper' Doc 4, May 2005)

The PAT 3 report was important as it made a range of recommendations for the role of the Small Business Service in the development of widening access and participation to enterprise activity. It was to form the basis of policy developments in business support strategy and programme delivery in the decade to follow. The implications of these developments for the following decade will be explored in detail in the case study 3 in this trilogy.

Macro-level policy changes followed the release of the report. Government strategy for small firms resulted in the development and introduction of the 'Small Business Service'(SBS) within the DTI in 2000 (Bridge and O'Neill, 2013). The service was initially led by David Irwin, an ex- Enterprise Agency Chief Executive in the North East region of the UK (Irwin, 2000) and subsequently by Martin Wyn-Griffiths from 2002. The development of SBS led to the further expansion of support to small businesses provided within the Chambers of Commerce, a role envisaged by Lord Micheal Heseltine in his role as 'President of the Board of Trade' in 1992 (National Archives, 2007) with the establishment of the so-called 'One-Stop Shops' for SME support – which were later renamed as 'Business Links'. The role of the Chambers of Commerce had been championed by Heseltine over the previous decade,

particularly their potential role in the economic regeneration of the regions (Bennett, 2011). The establishment of these local business support agencies brought together strands of funding, provided from the Training and Enterprise Councils to the local enterprise agencies and Chambers. At the time, the TECS had merged with the local Chambers of Commerce, and so the development of the 'Business Links' was viewed as a branding exercise to gain greater affinity with SMEs. Both the Chambers of Commerce and Business Link were to become very important organisations in the development of women's enterprise policy and practice in the West Midlands in the following decade. This was predominantly facilitated by another government initiative which was formed at the time – namely the Regional Development Agencies.

6.3.3 The role of the Regional Development Agencies.

1999 saw the introduction of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) by the Labour Government. John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, launched a government White Paper "Building Partnerships for Prosperity", (DETRA, 1997) which brought forward the Government's intentions for the creation of nine English regions. It was a part of the Government's plans for regionalisation which also included devolution for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The White Paper stated that:

"The RDAs will have 5 specific objectives, and we will give RDAs the powers and funds they need to achieve them". The five objectives are:

1. Economic Development and Social and Physical Regeneration
2. Business Support, Investment and Competitiveness
3. Enhancing Skills
4. Promoting Employment
5. Sustainable Development."

(DETRA, 1997 *ibid*).

According to the White Paper, the core function of the RDAs was the economic development of the region. As a part of this, the business support infrastructure for the region came under the remit of the RDA's, with funding initially administered via the Training and Enterprise Councils and the Government Offices in the region. The budgetary responsibility of the RDAs was to increase substantially over their period of operation, with a range of infrastructural funds administered across their regions (Advantage West Midlands, 2004).

Regional Development Agencies were established as 'non-departmental public bodies' (NDPBs), which gave them powers to operate on behalf of Government at arm's length. They were often referred to pejoratively as 'quangos' (an acronym for 'quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations')²⁵.

The RDAs were tasked with forming strategic alliances and partnerships with local representatives in public, private and third sector organisations. It was a difficult task, given the range of tiers of local authorities in both urban and rural parts of a region. At their formation, they also worked alongside Regional Government Offices, which included civil servants from government departments such as The Department for The Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), The Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI). Administration of regional European Structural Funds was also conducted through the Government offices.

Within the White Paper and subsequent RDA Act, RDAs were to be constituted with a Board (appointed through public appointment), of fifteen members, with predominance given to 'business' representatives' (HMSO, 1998). The Government's Public Appointments process provided for representation on RDA Boards specifically from female entrepreneurs; many of these women were to prove crucial to the progress of women's enterprise policy across the

²⁵ This term became associated with their demise in 2010, when government called for a 'bonfire of the quangos' (Daily Telegraph , 15/10/2010 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/bonfire-of-the-quangos-bodies-to-be-abolished-2107709.html> Accessed 05/06/18), following the defeat of the Labour Party to a Coalition Liberal and Conservative government in 2010.

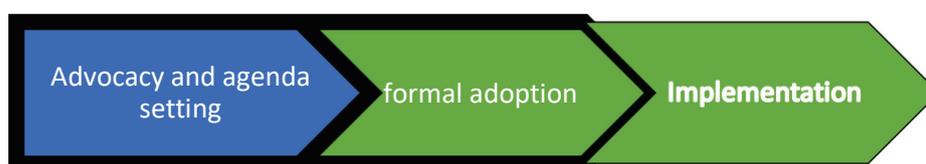
UK, in general, and specifically in the West Midlands, throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The importance of the RDAs to the development of women's enterprise in the West Midlands region was to be pivotal. Details of this are provided within case study three.

Initial case analysis.

The diagram below highlights the areas of the policy process covered by the case.

Figure 6.2: Policy stages for case 2



Source: Adapted from O'Hagan (2015).

Case two provides insight into the methods and measures used by the WEDAs to develop a regional infrastructure for the range of support and measures to directly engage with a diverse range of women from across the region. The contextual information illustrates that these women were operating in difficult economic and political environments, where they often faced multiple disadvantages. At the time, supporting Black and low-income women into business was problematic. Female focused training materials were minimal; hence, the development of materials and directories in the early part of the decade.

The combination of gender, class and race issues – what we would now see as issues of 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989) - provided multiple structural and practical issues which had to be addressed. These included gaining credibility with policymakers, raising finance from public, private and charitable sector sources, and maintaining the organisations, with their diverse range of views and conflicting conditions. As this case shows, in the early '90s, there were few women involved in developing enterprise policy, and those women who were

involved were challenging the status quo. Hoskyns (1996) states that “the issue of male dominance in structures of policy-making reflect male life patterns, are largely controlled by men and support a process that presents different, but essentially male, views of problems and solutions” (p10). The quotation reflects the prevailing conditions at that time, but this case illustrates methods by which women challenged this prevailing hegemonic context.

It is argued that the organisations were pioneering fundamental approaches to business support in the region. For example, they were successful in the recruitment of diverse and predominantly female boards and staff. They were also innovating new types of bespoke programmes, by navigating a range of local and national government departmental personnel and procedures. The examples of establishing the Enterprise Rehearsal Scheme and the Childcare Centre show the enterprising nature of the boards, staff and clients. Elements of knowledge transfer are also identified, where the groups of women were interacting with local government and regional government departments. The Enterprise Rehearsal Scheme, for example, brought together a range of policy practitioners, for the scheme to gain approval.

The changes to Government administration are also highlighted in this case. Firstly, the change in the Conservative leadership, which facilitated new government initiatives (such as the National Lottery) that provided financial support for agencies. This government also amalgamated several individual funding schemes under the Single Regeneration Budget, which enabled easier access to finance and facilitated capital growth for the remaining agencies.

The new Labour Government in 1997 acted as a major catalyst to the growth of women’s enterprise activity in several ways. Firstly, the development of devolved regional budgets, through the RDAs, enabled bespoke regional programmes to be considered and funded. Secondly, the lobbying activity of key parliamentarians and women’s organisations in support of heightening the profile of female entrepreneurship was facilitated by a key Government minister. Thirdly, the formation and actions of the Cabinet Office Social

Exclusion Unit - with its focus on widening participation in enterprise activity – provided a fund from which innovative enterprise programmes could develop. The process enabled the women’s agencies to build upon their local community expertise and to escalate their activities into regional policy formulation and delivery. It also enabled them to take a more active involvement in national policy direction.

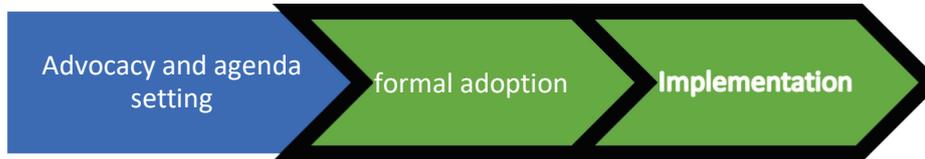
Case 3 that follows describes the escalation of women’s enterprise policy and practice in the region in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The implications of this and the mechanisms adopted will be explored further when addressing policy coalitions under the Advocacy Coalition Framework in Chapter 7.

6.4 Case Three. Strategy and policy in the new millennium – 2000 -2010.

6.4.1 Introduction

The diagram below highlights the areas of the policy process covered by the case.

Figure 6.3: Policy stages for case 3



Source: Adapted from O'Hagan (2015).

This case provides detail of the activities which took place at the West Midlands region, resulting from national policy initiatives on women's enterprise over this decade. The case starts by providing an overview of three national activities that influenced the regional policy activity, namely:

- The Phoenix Development Fund, and its associated projects;
- the development from this of the National Advocacy organisation PROWESS; and
- the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise (SFWE) launched by the UK government in 2003.

There then follows an account of the impacts of these initiatives on the implementation of Women's Enterprise policy and practice in the West Midlands. This is then followed by an analysis of the relevance of these to West Midlands regional economic development.

6.4.2 The Phoenix Development Fund and the establishment of 'Prowess'

The importance of the 'Phoenix Fund' as a facilitator for the activity which took place over the following five years should not be overlooked. On both a national and regional level, finance from the fund enabled the growth of enterprise support initiatives to women (and other groups that at the time faced disadvantage in accessing mainstream enterprise support provision).

The Phoenix Fund allocated one hundred and eighty-nine million pounds between 2000 and 2008, with three specific funding streams. These are described in the official evaluation report of the fund, as follows:

- A Development Fund to promote innovative ways of supporting enterprise in disadvantaged communities and under-represented groups;
- A Challenge Fund and Loan Guarantees to help resource local Community Development Finance Initiatives;
- and a national network of volunteer mentors to pre-and early-stage business start-ups.

(Ramsden, 2006, p27).

6.4.3 The formation of Prowess.

The Phoenix Development Fund (PDF) allocated funding to projects in phases, through three bidding rounds. In 2000 to 2001, funding was awarded through two bidding rounds ('Phase 1' and 'Phase 2' projects) to ninety-six projects, with a total budget of thirty million pounds (Ramsden, *ibid*, p46). These were referred to in policy briefings as 'demonstrator projects' and were designed to be a testbed of different approaches and initiatives to encourage wider participation in small business start-up and growth. Women's enterprise support projects featured widely in Phases 1 and 2 of the bids. The PROWESS bid successfully received just under five hundred and eighty-one thousand pounds worth of grant funding in Phase 2 of the PDF (being one of the top eighteen grant awards out of the ninety-six combined round one and two projects), enabling it to commence nationwide activity in 2002 (Ramsden, *ibid* p60).

The Phoenix Development Fund provided the resource for the development of an organisation that enabled a lobbying platform for Women's Enterprise in the UK; namely the organisation 'PROWESS'. As noted in Case Study 2, the idea for the lobbying group originated following the Women in the New Economy Conference in November 1999. Representatives of women's enterprise support organisations in the North East (based in

Durham), North West (based in Liverpool), East Anglia (based in Norwich) and Scotland (based in Perth) met informally and began working on a bid to the Phoenix Fund to form an alliance of Women's Enterprise support organisations (organisations similar to the Women's Business centres in the USA).

Originally, it was perceived that the alliance would be a loose forum with a small resource, but the Phoenix Bid galvanised the founders' opinion to attempt to establish a larger alliance, as a company limited by guarantee. The company form was a necessary structure for accessing state funding. As one of the founders of the organisation recounted during an interview:

"It was Phoenix funds' that allowed a more substantial funding bid to be put in, and everything Prowess was about fitted into the objectives of the Phoenix fund." (interview, pers.com)

Promoting Women's Enterprise Support Services National Network (Prowess) Ltd (commonly referred to as 'Prowess') was incorporated in October 2001 (Companies House, 2017) as a consortium of organisations involved in the support and development of women seeking to start or grow businesses across the UK. It was based in Norwich, which was also where one of its founder members (Women's Employment and Enterprise Training Unit - WEETU) was based. Prowess changed its company name to 'Promoting Women's Enterprise Support (PROWESS) Ltd' in 2007 (ibid). The company had two initial classifications of membership, which subsequently also changed in 2007 to reflect the typologies of associating bodies, as it developed. These points are important because they provide details about antecedents to issues that arise later in the decade with the company.

PROWESS spent the first eighteen months of its existence recruiting fee-paying members from the women's business support community across the UK, together with forming governance structures. A wide range of stakeholders became involved with the group, from the public, private and voluntary sectors, including local enterprise agencies, women's

business agencies, social enterprise support organisations, and private training providers, supporting women into business (Prowess, 2003). The organisation also formed beneficiary relationships with banks –Nat West Bank provided initial sponsorship for the company- and Barclay's Bank joined as an Affiliate member of the organisation.

6.4.4 Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise – development and launch

A major operational focus of Prowess at this stage was working with the Small Business Service (SBS) within the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on the development of the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise. In response to Ministerial interest in the agenda (as noted in Case 2) The Small Business Service commissioned a report on Women's Business Ownership from Strathclyde University in August 2001 (Carter, Anderson and Shaw, 2001), which provided baseline data on the position of women and enterprise in the UK at the time. Together with academic references, a range of case studies, newspaper articles and websites (a relatively new form of information at the time) were included. It was followed by a report from the authors for the Industrial Society, which summarised the key points of the report, explicitly outlining women's enterprise policy proposals to Government (Shaw, Carter and Brierton, 2001). These reports provided a thorough starting point for the development of a strategic approach to addressing issues raised at ministerial events of 1999 and 2000, as part of the Policy Office PAT 3 team activity (as outlined in case study 2). The Small Business Service inherited the policy focus resulting from the ministerial events from the Women's Unit, which had previously held this function.

To support the development of the framework, a Policy Development Advisor was contracted by Prowess to work within the Ethnic Minority and Women's Enterprise Unit of the Small Business Service of the DTI. This person acted as a catalyst for the development of the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise (SFWE).

6.4.5 Rationale for the Strategy

From private correspondence with ex-Prowess staff working at the time, it is possible to ascertain that there were a range of initiatives taking place across the UK, utilising European Funds, Skills Training Funds, local authority economic development grants, Big Lottery Funds and University funds, based in communities, which were galvanised and mobilised through the Phoenix Development Fund's initiatives. WEDAs are an example of such initiatives. The ease of application to the fund, the relative lack of bureaucracy of the monitoring process on projects, the sense of community fostered by conferences, peer learning, and the administrative process of the programme in SBS created a liberating atmosphere where ideas were able to flourish (Maurey, 2006). These conditions facilitated creative thinking about ways to target ministerial concerns with appropriate policy initiatives. As shown in case study two, there was heightened ministerial interest in the potential for greater involvement of women in enterprise activity, which civil servants in the Small Business Service sought to gratify²⁶.

As highlighted in the literature review, at the start of the century much of the academic literature (as identified by Carter, op. cit. and supported by the empirical work of organisations such as WBDA) emphasised the barriers that women were facing in starting and growing businesses. This previous research and business support activity provided content to the environmental and stakeholder analysis for Women's Enterprise strategic formulation because these issues were thoroughly documented and were increasingly visible to policymakers, given the level of ministerial interest and involvement in the topic.

The perceived need for a Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise at the national level within the UK was explicitly highlighted in the Carter and Shaw report to the Government's Small Business Service. It states that:

"There is no national strategy for women's enterprise. Clearly, there is a need to develop

²⁶ The institutional process within SBS is discussed in detail by Arshed, 2012 and Arshed, Carter and Mason, 2014).

one. The strategy should be designed to overcome the piecemeal basis in which support for women's enterprise is currently offered and provide a framework for the development of a coordinated approach to the support of women's enterprise across the UK".

(Carter, op. cit, p 11)

This message was reinforced by the Industrial Society report, which followed (2001, op.cit).

According to the Industrial Society, a further driver for change occurred as a result of the

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) initiative and their reports. The Global

Entrepreneurship Monitor began in 1999, initially as a joint initiative between London

Business School and Babson College in the USA²⁷. It was one of the first global studies to

make a correlation between economic growth and women's business ownership.

Subsequent GEM UK reports in 2001 and 2002 provided specific details on the potential for women's enterprise development (or 'nascent entrepreneurship,' in GEM terminology) in

support of the strategic alignment of women's enterprise with the wider potential for business development and support.

A further contributor to the debate over the development of the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise came from the UK Government's Cross-Cutting Review of Government

Services for Small Business (Great Britain HM Treasury, 2002), which was one of several such reviews commissioned by government across a range of departments at the time. The

Small Business Review investigated the range of publicly-funded business support, with a view to 'improving the effectiveness and coherence of Government Services to business'

(Great Britain HM. Treasury, 2004, p.45). According to Prowess, the report "provided the clearest analysis to date of the issues around "extending enterprise" to under-represented

groups" (op cit, p5). Such 'under-represented groups' included women, minority ethnic groups and social enterprise organisations.

In December 2002, the Small Business Service released another important policy document,

²⁷ www.genconsortium.org

in support of widening the participation of women in enterprise. 'Small Business and Government – the Way Forward (Great Britain Department of Trade and Industry Small Business Service., 2002)' provided a cross-governmental strategic framework for assisting small businesses. Seven strategic themes were outlined to improve productivity, economic growth, and develop 'enterprise for all.' As a part of consultation on this report, representatives from Prowess collaborated with civil servants from across Government on the second of September 2002, including the Treasury, the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and Skills, Women and Equalities Unit, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (pers com).

The meeting was important, as it indicated the range of strategic stakeholders that were required to ensure departmental 'buy-in' to the SFWE, and alignment to cross-governmental strategic framework.

Momentum for the strategy gathered pace after this, and after eight months the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise (Small Business Service, 2003) was launched, in May 2003. According to internal briefing documents from Prowess (pers com), the Framework was established to address long-term culture change across the UK related to the importance of female entrepreneurship as a contributor to national and regional economies. With this aim came a series of key issues with associated short and medium-term goals for the improvements to services for women involved in enterprises. The issues highlighted in the framework were business support, access to financial support, childcare and caring responsibilities and transitions from state benefits to self-employment. It aimed to provide a strategic approach to the gap in 'appropriate' business support provision for women and to deliver a cohesive framework approach throughout the UK, with an emphasis on long-term cultural and societal change. This was perceived to be needed by both women in business and policymakers, in order to increase the numbers of women starting, developing and growing businesses in the UK. It also sought to improve cross-government departmental cohesion around the key themes, and the sharing of good practice guidelines associated

with the themes across the UK. A series of targets for each of the themes were set, with a timescale of the end of 2006, and a progress review to be undertaken to ascertain progress against the targets.

The framework encouraged a partnership approach to its implementation. For example, under a series of measures on Business Support provision, the framework stipulates an activity of 'Capacity Building at Regional Development Agency level', with an associated objective to 'Embed the targets and principles of the Strategic Framework in relevant regional and local strategies, action plans, forums and organisations' (op cit, p48). From internal Prowess briefing documents to the Small Business Service, there was a clear emphasis on engaging at a regional level with the RDAs to influence business support services and the mainstream Business Link network's delivery plans for 2004 and 2005.

6.4.6 The West Midland's regional women's enterprise development.

6.4.6.1 The WEDA Phoenix Development Fund application.

The significance of the development of PROWESS and the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise was directly experienced at a later date in the West Midlands region. At the time of consultation on the Strategic Framework, and on the formation of PROWESS, the WEDA network across the West Midlands were not directly involved. There were comments made on the consultation draft of the Framework, but at the time, WEDA were developing their application to the PDF, entitled 'Bridge Over Troubled Waters,' which was an application to Phase 1 of the PDF – a year in advance of the PROWESS bid. Therefore, connections were not initially made between the PROWESS national initiative for a lobbying and advocacy network, and the West Midlands bid for Women's Enterprise Support.

The West Midlands WEDA Bid to the PDF was awarded in 2000 for a project to run until 2003. This timeframe was a year ahead of the Phase 2 projects (such as PROWESS), which ran between 2001 – 2004. The application was compiled by the Coventry WEDA but included elements of support from Sandwell WEDA. The bid was for West Midlands-based

regional enterprise support for women; specifically, 'socially-excluded' entrepreneurial women. The concept was to form a link (or 'Bridge' – hence the title of the bid) between these women and the existing small Business Support infrastructure, provided through the Small Business Service, The TEC and its partner enterprise providers. The project was unique amongst the first round of PDF applications, as it had the support of three Business Links (the mainstream business support agency) across the region.

The objectives of the project are important to note, as they formed the foundation of much of the philosophy and method of support that were adopted in the region throughout the next decade. These objectives, taken from the bid, are as follows:

1. To undertake action research to develop a profile of each of the five locations involved in the programme, to ascertain the current position of women, in relation to mainstream business support services.
2. To develop and implement local outreach programmes to access socially excluded women.
3. To develop and implement a women's empowerment programme which seeks to equip women with the knowledge, skills and confidence to start the process of developing their business idea and access mainstream business support provision.
4. To develop a flexible open learning training programme on CD ROMS, together with a good practical guide to equip key staff within the Small Business Service and their partners with the knowledge, skills and ability to access women and provide gender sensitive business advice and counselling to women.
5. To train suitably qualified and experienced enterprising women to be Business Advisors, thus addressing the severe under-representation of women in this profession
6. To monitor, evaluate and disseminate the results of this project to effect change on the national level.

(WBDA 2000, p6 [stet])

These were summarised as requiring actions of 'outreach', 'empowerment', 'effecting change' and taking 'positive action' to support these women (ibid, p 34). These themes recur in the future models of development support seen in the region. The project targeted a range of women who were classified as 'disadvantaged'. These were lone-parent mothers, unemployed women, those on a low income, Black and ethnic minority women, women returning to the labour force and women with disabilities. All such women within the Midlands region were eligible for support under the programme.

One issue for this project related to the preparation of financial aspects of the programme. Although eligible for one hundred per cent funding for the project, WBDA's bid was entrepreneurial, and mirrored previous funding applications from the European Union which sought match-funding (or co-financing) for the programme. WBDA applied for only three hundred and seventy-six thousand pounds through the bidding round, for a total project value of five hundred and thirty-six thousand pounds, which left a financial deficit on the project. The subsequent shortfall had repercussions on the WBDA partnership during the delivery phase, as some partnership members received less funding than was originally anticipated.

6.4.7 Other regional initiatives targeting women and enterprise across the West Midlands

6.4.7.1 Urban areas

It is relevant to this case to contextualise the position of the WEDA network and its Phoenix bid, with other women-focused enterprise initiatives in the West Midlands at that time. The network was one of several stakeholders involved in the process of developing women's business support in the region, but the only one run solely by women. Given the demise of WEDA in Birmingham, organisations in the City of Birmingham moved into providing business support and training targeted at women. Both ESF and ERDF structural funding was used to support these initiatives, which were delivered by voluntary and community-based enterprise support agencies, together with Business Link Birmingham and Birmingham City Council.

Business Link Birmingham was the main government-funded business support provider in Birmingham – the largest city in the region. At that time, it was delivered as part of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber applied to the Phoenix Development Fund for outreach and targeted support initiatives and was awarded the second largest UK sum of eight hundred and eighty-six thousand pounds (Ramsden 2005). The project aimed at supporting BME businesses, which included provision for a limited number of female led BME businesses. A further Phoenix Development Fund project was also funded in Birmingham, particularly targeted at the Asian community. Nazir Associates' bid was also amongst the top twenty highest funded bids at seven hundred and twenty-three thousand pounds (ibid). Again, some of the beneficiaries of this project were women in business in Pakistani communities.

These women were also being targeted for support from the community-based groups using ESF funding. For example, the 'Backing Bangladeshi Women's Project' worked across five council wards in East Birmingham (B8-B11 postcodes), delivering awareness-raising and basic skills training for those women seeking additional skills (Bangladeshis for Equal Rights, 2004).

Other initiatives using European funds to support training and assistance for women starting businesses developed in the Voluntary and Community Sectors; particularly in urban areas of the region. These included community-based enterprise support organisations, such as 'Just for Starters' in Aston, Birmingham, which secured funding from ERDF to match funds obtained via contracts for services from the Chamber of Commerce's 'Enterprise Link' Initiative (a specialist business start-up support initiative), in conjunction with Birmingham City Council (Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, 2000). Bids made via voluntary services councils, particularly in Birmingham, Coventry and The Black Country Boroughs' (Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall) were also successful in accessing funds for community-based groups (Black Country Consortium, 2004). The region was, therefore, a beneficiary of various grant-funding schemes, including the Phoenix Development Fund. This aligned with the remit of the PDF to provide support to disadvantaged communities. At

the time, the West Midlands had some of the highest local authority wards in England with communities facing multiple deprivations such as high levels of unemployment, poor housing stock, disability, poor health and low education and skill levels. (Great Britain, Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, 2000).

6.4.7.2 Rural women's enterprise support

Targeted support for women in an enterprise in rural areas of the West Midlands was not focused upon until the early 2000s. Several groups of women formed in peer mentoring arrangements through the Soroptimists and via Rural Community Councils, which had support in the rural areas of the Staffordshire Moorlands. In 2000, an initiative was formed at Harper Adams, the Rural Agricultural University in Shropshire. A network for women developing and running businesses in rural areas was established, namely Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE). WiRE was formed following research by Warren-Smith and Monk (2000), Warren-Smith (1999; 1997) and Jackson (2000) into the requirements for support for women working in rural-based enterprises across the UK. Warren-Smith (2007) writes extensively about the development of the initiative and its impact. An initial conference about the idea of a Rural Women's Network, indirectly funded by the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the European Social Fund (ESF) in February 2000 attracted many more participants from the Marches area of Shropshire, and Herefordshire, than were anticipated. In her initial research on the topic (2000;1999), Warren-Smith identified the inadequacy of the existing business support provided to women working in rural businesses.

In 2002, a Business Skills Conference with practical workshops took place at Harper Adams University College, whose speakers were from HSBC Bank, Business In the Community, the Countryside Agency and the then Secretary Of State for Trade and Industry, and Minister for Women, Patricia Hewitt (WiRE, 2002). Hewitt was instrumental in the development of the women's enterprise support agenda, given her role at the Department of Trade and Industry. The case for the contribution of women's role in the rural economy was also further boosted by the publication of a report on this matter, funded by DEFRA in 2003 (The Countryside Agency, 2003).

The collaboration of various government departments, private and the voluntary sectors enabled WiRE's development as a network and support organisation between 2000 and 2003. Within the West Midlands, for example between 2002 and 2004, WiRE attracted a total of just over one million, two hundred thousand pounds from various sources including just over half a million pounds from the European Social Fund, one hundred and fifty thousand pounds from HSBC bank, two hundred thousand pounds from the Regional Development Agency (AWM) and forty-two thousand pounds from Business Link (ibid, p138). Services provided to WiRE network members by the organisation included a preferential rate business loan from HSBC Bank, business networking events, a newsletter and online forum, business advice and training.

The importance of WIRE to the development of the West Midland's regional infrastructure for women's enterprise support is discussed further when addressing implementation, later in this case.

6.4.8 Coalescing around the Framework in the West Midlands.

In order to take forward the key actions of the WESF across the UK regions, the Small Business Service appointed three consultants in November 2003 to work on operational implementation with RDAs across England. Consultants specifically targeted the South West, East Midlands, and London areas, acting as what Cairney refers to as 'policy entrepreneurs'(Cairney, 2012). Working with the RDAs over 18 months, the consultants formed regional steering groups from stakeholder organisations across the region, often chaired by a Board member or senior executive of the RDA. As a result, a multi-disciplinary group was formed to address the cross-cutting themes of the Framework. However, the approach differed in the West Midlands region, as at that time there was not a national 'policy entrepreneur' allocated specifically to the region. Instead, one of the consultants operated across two regions, acting as a representative of Prowess.

As a part of its ESF match-funded activity, Prowess launched a series of events across the

UK to focus on the implementation of the SFWE. In December 2003, a conference event took place in central Birmingham which resulted in the creation of a Forum for Women's Enterprise in early 2004, headed by an AWM Board member, who was also the first female President of the British Chamber of Commerce network in the UK (the BCC being the contractors for the business support network across England at the time). With secretariat support obtained from Coventry University, the group became the West Midlands Forum for Supporting Women's Enterprise.

The Forum comprised one hundred and ten women's enterprise-related representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors, Universities, government bodies, plus individual businesswomen. An action plan for Women's Enterprise in the West Midlands was developed in November 2004 as a response to the Government's Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework (West Midlands Forum For Supporting Women's Enterprise, 2004). Funding for support of the Forum was provided by the DTI's Small Business Service, AWM, as the Regional Development Agency and Prowess, through their ESF Equal Project 'Accelerating Women's Enterprise Mainstreaming Partnership'. The Action Plan presented a range of short, medium and long-term objectives for embedding the role of women's enterprise in policies developed by the Regional Development Agency, as a part of their Regional Economic Strategy. The needs of minority ethnic women were highlighted as being implicit in all of the categories of women to be supported (young women, older women, those working in social enterprise, for example). The report highlighted that "Minority women do not need a different service; instead, they need mainstream services to be differentiated accordingly" (ibid, 2004, p6). The needs of women from across all communities in the region were considered when the Action Plan was drafted.

The Action Plan launch came shortly after a Prowess summit for UK RDA representatives, held in Nottingham in July 2004, where representatives of the Small Business Service, the RDAs and women's enterprise organisations explored the role of women's enterprise co-ordination within the RDAs. A further agenda item was the formation of national Women's Enterprise Panel; a national advisory structure that was developed to advise government

ministers on the implementation of the WESF across the UK. This was taken forward by AWM's Women's Forum chair, who also became a member of the national panel. This gave the West Midlands high-level representation on a national policy forum. Further national influence was gained when the CEO of WEDA became the chair of the Prowess Board in 2006.

The West Midlands action plan, therefore, came with influential support at both the national and regional level. The West Midlands was viewed by SBS as one of the most developed regions for women's enterprise infrastructural support across England. This resulted in the development of a pilot 'Regional Women's Enterprise Unit (RWEU), in the West Midlands. The unit was initiated as a result of a Regional Development Agency bid into the Government's Small Business Service for additional funding to support women's enterprise development; money which was released as a consequence of the national Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework, and the recognition of the achievements of women in developing their own support infrastructure over previous decades.

Political involvement also contributed to the support for the region's bid for the RWEU. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the time, and also Minister for Women and the head of the Women and Equality Unit, Patricia Hewitt, was a key driving force behind the SFWE and its implementation across the regions. Her Deputy Minister for Women and Minister for Industry and the Regions in the DTI was Jacqui Smith – the same Jacqui Smith who was an advisory Board member for Redditch WEDA in the early 1990s. She was well aware of the women's enterprise agenda and maintained links with WEDA members as MP for Redditch, over this period.

6.4.9 Implementation of Women's Enterprise policy initiatives in the West Midlands.

Several women's enterprise policy initiatives developed across the West Midlands between 2004 and 2010. Each initiative gave rise to the next; those actors involved in each of the initiatives provided regional development policy owners with guidance and information that enabled, in the process of 'policy learning'. What follows are details of those initiatives.

6.4.10 The Regional Women's Enterprise Unit

The Regional Women's Enterprise Unit (RWEU) developed from the research and activity undertaken by the regional forum. It resulted from a call for bids from across the RDAs by SBS. Five successful projects were announced in the 2006 Budget, with AWM receiving the largest allocation of the five bids – a sum of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds which was matched by additional funding from AWM. The project was established as a partnership between the two main women's enterprise-supported providers in the region, namely Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE), covering support to rural women, and the Women's Business Development Agency (WBDA) covering the needs of urban women.

Both organisations provided specialist advisors and support for minority ethnic groups across the region, including women from Western and Eastern Europe, Africa, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The unit had two other partner organisations involved - Prowess, who aimed to disseminate learning and good practice from the initiative across the UK, and AWM, who sought to embed the practices into their mainstream business support provision (Business Link). The RWEU was chaired by a Prowess consultant, who had previously worked in the role of women's enterprise consultant to the Small Business Service.

The initiative ran for two years between 2006 and 2008, providing additional targeted support for women across the region, during the period when contractual arrangements were being made for regionalised business support delivery through Business Link, which provided brokerage and direct support services for all businesses across the region. At the time of the RWEU, the responsibility for contracting the delivery of mainstream government-funded business support services were devolved from the Department of Trade and Industry in central government to the Regional Development Agencies (Great Britain HM Treasury, 2004). This created an opportunity for the RDA to explore the potential for bespoke provision for female entrepreneurs within the mainstream Business Link Service. It was therefore important for the RDA to monitor the impact of the RWEU project on women-owned businesses in the West Midlands. It transpired that the RWEU services had an impact on the

regional economy. An independent impact assessment undertaken on the project in 2008 stated that:

‘Women-owned enterprises that have received services in the region are projected to collectively contribute an estimated £4.3m to the UK economy in 2008 and contributed an estimated £3.3m in 2007.’

(Blue Horizons [Scotland] Ltd, 2008, p3)

As a result of this, the initiative gained traction with the Regional Development Agency policyholder, and the Agency asked Prowess to bid to contract to provide further services to support infrastructural development for female entrepreneurs across the West Midlands and to explore ways of providing specialist business support services to women through the Business Link service.

6.5 Mainstreaming the approach to women's enterprise in the West Midlands.

In 2007, during the second year of the Regional Women's Enterprise Unit's activity, Prowess was successful in being awarded a contract to provide a 'Centre of Expertise' for Women's Enterprise in the West Midlands (commonly referred to as WECO). AWM established the Centre for two years, to facilitate the integration of women's enterprise activity into the mainstream policy of economic development and business support services across the region. It was explicitly established as a strategic body, so as not to be viewed in conflict with the delivery agencies, such as WBDA and WiRE.

6.5.1 Establishing a policy body: Women's Enterprise Centre of Expertise for the West Midlands (WECO).

The Women's Enterprise Centre of Expertise for the West Midlands commenced in January, 2008. Its mission was to provide a dedicated resource for the West Midlands, to facilitate the integration of women's enterprise into the mainstream policy and practices of economic development across the region. The main objectives were to provide the following, concerning women's enterprise development:

Market intelligence – gathering further data on women in business in the region.

Supply Side Analysis and Capacity Building – exploring the relevance of support to women in the region and developing additional relevant capacity through training and development

Stakeholder Engagement – awareness raising and developing partnerships with private and community sector organisations.

Scrutiny and Evaluation – providing support to AWM on the appropriateness of mainstream programmes.

Potential piloting of initiatives with partners (in the event of market failure).

(Prowess 2007, pers.com)

The Centre aimed to provide a range of services, supported by a variety of 'tried and tested'

tools and techniques (many of which were new to the region), to embed quality policies, practices, and procedures within Business Link West Midlands, thus 'mainstreaming' woman- focused business support. The measures enabled support organisations to assist a diverse range of women in business in more strategic and appropriate ways than had previously been used across the region.

The majority of WECOE's budget was revenue funding to cover office rental and staffing costs for five staff, as it was established as a policy centre and not as a project delivery organisation. Some funding was allocated for the development of capacity-building projects across the region. An example of this was for the training of accredited business advice workers from BME communities to work with women in their communities across the West Midlands.

The governance and reporting structures of the Centre illustrate the wide range of stakeholders involved with the project, and thus its level of reach. WECOE was a Prowess project, which was grant-funded from AWM and as such, was not affiliated to any of the local women's enterprise support organisations in the region. However, the Centre's Committee Group, comprised representatives from Prowess, local women's business support organisations (including WIRE and WBDA), academics from regional universities, two of AWM's executive including a project officer and local businesswomen.

The organisation had formal reporting links to the Regional Development Agency through a Grant Aid Agreement, and to Prowess, as the 'parent organisation' of the project. The Centre linked to other structures for business support, such as the West Midlands Enterprise Board at AWM; a body which had strategic responsibility for enterprise across the region, and also into the newly formed Business Link organisation, providing strategic guidance on the development of women's business services across the West Midlands. These relationships are shown in Figure 6.4 (next page).

The Centre also worked to raise the ambitions of economic development and business support organisations across the region in their expectations and perceptions of women's enterprise and its contribution to the regional economy. This was achieved through the engagement of regional policymakers, and a large body of women entrepreneurs, in a national dialogue with government departments to enable regional needs to be both identified and incorporated in the national strategy on women's enterprise. The body also influenced national activity, being identified for a period as the home for a National Policy Centre for Women's Enterprise, in the Government's National Enterprise Strategy in 2008 (Great Britain HM Treasury Department for Business and Regulatory Reform, 2008). However, this was changed by Prowess during 2008. They wanted the National Policy Centre to be located in London, as they had no physical presence in the UK capital.

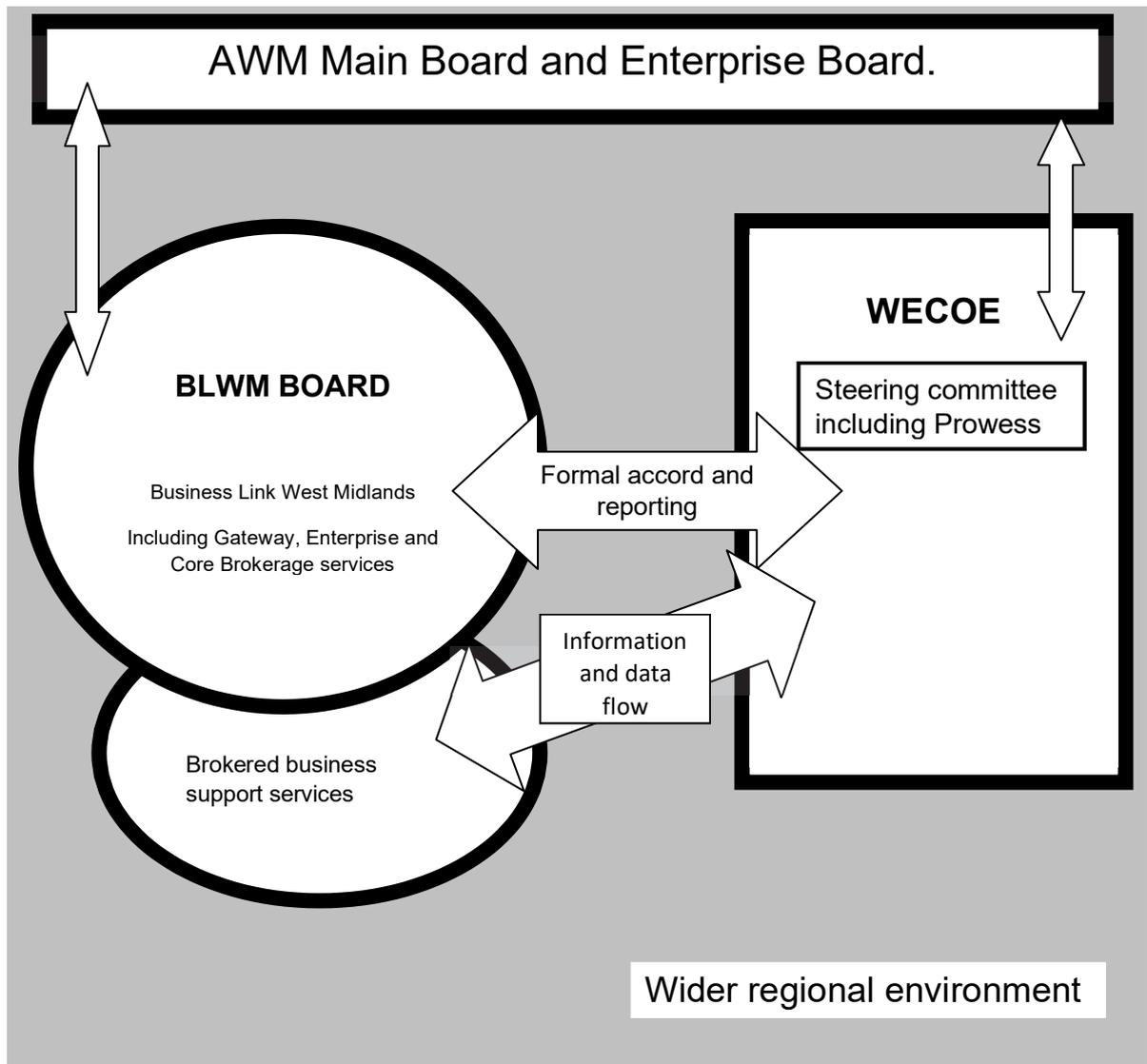
Nevertheless, the importance of the Centre of Expertise as a concept was adopted by AWM as a method for wider engagement of other groups in enterprise activity in the region. Following WECO, AWM established Centres of Expertise for Young People (YPCOE), Minority Ethnic Enterprise (MECOE) (Jones, Mcevoy and Ram, 2009), and Social Enterprise (SEWM). Each of these COEs was managed by different organisations across the region but worked together on developing a more inclusive enterprise support environment regionwide.

6.5.2 Developing existing agencies – integrating women's enterprise practice in mainstream business support contracts.

Both WBDA and WiRE, throughout the RWEU pilot, worked with representatives of Business Link West Midlands on the development of an offering for tailored business start-up provision to women across the region. Business Link tendered for a range of business support providers to deliver specialist support services to West Midlands businesses in 2008. Both WBDA and WiRE were offered core contracts by BLWM to support women's businesses. Contractual arrangements varied, with WBDA gaining additional contracts for services besides business start-up support, including access to finance contracts for the delivery of pre-growth finance support to firms. As a result of all of the activity that took place over the decades, this was the first time that bespoke women's enterprise services were

integrated into a state-funded mainstream business support service in the region. However, it was to be short-lived.

Figure 6.4: Relationship diagram between BLWM and WECOE Steering group and AWM Board and Enterprise Board Governance and reporting structures.



6.5.3 The end of an era.

6.5.3.1 Political change

In 2010, the political landscape in the United Kingdom changed, and this had consequences for publicly funded business support services across the UK. Following the recession after the global financial crisis of 2008, government spending on public services reduced considerably, with year-on-year savings requested from government departments (Elliott and

Atkinson, 2009). Within the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform: DBERR), a Business Support Transformation Programme (Business Solutions) was implemented in 2008 (BERR, 2009). The programme consolidated the range of business support services available through the Business Link Network, resulting in cost savings. A review of business support services in 2008 (Richard, 2008) also recommended the greater use of the internet for the provision of publicly-funded business support service, as a cost-cutting exercise. As a result, Business Link services were targeted for cost savings within the RDA's. Unfortunately, this coincided with the implementation of the women's enterprise mainstreaming services within Business Link in the West Midlands. The timing was not ideal.

Following the change of government after the election in the UK in May 2010, the new coalition government closed the Regional Development Agencies; seeking to decentralise power from Whitehall (as allegedly administered through the RDA) to a local level. Their services were gradually ceased or transferred to other statutory organisations. The business support services for start-up and existing businesses within the Business Link regional service closed in the West Midlands in March 2011. Some Business Link provision was transferred to a national website (Businesslink.gov.uk), but this website was closed in October 2012. The closure process was undertaken very quickly, with resulting losses in intellectual capital and regional resources. The Minister responsible for their closure, Vince Cable, even admitted to the UK press at the time that "The abolition of regional development agencies by the coalition was a "little Maoist and chaotic." "(Pike *et al.*, 2015, p. 191)

6.5.3.2 Legacy activity.

Following the closure of the RDAs, the government announced the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) across England. These organisations were, in effect, a scaled-down version of the business-led boards that formed a part of the RDA enterprise infrastructure. The LEPs operate on a sub-regional basis and have input into their local economic strategies. In effect, they are a return to the local economic development boards that were involved in the early developments of the WEDAs in the late 1980s.

With the closure of the Regional Development Agencies in 2012, the funding for the COEs projects ceased. However, the legacy of this work continues in various organisations across the West Midlands. Academic research centres on Minority Ethnic Enterprise and Women's Enterprise continue in Birmingham UK, through the 'Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship – (CRÈME)' at Aston University Business School, and the 'Centre for Women's Enterprise, Leadership, Economy and Diversity (WE-LEAD)' at Birmingham University Business School. Harper Adams University continues to host WiRE, which remains operating nationwide as a rural businesswomen's network.

WEDA in Coventry ceased operations in 2012, and the company was dissolved in 2016. Nevertheless, the impact of their work continues. Numerous groups of women continue to provide peer to peer support for businesswomen in the West Midlands. There are many private networks, run as women's businesses themselves. Many current publicly-funded organisations provide 'woman-friendly' services for women within their mainstream services, as a result of working with those organisations highlighted within this case.

At a national level, momentum has been maintained in various ways. The private sector has continued its involvement with supporting women's enterprise. Since the global financial crisis in 2008, subsequent UK governments' financial support to the banks amounted to a total sum of £1.2 trillion (Mor, 2018). Some UK banks, particularly those in which the UK government brought a stake at the time of the crisis, have chosen to increase their focus on the service provided to women in business. In particular, the Royal Bank of Scotland Group, (which includes the Royal Bank of Scotland, NatWest and Ulster Bank) are actively promoting their work with women in business. For example, in 2018, the then Deputy Chief Executive of NatWest Bank (and now current Chief Executive of the Bank) was tasked by the UK Treasury to review the barriers to female entrepreneurship. The review was published in March 2019.

Since 2010, the UK Government continued to support Women's Enterprise, but in word

more than in deed. Since 2010, the Burt report on business support for female entrepreneurs was published (Burt. MP, 2015), whilst in 2019, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women's Enterprise published its report, making recommendations to the private sector and government on 'pathways to progress' female entrepreneurship across the UK (Women and Enterprise All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2019).

While English regions have seen little central government funding for statutory support for women's enterprise since 2011, the situation is different in the devolved administration in Scotland. Following extensive work from stakeholders across Scotland (as outlined by Waring and Brierton, 2011), the Scottish government launched a Framework and Action Plan for Women in Enterprise in 2013 (Women's Enterprise Scotland, 2013), and have a Scottish Advocacy organisation for Women's Enterprise, namely 'Women's Enterprise Scotland'.

6.6 Analysis.

This case has explored the formal adoption and implementation of women's enterprise policy in the West Midlands region. The focus of this case is the process by which the advocacy and agenda-setting work resulted in positive outcomes for women's enterprise in the region. Political willingness to move forward with an agenda was important. Having worked with politicians throughout the development of the women's business support organisations during the 1990s, both the political allies and the women's enterprise groups were primed to grasp opportunities which arose.

One major opportunity was money from the Phoenix Development Fund. This enabled organisations and networks to expand across the region, building capacity for greater levels of service to nascent and existing female entrepreneurs. The Phoenix Fund also contributed to the acceleration of UK-wide strategic formulation. The development of Prowess brought together both the critical mass and the resourcing to enable the development of the first national strategy for Women's Enterprise in the UK. The organisations in the West Midlands were initially focused on their project implementation but were soon to become key figures

within the national movement of Prowess. The CEO of WiRE was a founder director and chair of the Board of Prowess, and later the CEO of WBDA became the Prowess chair. The involvement of both organisations from the West Midlands region heightened the profile of the extensive work that was being undertaken with women in enterprise.

Another important organisation highlighted in this case was the Regional Development Agency, AWM. AWM had a champion for women's enterprise on their Board, and she was instrumental in ensuring that the implementation of the WESF was taken forward in the region. She was also a member of the regional Enterprise Board which had oversight of enterprise- related policy. As this person also had additional roles as the President of Prowess and a member of the Government's Women's Enterprise Panel, it assisted with providing vital support to initiatives highlighted within the case.

The role of networks and fora was also important. The WEDA and WiRE networks mobilised thousands of women in the region into training schemes, profiling events, peer support and importantly lobbying and advocating with the private sector, including financial institutions for products and services that met their requirements. The sheer visibility of a wide range of women actively participating for change played an important part in gaining recognition for policy change.

The role of the policyholder within the RDA is also important to note. The West Midlands was fortunate because it had officials working within the organisation that were receptive to policy changes being implemented from the WESF. In some regions, it was a struggle for the Women's Enterprise facilitators from SBS to organise implementation planning meetings. However, AWM had a champion in the person brought in to manage the business support transition in 2005. This woman was keen to embed 'an enterprise culture' across the region; grasping the strategic messages emanating from SBS and using them to attract additional resources into the region which could be used to widen participation in enterprise- related activity. She was also ultimately responsible for the design and contracting of the Business Link and Manufacturing Advisory Services in the region, and therefore had power

to influence the form and content of business support delivery. The Enterprise team within AWM were therefore amenable to suggestions that were being put forward to integrate women's enterprise policy and practice across the region.

The role of Prowess in the region also played an important part in the implementation of policy within this case. The organisation had both positive and negative effects on regional outcomes. Positive effects arose from raising the national profile of the West Midlands regional initiatives to the extent that they were perceived as national exemplars (as illustrated within the case). In working in partnership with Prowess, additional financial resources were brought into the region, at both operational and strategic levels. At operational levels, the RWEU initiative provided funds to widen services across the region. It also enabled learning from the Phoenix fund initiatives to be embedded into both outreach services and community-based financial planning support to female entrepreneurs.

One of the negative factors of Prowess involvement was that, as partners, they gained some of the financial allocation which was not entirely used within the region. The role of the chair of the RWEU advisory board was funded by Prowess, but they also took an administrative fee.

This was used to a certain extent in regional support, but some funding went into their central administration. This created some friction for the local agencies. Further tension was created by Prowess through the expansion of their Prowess 'Flagship Award'. Prowess adopted a form of 'Charter Mark' for woman-friendly business support from its inception, and the verification process for this brought an income stream into the organisation. Both WBDA and WiRE were founder award winners of the Flagship Award, which held a certain status for the organisations. However, Prowess sought to increase their revenue stream by expanding the criteria of the types of organisation that could be awarded Flagship status. It brought the membership into conflict with the executive, as they deemed that this would dilute the brand and the nature of service delivery that women-focused enterprise support agencies brought to their clients. Thus, began conflicts that were to escalate in the development of the centre

of Expertise for Women's Enterprise (WECOE).

WECOE was also established in conjunction with Prowess. It was viewed as a strategic body, which was not in conflict with local delivery partners. Given that senior staff from both WiRE and WBDA were at the time Prowess board members, it was assumed that the boundaries between the work of the COE and WiRE and WBDA would be demarked. In reality, problems arose from the outset. This was partly due to personnel changes, but also to a clash of cultures between the demands of national body executives and the drive to satisfy policy priorities at the regional level. WECOE did achieve a wide range of outcomes related to capacity building, stakeholder engagement and awareness-raising at a policy level over its time, but it was tainted by difficulty with management relations within Prowess.

These points are highlighted in order to illustrate the difficulties faced in maintaining coalitions when implementing policy. These matters will be addressed further when exploring the ACF analysis within the following chapter.

SECTION 3: CASE ANALYSIS USING THE ACF FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 7: MULTIPLE CASE ANALYSIS.

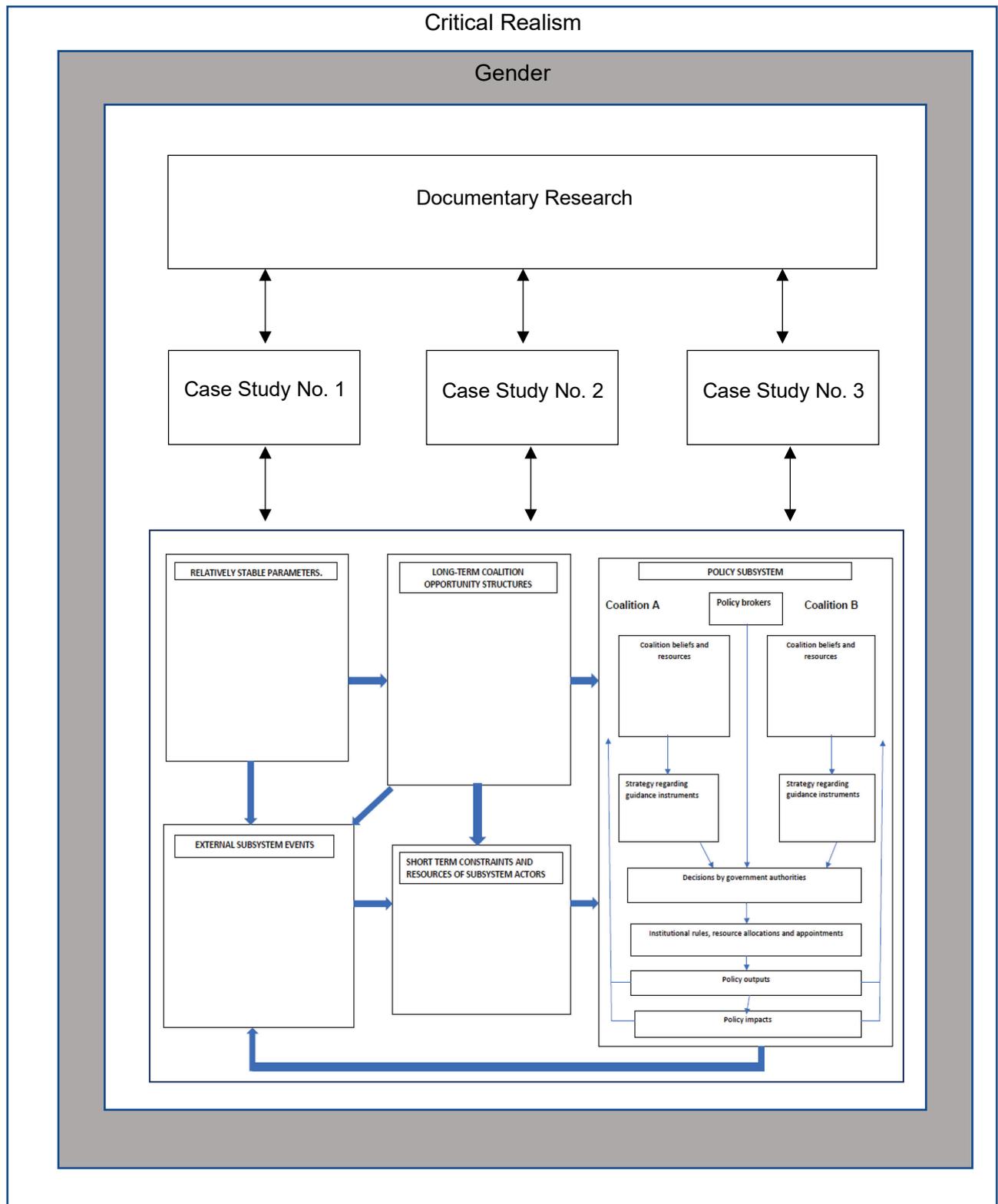
7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the case studies in the previous chapter. The analysis was systematically compiled from each of the cases, using the Advocacy Coalition model as a guide. The approach was undertaken in several stages, which are briefly described here. A detailed example of the analysis of a specific case (case study one) is provided for illustrative purposes in Appendix 5.

The chapter begins with a reminder of the conceptual framework and details the Advocacy Coalition Framework within it. Following this, the Advocacy Coalition Framework model for the full case analysis is then posited. Narrative analysis is then provided, detailing the aspects taken from the model, in order to provide an assessment of policymaking for women's enterprise development between 1989 and 2010. These are then discussed and synthesised in order to structure the process over time.

Finally, a cumulative critical analysis overview is provided, which relates to both the gender and critical realist frames shown within the conceptual framework. Before commencing the analysis process, there follows a reminder of the conceptual framework and the Advocacy Coalition Framework used in this analysis.

Figure 7.1: The conceptual framework

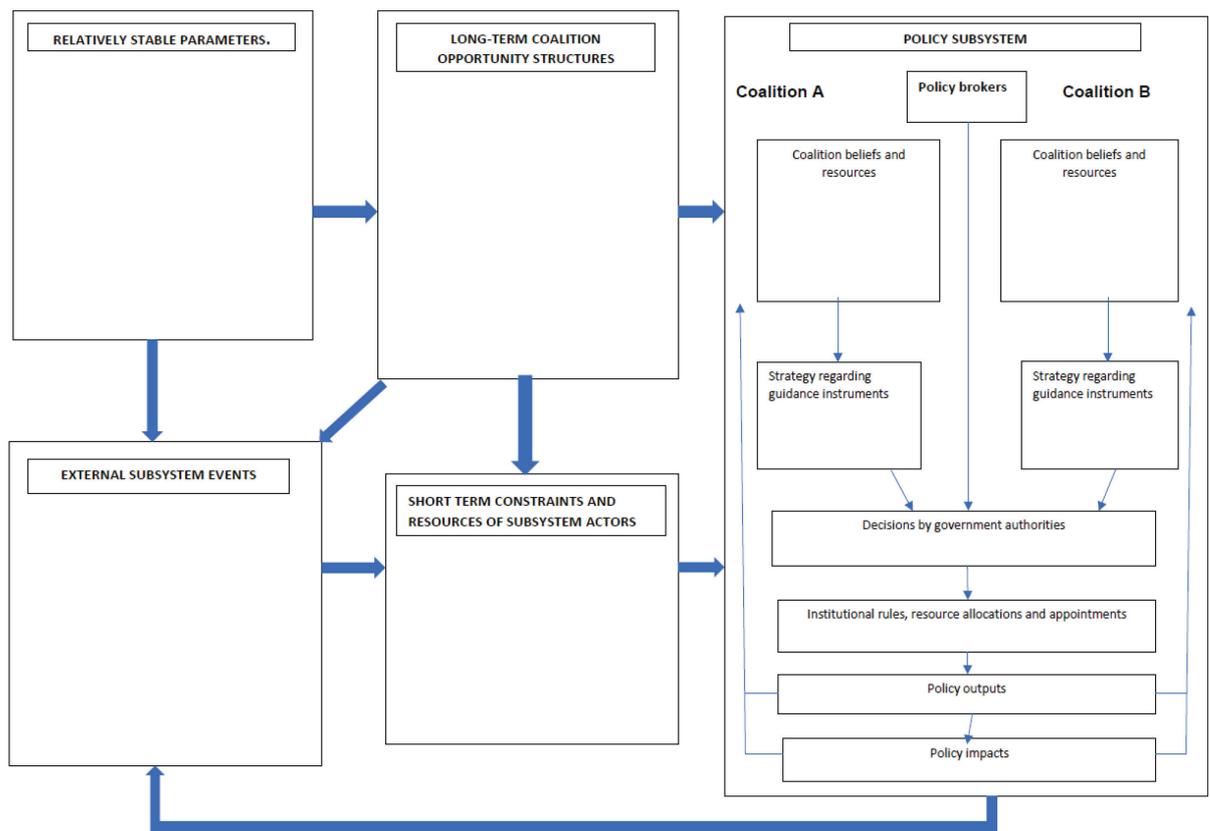


As indicated in Chapter 1, the framework acts as a conceptual map of the process of theoretical analysis of the details in the cases.

7.1.3 The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)

This framework model is situated in the bottom half of the overall conceptual framework. It provides us with a robust method by which to interrogate the information within the case studies. As a reminder of the areas of the model being covered within the analysis, the framework is again presented below.

Figure 7.2: The Advocacy Coalition Framework

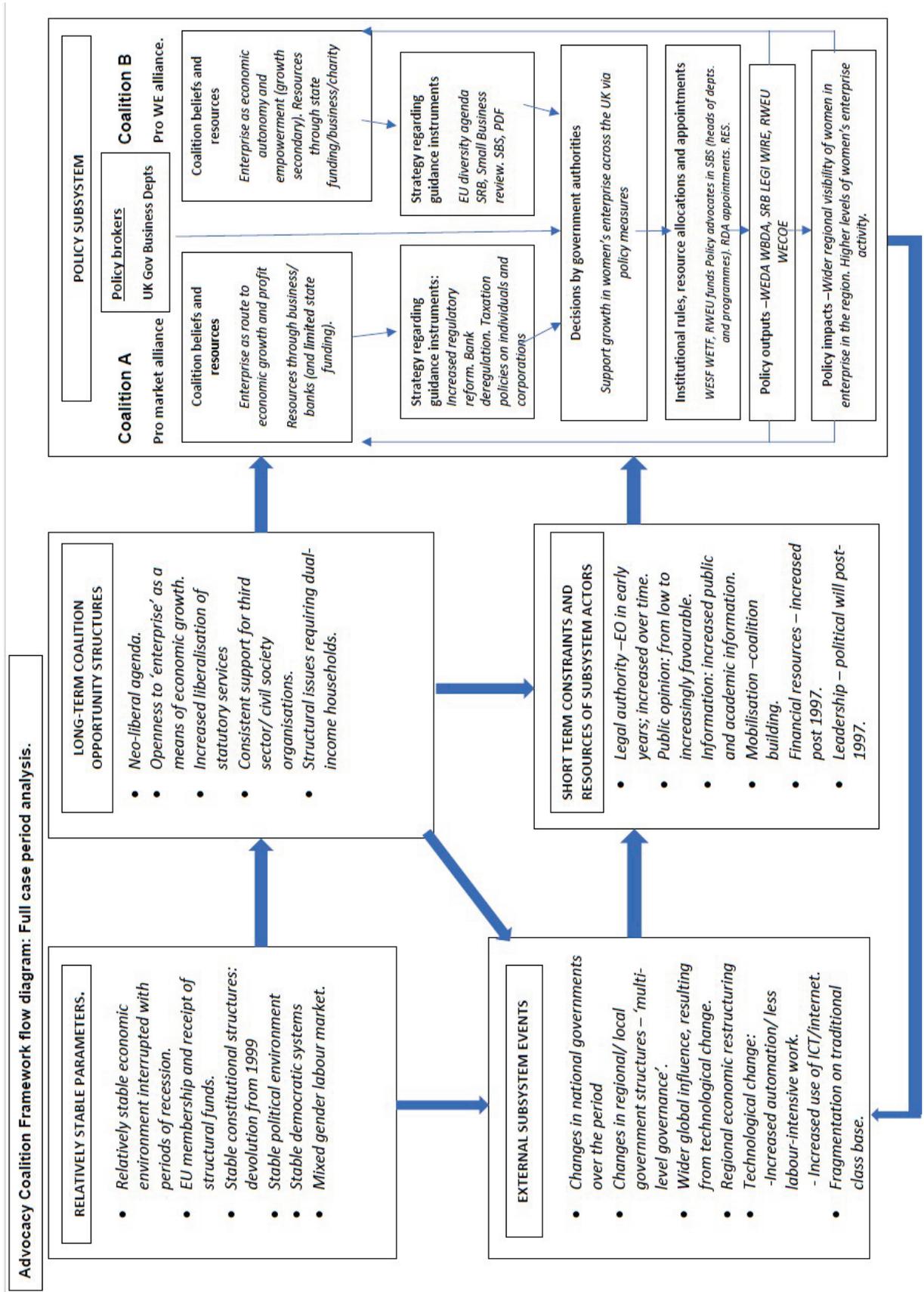


It is the analysis of the cases utilising this model that we now turn to within this research.

7.2 Advocacy Coalition Framework analysis of the cases.

The overall analysis framework model for the three cases is provided below, which is then followed by the narrative analysis, based on the contents of the diagram below. A diagram is provided at the start of each analysis section, to guide the reader. It illustrates the area of the model under scrutiny within that specific section.

Figure 7.3: Advocacy Coalition Framework analysis model for the entire case study periods

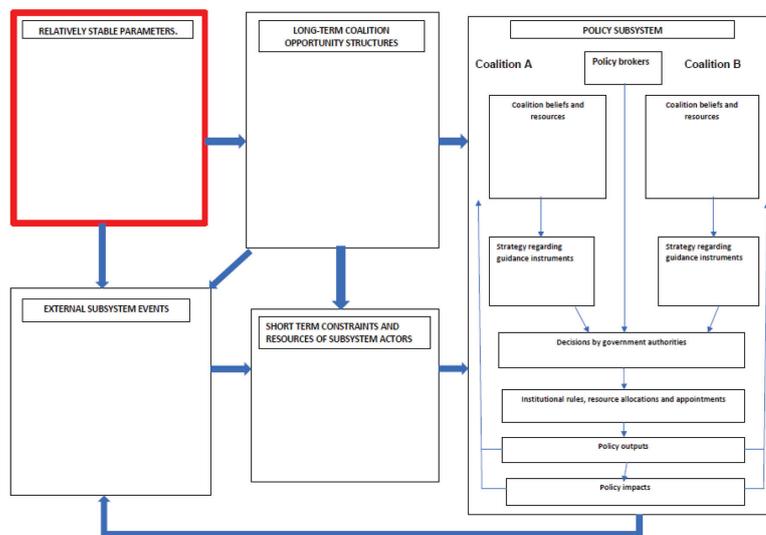


7.2.1 Case study analysis utilising the model.

The analysis begins with the domain of 'Relatively stable parameters' from within the model. There then follows analysis and discussion on each of the areas established within the model.

7.2.1.1 Relatively Stable Parameters

Figure 7.4: Relatively stable parameters



The 'Relatively stable parameters' section of the model addresses factors that contribute to the overall stability of the environment in which the policy subsystem is situated, i.e. the societal, cultural, legal and economic framework of the society, which in this case is the West Midlands region of the UK.

Throughout the study in the cases, it is argued that the environment was relatively stable, as the UK has a long-established judiciary and form of governance. However, changes occurred within the government, which are highlighted within the cases. A tier of regional government (West Midlands County Council) was disbanded shortly before WBDA commenced, to be reinstated a decade later with the Regional Development Agency AWM, which itself was disbanded just over a decade later. Over this period, the local authority

structures remained, with Borough and Shire Counties. The recursive 'expansion and contraction' of state bureaucracy from centralised Whitehall-based policymaking to forms of decentralisation and back again, continues beyond the duration of this research— a Combined Authority structure for the region with an elected Mayor was introduced from 2015.

These structural changes bring both frustrations with elements of wasted resourcing (constantly 'reinventing the wheel' for another decade), but they also bring opportunities to renew the policy message to a new audience of policymakers, which advocacy coalitions can grasp. This was the situation with those seeking to further women's enterprise during the study period; at every perturbation with external subsystem events, coalition members sought to maximise on opportunities that arose. If there was a problem, the coalitions found a way to respond tactically, in order to maintain the visibility of the role of women, within the policy framework across the region. For example, with the closure of two major car manufacturing plants in the West Midlands (in Longbridge, Birmingham and Ryton on Dunsmore, Coventry), the Regional Development Agency established a Regional Task Force to support the impact of large-scale job losses. Parts of the Women's Enterprise Coalition were actively involved in delivering programmes of support through the Task Force, ensuring that the role of women's enterprise was viewed as a contributor to mainstream regional economic development initiatives.

Birmingham and Coventry City Councils were particularly adept at accessing European Structural Funds during the period covered by case studies one and two. The Economic Development Departments within local authorities across the region had the policy remit of supporting businesses within their localities. European Structural Funds were used to supplement authority income for both infrastructural projects (European Regional Development Funds) and training (European Social Fund). ESF monies targeted training for women under-represented in local labour markets, and groups such as WEDA and WiRE accessed those funds in their early years of operation. With a mixed-gender labour market, women were under-represented in a range of occupations, and EU funding enabled training

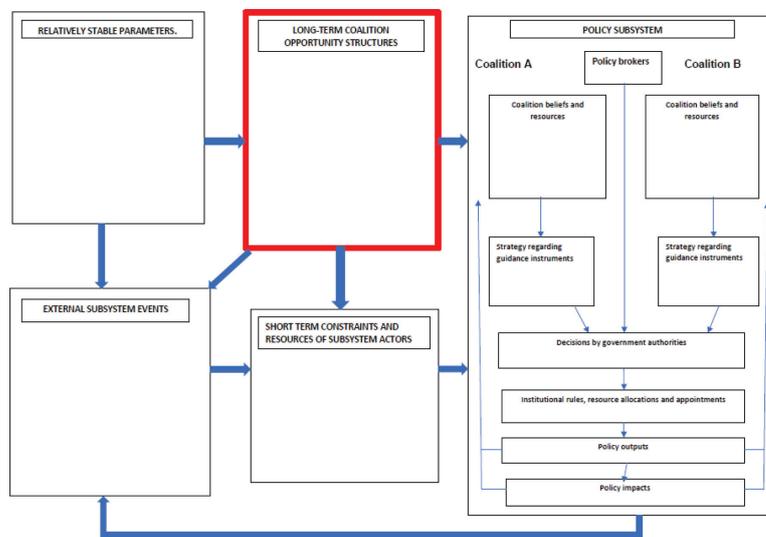
to encourage women to develop vocational skills in labour market sectors in which they were underrepresented (as illustrated in case study one).

As detailed in both case studies one and two, between the mid-1980s and 2010, there were several changes in government, with an increased neo-liberal economic agenda, following the era of the Thatcher and Major governments (1989-2007). There was also relative stability in the UK's relationship with the European Union; the UK remained a member of the EU, albeit negotiating a variety of Treaty 'opt-out' clauses. Domestically, the responsibilities of membership within the EU caused internal issues for UK political parties, particularly within the Conservative party. Nevertheless, EU membership prevailed throughout the study period, with its associated legal and economic conditions, and bringing undoubted benefits for the region. These benefits include the use of EU Structural Funds for large infrastructure projects, and the labour market benefits identified from the use of ESF funds, as highlighted above.

Turbulent economic times arose towards the end of the period of the third case study, with the onset of the global financial crisis and its resulting impact upon the economy of the United Kingdom. The effects of the crisis were beginning to have an impact at the end of the case study three but were to have more important effects after the period of this study, as highlighted in the analysis at the end of that case. Some of the structures for women's business support that were developed over the case study period collapsed, but it is to be argued that policy learning and programme impacts continue to date. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

7.2.1.2 Long Term Coalition Opportunity structures.

Figure 7.5: Long term coalition structures



The opportunity structures throughout the period are examples of the creation of favourable conditions that policy actors were able to exploit. They are detailed further below.

Neoliberal agenda, openness to enterprise and service liberalisation - Given the relative stability of macro-environmental and political issues, policy actors explored opportunities for policy influence and worked within the structures over the long timeframe of the case studies. The openness of government to enterprise and business start-up as a result of neoliberal economic policy presented the largest opportunity. This is because it enabled a culture change in how both small business and enterprise activity were perceived by the UK population. As shown in case studies one and two, many women at that time were providing additional income for themselves or their families through small scale ventures. However, they were often either trading unofficially (i.e. not declaring themselves to taxation authorities) or trading on a very small scale. Government schemes such as The Enterprise Allowance Scheme facilitated their opportunity to 'take the next step' and legitimise the business, or to expand the business. Such micro-enterprises were not major contributors to income and corporation tax revenues for the country at a macro-level, but at the micro-level of the individual women and her household, they were often life-changing. For the

government, the EAS was a scheme to reduce unemployment, but it provided the opportunity for many to consider self-employment and business formation as a credible alternative to employment, or unemployment. It is not the intention to provide a positive explanation of this, as there is much to be criticised within this approach; nevertheless, for analysis using this model, it is important to recognise the opportunities identified by women for policy development and change. Critical analysis of government approaches will follow later in this chapter.

Support for the Third sector/ civil society organisations - A further enabling factor throughout the study was the role of the Third sector or civil society organisations in the UK. From the outset of organising to facilitate change to women's enterprise policy and practice in the 1980s, voluntary and community organisations as entities were at the forefront of developing approaches which were subsequently adopted by state policy brokers. Many organisations that were established to support women's enterprise were formed as 'not for profit' organisations; these forms of company structure have expanded over the years under investigation in this study, but the majority were formed as companies limited by guarantee. This specific structure was rather defined by the requirement for organisational funding, as it was a condition of many charitable and state funders that beneficiary organisations were structured in the form of a company. Other group structures played a part in the formation of coalitions, such as a range of fora, partnerships, informal associates, co-operatives, individual businesses and self-employed women (see also the 'policy subsystem analysis' subsection below, for further details on coalition members). Nevertheless, the continued support of third sector organisations by the state and businesses (through their Corporate Social Responsibility agendas) ensured an environment that was conducive to Third Sector participation in public policy formation.

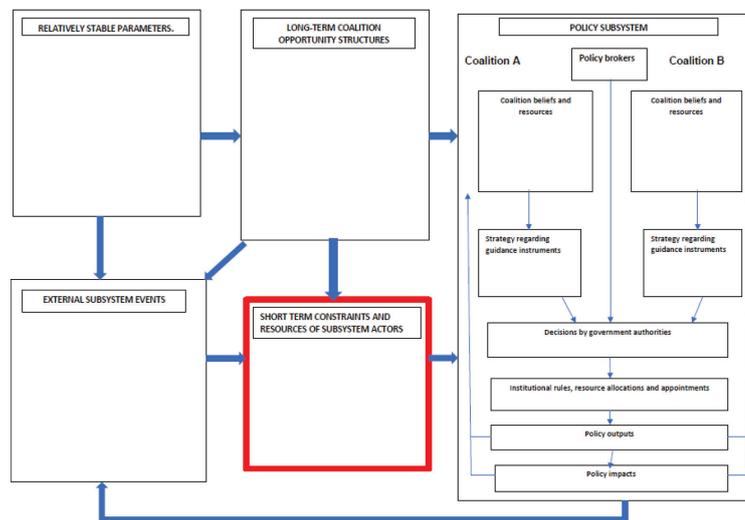
Economic Structural issues - A further 'opportunity' for creating policy change resulted from increased inflationary pressures, particularly related to house price inflation. With liberalisation in the public sector housing market from the early 1980s, and the 'Right to Buy' scheme for social housing, the UK has seen a rise in owner-occupation, and property in the

private rental sector, with a simultaneous reduction in the private building and social housing stock.

According to the UK Office for National Statistics (2016), the number of houses built per annum has fallen by 40% between 1980 and 2016. The average mortgage repayment for owner-occupiers is now at around 35% of household income. This results in house price inflation over the period under study, with households generally requiring two incomes within a family in order to afford mortgages or rents. While ‘in-work benefits’ have been made available from the state for low-income families, the need for two incomes in a household remains high. Rather than being perceived as extra income, self-employment and business formation have become a means for additional household income to be raised. This resulted in greater demand from those seeking relevant business support for their ventures over the case study periods (Bennett, 2008).

7.2.1.3 Short -term constraints and resources of subsystem actors.

Figure 7.6: Short -term constraints and resources of subsystem actors.



This section of the analysis explores factors in the policy system that may have an accelerating or braking effect on actions that actors within the policy subsystem may encounter. They can, in effect, speed up the process, or slow it down. In exploring these

factors, this analysis adopts a contemporary adaptation to the ACF, (as developed by Sabatier and Weible, (2007) and partially based on the work of Sewell, (2005)), which defines the constraints and resources in more detail than in previous versions of the model. These factors, as they relate to the women's enterprise policy process, are detailed below.

Legal authority – there were various members within the Pro-WE coalition who had legal authority. Several coalition members worked in legal affairs and were public appointees to statutory Boards. For example, the head of the Equal Opportunities Commission in the 1980s was an advisory Board member on WEDA. Many of the subsequent Board members of WEDAs and WiRE worked directly in legal firms or ran legal practices. This was beneficial to the policymaking process as women had the technical 'know-how' (or knowledge capital) when putting forward their case for policy change. Their policy recommendations were supported with relevant equalities legislation.

Public opinion – over the case study periods, the women's organisations within their coalition worked extensively to raise the profile of women in business. The variety of measures addressed in the cases, such as Bankers Forums, awareness campaigns, outreach work into neighbourhood communities, newsletter publications, media interviews and political events were all attempts to heighten the profile and raise the visibility of women's economic participation, at a time before the popularity and ease of use of social media platforms.

Importantly, Black and low-income women's role in economic activity outside of the domestic sphere was a focus of much of this activity. The use of accessible role models for these women was a key to engagement at the time, with many women highlighting the lack of visibility of themselves in mainstream business literature. Increasing their visibility encouraged more women from BME backgrounds to belong to organisations that formed a part of the coalitions operating within the policy subsystem.

Information - The role of information played a major part in profile-raising, policy formation and change. The origins of NWEDA developed from an academic institution, and therefore the role of the academics and their research were central to the establishment and organisation of the Pro-WE coalition. Every WEDA had a feasibility study undertaken before local authorities, or private sector beneficiaries would support the venture. This was also true of every public or third sector organisation that was formed during the study. Research evidence of the need for such ventures was required, together with their potential outcomes and impacts. Much of this development work was undertaken by researchers from regional academic institutions.

Research data and reports were required by the Pro-WE coalition at every stage of policy influence. Data gathering on key practical and policy issues, programme and project management information, dissemination through various media, and arranging visits from policymakers and politicians, all required data management and co-ordination.

The role of academics and their institutions, therefore, played a very important part in the policy process. Each of the case studies illustrates the role played by individual academics and educational institutions in the support and development of the policy issue. They played a key role in the Pro-WE coalition, in providing evidence which contributed to policy change. This does not indicate that all the policy changes that occurred were necessarily evidence-based. What it does indicate is that academic institutions and their staff were long-term influencers within women's enterprise policy change coalitions throughout the study.

Mobilisation²⁸ - The ability to organise women in support of the policy agenda over the research period is a core component of policy changes that occurred. Women from diverse backgrounds and ages were keen to participate in actions that raised their profile and enabled them to receive publicity and exposure, both for their businesses and subsequently

²⁸ Sabatier and Weible's 2007 adaptation to the ACF emphasises 'mobilizable troops' (ibid., p 203), but as this study is not a war-based scenario, the terminology of mere 'mobilisation' is preferably adopted for this analysis.

for changes in strategy and policy. The formation of networks and community -based, civil society organisations provided a so-called 'grassroots' or 'bottom-up' influence on policy action.

Similarly, business and professional women's organisations, sectoral professional bodies and academic institutions acted with politicians and legal professionals to create what can be perceived as a 'top-down approach' to supporting the policy agenda. The groundswell of support for the agenda is illustrated within the case studies, with the numbers of women taking part in regional forums, for example.

Financial resources - Financial resources within the coalition fluctuated over the years of study. From humble beginnings, using sponsorship and small sums of grant income, a little money enabled further resources to be gathered, so to an extent, the financial impetus had to be gained from the start of the WEDA ventures. This is evident throughout the study. However, when operating in the domain of women's enterprise, those running organisations and campaigns were themselves enterprising in the means by which money was attracted in pursuance of policy change. For example, in the early years of forming the WEDA network, some elements of cross-subsidy for organisations across the region occurred. This was mostly achieved by shared resourcing, and the application of joint-funding bids, in order to apply economies of scale to the operation. During the early to mid-1990s, core financial resources for projects and programmes continued through local authorities, matched with ESF and ERDF monies for individual programmes. This was supplemented by some charitable donations and national urban and rural development funds.

Some organisations ceased, but those that sustained beyond 1997 and the new Labour Government were able to forge new strategic alliances, based on the incoming government policy priorities. The New Deal for Communities (administered by DCLG) targeted additional government funding to deprived areas of the UK. Two rounds were issued in 1998 and 1999, and both Sandwell, and Coventry areas covered by WEDAs were selected as areas to

receive New Deal Funding. This enabled opportunities for collaboration across the WEDA network, at the time before the Phoenix Development Fund was introduced.

The financial resource made available by Government through the Phoenix Development Fund was a major catalyst for policy change. This was because it enabled the connectivity between the various groups supporting female entrepreneurs, the female entrepreneurs and themselves, and the wider enterprise policy community within the Department for Trade and Industry. To a degree, it was the lubricant for the whole of the policy change process. The process was in train before the introduction of the PDF, but the PDF enabled coalitions to mobilise in order to meet the scale of the strategic challenge.

Leadership – To materialise a strategic vision from an idea through to fruition takes a wide range of skills, including patience, tenacity and long-term planning. If the vision is clear and well-articulated, it can be taken forward by many actors involved in the process. A coalition by its nature involves a wide range of stakeholders who come together around a core set of beliefs. When examining the longitudinal nature of a policy change, these beliefs remain, but those actors who take the idea forward and lead on it may change. Over twenty-five years, many leaders enabled women's enterprise policy processes.

In the early years (the late 1980s to mid-1990s), there were women from a variety of backgrounds leading WEDA organisations in the West Midlands – the majority in the region were from minority ethnic backgrounds. There was also a multi-faith approach, with leaders active in local religious groups. This was initially coincidental – organisational directors and management committee board members were drawn from across communities within the region - but given the multi-ethnic nature of the region, people from a variety of faiths (and non-religious people) participated in the organisation, and had representation on the management boards. The faith groups proved to be advantageous to the mobilisation of coalitions in the framework as they were often well-networked, and the networks were used when organising outreach and community events. They also formed communities of interest around policy issues or concerns, for example forming community-based businesses, or

supporting women in facing disadvantaged that were active in their community – in the form of community ‘self-help’. These women also had a connection with associated faith groups across the UK, which again was beneficial to developing coalition groups across the country.

Leaders also developed from other sources. As illustrated in case one, some leaders at the national level were initially community activists or local councillors. Others were Chief Executives of Local Authorities or senior executives in the financial services sector. These women were also well networked, bringing a range of social and cultural capital to the organisations, and enabling greater critical mass for the policy negotiation.

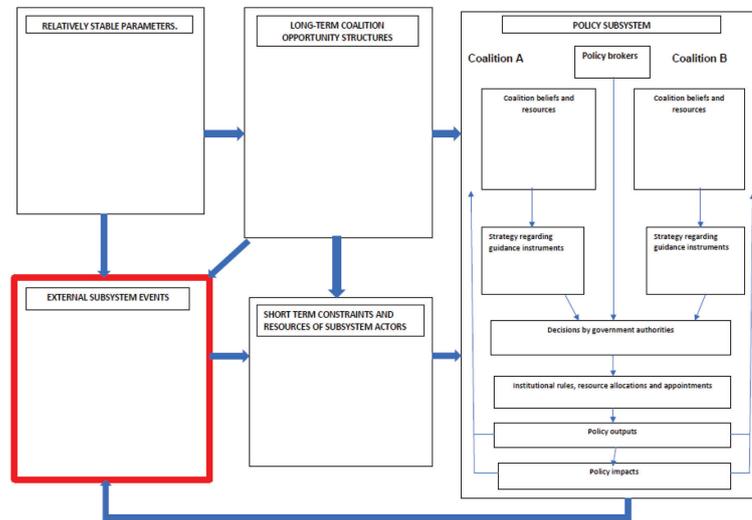
As time progressed into the early years of the new millennium, there were both established WEDAs and other women’s enterprise organisations in the region. Individual executives changed over time, but the core beliefs in women’s role in the economic development of the region were maintained. With the onset of the Phoenix Development Fund, a new national informal network of organisations working with a diverse range of entrepreneurs developed. At the same time, the development of the Prowess organisation also increased the complexity of the women’s enterprise support environment.

Matters of leadership within the organisation became more complicated after this point. Prowess was formed as a membership organisation, with a national remit to support strategic and policy development on the development of women’s enterprise. It comprised a board of mainly chief executives of regional women’s enterprise organisations. It also had a Board chair and a President. As the organisation became more established, there were several conflicts on practical issues, particularly with Prowess allegedly duplicating member services, or undermining the status of regional organisations through encouraging more mainstreaming of women’s enterprise support amongst a wider range of enterprise providers. The relevance of this to the West Midlands region was that both the chair of the board of Prowess and the President of Prowess were long-standing members of the women’s enterprise community in the West Midlands.

This is one example of the intra-coalition rivalry that was exhibited during the policymaking process in the West Midlands. This rivalry had consequences for policymaking in the region given the direct involvement of Prowess in key strategic and policy measures in the region, particularly during the period covered by case study three, namely their involvement in the RWEU and WECOFE initiatives. It is an example of how ineffective leadership can result in negative consequences for the policy process.

7.1.2.4 External subsystem events.

Figure 7.7: External subsystem events



Over twenty-five years, various macro-level events occurred within the region, which came to bear upon the policymaking process for women's enterprise development. These are identified on the overall case study framework and are expanded upon below.

Changes to national governments - Changes within national government impacted upon the policymaking process in many ways. The neo-liberal agenda in the Thatcher years acted as an enabler for the establishment of women's enterprise support organisations, as the opportunity arose to form a coalition of organisations to facilitate a national conversation on the topic.

Changes in the 1990s, with the development of the Training and Enterprise Councils and the demise of the national Small Firms Service, replaced by the statutory business support delivered sub-regionally through the local Chambers of Commerce network (Michael Heseltine's One Stop Shops, indicated in case study two). A major window of opportunity for policy influence and change occurred after the Labour government election of 1997, as indicated in case study three. Harnessing these opportunities was vital to the progress of policy change.

Changes in regional government structures - The changes to structures of local public administration were also important to the policymaking process. While local authorities supported the WEDAs throughout their development, funding for business support was administered from the DTI to regional Government Office and services were contracted via the Chambers of Commerce. From the mid-2000s, this funding was allocated directly to the Regional Development Agencies, who were tasked with developing their delivery mechanisms for business support. This led to integrated regionalised business support services which provided the opportunity for greater regional collaboration and implementation of women's enterprise support. The consultants that were taken on by SBS in 2003 (as indicated in case study three) acted as policy entrepreneurs in regional policy across the UK; a position which was reinforced with the introduction of the National Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework. The regional influence was established through the Women's Enterprise Forum in the West Midlands region. As a result, AWM's Regional Economic Strategy highlighted stated the need to encourage more women into enterprise (Advantage West Midlands, 2007).

Changes to the sectoral composition of the labour market - A further major external influence over the research period was the deindustrialisation of the West Midlands region and the changes in the prevalence of industrial sectors. As illustrated in case study one, the closure of manufacturing industry across the region led to large-scale unemployment. This also coincided with a period of technological change; the new sectoral employment relied upon different vocational skills from those previously used in heavy manufacturing industry, the

mines and the potteries. The rise in service sector positions increased technological innovation in manufacturing (for example, to vehicle manufacturing companies) and the growth of employment in information and communication technology industries necessitated mass upskilling of the regional workforce. The skills gap in the region remained across the period of the three cases. For example, in 2007, the region ranked in the bottom quartile of regions on most skills indicators, including levels of qualifications in the workforce, graduate retention, workplace training, and leadership and management (Advantage West Midlands, *ibid.*).

This change in labour market conditions, and the need for upskilling, created opportunities that enterprising women captured. With the changes in subsystem events, groups of women were able to explore alternative options for employment. In the early years of the cases, it was Black and low-income women who actively sought greater autonomy and better incomes and looked to self-employment and business creation to achieve this. Through being supported by WEDA, they understood that self-employment and business formation could result in changes in status for important statutory taxes, such as national insurance, which was a specific issue for married women. Having support from an agency which understood the specific difficulties facing women in the statutory pension system resulted in women considering these matters.

The sex-related differences in statutory benefit provision are one example of how women's business support assisted clients and had an influence upon subsequent policy advice within other government departments (in this case, the Department for Work and Pensions).

Shifting class perception - Another external event which had an impact upon the policy subsystem were changes in the perception of class across the region. It is argued that this occurred due to a combination of factors. Firstly, as previously outlined in section 7.2.1.2 on economic structural issues, homeownership increased, through the 'Right to Buy' scheme, households with their own home had an asset, which could be used as collateral against a loan. The asset was also aspirational and created an impression of greater levels of societal wealth. Secondly, the changes to the labour market saw an increase in 'blue-collar' workers.

Those working in the services sectors, in self-employment and starting businesses (however small) perceived themselves as different from being employed in low paid, low skilled industrial manual labour roles. In his work exploring social class in the twenty-first century, Savage (2015) identifies these factors as increased 'individualisation', but also highlights that the divide between those with extreme wealth and those with little wealth has grown over the research period in the UK. It is the area between the two extremes that have seen the greatest change in the traditional class structure. For example, traditional views of working-class political affiliations have become more diverse over this period.

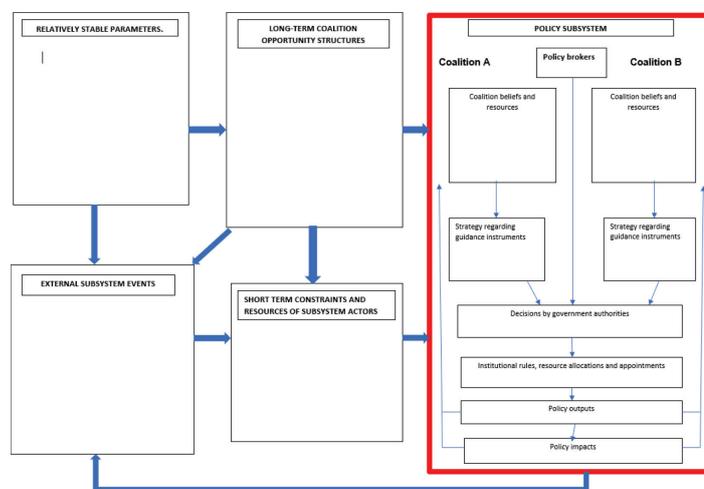
Concerning the external subsystem events within these cases, it is argued that the changing class perceptions and rising aspirations - particularly by those unemployed or working in low-income employment – provided conditions for harnessing the opportunity for policy change.

From the experience of women highlighted within the cases, it was not necessity entrepreneurship for all the women, but a choice that some of the women wanted to make.

The global financial crisis - A final external subsystem event which occurred towards the end of the case study period was the global financial crisis. As indicated in case study three, the impact of this was such that it changed both the political and fiscal policy landscapes in the UK. This resulted in major reductions in public spending, and the closure of much of the statutory business support function. While beyond the scope of this study, it led to changes in the policy subsystem, as different policy approaches were adopted.

7.2.1.5 The policy subsystem.

Figure 7.8: The policy subsystem



This section of the analysis covers what Jenkins-Smith et al. (2018) refer to as: “a policy topic, territorial scope and the actors directly or indirectly influencing policy subsystem affairs” (p.139). As such, it gets to the heart of the policymaking process for women’s enterprise in the West Midlands region over the case study period.

Coalition beliefs and resources - It is posited that this policy subsystem contained two coalitions, named within the model as Coalitions A and B. Coalition A was formed of a range of pro-neoliberal actors who wished to see a free-market economy, with deregulation at the heart of policy practice. They are termed a ‘Pro-Market alliance’ within the model. Coalition B is termed as a ‘Pro-WE alliance’ (where WE signify Women’s Enterprise). These represent a range of women’s organisations, groups and individuals (both male and female) seeking to promote enterprise as a form of economic autonomy for women and to raise the profile of the economic contribution of women’s enterprise to the UK economy.

While initially these two coalitions appear to have little in common, the Pro-Market alliance acted as an enabler for the Pro-WE alliance. Conditions in the late 1980s and early 1990s provided an increasing political will for the development of an enterprise culture across the

UK. At that time, the culture was seen as developing at macro and meso levels of society, with the privatisation of state institutions and the liberalisation of banking policy. However, due to the restructuring of the economy and labour markets, the government implemented policy measures to reduce unemployment, which included the Enterprise Allowance Scheme. The Scheme had eligibility criteria which were unfavourable to many women. WEDA operated throughout the scheme delivery, and network members worked together to lobby for changes to the eligibility conditions for married women. It can be argued that this laid the foundations for the Pro-WE alliance. Once WBDA officials had developed contacts through this initiative, they continued to work at both regional and national levels to increase membership of the alliance. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 illustrate examples of the range of coalition members in the Pro- Market and Pro-Women's Enterprise (WE) alliance, over the years of the study in the UK.

Points to note about these stakeholders and the coalitions are twofold:

1. The two coalitions share stakeholders in some cases. This is of interest because although the two coalitions appear to have little in common, their shared belief system about the value of enterprise enables them to work together. This point is explored in more detail when examining the core beliefs of the coalitions in section 7.2.3 below.
2. The range of stakeholders within the coalitions is of interest. They vary in background and sector and in some cases do not share political alliances. They are not a clique or appear as the 'iron triangles' which were prevalent in other policy analysis models.

Resources of the coalitions also differ in size and scope. The Pro-Market alliance were the predominant philosophical coalition at the time and were therefore well resourced and supported through government, private industry and financial institutions. In contrast, the Pro-WE Alliance relied upon charitable income, some private sector sponsorship – often provided by financial institutions – and statutory grants. To a degree, the resources of the Pro-Market alliance were responsible for financing the Pro-WE alliance.

Table 7.1: Examples of Pro-market UK stakeholders (not an exhaustive list).

| Type of coalition member | Example |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Business Representative Groups | Institute of Directors |
| Industrial bodies | Confederation of British Industry. British Bankers' Association. |
| Media | Daily Mail. Daily Telegraph |
| Parliamentary members | Margaret Thatcher, Ian Duncan Smith |
| Regional interest groups | Taxpayers Alliance |
| Think Tanks | Adam Smith Institute |
| Academics | Professor Phillip Booth |
| Financial Institutions (macro-level) | IMF. World Bank (Babb and Kentikelenis, 2018). |

Table 7.2: Examples of Pro-We UK stakeholders (not an exhaustive list).

| Type of coalition member | Example |
|--|--|
| Women's Business Representative Groups | Soroptimists, National Black Women's Network, Women into the Network. European Federation of Black Women Business Owners. Everywoman. Business and Professional Women UK. Women in Manual Trades |
| General women's groups | National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Fawcett Society. |
| Industrial bodies | Federation of Small Businesses, Institute of Directors |
| Media | The Times, The Guardian, Daily Telegraph |
| Parliamentary members | Lady Howe. Baroness Jay. Patricia Hewett. Baroness Betty Boothroyd. Jacqui Smith MP. Jenny Jones MP. Baroness Lorely Burt. Baroness Dame Rennie Fritchie |
| Regional interest groups | New Working Women. Foleshill Women's Training (Coventry). |
| Think Tanks | New Economics Foundation |
| Academics | Sara Carter, Susan Marlow. Angela Coyle, Mark Hart, |
| Financial Institutions (meso level) | NatWest Bank, Midland Bank. Lloyds Bank |

Strategies regarding guidance instruments - From the Pro-Market alliance perspective,

deregulation was a route to greater liberalisation of markets. Deregulation of financial institutions from the 1970s and stock market deregulation in 1986 enabled changes to the whole financial and monetary systems within the UK (Hasan and Taghavi, 2002).

Reductions in corporation tax also occurred sharply in the early 1980s with a levelling out at a rate of around thirty per cent for most of the 1990s and 2000s, reducing to twenty-eight per cent in 2008 (GREAT BRITAIN HM Revenue and Customs and HM Treasury, 2013). The relaxation of regulation and reduction of state bureaucracy in business drove the free

marketeers. The concept of enterprise as a driver of the national economy was also embraced by politicians, particularly Margaret Thatcher in the UK, who sought to have a small state and to enable free enterprise (BBC News, 2013).

The strategy for the Pro-WE alliance changed over the research period. Initially, the Pro-WE alliance sought equality of opportunity in access to support services to start and run their businesses. As shown in case study one, it was very difficult to navigate the banking system, as well as obtain appropriate support in the 1980s. At that time, the women's groups were approaching their concerns through equal opportunities legislation and by alliances with European Women's Groups working to obtain European Funding to develop initiatives.

Although WEDA initially modelled itself on a US project developing Women's Enterprise Support in the Black community, this alliance faltered when the national agency closed. With resource availability through European funding, an EU focus prevailed until the mid-1990s.

From the mid-1990s, this approach changed. Rather than seeking alliances with European women, the focus moved to examination of the US and Canadian models of enterprise support, as a means of gaining greater traction for UK WE policy initiatives. From a political level, this occurred following the visit of Baroness Jay to the USA, which preceded the 'Women in the New Economy Conference in 1999 (as illustrated in case study two). At the level of policy brokerage, representatives from the National Women's Business Council and Project Tsunami in the USA, and from the Canadian Women's Taskforce met with UK officials from the DTI in January 2004 to endorse an tri-partisan agreement with the purpose of exchanging best practice and sharing ideas on women's enterprise issues (Brieron, 2004). The agreement had the effect of refocusing the Pro-WE alliance members closer to the US and Canadian experiences of women's enterprise development. It also explains the move away from the Equal Opportunities focus of the earlier version of the Pro-WE alliance, to the 'economic case' for women's enterprise, as this was a major focus of the US strategic approach. However, as illustrated in the research case studies, resources for support

agencies were often co-financed with EU structural funds. Therefore, the practical focus for many Pro-WE alliance members was not entirely removed from EU policy directives and an equal opportunities approach to their delivery.

Within the West Midlands, the economic case for women's enterprise was the primary driver of policy change. This resonated well within the regional Economic Strategies of the RDAs in the early to mid-2000s and moved women's enterprise from the 'People and Place' agenda within the strategy to inclusion within the 'Business' section of the strategy (Advantage West Midlands, 2007). The economic case narrative shifted policyholders perception of the role of women's businesses across the region.

Decisions by Government Authorities - Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Women's enterprise initiatives were operating within coalitions comprising organisations at a local, national and EU level, with little interaction at a regional level. At the same time, Pro-Market alliances were continuing to deregulate, opening financing opportunities within banks for smaller firms. As discussed in case study three, where these two coalitions met were often at a regional level through the banking networks, and within government structures, such as the Training and Enterprise Councils and the Chambers of Commerce. This was the main regional interaction throughout this period.

After 1999 (i.e. from the case study three period), both coalitions met more frequently, initially through the Small Business Service, and later through the Regional Development Agency. The RDAs were structured with a business-led board, with representation from local authorities, trade Union bodies and representatives from the voluntary sector. Bringing such a range of stakeholders together enabled greater interaction between Pro-Market alliance members and pro WE alliance members within the region. As indicated in case study three, one of the RDA Board members was also the chair of the Women's Enterprise Forum in the West Midlands and was also a past president of the British Chamber of Commerce. This person acted as a conduit between the two coalitions when it came to the initial discussions of Women's Enterprise policy in the West Midlands. In acting as a champion for the Pro-WE

alliance, it resulted in policyholders within the region being directed by advisory Boards to the Agency (such as the West Midlands Enterprise Board) to implement government directives on Women's Enterprise.

The Women's Enterprise Strategic framework was launched in May 2003, and policyholders in the West Midlands were tasked with implementing the policy through regional strategies. The results of this can be seen in case study three and are discussed further in the next section.

Institutional Rules, outputs and impacts - The final three boxes within the ACF policy subsystem address the implementation of the policy measures. Within the West Midlands, the policyholder was tasked with ensuring that the WESF was embedded within the regional strategic implementation. Coalition members were involved in all stages of this process, with some acting as policy entrepreneurs by selling policy ideas to the policyholders. For example, Pro-WE alliance members worked with pro-market alliance members to advance access to finance initiatives for female entrepreneurs. Similarly, Pro-WE alliance members worked with pro-market organisations to train more female business and financial advisors.

The main strategic documents guiding the implementation of enterprise policy in the region was the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). The enterprise-related aspects of this strategy was the responsibility of the Regional Enterprise Board, which comprised representatives from industry, academia, the third sector, politicians, the trade unions, local authorities, and policy leads on other aspects of the RES from within the RDA. Within this range of Board members were also representatives of the Pro-WE and Pro-Market alliances. For example, the Chair of the Women's Forum (and the National Women's Enterprise Panel member) was also a member of the Enterprise Board, as were two important members of the Regional Finance Forum, who represented the Pro-Market alliance.

The Enterprise Board was a formal advisory board to AWM with a secretariat. The Chair of the Board changed in the latter part of the study period, but both Chairmen became involved with the work of the women's business delivery organisations in the early part of the 2000s. As the chair of Prowess was also the Director of WBDA (and the CEO of WiRE was also on the Prowess Board), individuals within the Enterprise Board were aware of the national profile of the women's enterprise initiatives in the region.

As a result of this, The Enterprise Board became further advocates of women's enterprise policy initiatives. For example, when AWM decided to bid for additional funding to establish the RWEU in 2006, the Enterprise Board supported this, with additional allocations of 'Single Pot' finance (i.e. AWMs core funding). The concept of the Centre of Expertise was also supported by the Single Pot budget and sanctioned from the Enterprise Board. These examples illustrate the embeddedness of the policy coalitions within the existing policy-making structures at the time.

The impact of embedding these policies into the regional infrastructure varied. There were both direct and indirect impacts, given the curtailment of the RDA and the Business Link from 2010 onwards. It is also necessary to look at whom the impacts apply to. For example, are we addressing impacts at a macro level of the regional economy; on the women's enterprise agencies or for women starting and growing businesses?

From the policy perspective, WECOIE developed a range of policy documents for AWM, identifying policy issues related to access to finance, business start-up, the requirements of existing businesswomen, and future policy matters. A contextual GEM data analysis was also provided (Hart and Martiarena, 2009). A sample of WECOIE reports are available to view in Appendix 6.

7.2.3 Core beliefs and policy learning within the case analysis.

7.2.3.1 Policy beliefs

The ACF model has at its heart the concepts of deep core beliefs and policy learning. As a reminder, core beliefs are a common set of values or belief systems that act as the 'glue', binding coalitions together over time. According to the model, these shared beliefs take three forms, deep core belief, policy core beliefs and secondary aspects. The deep core beliefs are the most entrenched, and the least likely to be affected by external events that might create change. They can be viewed as ontological issues.

Within these case studies, it is contended that there are shared core beliefs across the two coalitions within the subsystem. These are both supply-side issues, namely the legitimacy of enterprise as a means of increased prosperity; be that for society, or individuals; and the economic contribution of female labour to society. Both the Pro-WE alliance and the Pro-Market alliance shared these beliefs, but not necessarily with similar objectives in mind.

Over the research period, the Pro-Market alliance grasped the opportunity of greater liberalisation, in order to promote increased enterprise and innovation in society, and the reduction of the size of the state. The focus on women within this ideology was marginal, but in espousing economic freedom, they were creating an opportunity for women to grasp. The Pro-WE alliance originally sought equal access to enterprising activity and fought to address barriers which were perceived to prevent them from gaining that access. These included, for example a lack of affordable childcare and seeming difficulties accessing finance. Whilst the Pro-Market alliance sought revisions to the demand-side measure in the economy it was the supply-side issues which formed deep core beliefs within the two coalitions.

The supply-side issues also impacted the policy core beliefs, with equal treatment being sought by the Pro-WE alliance. This resulted in secondary policy aspects of the focus of funding and delivery of services. As can be seen from the examples of measures implemented in case studies one and two, the focus at that time was predominantly on

training women, with advice and guidance and bespoke support. At the time, these measures were welcomed by beneficiaries of the programmes, which should not be undervalued. Nevertheless, the measures themselves were targeted at equal treatment for women, with the male model of 'being entrepreneurial' viewed as the norm. This aligns with the work of Ahl, Marlow, and Martinez Dy (Ahl, 2004; Marlow *et al.*, 2012; Martinez Dy, Marlow and Martin, 2017), where they reiterate the masculine 'norm' of entrepreneurship, and its perpetuation in the policy process.

7.2.3.2 The importance of policy orientated learning to the process.

Jenkins-Smith *et al.*, (2018) stress that one of the distinguishing factors of the framework model is its focus on belief systems and their capacity for change, based upon new insights from empirical analysis. This process is termed in the model as 'policy-orientated learning'. This study illustrates the importance of policy orientated learning, as coalitions worked to influence policy over time. They achieved this by accumulating empirical data, showing evidence gaps in data, and highlighting resulting discrepancies in both the development and outcomes of existing enterprise policy predicated on the data. Examples of this are the lack of gender- disaggregated data within HMRC and the lack of distinction between self-employment and company formation. These were identified in the 1980s and formed a part of building evidence backing the so-called 'Case for Women's Enterprise Support' in the early years of this study.

Policy orientated learning can cover a variety of areas of concern, including a greater understanding of goals and variables affecting belief systems and gaining greater clarity over causal relationships within a belief system. Identification and response to challenges over a belief system generally move to reinforce policy core beliefs – 'adding validity to the argument' so to speak. This leads to inputs from learning in the 'feedback loops of the model' – i.e. the policy learning feeds back into the policy process.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith remind us that all of this learning takes place in a political context – therefore, they suggest that learning it is not a 'search for truth' (Sabatier and

Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p. 45). Rather it contributes to the competitive element of resource allocation, associate with the values and beliefs of that political system. An example in this study is the change in receptiveness to the narrative of women's enterprise development from the Labour Government in 1999, as shown in case study two. The circumstances within this case illustrate how the combination of women's enterprise group lobbying and political will from politicians engaged with women's equality issues enabled a 'window of opportunity' for policy learning and potential policy change, as illustrated in Kingdon's multiple stream theory (Kingdon, 1984).

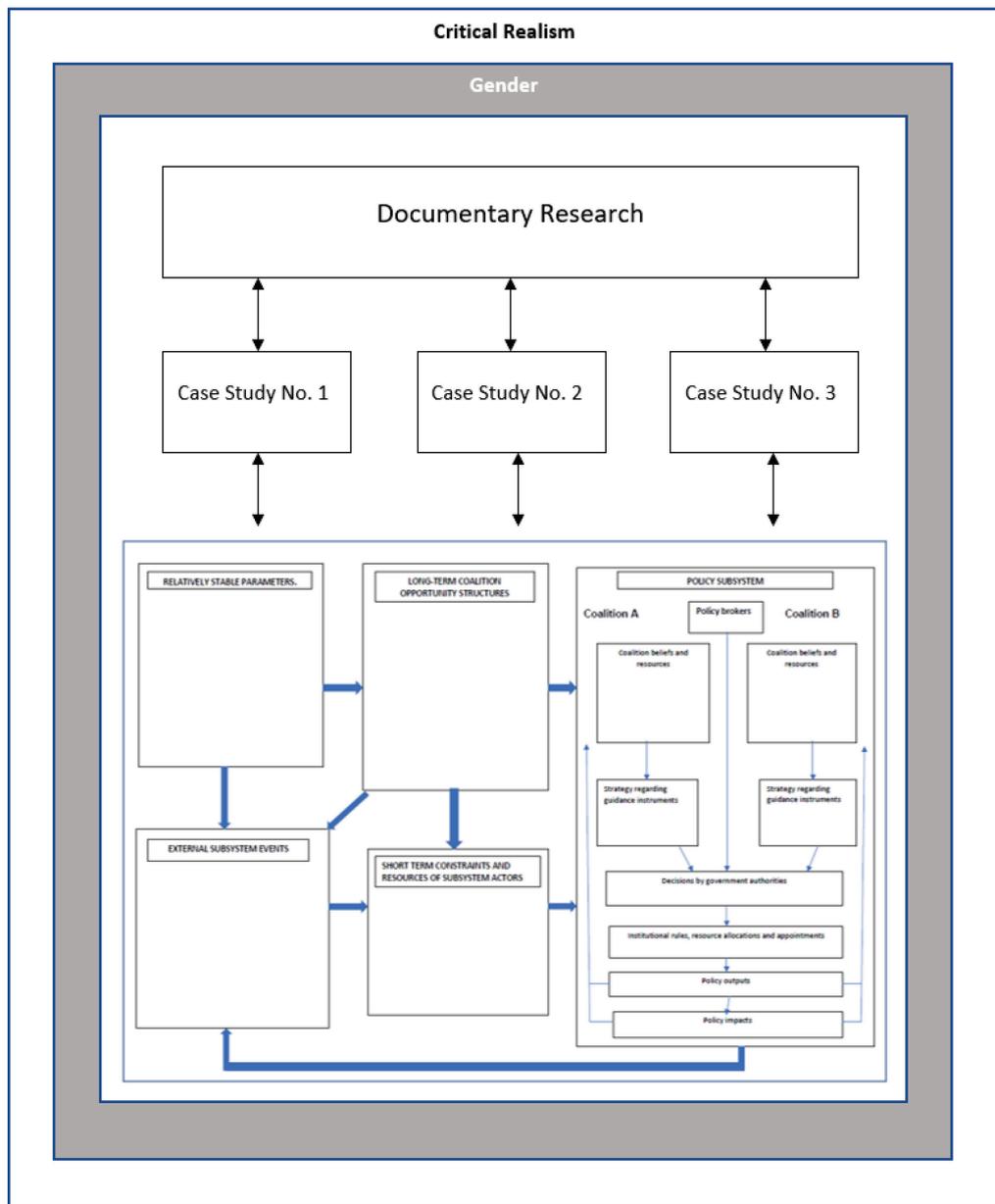
Policy orientated learning can occur both within advocacy coalitions and across coalitions. New learning can provide evidence which encourages other coalitions to amend their policy core beliefs in a way as to be more conducive to the points made by the originating coalition. An example of cross policy learning resulted from the 'opportunity spotting' highlighted above. The Pro-WE Alliance spent time with women's enterprise activist from the USA and Canada. The policy position that emanated from the women's advocacy groups in these countries related to the latent economic potential of women's enterprises to the national economy. 'The economic case' for women's enterprise became the dominant narrative for the Pro-WE alliance from the mid-2000s, with women presented as an 'untapped resource'. This approach has a resonance with the Pro-Market alliance beliefs and nudged them into considering the economic impact of women's enterprise potential. While not perhaps totally amending the Pro-Market policy core beliefs, this change of narrative from an equality position to also an economic position from the Pro-WE alliance forged a stronger coalition. This was as a result of policy learning, initiated by the Pro-WE alliance.

7.2.4 Next steps in the analysis.

This section has analysed the case studies, using the Advocacy Coalition Framework. The main findings from this analysis are provided in the chapter that follows. The next section within this chapter explores the cases using the gender and critical realist frames, to provide a further perspective on the cases.

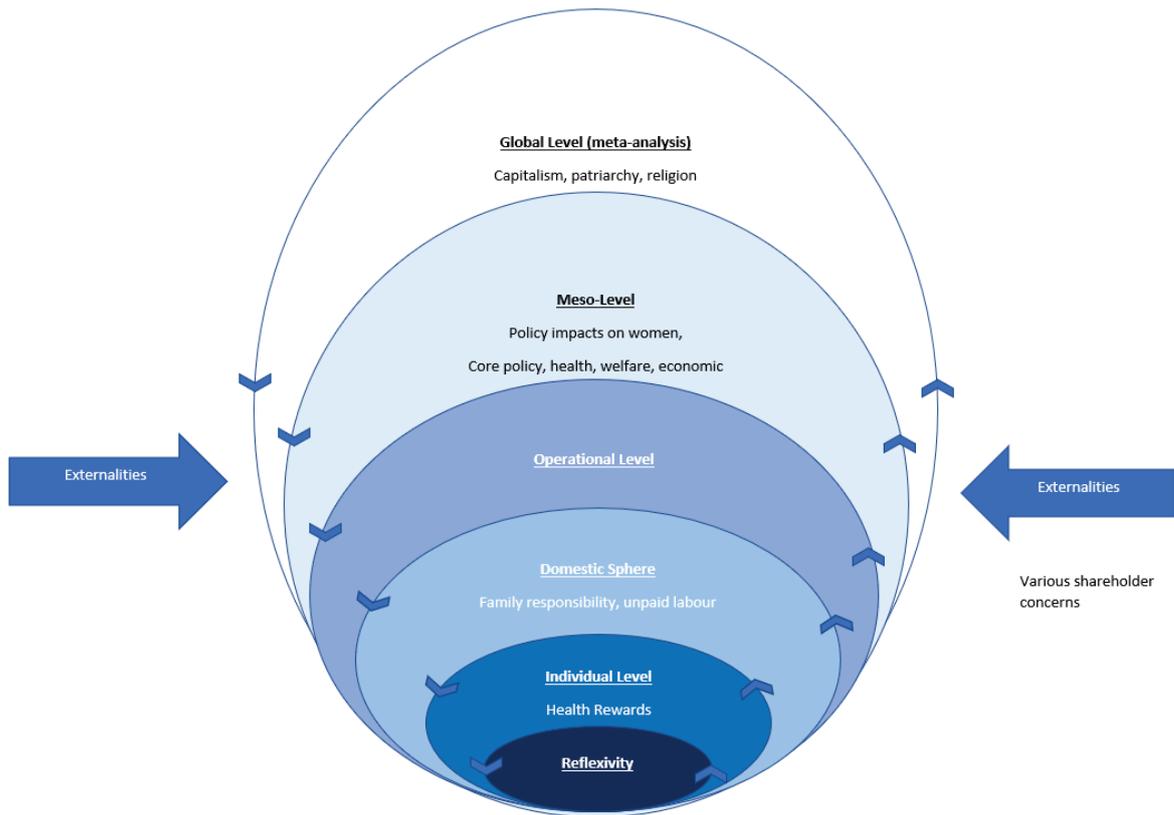
7.3 Critical Realist and Gender analysis.

Figure 7.9: Conceptual framework for data analysis



In order to examine the gender and critical realist aspects of the case studies, a model has been devised. The model is illustrated in Figure 7.10.

Figure 7.10: Laminated policy model.



Source: Author's own.

7.3.1 Introducing the model.

Figure 7.10 represents the structural and systemic dynamics which provide foundations onto which the policy analysis is built. It is a hypothetical social ontological model which takes the outer critical realist lens from the conceptual framework and interrogates it in detail.

The model symbolises a laminated system (Elder-Vass, 2010) showing the structures impacting upon individual women, and the agency that the woman possesses in that situation. At the heart of the model is the woman, with her potential for reflexivity - the layers that surround her interact with each other to have an influence upon her, and she onto them.

The diagram depicts levels of structure in which the individual female entrepreneur is a part of this multi-layered social structure. The circles within the model are the layers of our system.

Three of the layers identified within the model relate to the micro, meso and macro levels of society. These layers are also represented in the Women's Entrepreneurship 5M model of Brush, de Bruin, and Welter (2009), shown in Figure 3.1. The micro, meso and macro-layers are similarly embedded within the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) as the boxes to the left of the policy subsystem. For example, external subsystem events from the ACF would correspond with the macro-level concerns within this 'laminated policy model'.

The model is designed in this way to explore the 'causal powers' of the system that is explored. Here it is a women's enterprise policy system – it is a system in which social action takes place. Critical realist theory, according to Elder-Vass (ibid) explores the configuration of these various layers, or laminations in order to explore the operation of the entire system. The outer level of the model is defined as 'meta' level concerns. These are the 'deep' level ontological issues which affect social structures, such as philosophical issues and political and social theories. Within this hypothetical model for the women's enterprise policy system, these are defined as capitalist forces, patriarchal forces and religious forces. The laminated system is not a closed system: it can be impacted by other external factors, or by other laminated systems. Hypothetically, this women's enterprise system could be affected by external market factors, for example.

The purpose of presenting this model is to apply it to the circumstances of the women's enterprise policy development which was analysed previously within this section. The analysis now follows.

7.3.2. Identifying structural dynamics in this women's enterprise policy case.

Our conceptual model situates the Advocacy Coalition framework analysis within a wider gender and critical realist framework. They are represented by the lamination model. Meta-level issues have an impact on how the system operates. The interconnection between patriarchal forces and capitalist forces create emergent properties which limit the potential for women's enterprise policy development. The policies are developed in a way that

reinforces women's subordination, whilst making them appear to be progressing. For example, by providing incentives for women's enterprise development, but subsequently insufficiently resourcing them. Strategies are developed, but not monitored or evaluated for their impact.

Another meta-level influence is that of religion. This is an aspect that is not widely discussed as a meta-level issue in economic contexts. Within England the role of the state in the enterprise-policy terms is often discussed, but lesser so the role of religion (although it is discussed in relation to the banking sector, for example Sharia finance). Within the lamination model, the role of the church is highlighted because it has an impact on women's position in society. It is linked to the 'relatively stable parameters' section within the ACF framework. Religion provides stability in society, but it also brings its own norms and societal rules. Those rules provide ontological rationales for women's position in society. They make their way, through the lamination levels into the actions and behaviours of women. Some of these rules may be encouraging for women to get involved in enterprising activity; others may view women's role as within the family. The changing composition of families creates further policy issues.

Within a laminated system, the meta-level concerns can have an impact upon the issues in the level below them. The next level within the model indicates macro-level concerns. These relate to policy issues that can affect women's enterprise policy. For example, national policies for childcare or maternity care can have an impact on women's availability to work. This overlap between policy issues was illustrated within the policy subsystem in this analysis when a cross-governmental meeting was called to discuss the implementation of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework. The Framework was supposed to have been adopted, and measures implemented across several government departments, but policy leads in those departments did not necessarily follow this through. In other words, a lack of joined-up policy led to inconsistent policy approaches. Without alignment between welfare policies, and enterprise policies, it made it very difficult to implement childcare initiatives outlined within the Strategic Framework.

The next level within the framework is Meso-level concerns. These relate to issues arising from policy interactions with institutions, such as banks or professional bodies. For women, this can relate to difficulties women may face with legal authorities of statutory bodies. At this level, institutions may be for or against supporting women. As indicated in the ACF analysis, banks benefitted from policy learning over the period under analysis and have become increasingly proactive in supporting women's enterprise. However, other institutions and small businesses may not be so favourable to individual businesswomen. For example, a lack of exposure to women in non-traditional sectors can affect women's ability to gain credibility in such sectors. These structural issues have a negative effect.

At the micro-level, women have a range of domestic responsibilities to consider. They may be looking to develop business for personal or familial rewards, or as a familial contribution. As they have the impact of all of these levels of the laminated system to consider, they have to be reflexive and constantly consider the impact of all of these factors. This is hypothetically and in reality, a heavy weight to bear.

7.3.3 Summarising this gender and critical realist analysis.

The purpose of this model is to attempt to identify why women's enterprise policies appear to have difficulty with sustainability and therefore, why they may have only limited success.

The model enables us to unmask structural dynamics that occur both for policy implementation and the women affected by such policies. Within this society, the range of factors that can interplay, in order to make women's enterprise difficult to start, or difficult to maintain are multifarious and complex. Policy measures such as developing networks and providing access to finance may help, but it is also important to examine some of these deeper issues and consider how some of these may be addressed.

As previously stated, this is a hypothetical model and is in its first iteration. However, with refinement, it may be beneficial as a representation of the structural constraints on women's enterprise policy concerns.

CHAPTER 8: KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

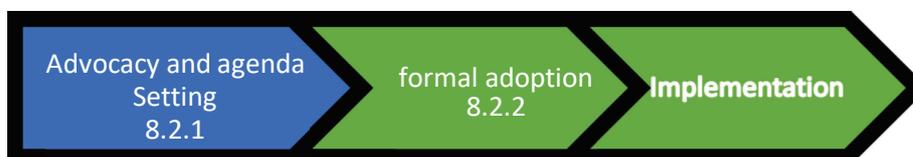
8.1. Introduction.

This chapter of the research study provides findings from the detailed analysis in the previous chapter. These are presented firstly in relation to the process model from O' Hagan (2015), highlighted in the analysis section of each case study, to provide a clear guide to the position of the findings within a complex policy process. Secondly, the findings are applied to the aims of the research in order to connect the detail of the analysis with the rationale for conducting this research study.

8.2 Research findings related to the policy process.

The findings of the research will be structured using the framework adopted within each of the cases. This is provided in Figure 8.1 below. It provides a simple guide to situating the findings in the policy process stages indicated.

Figure 8.1: Policy stages for cases



Source: Adapted from O'Hagan (2015).

8.2.1 Findings related to advocacy and agenda-setting in the policy process.

The ACF model enabled the conditions for advocacy and agenda-setting to be clearly identified. Over the duration of the cases, actors combined from the public, private and voluntary sectors into coalitions. Within the West Midlands, these were initiated by community groups, academics and public sector actors, who perceived an opportunity created from a difficult economic climate. They harnessed external events such as the UK neoliberal political agenda and combined this with resourcing from European Structural Funding, local authorities and sponsorship, to create delivery mechanisms in support of marginalised women in the region.

Responsiveness to external drivers was indicated through their ability to marshal coalition members in favour of the initial case for equal treatment in business support service delivery for these women. In the early years (as illustrated in case study one) they developed the architecture on a regional basis to support Black and low-income women to express their desires to start or grow businesses, creating opportunities to build their initiatives into a regional network, with national aspirations.

The women's alliance formed coalitions with other pro-market actors to further their ambitions for policy development. In working with local authorities and other government departments on a regional basis, they gained knowledge of funding and budgetary procedures. This enabled them to be able to harness further resources for the delivery of larger projects and programmes, which heightened the profile of their work on a national and international scale, through their alliances with EU-women's organisations, such as CREW.

The presence and pressure of other women's organisations and civil society groups was an important factor in both gaining alliance members, but also in developing solidarity for policy development. For example, during the various activities within case one, the UK National Alliance of Women's Organisations aided by drafting funding proposals. Community development organisations and trusts across the region supported the agency development and matched funding for statutory agency funding proposals.

The coalitions of both Pro-WE and Pro-Market took advantage of political changes and political opportunity structures, at local regional and national levels. This is evidenced strongly across all the case studies. The ACF model helped to explain the processes that alliances took to lobby government agencies for a greater level of women's enterprise development and support. In the 1980s and 1990s, the foundations of the strategy were proposed through alliance networks, through events and the development of academic papers that raised the profile of women's economic participation (for example Carter and Cannon, 1992). Reductions in state funding to voluntary and community organisations were met with enterprising responses, such as harnessing National Lottery Funding for innovative

programmes. Whilst reductions in the state funding were not welcomed, the analysis indicates that shared core beliefs about the value of enterprise to society between Pro-Market and Pro-WE coalitions enabled resources to be found. Local and national politicians also gave both direct and indirect support for the continuation of the organisations concerned.

Political opportunities were clearly harnessed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The findings suggest that the change from the Conservative to a Labour Government in 1997 enabled resource and political will to be marshalled, in support of policy change. These external subsystem events resulted in lobbying opportunities to government policy brokers. Many years of working with local and regional politicians resulted in a favourable group of MPs; both Pro-WE and Pro-Market, supporting women's enterprise policy. These were very important in the formal adoption stage of the women's enterprise strategic framework. The policy opportunity that derived from the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit in November 1999 - which initiated the Phoenix Development Fund - enabled the Pro-WE coalition to resource and escalate their efforts.

The critical realist analysis provided a deeper understanding of the structural dynamics that were evident over the course of the case study period. In relation to the advocacy and agenda setting period, the neoliberal agenda of government created opportunities for the women's enterprise agenda. However, with the opportunities came compromises. The Pro-WE coalition were colluding with the governing system because the neoliberal agenda reconfigured statutory provision in ways that could be detrimental to women, particularly those on lower incomes (as highlighted in case study one). Ahl and Marlow's postfeminist comparative analysis of government support for women's enterprise policy in the UK and Sweden (Ahl and Marlow, 2019) posit that women's enterprise policy reinforces women's subordination. They state that: "Power relations are not unpicked, but rather camouflaged as negotiable challenges; in effect, the foundations for subordination are not dismantled, but rather the responsibility to address such inequity is rather neatly passed back to the victim." (p. 23). This situation is relatable to the study because the underlying meta-level concerns

within society remain constant within the case study period. However, if the macro and micro-level concerns are addressed, the cases illustrate that women were demanding changes that had an everyday impact on their lives. They were prepared to take risks with business ventures because they were supported by other women, wanting them to succeed.

Religious affinity also has a part to play in the advocacy and agenda-setting of the policy position. As highlighted within the first case, many policy actors over the period of study were active participants in faith-based groups. The faith aspects of the organisations were demonstrably used to achieve heightened visibility for the organisation. Faith-based networks formed a part of both Pro-WE and Pro-Market alliances, and these were used to coalesce around issues such as poverty reduction and philanthropy. Whilst religious structures acted as enabling mechanisms; they also provided mechanisms of control. In certain circumstances, the faith alliances placed limitations upon the behaviour of management boards, which were detrimental to the perception of the organisation.

The structural issues related to patriarchal values within the advocacy and agenda settings were intrinsic to this research. Both the gender and critical realist analyses illustrate the structural discrimination faced by women attempting to develop and implement a policy position. The ACF analysis illuminates this by dissecting the various external and internal policy processes that need to occur in order to generate national and regional policy change.

8.2.2 Findings related to the formal adoption of the policy.

The research analysis enabled important aspects of policy adoption to be identified. The two-tier nature of the policy adoption was created by the National Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework within central government and the subsequent policy developments at a regional level.

There were several policy actors, entrepreneurs and brokers within the policy subsystem. In order to gain formal approval for the Strategic Framework to be adopted, MPs, a range of

cross-governmental senior Civil Servants, coalition members, business interest groups and community and civil society groups coalesced around the development of the Strategic Framework. Within the West Midlands region, a critical mass of support was being generated from the development work undertaken within the WEDA network. This was fed into the framework document.

The importance of political leadership within this process is highlighted throughout the cases. The development work that was undertaken with many local government politicians, who later became MPs was important in this study. Female politicians were aware of the regional women's enterprise activity and saw the difference that effective support had on constituents in their localities. When the opportunity arose to support the framework, there was a critical mass of MPs engaged with the policy agenda, and willing to support it. The framework provided a clear conceptual model of what the problems for women were, at that time, and how they change could be implemented.

Positive institutional arrangements also supported the policy changes. At a national level, the government established their 'Enterprise for All' agenda (Great Britain HM Treasury Department for Business and Regulatory Reform, 2008) (as highlighted in case studies two and three) and were actively seeking ways to encourage wider participation in it. The Pro-WE coalition was able to provide expertise for women, and this overlapped with other coalitions seeking to support minority ethnic businesses and social enterprises.

The development of policy change in the West Midlands was also facilitated by positive institutional arrangements and engaged actors. Policyholders within the Regional Development Agency viewed the work of WBDA and WiRE in the region and saw them as exemplars of good practice for delivery in the region. Policyholders and agency officials worked with the women's agencies over the years prior to the introduction of the Strategic Framework and knew their capabilities. Their work across a range of diverse communities was also noted – the spread of urban and rural women, together with those in poverty, or ex-offenders, for example, enabled the policyholders to ensure wide reach with their policy

proposals. The West Midlands had developed a resource for supporting women's enterprise, and the Regional Development Agency recognised this. They also recognised the status and the calibre of women's enterprise representation, given the positions of policy entrepreneurs such as the Chair of the Women's Forum and national Women's Enterprise panel member, and the Chair of Prowess, operating within the region.

The critical realist analysis of formal adoption identifies the drivers of the neo-liberal agenda with the desires of the businesswomen to develop their own businesses. The macro-level top-down drive for policy implementation met with the bottom-up micro-level drive for personal and family rewards and contribution. This contributed to a more gender-responsive policy, as the Pro-WE coalition shaped the agenda for the Strategic Framework.

The intersectional aspects of race and gender are important to consider within this structural analysis. Challenges to the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework came from representative groups of Black women, a matter that was later considered by Foreson (2006). The Framework is criticised for its homogenous approach to business support and a lack of recognition of the needs of minority ethnic women in the UK. This is relevant, because, as highlighted in case study one, a similar claim was made within the passing of The Women's Business Ownership Act in the USA by Inuzuka (1991). From this research, it appears that lessons were not learned about the explicit involvement of minority ethnic women's groups in the policy process. However, Black women's groups were involved in the policy development process of the SFWE, so there may be other reasons for the criticism in this specific circumstance. This intersectional issue is reinforced by the situation that is observed in the West Midlands region with WECO, and these findings are addressed within the next section which explores policy implementation issues.

8.2.3 Findings related to policy implementation.

The implementation phase of the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise was mainly led by Prowess, with some initial support from the Small Business Service. The implementation was deemed as the responsibility of the Regional Development Agencies.

Prowess (and a small team within SBS) were tasked with working across nine Regional Development Agencies and the three devolved administrations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) led to inconsistent policy implementation. Prowess developed an RDA 'benchmarking tool', for analysis of the progress of implementation measures, but decided upon a 'light-touch' approach to using it, so that it did not act as a disincentive to those engaged to a lesser extent.

However, coalitions did rally in support of the key policy objectives. Across the UK, all RDAs engaged by exploring aspects of business support delivery within their Business Link providers. Some engaged with access to finance recommendations, examining how supply-side measures could be adopted in their regions. For example, when the Phoenix Development Fund project ceased in 2006, several RDA's explored ways to maintain projects, using funding from their core budget, with support from the private sector (Maurey, 2006).

Within the West Midlands, the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands, was actively engaged with the Framework. The policy coalitions and policy brokers worked in tandem, and as a result, initiatives developed that are highlighted in case study three. Policy entrepreneurs and femocrats were also important within the West Midlands policy process.

The role of policy brokers within the RDA, and women working within the RDA projects, acted as policy enablers. They provided opportunities for policy entrepreneurs, such as the Chair of Prowess and the CEO of WiRE, to work with them in the form of a strategic alliance. The development of the WECO project heightened the profile of Pro-WE coalitions work within the region and gained strategic access to other organisations. This enabled policy measures to embed into other aspects of the delivery plan for the Regional Economic Strategy.

When examining implementation from a critical realist perspective, the issue of intersectionality is again raised. The involvement of Prowess within the region led to areas of conflict, and one of these areas related to the ongoing representation of Black women in the region. This was also highlighted in the initial development of the Women's Enterprise Forum for the West Midlands. Whilst numerous groups were involved within the process, individuals that represented certain groups were highly vocal; ensuring that Black women's voices were heard in the discussion forums. This highlighted the lack of homogeneity of the group, which at times Prowess failed to identify. Given the diverse nature of the region (and the antecedent factors of black and low-income women's involvement in the development of the WEDA network), more could have been done to address this. However, in Arshed's work, examining the development of women's enterprise policy at a national level over this period (Arshed, 2012), she identifies the role of individuals acting upon the policymaking process. She posits that the opportunity for agency and self-interest can occur when systems become "taken for granted" (p. 281). From the critical realist analysis, this provides an example of how individuals attempt to gain influence in a rigid structure which is reinforcing their 'otherness'. In the early days of women's enterprise development across the region, this was not the case. The women were central to the approach. As time progressed, and more resources and professionalism were brought to the topic, many of these groups were marginalised by mainstream support.

Many of the women's groups disbanded, but those that remained had to keep repeating their own needs and experiences, in order to remain a part of the mainstream coalitions. From a critical realist perspective, what appears 'self-interest' is more a representation of the continued oppression faced by those 'othered' within a system.

8.3 Findings as related to the research aims.

The aims of the research are now revisited in order to recount the findings in relation to addressing these concerns.

Explore the antecedents to the development of the gender-focused policy for the promotion

of women's enterprise in the West Midlands region.

Both the case development and the case study analysis reveal the historical origins of the policy changes that occurred between 1989 and 2011. Individuals and groups of women are identified, and the process that they went through explained. From the outset, these coalitions involved black women, and women facing economic disadvantage. The women formed organisations and coalitions. They networked and worked alongside other policy coalitions with similar core policy beliefs, but who had different objectives for demanding policy change. These included what the research refers to as a Pro-Market Alliance. These are a range of national and regional stakeholders from private industry, banks and MPs who wanted a smaller state, with increased deregulation across the UK.

The role of West Midlands women in the national policy change is discussed, highlighting their indirect involvement in policy development, and direct role in policy implementation at a national level. The women's regional role then increased as they engaged with regional policy brokers, policy entrepreneurs and femocrats that assisted in the development and implementation of regional policy development and policy outputs.

Analyse the processes over time of this specific 'black box' of Women's Enterprise policy formation in the region, by developing longitudinal case studies that focus on 'female entrepreneurship development.'

Three case studies have been developed from a wide range of data, gathered over the research study period. This has enabled the policy process to be opened to scrutiny using the Advocacy Coalition Framework model.

Utilising the contents of the developed cases, devise an exploratory conceptual framework for this policy formation, using the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Weible and Sabatier, 2017) as its basis.

This model was developed and is used throughout the study. It provides a conceptual framework which acts as a map for the analysis – whilst also providing an analytical tool for

scrutiny of the case data. The conceptual framework has enabled a range of theoretical and methodological concepts to be used to address the research question.

Further analysis of the Framework, utilizing critical realist practice, to explore underlying mechanisms that occurred over the period.

The first draft of a critical realist analysis has been provided. It includes a diagram (Figure 7.10) which is an attempt to map the laminated system that relates to this research. It attempts (albeit fallibly) to reveal the structural dynamics that impact individual businesswomen.

Explore potential implications for research and praxis, resulting from this analysis.

The implications for research and practice from this analysis will be provided in the conclusion section in Chapter 10.

Provide a detailed personal reflection on the process, uncovering how the praxis of developing feminist policy is experienced by a woman tasked with creating and implementing such a policy.

This aim has been placed in a different position from the original series of aims provided throughout this research. This is for practical purposes, as what follows leads on to the next chapter of the research. The personal reflection on this process immediately follows this chapter in Chapter nine. It is written in an autoethnographic form and provides a personal insight into the complex nature of the author's relationship to this research.

SECTION 4: REFLECTION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 9: REFLECTION ON THE CONTENT, PROCESS AND OUTCOMES OF THE RESEARCH

“in the depths of my PhD angst and despair, I have found your writing on autoethnography, and it has given me the courage to find my writing style [and] my voice” (D.B., 2018)

(Stahlke Wall,S. 2018, p. 2)

9.1 Introduction

The quotation above from Sarah Stahlke Wall, taken from the International Journal of Qualitative Methods, commences this reflexive chapter. It illustrates a researcher’s struggle to detach from the complexity of their research, while finding a method to convey their part within the research; their reflexive praxis. In this section of the research, that method is autoethnography – or as Schwandt (2001) historically defines it, “the cultural study of one’s own people” (p. 13). These elements are important to this research because this thesis is the study of my people; my life history is bound into the cases that are addressed in this research, and this is my research. Of equal important is that I am the researcher, cited by Sarah Stahlke Wall in the quotation above; autoethnography has enabled me to gain my voice in this research process.

One of the aims of this research was to provide a detailed personal reflection on the process of being a feminist, working on feminist policy. To do this, I am writing this chapter embracing a method that is not used throughout the previous course of this study. I am defying convention at this point of the thesis and writing in the first person, as an autoethnographic script (although this approach has been used by other entrepreneurship authors, for example, Gartner (2010)). As Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) state “Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)”. (p.273).

I am writing this section using this method for a reason. This thesis has documented and

analysed a large piece of my life's work. Besides my involvement in the topic under investigation, the thesis has taken many years to compile; in total, this document represents thirty years of addressing female entrepreneurship. In this chapter, I metaphorically stand outside of the previous chapters and provide a personal perspective on the research. This is intended to offer another dimension to the study; one which adds 'the personal' to the 'political' and socio-cultural dimensions discussed throughout the thesis.

In second-wave feminism in the USA, the term 'the personal is political' was popularised by Carol Hanisch in the late 1960s, to define women's consciousness-raising as bringing the personal world of women into the political realm, and to give it exposure and credence (Hanisch, 2013). However, this phrase has its origins in the history of Black women's struggles in the USA, in the 1850s – a point that is often overlooked in feminist literature (Phipps, 2016). This phrase, therefore, resonates with the work of this thesis, which for me, is both personal and political as it analyses the collective action of both white and Black women working for change. When attempting to detach from the unfolding detailed theoretical analysis, the reflexive process evoked conflicting, and often challenging ideas, and adding some of this abstract thinking back into the research, in my view provides greater resonance to the text.

When adopting this method, I have considered the subjectivity of the research and my relationship with what I have written. Taking the approach of an engaged, active scholar (as outlined in Chapter 5.10), has meant that I have clearly stated my method. I am embracing what Maxwell (2012) terms as his "realist model of research design" (p. 97); namely viewing researcher subjectivity as a virtue, and not an affliction. Every attempt has been made to provide a factual and verifiable source for the data in the cases, but in this section, my subjectivity adds to the richness of that data. Within the main body of the thesis, it is important to note that the cases are based on temporal data, assembled to tell a story that developed from my systematic approach to the scientific methods used. It is situated knowledge but addressing multiple marginalities in a systematic way (Code, 2014). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) state that "My subjectivity is the basis for that story that I am able to tell"

(p. 104). In order to reflect the structure of the thesis, this chapter mirrors the chronology of the cases, providing a narrative on each period analysed. The chapter concludes with thoughts on my becoming a 'femocrat' and a 'feminist scholar'.

9.2 Reflections on Case One

9.2.1 Advocacy and agenda-setting

The emphasis on case one is that of establishing the policy agenda as having resonance and purpose for the economic development of the region. In the late 1980s, there existed several women's organisations in the West Midlands region that were generally addressing issues related to women's health and welfare benefits, but the involvement of women in the business policy of the region was limited. Women were involved in community organisations – my community work in the Borough of Sandwell in the early part of that decade brought me into contact with community development charities and trusts where women were invariably on management committees or running voluntary sector projects. During the periods of mass unemployment from the steel, coal and pottery industries across the West Midlands in the late 1980s, women were often working as the head of a household to make up for the loss of income from the male in the household. Women also lost their jobs within these industries: it is often forgotten that the pottery industry in Stoke on Trent employed a majority of women, with around 30,000 women employed in 1977 (McFarland, 1985). Economically, times were hard, and the need to maintain household income led many women into forms of self-employment – what we would now term 'necessity entrepreneurship' (Hart, Bonner and Levie, 2017).

When such women – often working-class, or from minority ethnic backgrounds sought help to start a business officially (i.e. registering their business with the taxation authority HMRC), in order to pay national insurance payments to maintain their 'stamp' (i.e. the colloquial term for their pension contribution, paid into the National Insurance scheme), they were sometimes directed onto the Enterprise Allowance Scheme. These were generally the fortunate ones. Many women at the time found no official assistance from existing business

support provision and very little from Banks. 'We don't want any more hairdressers and window-cleaners' was a term that was often stated in enterprise support organisations at the time – it was stated on numerous occasions at the TEC, for example. The impetus for the establishment of women's support organisations was therefore pertinent and timely and was not only demanded from necessity entrepreneurs. As case one illustrates, professional women were also seeking support and finding the existing structures inadequate to meet their needs.

The coming together of both groups of women under the auspices of one organisation was not without its difficulties. These are not directly addressed within the case, but at the micro-level of the organisation, there were many conflicts; both with individuals within organisations and across the network. The financing of the organisations caused the most tension, and bidding for funding under both charitable and statutory funds was competitive. There was inequity of finance available across the region for economic development, and large infrastructure projects that transformed the landscape, scarred by dereliction from newly closed steel and coal industries, were priority projects. Advocating for funding to support specific groups of women was a hard task and was not easily won. But women mobilised – irrespective of race or class; they mobilised to establish business support services that met their needs, as best that they could in the circumstances. Utilising political allies in local authorities and at a national level heightened the visibility of their needs and resulted in practical policy and programme measures.

The importance of working together despite difference was key. There was no 'piggybacking' on existing equality policy measures – at that time, they did not exist in the realm of economic development. Utilising networks and organising events, attending council meetings, lobbying and building capacity were central to forming strong coalitions.

9.2.2 My role during this period

When reflecting on this time, I was both an entrepreneur and a policy entrepreneur. I was running my own seasonal holiday company while working to develop the network of business support organisations. I knew hardship as a woman with low income starting a seasonal business. I was also aware of the levels of poverty and deprivation faced by communities in the region, following my period as a community worker. I was, therefore, able to relate to the specific needs that women had in starting and growing a business. For example, my experience of attempting to raise money from my bank in the mid-1980s was very difficult. I was asked many irrelevant questions connected to my domestic arrangements and whether there was a man that could guarantee a loan on my behalf. This experience led me to initiate a series of Bankers' Forums – with role-playing between bankers and low-income women from many communities – when I had the opportunity and power to arrange this. The experience enabled bank branch managers to directly experience their biases when addressing potential female business clients from within their communities. Once in a position in WEDA to influence activities, I was able to practice a series of these events across England, pioneering Banker's Forums across two major banks in the 1980s.

Such practical examples promoted advocacy on behalf of these businesswomen. Several branch and area managers acted as pioneers within the bank, further escalating momentum for change. Soon, senior bank officials hosted large events in the City of London for the agency, showcasing women's business ventures, and highlighting accessible role models to women from various communities across the UK.

9.3 Reflections on Case Two

9.3.1 Adopting the approach

The period during the 1990s was both developing capacity through advocacy and agenda-setting, but also gaining small 'wins' for policy adoption. With the network of agencies in place, it was possible to show local authority members and other enterprise support

organisations how the methods of business support operated differently from the existing mainstream provision. With the support of the European Social Fund income, agencies demonstrated the need to provide childcare for women attending training and support sessions. Non-traditional skills training in building and manual trades were encouraged, and women witnessed women like themselves belonging in that environment. Local authorities, funding agencies and banks engaged with such women at a local level. At a national level, MPs from the region began to engage with the local agencies and spearheaded activity on their behalf. For example, Betty Boothroyd MP (the Speaker of the House of Commons between 1982 and 1990, and member of parliament for West Bromwich in Sandwell) initiated events in Parliament, where client businesses and members of the local WEDA Boards met with parliamentary groups on economic and welfare matters.

The Enterprise Rehearsal Scheme, which was initiated in Coventry in the 1990s, was an example of a pioneering multi-agency approach, brokered through high-level regional policy contacts and national policy supporters. The opportunity for women in receipt of welfare benefits to trial-trade their small business, while also retaining their welfare benefits, was complicated to arrange. It took months of negotiation between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), HMRC, and a regional bank (that was a major participant in the Bankers' Forum programme). National Lottery funding also supported the programme.

While the National WEDA agency ceased, the local agencies that remained worked to maintain a regional presence. They focused on meeting the needs of Black and low-income women and network with other third sector organisations and women's groups to ensure that outreach activities occurred across the region. Core funding from local authorities reduced, and project and programme-based funding became the major sources of income for the services provided. As the agencies became more established in the late '90s, they gained more technical knowledge of raising funds. Nevertheless, the focus remained regional, and it was not until the turn of the new millennium that the national networking opportunities would return.

9.3.2 My role during this period

During this decade, most of my work was spent supporting individuals and groups of women to start or grow businesses. It is estimated that I supported over three thousand individuals over this period. I worked as a business advisor across the WEDA network, and in the Co-Operative Development Agencies across the region, supporting various types of co-operative businesses. I was a business advisor in inner-city Birmingham, working for a third sector organisation, providing business advice to a range of multi-ethnic clients from across the city.

Reflecting on my experiences during this period, I was involved with a wide range of clients, predominantly working-class and from many ethnic groups. I became a 'go-to' advisor, for clients who did not fit a traditional mould of 'entrepreneur' at the time. As a result, I worked with amazingly talented individuals; some of whom are now millionaires. Others did not have that level of ambition but warranted business support. In one case, I enabled a woman to overcome serious legal issues in the USA, where she had overstayed a visa. She ran a successful clothing business in a major city in the Midlands but had serious mental health issues which she was too ashamed to disclose, even to her family. After meeting her and her family over a series of months, we were able to get her the support that she required and appoint an interim manager to the businesses, enabling her eventually to make a full recovery, and continue to run and grow the business internationally.

I class my role during this period as a facilitator, coach and policy entrepreneur. I was very engaged with working on a 'one to one' basis with clients. This meant coaching clients and providing them with ways to develop their skills and to gain confidence in what they were practicing. This is not to say that all the women lacked self-efficacy; they did not. The issue was that they were often not taken seriously by those that they encountered in the early stages of their business. Coaching and mentoring provided ways to challenge such issues.

As a policy entrepreneur, I was also working on challenging those professionals that were obstructing such women. For example, I was working with local authorities and government bodies such as the Small Business Service, evaluating their mainstream business programmes for small business support.

9.4 Reflections on Case Three

9.4.1 Implementing the approach

The period between 2000 and 2010 was important for policy implementation at both national and regional levels. This was the period of strategic implementation at a national level and the time when state resources were made available for the implementation at the regional level. It was a time when national political opportunities were grasped, and environmental factors made it easier to 'open doors' and meet with policy owners across the UK. The West Midlands region had several politicians and high-profile businesswomen from across the range of communities, all involved in women's enterprise, given the antecedents highlighted in the previous case studies. Various women's enterprise groups formed and were looking for a platform on which to assemble. The business support landscape was also changing, following the changes to the Small Business Service. The Phoenix Development Fund initiative galvanised a core group of organisations to lobby and advocate for women's enterprise directly into government. The stakeholders are identified in Figure 9.1.

9.1: Women's enterprise policy actors in the West Midland policy process between 2000 – 2005

The lighter boxes represent the funding organisations and projects – 'the policy brokers'.

The darker boxes show those that delivered on the policy- the 'coalition members'.

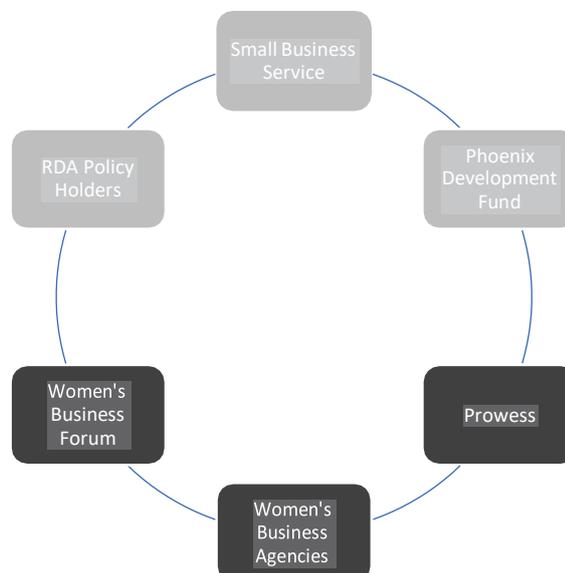


Figure 9.1 illustrates the main policy subsystem actors across the region. As illustrated in case study three and Chapter 7, there were numerous difficulties experienced in the relationships between all of these actors. There were also difficulties between these actors and the other coalitions that were 'Pro-market'. For example, the Women's Business Forum in the West Midlands disbanded in 2006. The Forum had achieved most of its policy demands, once the Regional Women's Enterprise Unit (RWEU) was established by the RDA in 2006. The Chair of the Forum was also selected to be a member of the National Women's Enterprise Panel, thus securing regional representation on the national policy advisory board (the precursor to the Women's Enterprise Panel, and the current Women's Business Council).

However, the disbanding of the Forum was not welcomed by several Black women's organisations in the Forum. While WBDA was one of the partners in the RWEU, other women's groups did not believe that this would be satisfactory to cover the needs of all women across the region. This resulted in numerous negotiations between Black women's group representatives, the RDA and Prowess.

The issues of the representation of Black women across the region were not only limited to the disbanding of the Regional Forum. Forson (2006, 2007) highlights that the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise marginalised Black women and did not adequately take account of intersectional issues of race and class that these women faced. Prowess was also initially criticised for its lack of diversity and representation of Black women. This was also an issue which was faced in the West Midlands Region during the time of the Women's Enterprise Centre of Expertise, which was managed by Prowess. The previous collaborations between Black Women and low-income women from the earlier WEDA days were undoubtedly strained during this period. The expectations of certain female coalition members were debatably side-lined. At the time, the RDA had also initiated a Minority Ethnic Enterprise Centre of Expertise (Jones, Mcevoy and Ram, 2009), to promote strategic and innovative approaches to supporting minority ethnic businesses, but this did not distract in the role of the Women's Centre in supporting Black women. The intersectional nature of women's needs from a variety of cultural and class backgrounds could, in my opinion, have been more explicitly addressed by the Women's Centre of Expertise at that time.

9.4.2 My roles during this period

My roles during this period varied, but I arguably played a part in the development of women's enterprise initiatives at a national and regional level. It is important to make this explicit within this research, as one of the research aims was to provide a detailed personal reflection on the process, to expose the lived experience of being a policy practitioner and a policy entrepreneur within the policy subsystem.

After working freelance as a business advisor with women, I was contracted to the Small Business Service (SBS) on the implementation of the SFWE, initially for the South West region of the UK. After developing coalitions supporting women's enterprise within that region for their RDA over eighteen months, the SBS team on SFWE implementation disbanded. I was employed as a consultant by Prowess and took on several roles. One of these roles was reporting for Prowess on the regional state of women's enterprise. This

involved developing a measure which was used to benchmark each of England's nine RDAs against their progress on the SFWE objectives (Prowess, 2005).

Following this, Prowess allocated me to become the Chair of the RWEU initiative with WiRE and WBDA, and the RDA, AWM. I was responsible for liaison with AWM and acted as a policy entrepreneur, selling the concepts of embedding more aspects of women's enterprise policy and practice across the region. During this time, I was involved in many negotiations between women's business support organisations, academics, Prowess, SBS policy brokers and senior members of the regional development agency, including those developing the new business support service for the region (Business Link). The female policyholder at the time (the Director of Enterprise and Business Support) was willing to encompass the RWEU into the mainstream provision of Business Link and was also keen to see a range of strategic enterprise projects established to guide the formation of the new Business Link service. These were the Centre's of Expertise highlighted in Case Study Three, which the RDA put out to tender. My role in this was to write the full submission and business plan for the Centre of Women's Enterprise Expertise, on behalf of Prowess. This tender was successful in 2007. I then established the Centre in 2008, on behalf of Prowess, and became its initial manager.

In 2008 however, the role of the Director of Enterprise and Business Support at the Regional Development Agency became vacant. This was the main policy holder role for the entire business support infrastructure across the West Midlands. I left the Centre of Expertise very early in its development and took up the role of Director of Enterprise in the West Midlands in April 2008. This enabled me to become what Hester Eisenstein classes as a 'femocrat' (Eisenstein, 1989). The power that this position bestowed upon me enabled me to embed policy practices gained from the processes analysed within this research. My tenure in that role may have been curtailed, but while there, it was the opportunity to mainstream best practice into a wide range of economic development initiatives across the region. I had the direct responsibility that comes with being the regional enterprise policyholder.

9.5 Concluding the reflexive points.

Passing as a white woman with a middle-class lifestyle, when having experiences far beyond those stereotypes is an interesting experience in life. Reflexivity is not an optional extra in your day-to-day existence. The roles that you undertake, and the image portrayed is not necessarily your own identity – it is one that you wear. Iris Young broaches the idea of the 'lived body experience' when examining the binaries of sex and gender. Exploring the work of Toril Moi (Moi, 2001) Young argues that the lived body experience consists of 'facticity,' i.e. the physical and biological constituency of the body' and also of 'freedom' – the human agency to make choices and navigate how the individual interacts with society in the body that they inhabit (Young, 2002). The facticity of my life is of white skin and a female body form. This is what is seen. However, the freedom aspects of my life are experienced mainly in familial settings of minority- ethnic groups. My upbringing was in a working-class household, and I experienced poverty and deprivation in my younger years. I have been a low-income woman and originate from a minority background. I did not merely work *on behalf* of such people – aspects of me remain as one of those people, irrespective of my current socio-economic status.

My journey over the twenty-five-year period of this research has been great. From humble beginnings, the company of women and women's groups has enabled me to grow. Starting from catering and community-based jobs to night school to obtain grades to reach university; to studying social policy and focusing on statutory policies affecting women and the labour market. Subsequently, starting and growing a business with a partner provided me with the skills to assist other women in doing so. From many years advising women to start and grow their business, I moved to policy implementation on their behalf, and to ultimately becoming a policyholder, responsible for enterprise policy across a whole region. I moved from chairing the boards of women's groups to chairing regional economic boards, allocating millions of pounds of infrastructural funding. Throughout this process, I constantly reflected on how I 'fitted in' to these circumstances; navigating a way through their structural and institutional values to explore how my actions could contribute to the wellbeing of the locality and especially the women within it.

The importance of social capital and the networks that I developed over these years helped to provide 'sense checks and balances' when performing in what were openly welcoming, but intrinsically challenging, environments. Utilising existing women's networks of support; ensuring that a wide range of women were consulted, enabling women's participation in the policy development; all contributed to the iterative process of policymaking indicated in the analysis sections of this thesis. Without the contribution of such individuals and groups, little progress would have occurred.

There were many occasions when I was the only woman in a room of twenty policymakers, plus politicians, civil servants, heads of industry, professors, and bureaucrats. On such occasions, I reflect upon the continued imbalance of power between women and men. Initially, I was often expected to answer questions on matters 'of the domestic sphere,' i.e. childcare, or domestic issues, but opportunities to speak on matters of infrastructure spending, or housebuilding, or land and property issues were to follow. When I became a regional chair of a public body, I ensured that more women were encouraged to become involved and participated in activities and that their contributions were included on a wide range of policy issues.

This experience of supporting women in their ventures convinced me of the value of involvement in entrepreneurial activity. There is much written about the cult of entrepreneurship, and whether it is of benefit to both individuals and society for all people to be able to start up and run businesses (Shane, 2009). Television programmes such as Shark Tank in the USA, or Dragons' Den in the UK present an impression of a business, which is entertaining but far from most people's lived experience of starting or growing an enterprise.

At the start of the new millennium, Ogbor and Avenue (2000) questioned the prevailing ideologies and discourse around entrepreneurship and exploring the relation to praxis. As a practitioner, I have gathered overwhelming accounts from individuals of the value of

engaging in entrepreneurial activity; however small that is. As a current scholar in this field, I am faced with a range of academic theory, but I am often questioning, to paraphrase Iris Marion Young 'what lived problems do these theories address'? (Young, 1997). While it is necessary to question policy and practice academically, as an engaged scholar, I stop to evaluate who are making claims to knowledge on women's behalf, and what are their intentions? My experience in this academic research process has assisted in this aspect of critical thinking. Taken for granted, tacit knowledge had to be unpacked. Consciously moving away from the role of a practitioner, distancing myself from the everyday experience, has enabled a different perspective on my work. Working in the academic environment in recent years has facilitated and developed a more critical mindset on my work in this field – but this has taken time.

To an extent, within the research process, there has been a strong element of 'going full circle in the research' – starting with texts that appeared to bear little relationship to what is being studied. However, by undertaking a reflexive process, it eventually brought me back to the texts that I started with, but with many diversions in between. Those diversions helped to 'solve the puzzle' by understanding what appeared relevant, but was not; and what appeared irrelevant, but was very important to the analysis of this study; Interpretivism is an example of that point. The experience equates with going on a journey and returning home. The journey was important to appreciate different perspectives about what I already knew. What changed was my understanding of the levels of complexity on the issues, and how theory opened this up – the iterative, recursive function of the 'puzzle-theory-puzzle' deliberation in the research process has led to the widening of my perspectives on working on women's behalf for greater economic participation.

In what I have stated within this chapter, I have attempted to ensure that I meet the high demands for autoethnographic writing, which Stalke Wall advocates within her critique of autoethnography as a method (Wall, 2016). In her article, she states that authors should "provide some kind of analysis of the description of the experience to link the personal with the social" (p. 3). This is my intention for the content of this chapter.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“There are in fact two things, science and opinion; the former begets knowledge, the latter ignorance”.

(Hippocrates, Law, cited in Vonnegut, 2006, p. 175)

10.1 Introduction.

The quotation above commences the final chapter of this research. The words that it contains focus the mind on the purpose of undertaking scientific research, namely the pursuit of informed knowledge. This research has aimed to inform the reader through the adoption of the scientific method about a recent period of history, in a specific place and time. The situated and temporal nature of the research provides us with a ‘snapshot’ of a regional policymaking process, in part directed and influenced by women across the West Midlands region. These women have been at the centre of the research.

This chapter provides a concluding commentary on the research. The next section outlines the academic contribution of the research, in both theoretical and methodological practice. This is followed by the limitations of the research, addressing potential areas for future development. Two recommendations are then presented for consideration by scholars or interested practitioners in public policymaking. The chapter ends with closing remarks.

10.2 Academic Contributions

The research is a qualitative longitudinal study, situated in public policy research on women’s enterprise development within the UK. It contributes to knowledge by both documenting and analysing a period in regional economic development history that has not previously been considered in academic terms; the temporal and spatial aspects of the research are therefore unique. The centrality of women, particularly those from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, in the development, organisation and activism for policy change within the region during this specific period is also a unique feature of the research. Scholars of female entrepreneurship are now focusing upon women’s enterprise policy and entrepreneurial feminism, in order to both discover and highlight more about the role of

government policy in support of women in regional and national economies. For example, studies on women's role in the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems are ongoing (Manolova *et al.*, 2017; Hechavarría and Ingram, 2018; Orser, Elliott and Cukier, 2019), examining women's role in regional and national economic development. On an international basis, the work of the Diana International Women's Enterprise Policy group in their longitudinal analysis of women's entrepreneurship policy in thirteen nations continues, for example with their recent collaboration with The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on women's enterprise policy practice (Henry *et al.*, 2017).

Conceptually this research contributes to this recent field of entrepreneurial feminism, through the exploration of a 'fallible form of emancipation' offered by critical realist theory. Philosophically, theoretically, methodologically and through the process of 'Engaged -Activist entrepreneurship scholarship', the underlabouring of the data provides insights into the contradictions of how entrepreneurial feminism operates within and against causal mechanisms of oppression. A conceptual model is also posited, in order to provide further insight into these mechanisms. Through the research, it is possible to highlight the many contradictions that are entrenched within the policymaking process and the resulting policy-led initiatives and how these are experienced by the stakeholders involved. Examples of these can include:

- inherited influences and design influence by policy activists who themselves are subject to multi levels of causal mechanisms including power and oppression;
- influence by the political tensions between the activist's beliefs and multi levels of causal mechanisms that inform the implementation of the policies;
- experiences of policy recipients whose lives are characterized by multi- levels of causal mechanisms of power and oppression in the context of civil societies.
- the issues of intersectionality and diversity amongst the groups studied; each with their own levels of interaction with the causal mechanisms of power and oppression.

A further important academic contribution results from the author's reflections on their own part in this research (as highlighted in Chapter 9). It is suggested that the researcher, through her underlabouring, informs the concept of emancipation through Bhaskar's depth ontological approach. The act of this research itself can be fallibly viewed as a form of emancipatory activity. At the level of the empirical (that which we observe), the author has underlaboured on the policies and practices identified. At the level of the actual (which may, or may not be observed) it can be argued that the author has identified a variety of tensions, both within and across coalitions, and the ways in which the members of these coalitions were supported -or otherwise -by the wider society in which they operated. At the level of the real (which Bhaskar contends is hard to observe without enough underlabouring), it is fallibly suggested that the author has identified mechanisms of power and domination, within this specific context. Therefore, the contribution of the author in this research is the absorption of critical realist theory (the ontological approach); utilising it directly within research practice and thus developing critical realist-informed methods.

From a methodological perspective, this research has adopted a multi-method approach to addressing a complex issue of how women influenced policy change across a region. The range of methods used is complementary and axiologically robust. The conceptual framework adopted the policy process analysis method of the Advocacy Policy Framework. This framework has not been adopted in this way for the analysis of a policymaking process for female entrepreneurship policy in the UK to date.

A further methodological contribution is the positing of a prototype model for critical realist analysis of the underlying structural dynamics of the policy process. Whilst somewhat crude at this stage, the model provides a hypothetical construct for refinement and debate. Scholars within the entrepreneurial domain are exploring the potential of critical realist theory for its application in the development of different epistemological perspectives in the study of feminist policy practice (Gunnarsson, Martinez Dy and van Ingen, 2016; Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018). The 'laminated policy' approach adopted within the research analysis

provides a unique conceptual approach to identifying causal mechanisms underlying the case study events. This provides a contribution within this domain of research, which could potentially (and fallibly) be transferable to other diverse groups seeking emancipatory practice.

The research practically shines a spotlight on regional economic development in an advanced economy and pinpoints how women have succeeded in becoming actively engaged, over a long period of time. It has opened a 'black box' of public policy practice and situated women as agents of change within it; identifying actors, interactions and detailed elements of the infrastructure across the region at the time.

This research is also complementary to other studies, which have explored aspects of this policy process but using a different theoretical lens and from a different standpoint. The work of Arshed examining policy development from within the UK civil service (Arshed, 2012) adopts an institutional perspective to the development of women's enterprise policy practice in the UK. This research study is complementary to the work of Arshed as it primarily provides an individualistic approach to the policy study. The focus of this research study differs, but it provides a greater depth of analysis and unique perspective into one of the regions included in Arshed's work.

10.3 Limitations of the research.

The previous section has indicated the contributions of this research, but this study is not without its limitations. The reflexive process adopted within this research resulted in questioning aspects of the research process throughout its duration. This highlighted three key limitations, which are outlined below.

Firstly, a methodological limitation. Both the compilation and analysis of the case study data was undertaken manually. It was not coded using a computerised analysis package. The use of such coding may have identified further themes for data analysis than those used within the case studies. However, the manual compilation added to the nature of the

underlabouring, as a great deal of time was taken to describe, reproduce, eliminate and identify data—a key component of Bhaskar’s DREI(C) approach to scientific explanation. The effect of this was therefore mitigated within the research, using manual archiving techniques, but the research could possibly have been extended using digital analyses packages.

A second limitation is the range of interviews conducted during the research period. A wider range of interview subjects could have participated; for example, other policymakers, or some of the original founders of the organisations highlighted within the research. Both access and confidentiality issues arose when attempting to obtain interviews with original founders and policymakers. Given the longitudinal nature of the research, and the closure of several organisations featured within it, locating and gaining permission from potential participants proved to be difficult. However, some interviews were given, and informal conversations with participants ‘off the record’ enabled further insight on some contentious aspects within the research.

The third limitation relates to the synthesis of the case studies into one overall analysis. Given the longitudinal scope of the research, it was necessary to provide an analysis of a policy process that ran over two decades. The Advocacy Coalition Framework was specifically chosen because it emphasised the longitudinal nature of the policy process. Nevertheless, the synthesis of key actors, coalitions, and external environmental events, and their effects on the policy subsystem had to be highly detailed in order to achieve meaningful results.

These limitations have been provided but should not detract from the rigour of the research. Both the rich picture provided within the cases - together with the significant level of underlabouring analysis undertaken within the research process - enable aspects of these limitations to be lessened.

10.4 Recommendations

This research has explored how women were involved in the policy process in a region over several years. It has addressed how conditions can come together to enable policy change and policy practice to progress. Much of this intimate detail is now lost, with the closure of women's organisations and government institutions across the region. However, policy learning can continue. It is on this basis that two recommendations are made.

Firstly, a recommendation to policymakers. Involve more women in the policymaking process. Involve women from across communities, from various backgrounds and with various interest. Place women from a variety of background in your job roles and in positions of authority. The findings show that this makes a difference if you want a diverse economy. Nurture the natural talent that exists within communities and embrace their diversity. Importantly, provide long term resourcing for organisations with expertise in diverse fields of enterprise. The cases and findings within this research show what can be achieved in terms of political involvement and activism in the policymaking process.

Secondly, recommendations to researchers. This research highlights some of the enablers in support of women's enterprise, but it also highlights a lack of structural change in the levels of female entrepreneurship over time. GEM data shown at the beginning of this study illustrates the stubborn nature of the rates of female versus male early-stage entrepreneurial activity. If, despite a range of strategic, policy and practical measures and women's best efforts, these rates remain unchanged, then more research is needed to expose both the macro and meta- level structural dynamics that impact upon women's lives. This research has contributed to that endeavour, but much more research is required if we want to demonstrate to governments how these rates can be improved.

10.5 Final remarks.

“History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” (Anon) is a proverbial saying which reflects certain aspects of this research process. Presently, within the UK, we have both The Rose Review and a Parliamentary group addressing the need for more female entrepreneurs within the UK (Rose, 2019; Women and Enterprise All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2019). Passing references are given to the Strategic Framework for Women’s Enterprise and the many initiatives associated with it. There are now new policymakers, new individuals and new coalitions that have formed in order to maintain this work. The scale of the challenge continues, as it appears that very little has changed with the structures and processes underlying these concerns, from when WEDA commenced its activity all those years ago. It is to be hoped that lessons can be learned from previous policy approaches at local, regional and national levels to increase entrepreneurial feminism, rather than merely perpetuating the status quo. Changing underlying societal conditions remains an uphill battle though; but one that many feminist researchers - together with practitioners in female entrepreneurship policy - continue to pursue with determination and fortitude.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – PROWESS DOCUMENTS

APPENDIX 2 – CASE STUDY EXAMPLE DATA

APPENDIX 3 – INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

APPENDIX 4 – ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

APPENDIX 5 – ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK DETAILED CASE ANALYSIS
OF CASE STUDY 1

APPENDIX 6 – SELECTION OF WECOE REPORTS

APPENDIX 1 - PROWESS DOCUMENTS

Appendix 1

List of Prowess reports and publications.

| Publication Title |
|--|
| Business Support with the 'F' Factor. A multi-lateral approach to providing Female-Friendly business support for all women (Oct 2005). |
| The Regional State of Women's Enterprise in England (June 2005). |
| The Flagship Award for Best Practice in Women's Enterprise Development (March 2005). |
| Women Friendly Incubation Environments and Managed Workspaces (Feb 2005.) |
| Bridging the Enterprise Gap: Strategies to support socially excluded women into self-employment (Oct 2004.) |
| Show us the Money; The state of women's enterprise support 2004 (Oct 2004). |
| US Women's Enterprise Study Visit – Washington DC (May 2004). |
| Women and Private Equity Finance (June 2004). |
| Who Benefits? The difficulties for women in making the transition from unemployment to self-employment (May 2004). |

APPENDIX 2 - CASE STUDY EXAMPLE DATA

MEDIA RELEASE

With photo

A Coventry researcher and auditor has thanked a leading women's business support organisation for helping to set up her business.

Julie Murphy has launched AEP Consultancy after receiving advice and support from the city-based Regional Women's Enterprise Unit (RWEU).

The mum-of-three, who lives in Stoke with her partner, Sean, and youngest daughter, Shealin, started her own business after working in education for over 14 years and wanted a more flexible way of working to look after six-year-old Shealin.

"AEP stands for Adult Education Projects and my business is centred on research and projects for organisations that deal with adult education and training," Julie said.

"I develop qualifications and course materials, conduct mapping, carry out research in areas such as completion and progression and ensure there is quality assurance and compliance in anything to do with adult education and training and assisting organisations where they need help or support."

The 46-year-old taught psychology at Lyng Hall School and Woodway Park School and Community College in the city as well as City College Coventry, Henley College and Rugby College and part-time at Coventry University.

Julie was also a development officer at the Open College Network for Central England based at the University of Warwick and has also worked for the examinations board OCR.

"I was looking for more flexible work since I have a six-year-old daughter," she said. "My other two children have grown up and flown the nest – there is a 20-year gap between Shealin and her sister. They grow up so fast and I want to make sure that I am around more this time.

"I have gained business from various people that I have worked with over the years and I haven't had to actively seek work yet which is great.

"I'm working when Shealin is at school or during the evenings and I may have to look at the possibility of sub-contracting out some work but it isn't an avenue that I have looked at yet.

"The RWEU has been really helpful and has given me plenty of good advice and encouragement.

“I went on a one-day course they organised with the Inland Revenue which was fantastic because it covered topics such as how to fill in your tax return form and what you can claim expenses for.

“It has also been great to meet other women that are starting businesses but are at various stages. Some women didn’t specifically know what kind of business they wanted to start and others were about to start operating but it is great to know that you are not on your own.”

Business adviser Minal Sodha, said the RWEU doesn’t just help women set up businesses, it provides on-going support to help companies grow.

“All services are free to women in the West Midlands as we’re part funded by Advantage West Midlands, the DTI’s Small Business Service and the European Social Fund,” she said.

“Anyone considering setting up a business should get in touch, just like Julie did.

“We run courses which provide practical advice on business and financial plans which are vital to have in place before any company gets off the ground.

“Julie has vast experience in her field and her business gives her the opportunity to continue working and look after her daughter before and after school which is the balance that many working mums are striving for.”

The RWEU can be contacted on [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

PICTURE CAPTION:

Best Practice Standards for Business Support Providers

| | |
|--|--|
| INCLUSION 1. Outreach 2. Access | CLIENT FOCUSED 3. Segmented market knowledge 4. Listening organisations 5. Regular face-to-face service 6. Promotion of clients' businesses |
| EQUALITY 7. Some women only provision 8. Women business support professionals 9. Commitment to Diversity | QUALITY 10. Established programmes 11. Significant impact 12. Effective partnerships 13. Coherent range of services - pre-enterprise - Business training or counselling - Access to finance - ICT - Networking or mutual support |

Inclusion

1. Outreach

Evidence: An effective outreach programme (e.g. talks/visits to places women go)

Rationale: It is a big step for a lot of entrepreneurial women to describe themselves as 'businesswomen'. Those women will not be attracted by traditional methods of marketing.

2. Access

Evidence: Deal with access issues adequately, for example:

Timings – all day courses may not suit women who have to collect children from school, many people need to start a business on top of a job and daytime courses exclude them.

Location: women are less likely to have access to a vehicle so venues should be accessible by public transport and in locations which take personal safety into consideration.

Costs: Women are more likely to be on lower incomes or benefits and may be excluded by the cost of care, travel or course fees.

Taking care responsibilities into account – women with care responsibilities will need access to a crèche or help with childcare costs without too many restrictions. Elder or dependents with other care needs is a growing issue where women are most likely to have primary responsibility.

Culture – some cultures will not attend mixed gender courses

Rationale: Inaccessible programmes can effectively design women and other groups out.

Client Focussed

3. Segmented Market Knowledge

Evidence: Disaggregate client statistics by gender, ethnicity, disability and any other relevant underrepresented or disadvantaged groups and on balance they reach an adequate number of these.

Rationale: To effectively target market segments, you need to measure the effectiveness of your marketing approach.

4. Listening Organisation

Evidence: Client focused – constantly working to improve the service and meet client needs, with good methods for listening to clients experience and concerns. Will have procedures such as social audits or client surveys.

Rationale: Women in business often feel invisible and not listened to – best practice organisations really do listen to and act on feedback from their clients

5. Regular face-to-face service

Evidence: A well promoted programme of menu of business support services, which clearly states the type of service available e.g. training courses, workshops, business advice sessions etc.

Rational: Lack of confidence is an issue for a lot of women starting their own business. In the early stages face to face services are crucial. Regular face to face services will also build trust and help ensure that businesses feel that they can help shape the service.

6. Promotion of client's businesses

Evidence: Clients are assisted to promote and celebrate their businesses where possible e.g. encouraged to apply for awards; directories of members; press coverage of case studies.

Rationale: Such promotion has the dual benefit of both promoting the business (and many women find sales and marketing a particular problem) and creating relevant role models for other women looking to start a business.

EQUALITY

7. Some women only provision

Evidence: There is an option of women-only support in terms of either pre-enterprise training, business training or networking.

Rationale: Women often feel more comfortable in discussing broader issues affecting their businesses in a woman-only session. This can enable strong and effective networks to develop, which are a source of ongoing support during the process of starting and developing a business. Women-only can be an essential option for some cultural groups.

8. Commitment to Diversity

Evidence: At least 40% of clients should be women and a proportionate % of BME women to local population, (except in organisations specifically aimed at BME groups). There should be a clear commitment to promoting diversity through organisational policies and practice.

Rationale: If services are effectively targeted at women and are meeting their needs this will start to translate into greater numbers of women taking up those services. Within the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise, the government's target for women using government funded business support services is 40% and mainstream business support organisations need to be meeting this target. The framework stipulates that the number of women from

BME communities receiving business support assistance should be proportionate to their representation in the relevant local/regional population.

9. Women business support professionals

Evidence: At least 1/3 of the business support professional staff in the business support organisation are women

Rationale: Support organisations need to make efforts to reflect the characteristics of their clients. Women business support professionals can be powerful role models to clients and women clients sometimes feel happier seeing another woman.

Quality

10. Established Programmes

Evidence: The programme of women's business support has been established for at least one year

Rationale: Reflecting on experience and feedback from clients is an important part of the process of designing a quality programme of women's business support.

11. Significant impact

Evidence: Programme assists a minimum of 50 women a year (30 in remote areas).

Rationale: Best practice is about making an impact as well as effective programme design and delivery. Quality programmes need to be committed to supporting a reasonable number of businesses.

12. Effective partnerships

Evidence: Where an organisation is dependent on partnerships to deliver elements of its service, the organisation will be able to influence the partner's delivery and will receive operational reports.

Rationale: Referral relationships are important, but best practice organisations will seek closer working relationships with organisations which enable them to deliver a coherent service. And they will expect the same high standards from the partner organisations as they set for themselves.

13. Coherent Range of Services

Evidence: Directly or in the type of partnerships outlined in point 10, the organisation is able to provide the following services, including at least one women only option (see standard 8).

- a. Pre-enterprise training or counselling

Those sessions build confidence and personal effectiveness skills such as time management and negotiation. Essential foundations for people who are starting a business after a long period out of paid work.

- b. Business training or counselling

Standard building blocks of most effective business support programmes.

- c. Help accessing finance (either the provision of grants and/or loans for business startup and development, and/or informed signposting to

appropriate sources of finance and business advice input to ensure women are investment-ready)

Women's businesses are disproportionately likely to be undercapitalised. Business support providers can help by providing direct access to loans and grants or advice which understands women's position.

d. ICT training

Some reports find that women are less likely to use ICTs in their business. Business ICT should be a core element of business training programmes and clients should be encouraged to use ICTs to research and promote their business where appropriate.

e. Networking or mutual support groups

An awful lot of business is conducted through informal and formal networks – but women have traditionally been less likely to participate in business or other networks. Women-only networks can be a stepping stone to engage in a range of networks and in themselves provide opportunities for important mutual support with other women in the same position.

Rationale: By providing a coherent range of services the organisation will enable women to access all the support they need to start up or develop their business without the need to shop around numerous business support agencies.

Additional Recommendations:

The services identified above are the minimum level required. In addition organisations are encouraged to think about providing:

- Assistance in making the transition from welfare benefits to self employment
- Mentoring or coaching services
- A managed workspace/incubation environment.

The PROWESS Flagship quality standard if focused on the structure of effective business support services. It may be used to complement other quality standards such as:

- SFEDI (Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative) quality standard <http://www.sfedi.co.uk/>
- IIP (Investors in People) <http://www.iipuk.co.uk/>
- Customer First standard <http://www.customerfirst.org/>

1. Rationale

- 1.1. The Enterprise Board have recommended that the need of supporting women into Enterprise is a key priority for the region. In doing this it has recommended that as part of the development of the new Enterprise Brokerage Service (and indeed the wider business transformation agenda) a Centre of Expertise should be set up to assist and ensure that support provided by mainstream support services are accessible and appropriate for all women in the region, using existing best practice, rather than setting up separate service offers.
- 1.2. It is envisaged that the need for this centre of expertise will be time limited. The ultimate goal will be for the key functions set out below to be incorporated into the Service itself as it develops its own effectiveness, reach and impact in this key area of its marketplace

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To contribute to the development of a robust enterprise support system in the West Midlands region through the provision of a dedicated resource and expertise in relation to women entrepreneurs. The specific tasks to include:
 - 2.1.1. Market intelligence: to act as a knowledge repository and intelligence unit for both regional and relevant national research, related to women's enterprise in the West Midlands region.
 - 2.1.2. Supply-side development: to identify and maintain comprehensive networks and communication mechanisms with the supply side i.e. support networks and community groups which support women's enterprise in the West Midlands region.
 - 2.1.3. Capacity Development: to work to develop the capacity of these groups to assist with the engagement and delivery of enterprise and business support to Women
 - 2.1.4. Proactive engagement with AWM, Business Link, DTI, Government Office Local Authorities, LSC and the new Women's Taskforce, with the aim of increasing relevant activity in support of Women's Enterprise across the West Midlands region.
 - 2.1.5. Where a market failure is identified, to design appropriate services and interventions to address the market failure
 - 2.1.6. To provide a 'scrutiny' role in relation to the new Business Support Model to ensure that it is accessible to Women and providing appropriate services to meet their needs.
- 2.2. Each of these tasks is dealt with in more detail below – with an indicative allocation of time. It is anticipated that each would require there to be a lead manager to drive each specific particular work area with supply side analysis and piloting naturally combining.

3. Market Intelligence

- 3.1. The Centre will seek to identify the specific needs of women entrepreneurs through defining:
 - 3.1.1. Current pattern and scale of women's enterprise in the region in terms of successful business formation. This will include comparison with other regions, both nationally and internationally
 - 3.1.2. Significant areas of underperformance (in terms of geography, sector, sustainability, community)
 - 3.1.3. Significant areas of opportunity (promising growth areas in terms of geography, sector, community etc)
 - 3.1.4. Barriers to enterprise, particularly for groups facing labour market disadvantage (for e.g. Muslim women)
 - 3.1.5. Commissioning research and data analysis as appropriate to inform the development of policy and services
 - 3.1.6. Advising the Enterprise Brokerage on how to structure its own data gathering to provide an ongoing evidence base for measuring its performance
 - 3.1.7. Contributing to the development of the Brokerage Service Marketing Strategy in this key area.

4. Supply Side Analysis and Capacity Building

- 4.1. Develop and maintain comprehensive networks and communication mechanisms with the support networks and community groups which support women's enterprise
- 4.2. Work to develop the capacity of these groups to assist with the engagement and delivery of enterprise and business support to Women. This may involve the administration of a Development Fund to be jointly managed with the Enterprise Brokerage Service
- 4.3. Develop where necessary and encourage the achievement of appropriate specific quality standards related to delivery of women's Enterprise business support.

5. Stakeholder Engagement

- 5.1. To provide the bridge between the new BL Service and the wider stakeholders in women's enterprise in the region. These would include:
 - 5.1.1. AWM, LSC, JCP, GOWM, local authorities, LEGI areas other key policy makers and fund holding bodies
 - 5.1.2. Relevant community and voluntary organisations
 - 5.1.3. Media and other opinion formers
 - 5.1.4. Delivery agencies, both mainstream and specialist
 - 5.1.5. Other potential Centres of Excellence operating across the West Midlands region.
 - 5.1.6. Universities, colleges and schools, potential clients and the general public

5.2. Specifically, the tasks would include:

- 5.2.1. Establishment and operation of a regional Women's Enterprise Forum comprising, at the least, representation from all of the above, The Forum would act as a consultative/engagement body for both the Enterprise Brokerage Service and the Enterprise Board
- 5.2.2. Development with the Brokerage Service of a "ladder of opportunity" for women entrepreneurs which aligns and joins up the activities of all of the stakeholders in the region

6. Scrutinising and Evaluating

- 6.1. A scrutiny function for the new Service will include monitoring the service standards, performance and outcomes of the Enterprise Brokerage Service specifically in relation to women entrepreneurs. This will focus in particular on the Business transformation goals of
 - 6.1.1. Increasing the volume in absolute terms of women entrepreneurs
 - 6.1.2. Simplification/ reducing duplication
 - 6.1.3. Improving (through such measures as Social Return on Investment) quality, impact and value for money of delivery
- 6.2. The Centre will also agree specific actions for further developing the impact and effectiveness of the services delivered with the Enterprise Brokerage.

7. Piloting

On the basis of the other activities outlined above the Centre will be funded to undertake some development or commissioning of innovative programme development and pilots. This will provide a key opportunity for experimenting with new forms of intervention either in terms of process or content and testing their effectiveness before implementation through the Brokerage Service.

8. Centre for Expertise Selection Criteria

- 8.1. The organisation or consortium bidding for Centre status *must* have the following attributes:
 - 8.2. Sufficient track record and 'clout' to be taken seriously by all
 - 8.3. Sufficient independence to be trusted by all
 - 8.4. Demonstrable and detailed knowledge of the West Midlands regional issues pertaining to Women's enterprise and the wider socio-economic and political agenda
 - 8.5. Credible experience of delivery in the field
 - 8.6. Detailed knowledge of the challenges faced in women's enterprise support
 - 8.7. Detailed knowledge of current issues/debates in women's enterprise agenda
 - 8.8. Able to work successfully with DTI/ Women's Enterprise Task Force and other RDAs
 - 8.9. Ability to present publicly, negotiate etc. with diverse regional bodies.
- There needs something here about where COE is likely to be located.

**REDACTED. Minutes from the West Midlands Regional Women's Advisory Group
20 July 2006 – 10.00am.**

- Attendees:**
- Prowess
 - WiRE
 - Small Business Service
 - WBDA
 - Advantage West Midlands
 - Birmingham Chamber
 - Advantage West Midlands
 - Advantage West Midlands
 - West Midlands Quality Centre (representing LSC)
 - Federation for Small Business
 - Advantage West Midlands

Item 1

Apologies had been received from:

XXXXXXXXXX- AWM

The Chair welcomed the group – each person introduced themselves and explained what their role was in enterprise.

Item 2 – Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference document was given out to all members – the Chair invited members to make comments.

The Flagship partnership was defined as that of WiRE and WBDA - who were the only two organisations with 'Flagship' status. It was explained that Flagship was an accreditation that Prowess awarded to organisations that provided a quality business support service that was 'women friendly'. This was a standard that was recognised by the DTI.

There was then a discussion regarding the group composition as many of the organisations listed in the TOR were not present. DH explained that this was just a first draft which the executive had come up with. In the long-term the success of the project would perhaps see more organisations become involved.

- It was confirmed that WBDA and WIRE were present as the Executive – this would need to be added to the TOR.
- The word 'Advisory' should be used as opposed to 'Steering'
- Other changes were also made to the TOR; it was agreed that these would be redrafted and circulated

Action

1. TOR to be redrafted and circulated

Item 3 – Activities within the RWEU

XX gave a brief presentation on the work that WBDA are involved in under the umbrella of the RWEU. This included work programmes to raise awareness within urban areas of enterprise, help women overcome barriers to starting a business and also programmes around high growth, to ensure that those businesses which want to grow are able to achieve their potential. There would also be programmes aimed at helping schoolgirls look to enterprise as a viable option. A piece of software has been developed which is already proving to be successful following pilots in two schools.

Following this presentation, the following issues were raised and discussed

- The role of LEGI and the need to involve them
- That mentors used by WBDA are all accredited

XX then explained the work that WiRE was involved in under the RWEU badge, this included, the membership, the work it is doing in rural areas around networking, raising awareness and high growth.

Following this the following issues were raised and discussed

- Many clients who access these services are individual's who do not use or recognise Business Link – the RWEU brand may be more appealing – however, some individuals will be passed back to the new model of business support, currently being developed by AWM.
- The need to ensure that the Unit reached 'invisible' groups in both urban and rural areas and the need to provide data on how successful the RWEU has been in reaching out to different groups.
- The need to collect statistics which shows penetration of all invisible groups.

The Chair then gave an introduction on the role of Prowess and its activities. There was then a general discussion on

- The Flagship standard and the fit with other quality standards
- The fact that Prowess Flagship is the only one to recognise and support 'women friendly' business support, and networks.
- However, it was also agreed that organisations with other quality marks would find it feasible to get the overall Flagship standard, given their knowledge of 'quality' business support delivery.

Action Points

- 2 Need to engage with LEGI contacts – contacts with local LEGI initiatives, and applicants needs to be made, in order to integrate RWEU's approach into the LEGI activity, and proposed bids.

Item 4 - Challenge Fund

The Chair explained the reason for having a challenge fund. Following which discussions took place on the following:

- The reasons for choosing BME and refugee women
- Whether these groups were already targeted within the main body of the RWEU
- Whether the challenge fund should be used for other activities.
- The fact that the challenge fund was aimed at groups who needed additional support over and above what the RWEU was able to provide
- Confirmation that these were additional target areas to what the main body of the RWEU was looking to do.
- The details contained within criteria and application form for the challenge fund and the timescales.

So far there had been 6 expressions of interest – those applying were not looking to re-invent existing ideas, but ‘up- skill’ existing activities.

- Clarification around match funding would also need to be made – the point was raised that Challenge Fund monies were partly from ESF and could therefore not be used as match by applicant organisations.

It was agreed that the Challenge fund documentation would need to be reworded – the Chair asked for volunteers to work on this. AA/XX/YY agreed to be a part of this subgroup.

Actions

- 3 Subgroup to look at draft of challenge fund
- 4 Application form and criteria to be circulated

Item 5 – Key Policy Areas

The Chair then handed out a document which highlighted the Key areas the group would look to address.

The main comments and discussion points were that:

- This should be a rolling document
- Needs to show the achievements and prioritise each area
- Need to ensure that we capture the work of other pilots – a workshop is being planned for September which will look at this (SBS)
- That the Business support agenda should be a priority as this will also help influence several other key areas listed
- That this meeting was an excellent opportunity for all agencies to help in advocating for women’s enterprise, across all organisations, thus ‘growing the market’ for women’s enterprise support across the region.
- Task to be undertaken to ensure that this agenda is aligned and fully integrated in that of business support – need both sides to work together to ensure that outcomes are positive.

- That skills and education are also critical in the long term.

Item 6 - Monitoring and Evaluation

The Chair explained the role of 'Blue Horizons (Scotland) Ltd, who had been appointed as the independent monitor and evaluator of the project.

The discussion that followed was around the business and operating plan – the Chair agreed that this would be circulated to all members

Action

5. Executive summary of business plan to be circulated

Item 7 - Background / Activities / Outputs and spend

A discussion then took place around the impact assessment tool kit outline, it was agreed that the data needs to mirror the SBS data i.e. around attitudes. The fact that it needs to be a powerful tool to ensure continuation and could influence the way data is collected in the future. It could also be used as guidance for the type of questions FSB may ask in future research.

Future Meeting Dates

It was agreed that the Group would meet every two months prior to the Enterprise Board meetings. Tuesday and Wednesday were viewed as the best days. There was then a general discussion around which other members should be part of the group – the suggestion was that the HSBC should be approached as well as VC managers, depending on where the main issues were.

AOB

- The mission and governance statement would be sent out
- Group would be champions for women's enterprise and would look to get out key messages.
- XX agreed that she will pull together the case for different policy areas.

Review of actions resulting from the meeting:

1. TOR to be redrafted and circulated
2. Need to engage with LEGI contacts
3. Subgroup to look at draft of challenge fund
4. Challenge fund application form and criteria to be circulated
5. Executive summary of business plan to be circulated.

Date and time of next meeting: to be circulated, together with dates up to May 07.

Meeting closed at 12.20pm.

APPENDIX 3 - INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Transcribed Scotland interview. 16/2/18.

Introductory statement on WESF: there were huge opportunities at that time. Draw attention 14-15% WE at the time. Framework in 2003. Guess what – says pretty much the same thing as we would say now. been chip, chip chipping away over all these years. Looking now in 2010, pretty much ditched everything. Left a vacuum. WE policy fell by the wayside. Nothing coherent currently. Still only one in 5 business women owned. Still go on about productivity gap, economic gap. In Scotland, issues about mainstreaming – put service as more ‘women – friendly’ not directly female focussed. 400K out of 3 billion on WE.

DB A question to those in business – does policy matter to you? Various responses.

One person Googled it. The old UK policy. Reading through it. Only real continuation of a framework. Existing framework was not refreshed. What is it supposed to do? Document highlighted economic inequality and potential. Identified barriers for greater participation and barriers to overcome. Strategy was evolved across the country as policies. Welsh, Scottish, NI and across the RDA's. ‘The Case’ was developed. Lightbulb moment with the case – the language that they used etc. It had not occurred to them that. Images that were used – pictures that are seen. Words images, all sorts of things. That we subliminally take in. predominant prevailing image of what business is/ is seen to be.

Another woman - People do not realise, hardly any females in this area. Men do not just see it – when you do open their eyes, they do see it and what to do something about it. Also went to a business angel group – only 2 women in 100. Had not seen it before. Subconscious for so many men.

Another woman. Man Talking to son – “Mummy and London – all things mummy had done in London.”

Was not a part of husband's life, so it did not exist. Not appreciating recognising, understanding contribution, knowledge and understanding of the ‘mummy’. Because of the industry mummy was in (fashion) all associated with fun – not serious. Many families in this industry involved women.

Another woman discussed roller derby (women are the default) and the poor commentary/ conversation – on women's sport. So condescending. Contact sport. Treating it badly 40 international teams at that level but was really played down.

Examples highlighting women's contribution not being valued at the same level.

Same woman says - Men need the support – worked with KFC. Area manager treated women badly. Made quarter of a million in opening month – staff treated badly.

Another woman. Husband of one senior business woman states that she does not have ‘a real job’. Very senior woman. Might not have gone into business for self if mum had not been in business. Good role model. Dad played a supportive role. As a result, 3 out of the 5 kids are self-employed. 4 women and one boy. Think it depends – if you are shown that it's possible, have a role model, it's not a big deal to be self-employed. Acknowledge that there are barriers. Women supported him and looking now to start business with husband. Now settled – not moving.

Other woman – we have a Ltd co for last 10 years. Need the level of support. You just do not get it from men. The encouragement from women is somehow different. Process information differently. If it does not relate to what they know, or do, or are interested in, they are just not interested. Women supporting each other.

Issues of perception. Women treated as underdogs. Her perception is not the same. In the arts in Canada, this was not the same. In the 90s more women. Never seen as underrepresented. I'm a woman who lives alone: I am used to making my own decisions, holding my own counsel. Canada and Scotland great support – Southern Ireland different. Support in Scotland is outstanding.

DB I want to probe further on the networks – if no support from close family etc, networks are important. How have you found the networks? What is the importance of networks for you?
Networks – discuss...

Networks essential – as a new artist could not have made progress at all, without Growbiz. Had a monthly magazine. Rural.

Another woman gained the contact via her landlord's mother. Ability to dip in and out of the network has been important. Always had it there – no need to attend all the time.

What about women only networks as opposed to mixed. Move people on. Many networks have inaccessible role models. It is about the journey as well – I dip in and out. Depends on where they are in the business.

Another – having experienced both city -based networks and rural, they are different. In what way different? – (how can I put this diplomatically). Lack of intimacy, lack of connection. Different needs of the networks.

Another woman – if you go to some of the city networks, it is a 'beer and pizza' culture – all to outdo each other. A lot of lies, deception. In rural level more intimate – different culture. Rural/ urban dimension, as well as male/ female. Female only can sometimes be 'alpha female' networks. Relaxed and calm at Growbiz. Everyone welcome. Realistic and achievable pace. We want to talk. Communication is different, and style and tone are important. Lots of time for networking to take place. Allows time for communication and networking to take place in the course of the agenda.

Sector can also be important in networks?? Creative only networks – not much difference, maybe because all female?? Thinking about differences, for creatives it may be more difficult to keep the conversation flowing?? But it is new. One issue that may play a role on the future is competition for galleries. More important for regular businesses as few artists and fewer galleries. I watch the social media exchange. I am concerned that 'we may keep the goodies to ourselves'. The importance in this sector of intellectual property. You may need to be more guarded?? Creatives using their own networks may be more guarded.

Picking up on the 'trust' thing. How we are going into the age of 'trust'?? Interesting as a concept. How we communicate, use information. Far more equal distribution of wealth. The idea of creative commons. How we use info and generate wealth. After industrialisation, move back to ideas of community – social interaction. 30 years ago, people thought new tech would replace people e.g. with business support online. Now people want to get together.

How do you see woman in business in 100 years' time? They said much more about community. Use less technology but use it better. No-one said that we will all be in spaceships. Idea of the Venus

project. No need to make big money where not needed. See how much easier life could be with the technology that is already out there. Fit lifestyle around working from home etc.

Opposite of what Governments always saying. The idea of growth. The idea of a female run government, I think more cross-party stuff, more social things paid attention to. Sometimes put women in top jobs to see things fail!! Issue of woman at the top being harangued for having lost her voice and coughing.

Cultural changes needed – communities working together and being redefined. How do you put a framework on cultural change? Harvey Weinstein been good for culture change. Now seems to be a time for change. Last 6-8 months seeing change. Social drivers – government must be pulled kicking and screaming to this. Scandinavian countries, why would you not have a crèche at work.

DB ask a question – do you believe that a document like WESF– these types of policy docs approach a problem from a ‘top down’ way> Do you think that having more of a community approach may help?

Reply, if you do not have women at the top, no-one will be listening. Government concentrates on big business. More people would be involved at grass roots level. Must come from both sides. Needs leadership – government changes – people at the top constantly change, you don’t get that continuity. Need more cross- party support and involvement. That’s more of how women work – much more collaboratively, but because politics is a male domain, it is much more about individual things, individual parties, individual policies.

We had to work with 11 different politicians on SF and different civil servants. It’s almost like 100 years ago, suffragettes started something, but we are still fighting. How many women in business know about strategic level. Need to engage more women. Find it hard enough to find business support, so where are they going to find the information. Need to show what the benefits of knowing will do for them. At school, kids find out how many women are astronauts?? What women seen as nurses and men as doctors. The joke to show how sexist you are. Mum is a surgeon in the joke. If we do not educate at school level, how do we change it. Little creativity. Bring things down to a mentally manageable level for them. It’s confusing to say that ‘you can do anything’. Bring things down on a more manageable level. Give them ‘a proper handle’ on what they way to do.

Stats – in IT gender balance very equal until mid-70s, then went back. Tracked back to introduction of gaming consoles. In US had 10% women. Changed the title of the course to ‘the joy of computing’, which brought in more women to the course.

One woman says that she has had consultants asking her for support to set up networks.

Any concluding point – has it answered questions about policy? Not looking for definitive answers. Are things changing? Your experiences really matter. Looking to get idea and a flavour of thoughts feelings and opinions. Would you get a different view from a group of 25-year olds?

TRANSCRIPT – 17/02/2018. Scotland.

REDACTED

D Cast your mind back a long way, feels like a long way, to developing the strategy. I would be interested just to know how you went about putting it together? I know I was involved at some stage in the draft that went out. What was it that prompted you, the key findings, the main things in the framework?

A I think it pretty much came out of various bits of research that had been done up to that time. At that point I think there was more emphasis on **barriers** to women's enterprise rather than focusing on the opportunity and potential. **The language I think was a bit different possibly**, some planks of the strategy (Strategic framework) were based on what we think were the **barriers** of women getting or going into business and therefore see what we can do to tackle and highlight them and look at some actions that may or not be workable. Obviously at that point Sara Carter had done quite a lot of research. Thinking back there was a lack of relevant published work, but I remember looking at an early GEM report 1999 /2000 and being struck that it was the first time - seeing it written down in black and white - that developing women's business ownership was an economic imperative for countries, so up until then it had been really quite difficult to see how we could hook what we were doing into any kind of mainstream strategic development. But from a government point of view, when the new Labour government came in in 1997, they completely reviewed enterprise policy. You could give the previous government a little bit of credit for its raising awareness of entrepreneurship generally and small business could be a bigger part of it.

D That was Heseltine around that time wasn't it?

A Yeh I think you have got to give them some credit for that

D There was also, I think at around that time, I thought and still get my head around was that the Tory Government were actually reasonably good at giving funding to voluntary type organisations to support.... moving away from strategy support to more around the voluntary sector for the delivery of services, and for me, that was one of the things that I harnessed was thinking about well what agenda can I get this stuff under and for me, I found that authorities, local councils etc were amenable around the kind of economic side of things but delivered through a kind of voluntary sector model.

A Yes, I think that is interesting. I think that might have been slightly more prevalent south of the border than Scotland but certainly if you look at Urban Aid, if you remember Urban Aid?

D Yeh yeh Urban Programme I think with us.

A Yeh that was a major driver for some of the activity in Scotland that tended to be demonstrated in increased community business or enterprise development. So the concept of women's enterprise, looking at gender issues within enterprise wasn't really there again until the mid to late 90s. I was told they were not particularly aware of what was going on south of the border because I was heavily involved in social enterprise development through the 90s there was a bit of 'toing and froing' for that. Going back to your question, so going forward to the strategy, I suppose, it is hard to think now, but it felt like it was a lot of **breaking new ground** in all of that because there was **no dialogue, there was no discussions going on about these issues in any part of Government** but what we did have was a fair amount of local and regional piecemeal activity which Prowess had some role in pulling together and at least providing a platform where you worked at that time. Train 2000 in Liverpool, the north east, and WEETU in Norwich and in the West Midlands (WEDA's).

D And London

A And London yes

D We have Phoenix Development Fund didn't we

A Yes to be honest the Phoenix fund was probably absolutely essential because.....

D A prerequisite I think

A I think so, and again the nature of the Phoenix funds which have never been really replicated or followed up on. That was deliberately a much less bureaucratic and easy process for community organisations to bid into and had a focus on diverse enterprise/ inclusive.

D I'm trying to think of the name of the woman who was involved with that

A XXXXXXXX?

D XXXXXXXX that's right. She was quite a champion for that and did quite a lot of profile with conferences and kind of activities and things, I think were quite important.

A When we originally were trying to put ideas around Prowess together and thought much more of a loose forum with a bit of resources.

A So we pulled together a plan for a UK-wide approach - I think - I wonder whether anyone from Wales was involved in that (yes – Chwarae Teg) - and it was **Phoenix funding that allowed a more substantial funding bid to be put in and everything** Prowess was about fitted into the objectives of the Phoenix fund.

D Even that in itself, I mean not going into the major ins and outs but how was that structure organised in terms - did someone come forward to do that, that was constructed was it?

A Yes by a working group - or whatever we called themselves, about half a dozen people like - do you remember – XXXXXXXX?

D Of course, yes from Manchester yes. XXXXXXXX, and YYYYYYYY.

A They were key players at the time . I don't think ZZZZZZ was involved in that

D I don't think so, no

A I don't think AAAAAA was

D No, not at all

A So we pulled our business strategy together that became the bid and then I think we had some money left from somewhere and I was paid as the consultant to help structure it and then pulled the recruitment together for the chief executive and then that went out to interview.

D And was there a board structure set up at that stage was it company limited by guarantee or charity. No

A It wasn't a charity

D No, so there was not necessarily a remit for it to move. The Norwich citing of it was more to do with the individuals that were involved in the organisation at that time?

A Yeh and in retrospect I think everyone recognised that we shouldn't have done that but there was a certain amount of support coming from academics near WEETU In some ways it made sense.

D The governance issues I think related to a lot of the organisations that were involved in one way or another. There were implications around governance and I think there were other issues that I want to dig a bit deeper into, not to do with individuals but my interest is around - this is **about women organising** for me and about how women and about how women's organisations operated. So, there are aspects of that that I'm looking into. It would be useful for me to have a quick look at that paper which we talked about but no issues.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A So yes, going back to the Framework, so Prowess had been up and running not that long and of course we had appointed a Chief Exec I was still contracted to do XYZ

D Was that at SBS; was that when you were working with abc?

A This was before.

D Oh ok

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I pretty much took on the front facing role to get Prowess launched and to make sure that we do what we said we would do with Phoenix but almost simultaneously we had got the Phoenix money and we were seen as a structured organisation, I was asked to come in and would meet with, it wasn't XXXXX at the first meeting I think it was YYYYY.

D Ok

A I remember the other guy who worked with

D Yeh I know who you mean

A So this is obviously been commissioned by the SBS, Patricia Hewitt.

D YYYYY

A No she wasn't around

D Not at that time ok

A People like XXXXX

D Yeh yeh absolutely

A and David Irwin was the first Chief Exec

D and then they changed didn't they, then there was Martin Wyn Griffith.

A It was still very much a **new thing of the government** to have this in small units and the relationship between small businesses service and mainstream DTI had a lot of tension. They called me in to talk generally about enterprise and what was happening as it wasn't clear they would set up a team that was going to focus on WE. They had the EM forum

D Yeh yeh yeh: XXXXXXXX involved and YYYYYYY involved and quite a lot of people that I knew. That was already operating because ZZZZZZZ was involved in that

A I don't think ZZZZZZZ was involved until later. I don't know where they got the secretariat from - Ok I know that he was important

D OK

A B, C and D (names of people)

D Oh ok well I know that they have been part of the kind of business the SBS type of approach around the EM business forum really and have been there for some time

A I think they were aware. They saw the forum very much of a conduit for knowledge and signposting for EM stuff that they wanted to do.

D I was just about to say that came out with Phoenix as did a lot of the social enterprise.

A I have got a copy somewhere of the reports that we did around erm XXXXXXXXXX– the impact of diverse enterprise support.

D I think I have got it somewhere. I know which one you are on about

A I remember that initial meeting and leaving that and feeling like I'd had my brain sucked out.

D Yeh yeh

A and I think they alluded to the fact that somebody was coming in to head up the team and arranged to meet them and I met xxxxx soon after.

A There wasn't really a UK wide women's enterprise network of dialogue going on at that time

D No. In 89 when I first got going this was the whole WEDA situation and that's what I'm writing about.

A Yes I mean I think one thing that came out clearly for me, personal when I was at xxxxx I really began to realise that-particularly once we started to network with the WEETU's that what we were all good at. There was lots of good stuff on the ground and there was a lot of inherent knowledge. What we weren't good at was the **advocacy lobbying influencing bit** so we hadn't actually.

D The collective we

A The collective we. I don't think we recognised that we could collectively lobby and advocate and make something happen at higher level and that was partly because government had never shown interest in women's enterprise, there was no sort of, government weren't coming to us so

D Drivers for change. There was nothing pushing in that direction

A I remember a critical event for me which changed my whole view of what we could be doing was when it was either 98, 99, think it was 98 ?? Baroness Jay instigated a transatlantic summit and using her US contacts got quite an influential bunch of maybe 10 or 11 women over.

D 98 did you say

A I think it was 98 and you know I have actually got the report on this somewhere but I have a feeling I gave it to the woman's library

D That's alright

A If I can find it I will

A I think that was the first they created because they had got this quite high level group of women over from America and I mean it just shows that I think at that point I think xxxx was invited, I was invited. there was maybe about half a dozen. I remember having to make a presentation. It was 11 Downing Street. They made this quite a do, they put a bit of gloss on it as it was quite important. So we had a reception at the US Embassy at Regent Park and the actual event the next day was in 11 Downing Street and, of course, I was feeling quite chuffed to be there and I remember just thinking gosh what a chance this is. I will never forget Gordon Brown was obviously Chancellor and I didn't recognise Sarah Brown. She was hovering about for some reason. I said is there anywhere to put your coat and she just went well you can ask Gordon. I will always remember that.

D Yes as you do, Funny

A So I did a presentation on xxxxxxx and concept of xxxxx as a women's enterprise centre and that was the catalyst for I think for quite a lot happening. I think Baroness Jay then used that event to influence her colleagues and say we needed to have a more coherent approach to all of this and there is activity happening in the UK, but we don't even know what that is or what it amounts to. At that point there wasn't really a coherent economic case made but **she had the vision to know that was the way.**

D Was that Women's Business Council in the states then

A Yeh I think so and there was an organisation, she was quite an influential woman. Interestingly Julie wasn't included in that group, but I think it was based on Baroness Jay's contact networks.

D Contact networks yes

[REDACTED]

D No. Given time, I'll ask you a specific question that I would like you to kind of just think about. What good to you think, what impact, good, however you want to put it your own subjective sort of view came out, has come out, continues to develop from the Framework and if that's nothing then say nothing but what.....?

A Well, I suppose because my general expectations and aspirations **for the sector** are high and are driven by sheer blood, sweat and tears over the years.

D Yes, and then some.....

A I would only be disappointed that **politically it's as if that never happened however**

D That's what I'm not looking for. I'm looking for you to think about.....

A I think, I mean you have to think right so if none of that happened, so we didn't have a Framework and it was still just that disparate activity going on and there was nothing really, overall I think it has had a positive impact, and even if it's now seen as a **'historical thing' you** know there is not even organisations that came out of that time, there are still very little that still exists really but there's **'daughters of'** that still exists

D And there's learning

A And there's learning. Absolutely and that's why I think it is so important what you do because I think there has been some advantage taken of that learning and certainly I mean it is hugely informed what we have done in Scotland.

D Which is why I came to Scotland to talk because there was still activity in Scotland and I am assuming there is still some activity in Ireland, I don't know. Do you?

A It is very patchy. We did our round table in November where very frustrated executive officer or CEO of the women's business network, and she was just pulling her hair out because she cannot get any kind of policy commitment or even a dialogue going; now that's partly because there is a vacuum in terms of government so they are relying on UK government at the moment. Yes that has been going for a number of years, so I guess Invest Northern Ireland support for women's enterprise has pretty much gone.

Interestingly I don't know if you have looked at Ireland at all but there is not any great policy stuff going on government level in Ireland but maybe partly because it's been a ***female chief exec of Enterprise Ireland*** they have had some gender focus activity particularly around investment going on for the last x number of years, and it has still been focussed on high growth etc, but that has partly been quite successful and they have been totally overwhelmed by every time they do another course or activity they are oversubscribed so the demand for women focus stuff is absolutely there, yet for some reason it hasn't influenced Northern Ireland

D The document itself obviously had key themes in it. Are there any themes that you think that you missed? I think these themes are still valid, are still relevant, are still things that need to be tackled. Are there any things that you think were an omission from what had originally occurred or if you had the time again, and this is the document, I'm not on about how it played out, I'm on about, I mean you have obviously got an iteration of that or a further iteration of it for Scotland. Did it develop in the Scottish model, are there things that you think now with hindsight?

A Yes I think there are two areas that would be picked up on or emphasised more. I don't think we talked much **about procurement** in the original framework

D There wasn't a lot

A I think procurement in the broad sense, diversity influencing government spending. Having said that

D It was access to markets or something wasn't it

A Yes I mean that was not worth the struggle generally for small business. The other side is looking- because at that time we were doing it from the developing it from the prospective - Mainly all was from mainstream business support so we were still looking at even when women's organisations were providing business support-it was still around a more **transactional model of helping women one by one and one to one support.**

D So the business support with the F Factor develop that further wouldn't it

A So looking at it from a more **relational** point of view I think we called it

D Transactional verses transformational

A I tend to talk now about '**relational**' because it means more to people so we put more emphasis on the Scottish framework on power of mentoring and peer support

D Ambassadors and that sort of thing

A Ambassadors role modelling. We didn't talk a lot about role. I think we mentioned role models, but we didn't - actually we did

D It was in the Framework yes

A It always surprises me how strongly that comes out in discussions as well, women definitely need to see how much we do for our team.

D What do you think about the access to finance situation.? The kind of financial literacy as it is so called. The sort of aspects around confidence, around money and those sort of things

A Yes I think we are not doing nearly enough. I think that is still a major issue and when we talk about everything that has happened in Scotland when we put access to finance in our framework. What the government really wanted to hone in on was the angel investment. I have gone red in the face telling them that If we really want to help women to grow, we need to provide micro credit, micro loans.

A It's education because women are hugely unconfident, they are not unknowledgeable, they are not unable, they are just unconfident and because in the last 10 years the sources of finance for small businesses has deteriorated to the extent that I'm wary of encouraging people to go to their bank now because sometimes that can just have the opposite effect or what I have had to do is get

an intervention from somebody in the bank who has got a business growth lender in our area who I have actually had to get to work with the business before they go near their lending site so that they know what to expect. But any deal would come for less than £5000-£10,000 which is where most businesses start, no traditional access whatsoever. Now obviously the growth of things that crowd-funding and peer lending has been I think is important, it still tends to be the sort of geeks and.....

D The younger and more tech savvy yeh

A We have got two examples of women entrepreneurs who have used crowd funding. One of them is pretty savvy. She is opening a bakery and she had generated some good PR, she was on 'Bake off' which always helps and that worked really well. Another woman who manufactures bras also used crowdfunding and did well. But what people don't appreciate, if you are using crowd funding as a means of raising capital, it's hugely labour intensive and time intensive and tricky. You have got to really be aware of your marketing and your response and 'living up to your expectations' and that sort of thing which is different from walking into the bank and getting a £20,000 loan.

D Yes I think basically financial literacy issues are still as prevalent it's just different kinds of financial literacy issues; you know from how you go to the bank and how you approach the bank to how do you work with this thing on their website and what do you do with that. It's still financial literacy it's just a different mode of delivery.

A And you know the frustrating thing is banks and financial institutions now know-partly because of their own experience and partly because research is telling them-that lending to women is inherently less risky for them. Women tend to put their propositions together and

D Payments etc, risk levels

A Absolutely and yet banks are still reluctant, or pay a lip service to actually working directly with women to make that possible.

D Ok thank you is there anything else you would like to say before I switch the tape off. We could literally go on for ages.

A I think it's difficult having been so involved in all of this stuff it is actually quite difficult to be objective.

D Oh yes that's what I'm trying to do and it's hard!

A It's really hard I remember points of utter exhaustion all through that period well for the last 20 years, just thinking 'oh my god why am I doing this and what's the

Going back to resourcing I suppose I'll finish off with

D It's ok

A So yes, absolutely the framework was never perfect. It was always going to be a slight compromise in various ways and actually doing it in the time scale. I remember when we were starting with so little to be going on with and was probably slight madness; but I think the big **issue was the resourcing that went in behind it**, so we haven't talked much about that but the delivery beyond that publication was sorely lacking and I think they thought what they were putting in was big bucks compared to what had gone in before, as to what had gone in before but, in essence to me to

change fundamental culture as we pointed out, to get the mainstream agencies to think differently about it, to genuinely treat it as a long term strategy. And then of course it was only three years later when all the budgets were reduced, and of course the first thing that went was focus women's enterprise

D Absolutely

A By which time ironically some of the RDAs were actually on the case and doing good stuff and obviously AWM was a good example but there were others as well and then the 'rug was pulled from feet' and everything goes back to square one.

D Before I do switch the tape off I do think it's important that sometimes we look at these things subjectively and not objectively.

APPENDIX 4 - ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM



Aston Business School

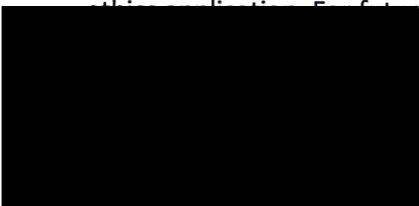
Debra Blisson

ABS Research Student

Date: 03/11/14

Dear Debra,

I am pleased to be able to inform you that the ABS Research Ethics Committee has approved your
this application. For future reference please quote 25:10/14.


Professor John Rudd

(Associate Dean of Research)

APPENDIX 5 - ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK DETAILED CASE ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY 1

Example of a detailed case analysis method.

1 Introduction

To explain how the individual cases were analysed, the full methods and application are provided here for case one only. This process was then replicated for each of the three case studies in order to develop the detailed information included within the overall conceptual framework analysis shown in Chapter x.

What follows is the detailed analysis for case one, followed by the Advocacy Coalition framework model that derives from it.

2 Approach to analysis

In order to analyse the data in the cases, the following matters were addressed.

Table x Criteria for consideration in the ACF analysis.

| | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Identify key stakeholders. | Identify key internal subsystem events. | Key drivers for change |
| Identify key external events | Who are policy entrepreneurs/ policy agents? Who is excluded (intentionally and unintentionally)? | Key drivers against change. |
| Who form coalitions (orgs/individuals)? Different types/ fragmentation / when /how. | Are there any gaps – anything hard to explain using the model? | Anything missing? |

Case 1 – Identification of key stakeholders/ actors. Who was involved?

Table 2 Stakeholder analysis

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Local authorities – Economic development department staff and Community Development staff. | Banks – NatWest, Midland, Barclays. | BME women in communities – ‘Black Sisters’. |
| Regional Authorities WMCC residual (ceased 31 March 1986). | Local WEDA – Coventry, Sandwell, Redditch, Birmingham. Board members, staff and clients. | NWEDA – board members and staff. |
| Voluntary organisations, e.g. Soroptimists UK. | Politicians – Betty Boothroyd MP (Sandwell). Leader of the House. Jackie Smith – Redditch Council. Jane Slowey BCC. | Business Organisations – e.g. Chambers of commerce in some areas. Business in the Community. Co-operative Development Agencies. |
| Central Government Initiatives – TECS/ | Role of a political party? | |

Central Government. Central government as policymakers – mainly working on the decentralisation of government-funded business support. Move from national SBS to TECS and Block 3 funding.

Coalitions: Development of 'enterprise agency movement, supported by Business in the Community (BIC). The policy is partly driven by government and BIC. BIC model predominantly established as voluntary sector organisations (Co ltd by guarantee), but with private sector secondees, predominantly from the banking sector, although some from British Steel of British Coal.

Women's group coalitions: Black sister to Soroptimists, local MP's and local councillors. Women on low income and women on higher income. Both viewing both self-employment and business start-up as routes to economic independence. Mainstream approaches were exploring growth (business start-up to take on employees and reduce unemployment) whereas the WEDA approach was looking at aspects of 'necessity entrepreneurship', and financial independence for women who were not able to get traditional jobs, or were finding difficulty in the appropriateness and applicability of service delivery in the mainstream business support environment (namely banks, the Small Firms Service, Chambers of Commerce and the enterprise agencies).

Alternative business support providers: Allies came in the form of alternative enterprise support provision, such as Co-operative Development Agencies (CDA's), established by the West Midlands County Council initially, but then funded through Economic development departments. They sought to establish co-operative forms of business, which were alternative business structures from those advocated by the mainstream Ent agency providers. As a result, those working in CDA's often saw clients that were seeking different business structures for their business or were from more diverse client groups. The nature of co-operative businesses lends itself to groups of people; therefore, clients wanting to work together would initially approach these services.

Case 1: Identify key external events (possible drivers for change)

TKey external events – PESTEL model.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Macro-economic factors: Neoliberal shift – decline in traditional manufacturing and mining base in the region. – Subsequent Coal and Steel industry schemes encouraging BSU (e.g. local enterprise agency grant schemes. Unemployment levels.</p> | <p>Political factors – e.g., End of 'Thatcher era' – 10 years in power 1989. Change of PM 1990.</p> | <p>Societal factors – Unrest and increase poverty due in part to unemployment. Riots in inner cities (e.g. Birmingham and Liverpool (Handsworth and Toxteth) – areas covered by WEDA's. Racial element to the unrest.</p> |
| <p>Microeconomic factors – unemployment alleviation measures -Enterprise Allowance Scheme 1981</p> | <p>Legislative change - Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 provides for Economic development Functions in local authorities.</p> | <p>Environmental change – increased derelict land due to pit and steel industry closure in the inner city. Technological Change. Major tech change as a result of increased IT uses – i.e. internet and mobile telephony.</p> |

Case 1: Identification of key internal subsystem events – within the subsystem itself

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Measures to alleviate unemployment | Importance of coalitions – e.g. Soroptimists – Equal opportunities agenda – Lady Howe. Black Sisters. Academics (Some strange ‘bedfellows’, but some overlap). | Internal disagreements – NWEDA/ local WEDA relationships – governance/ duplication of function. Competition for resources. Lack of clear boundaries on roles and responsibilities. |
| Economic development drive at a local level | Importance of individuals in coalitions . Politicians (MP’s and Councillors) and community activists (Slowey/ Cupid). Friendship networks. | Civil service changes to TECS and ‘Block 3’ activity for Business Support. |

Identification of core beliefs at the time of the case.

Deep core beliefs

- Enterprise is a route to ‘roll back the frontiers of the state’ – neoliberal free-market economics, as per Milton Freidman, Adam Smith Institute.
- ‘Enterprise for all’.
- ‘Support to start businesses is a good thing – alleviate poverty and unemployment — coalitions formation.
- Patriarchal attitude towards certain ‘typologies of women’. Homemakers. Working for ‘pin money’ Men as the ‘breadwinner’.
- Technological revolution a good thing – new forms of work/ more leisure time.

Policy core beliefs.

- Groups of women want a fairer share of access to support.
- BME and lower-income women not identifying with the type of provision on offer.
- Lack of congruity in the type of provision.

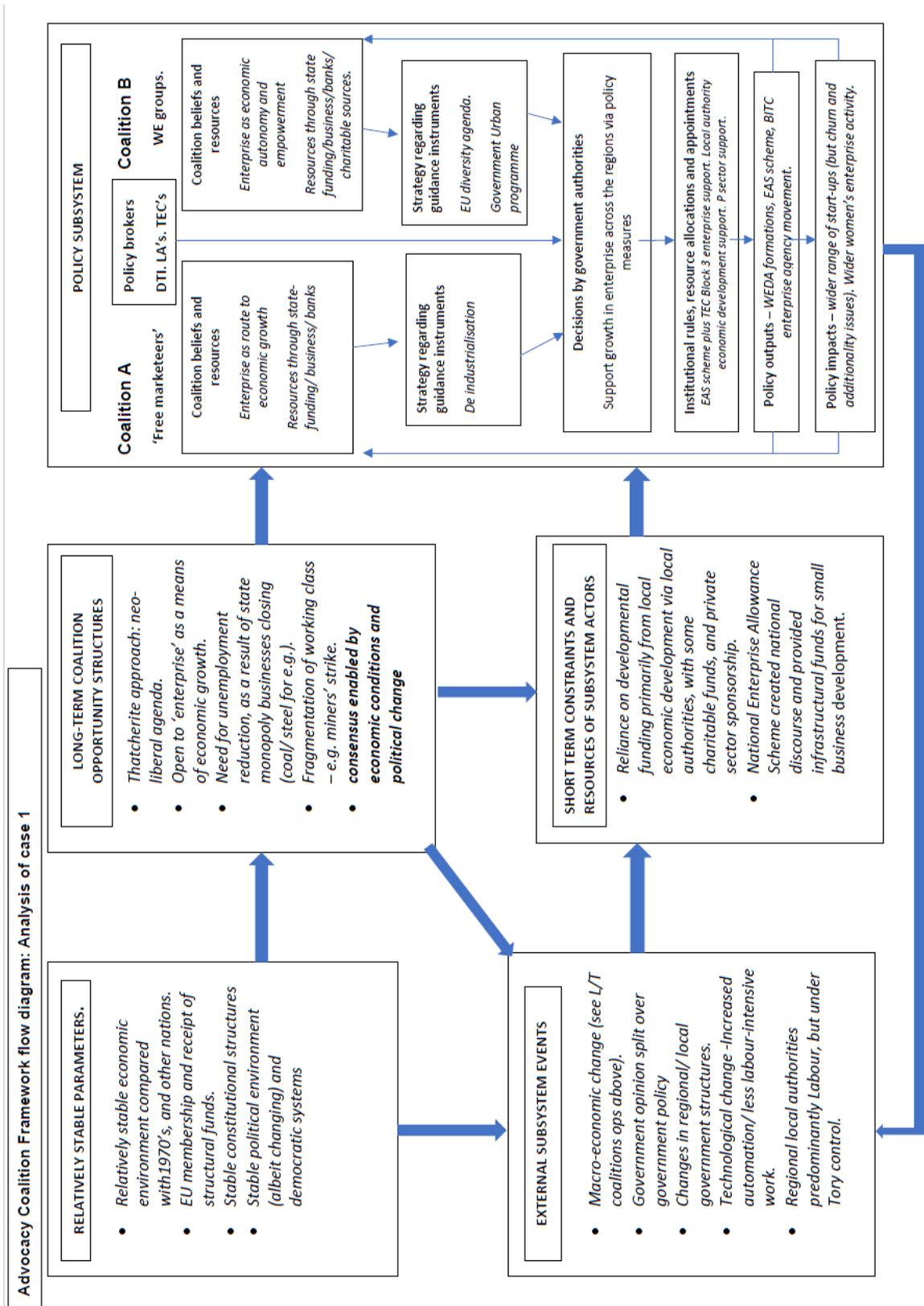
Resource availability

According to the organisational accounts (to year-end 31 Dec 1990), initial resources for NWEDA came in the form of small ‘seed corn funds from a range of private and charitable sector funding. Bank sponsorship was the main source– both in cash and ‘in-kind’ via secondment of a bank official, initially from the National Westminster Bank, and from 1991 The Midland Bank (now HSBC) which was common in the ‘enterprise agency ‘movement at the time The Co-operative Bank also donated a small sum for the organisation’s start-up. Funds also came from a range of private-sector sources including British Telecom (BT) Shell Oil (via its Livewire Scheme), The British Petroleum Company (BP) and the Norwich Union Insurance Group. (WEDA Ltd, 1991). These were not in direct competition with the regional WEDA organisations.

Regional WEDA funding relied upon grant funding from local authority Economic development departments, often matched with European funding. Funds from Trusts and Charities were also sought and secured. For example, Coventry WEDA’s funds were initially from Coventry City Council, the Barrow and Geraldine S Cadbury Trust and the European Social Fund, administered by the City Council. Additional central Government funds were levered via the Single regeneration Budget (SRB).

Resources were limited at a local level, with reliance on grant funding. However, in the case of NWEDA, an alliance of private sector funders was brought together to form a coalition, under the memorandum and articles of association of national WEDA. This coalition bonded around the secondary core beliefs of the organisation and favoured the deep core beliefs of enterprise activity as a route of employment for Black and low-income women. Activities were centred upon awareness-raising and lobbying – NWEDA amongst private sector organisations, and at a local level on local government and local women’s groups.

Application of the information above to the Framework. Example for case 1.



APPENDIX 6 - SELECTION OF WECOE REPORTS

Women's Enterprise Centre of Expertise (WECOE)

Policy Briefing

Women's Start-up Enterprise Activity

Introduction

Priority 1.3 of the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy 'Connecting to Success' identifies the need to create economically sustainable new businesses. One of the expected outcomes is an increase in the number of businesses from traditionally excluded and underrepresented groups and to ensure that interventions at the pre-start up phase will reduce the number of businesses failures. Since this publication, WECOE have focused on working with AWM, Business Link West Midlands and other regional stakeholders to ensure that methodologies are developed which will deliver this objective.

The policy debate about women's start-up businesses is confused. On the one hand, it has become a public policy mantra: more women's businesses mean more economic activity, higher productivity and greater wealth for the economy. 'If we had levels of business start-up activity amongst women as there is in the US, it is argued, we would have 750,000 more businesses a year creating jobs and giving women opportunities to fulfil their dreams'.¹

On the other hand, women are treated as an "under-represented group": in the interests of creating opportunities for all, policy needs to provide special support to women as a group that are excluded from enterprise because of their gender.² The first statement speaks to the importance of increasing the number of growth-oriented women's businesses, the second to working with women to build their human and social capital through skills acquisition, networking, education, training and coaching or mentoring.

¹ Gordon Brown (2005): Speech at the Advancing Enterprise conference, London.

² Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2008): "Enterprise: Unlocking the UK's Talent."
<http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file44992.pdf>;

This briefing paper argues that the two messages appear contradictory but in essence represent the top and the bottom of the enterprise escalator. The confusion comes from the fact that, as the “job for life” phenomenon disappears, more people have to focus on “employment for life” – in other words having a set of skills and capabilities that are transferrable between jobs or contracts, which require an entrepreneurial mind-set and an awareness of self-employment and enterprise as a career choice. Some but by no means all of these businesses will become growth-oriented.

WECOE believe that for women in the region, this represents an exciting, if challenging, career choice. Technology makes remote and flexible working a reality, so by setting up a business or becoming self employed, it is possible to square the circle of domestic and professional responsibilities and goals. In the West Midlands, the evidence is that women are substantially less likely to set up businesses or become self employed than their male counterparts. Similarly, there is qualitative evidence that the scalability, even sustainability, of these businesses is lower than in the UK as a whole, perhaps hindered by lack of awareness amongst the region’s entrepreneurial women about the opportunities that growing a business will create.

The policy dilemma is how to create a broad enough base amongst the population of women entrepreneurs in the region to ensure that there is a substantial pipeline of growth businesses coming through. The rest of this paper uses primary research and findings from WECOE activities over the past two years in order to develop policy recommendations which will seek to address these issues.

A note on method

The policy briefings are based on two years worth of extensive WECOE stakeholder engagement with business support providers, regional women's enterprise networks, policy advisors both regional and national, aspiring and existing women business owners. To substantiate WECOE's findings primary research was conducted by Delta Economics including 30 in-depth telephone interviews with entrepreneurs and business advisers across the region between September and the middle of November 2009. Alongside this ten case studies were also put together with female entrepreneurs in the region. The interviews and cases were supplemented by a regional focus group and stakeholder meetings. All qualitative interviews and a literature and documentary search were triangulated with secondary data mining (Labour Force Survey, GEM and Barclays data) and primary data analysis (COGS).

Context

Work over the last two years carried out by WECOE has identified that two things are driving a change away from an orthodox definition of the 'entrepreneur' who sets up a traditional high growth business:

1. The expansion of interest in entrepreneurship as a route to solving some of the world's intractable social and environmental problems.³
2. The individualisation of the labour market evidenced by the demise of the "job for life" and the breakdown of the employment contract giving

³ See, for example, Harding R. and Harding D. (2008): "Social Entrepreneurship in the UK." <http://www.deltaeconomics.com/media/social2008fullreport.pdf> Delta Economics, London, or Elkington, J. and Hartigan, P. (2008): "*The Power of Unreasonable People – how social entrepreneurs create markets that change the world*" Harvard University Press. Boston, Mass.

employment security.⁴ The risks of the labour market are passed from the large public or private sector employer to the individual, who has to develop skills for employment security through “portfolio careers” rather than job security rendering entrepreneurial skills such as flexibility a premium.

This should offer women the potential to manage work-life balance in a way that enables them to meet career goals and domestic responsibilities simultaneously. Yet we know the following about women’s start-up businesses in the UK as a whole and this has been reflected in WECOE’s findings for female entrepreneurs in the region:

- Women are half as likely as men to be entrepreneurially active.⁵
- This difference disappears for businesses that are set up for social, community or environmental purposes (social enterprises).⁶
- The flows into self employment are greater in sectors traditionally dominated by female employment such as care, health, education and community services.⁷
- There appear to be systemic problems in the capacity of female-owned businesses to grow and access growth finance on the basis of literature and case study work.⁸

⁴ Drucker, P (2007): “*Innovation and Entrepreneurship*” Butterworth-Heinemann, second edition.

⁵ Harding, R. et al (2008): Harding, R., Hart, M., Jones-Evans, D. and Levie, J., (2008): Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, UK monitoring report, 2007. Available from <http://www.gemconsortium.org/download/1221053796587/GEM%20UK%202007%20Report.pdf>

⁶ Harding R. and Harding D. (2008): “Social Entrepreneurship in the UK.” <http://www.deltaeconomics.com/media/social2008fullreport.pdf>

⁷ Harding, R. (2007): “The State of Women’s Enterprise in the UK.” Prowess <http://www.deltaeconomics.com/media/SOTRUK2007.pdf>

⁸ Carter, S., Shaw, E., Lam, W. and Nelson, F. (2007): Gender, Entrepreneurship and Bank Lending: the Criteria and Processes used by Bank Loan Officers in Assessing Applications *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* May 2007 pp 427-444. See also, Harrison, R. and Mason, C (2007): “Does Gender Matter? Women Business Angels and the Supply of Entrepreneurial Finance.” *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice* May 2007, pp 445-472. Cowling, M. and Harding, R. (2005): “Gender and High Growth Businesses in the UK.” Paper to the Diana International Conference, Stockholm, May 2005. Carter, S. and Shaw, E. (2006): “Women’s Business Ownership: Recent Research and Policy Developments.” BERR 2006.

- Women are less confident than men about their capacity to set up businesses and grow them and, even when successful, have typically started with lower expectations of growth and turnover than their male counterparts.⁹

This is a stylised summary but nevertheless underpins the policies that take under-representation as their starting point rather than growth. The market failure, it is argued, is on the demand side: there are insufficient women starting businesses, so policy should focus on encouraging more into self-employment because this achieves the goal of getting closer to the “Holy Grail” where women are as likely as men to set up businesses.

However there is a broad consensus amongst the entrepreneurs interviewed for this research, combined with WECOE findings over the past two years, that setting up a business is risky to the individual woman: it makes her vulnerable to the vagaries of the economic climate and poses the possibility of long hours, financial problems and often substantial shifts in personal relationships with no guarantee of success at the end. In the words of one entrepreneur, “Why would anyone want to do that?” Hard personal choices were often cited; “It has been less about work life balance, more about finding an equilibrium”; “You do need success fairly often, or you can get bogged down.”

This is a policy paradox: we want more female businesses to enable more women to participate in the labour market and increase the probability that we have a higher number of growth businesses at a national and regional level, but a policy to support women based on the assumption that women are under-represented because of the risks involved to her militates against strategies that create sustainability and growth. “‘We are helping you because it’s hard, risky and painful,’ is not a message that plays well, either with women with growth

⁹ Harding, R. (2005): “Stairways to Growth” Prowess; Harding, R (2007): “The State of Women’s Enterprise in the UK.” Prowess.

businesses or with women who might be uncertain of enterprise as a career choice,” argued a business adviser.

Is there a market failure in the West Midlands?

As elsewhere in the UK, women are slightly but not significantly less likely to set up businesses and become self-employed in the West Midlands compared to men. For example, self-employment amongst women is 27.1% of all self-employment in the region but is 28.8% of all self-employment in the UK as a whole.¹⁰ But lower self-employment might be as much a function of the industrial structure of the region, with heavy reliance on paid employment and larger employers, as of the failure of policy to generate more self-employment.

Figure 1 compares the West Midlands and the UK Total Early-stage entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rates according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) study, 2002-2008. GEM is a survey of households across the UK and TEA is the percentage of individuals in the adult population who are engaged in some form of start-up activity or have been involved with setting up a business for less than 42 months. It is therefore looking at the very earliest stages of entrepreneurship – the broad base in the labour market in other words.

¹⁰ Labour Force Survey, Q2 2009

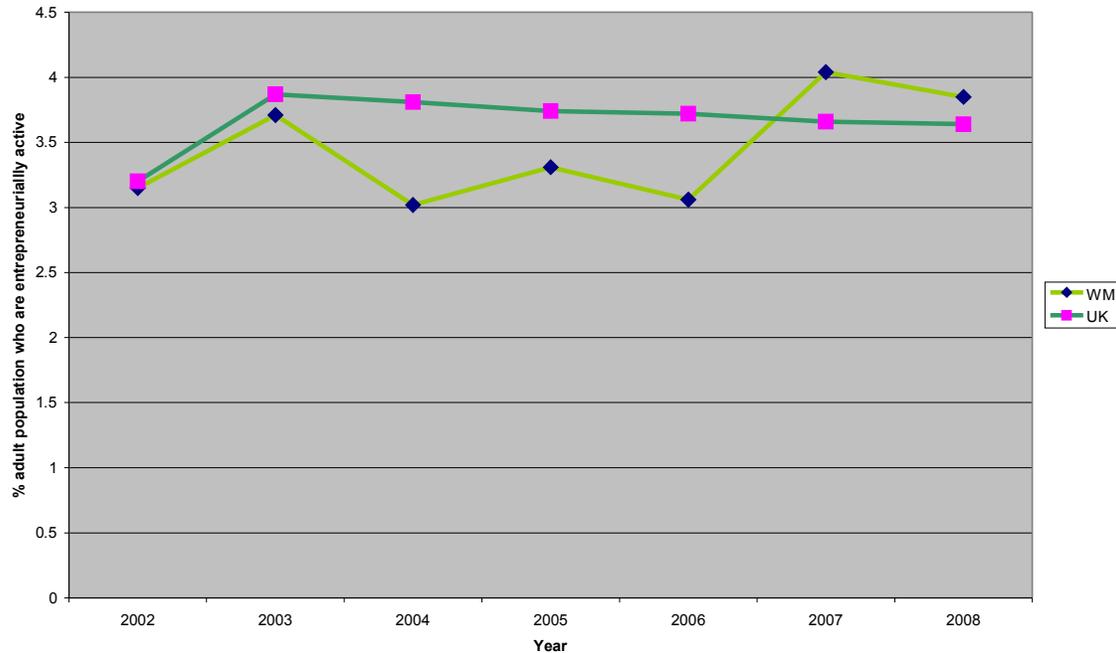


Figure 1

TEA rates for women in the West Midlands and the UK

Source: GEM UK Adult Population Surveys, 2002-2008; data supplied by WECO

Figure 1 presents no evidence of a specific market failure in terms of women’s TEA activity in the West Midlands. Over the time period, the figure suggests a slight increase in TEA in the UK and the West Midlands and, while the figure has fluctuated more in the West Midlands, the last two years (2007 and 2008) have suggested a marginally (but not significantly) higher rate of female TEA compared to the UK as whole.

The Barclays start-up data suggests that women’s start ups in the West Midlands and the UK have followed a similar pattern as illustrated in Figure 2 which shows female start-ups as a percentage of all start-ups in the UK and the West Midlands.

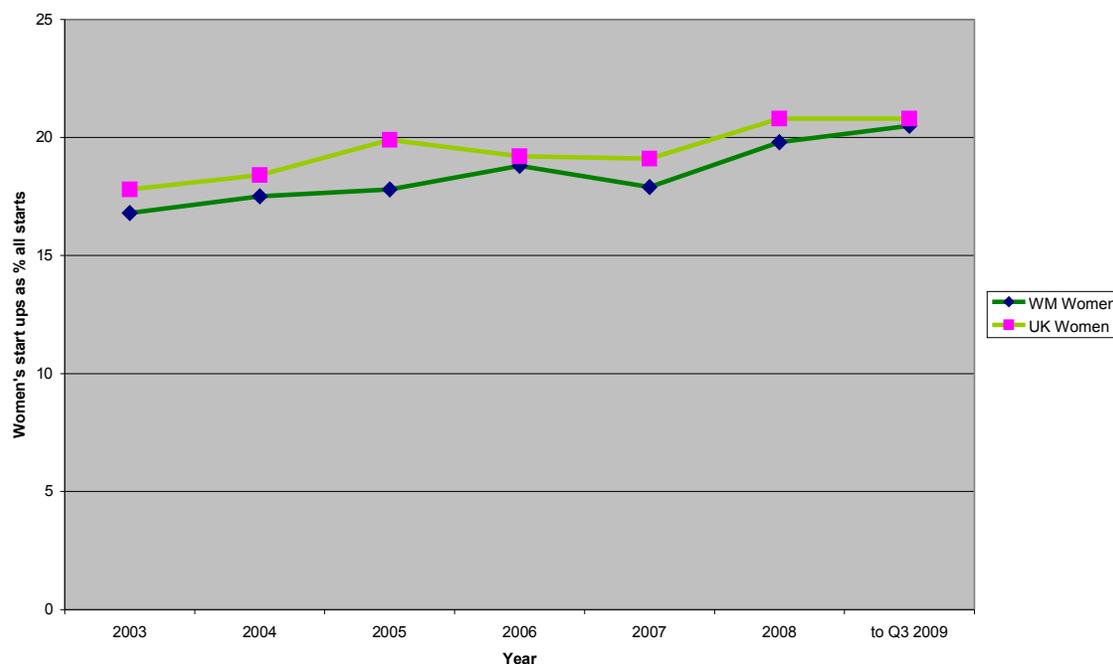


Figure 2
Female start-ups as a percentage of all start ups in the UK and the West Midlands

Source: Barclays Bank Small Business Research 2009

The data in Figure 2 go as far as the third quarter of 2009, suggesting a slight gap between the UK and the West Midlands which widened during 2006 and 2007 where it narrowed in the GEM data and had closed by the third quarter of 2009. The reason why the Barclays dataset is suggesting something different is because it is assessing the numbers of women who have started and registered a business rather than those who are in some way engaged in a start-up activity.

This points to the fact that the market failure in the region may be in the stages between the earliest stages of activity before incorporation and the point at which women actually start to run a commercial entity. The numbers in the datasets are small and the datasets themselves are not directly comparable, however this statement was corroborated by interviews in the region. One business adviser argued, “around 40% of all individuals who come to us are women but those who

actually stay and see a business adviser is a fraction of this.” Another commented, “The women who come to us are those with confidence already but even so, if we have to tell them that they need to do some more work before we can help them, even if we offer them support with their planning we never see them again.”

Some of this may be because of the following summary of interviews and the focus group in the region:

1. Women are not formally registering as business owners. One business support delivery agent argued that women’s start up activity is actually hidden. Very often, she argued, if a man is made redundant, he will look to start up a business in order to replace his income. It will be his partner who runs the operational side of setting up the business but will not appear in the start up statistics as her role, although paid, is informal.
2. Expectations of women on what they can achieve in the short term need to be managed before they seek advice. This was a real problem, argued one business adviser: “They are offered self employment as an alternative to unemployment and then expect the funding and the growth to follow. More could be done to make people realise this is a journey and one where the focus is on developing their skills and not on accessing various grants.”
3. Women who are setting up businesses do not always want to grow them. They provide an income but are not employing others and may be vulnerable because they rely on short-term contracts rather than longer term planning. An entrepreneur said “the business is just not one where we can employ loads of people unless we really change everything we set it up for.”

So the market failure is actually on the supply side as there does appear to be demand for enterprise and self employment in the region. This, from the

interview feedback, appears to manifest itself as a lack of entrepreneurial skills, a disconnect between the availability and the suitability of advice and lack of coaching and mentoring to take women up the enterprise escalator. As one interviewee said “I’m sure the advice is there, but I haven’t got the time to find out.”

More recent policy at a UK government level has focused on the role of entrepreneurs in generating new growth sectors and therefore new jobs through innovation.¹¹ Although the “New Industry, New Jobs” strategy document does not specifically identify women’s enterprise as a focus for policy, it is well known that women are less likely to be entrepreneurially active in the science and technology sectors that the strategy prioritises. As one incubator manager pointed out, just 3 out of 30 of the businesses across the incubators she managed were women owned and they tended to be in training and support so “innovative” rather than “technology” focused.

This suggests that it is just as important to look at the sectoral basis of women’s start up activity to identify any potential gaps, as illustrated in Figure 3 which is derived from the West Midlands GEM dataset, 2002-2008.

¹¹ BIS, April 2009: „New Industry, New Jobs – Building Britain’s Future.”
<http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file51023.pdf>

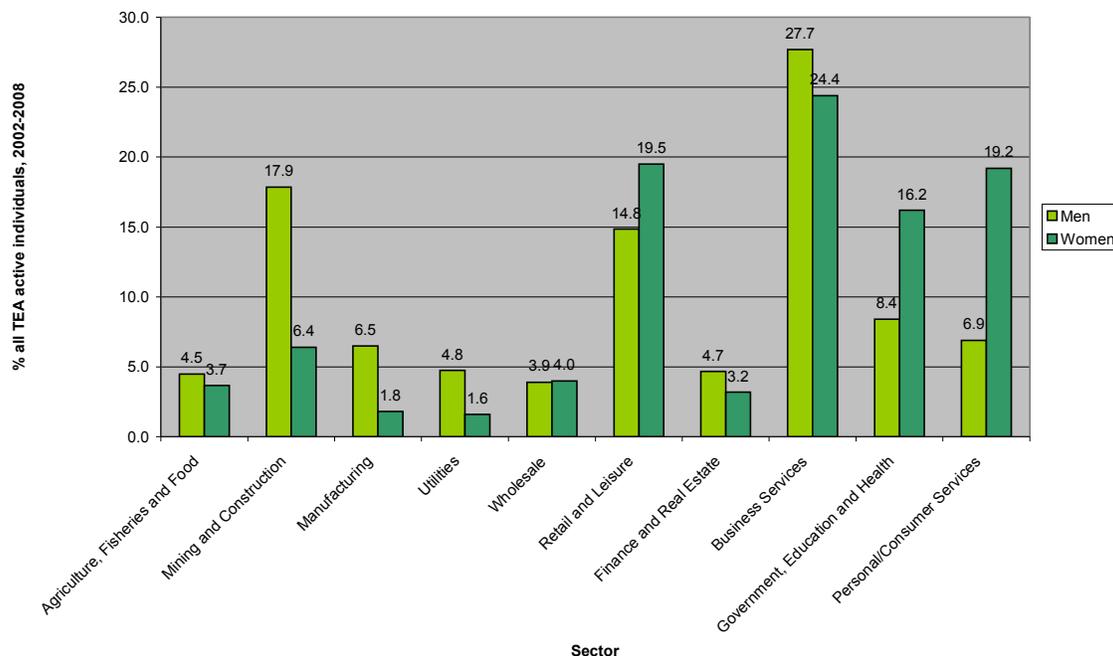


Figure 3

Women’s start up activity by sector in the West Midlands, 2002-2008

Source: GEM UK adult population survey, pooled dataset, 2002-2008; data supplied by WECOE

As noted above, GEM looks at the very earliest stages of start up activity which, in the West Midlands are focused on retail and leisure, government services, health and education and personal or consumer services. This sectoral distribution is echoed by other studies and suggests that where activity is greatest, i.e. at the earliest stages of development, women are setting up businesses in sectors which lend themselves to contract work and self employment where growth potential may be limited.¹²

¹² De Bruin, A., Brush, C. and Welter, F. (2007): “Advancing a Framework for Coherent Research on Women’s Entrepreneurship.” *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice* May 2007, pp 323-339; National Women’s Business Council (2006): “Women-owned firms, 2002” US National Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners, Company Statistics, 2002. Carter, S. and Shaw, E. (2006): *Women’s Business Ownership: Recent Research and Policy Developments*, Small Business Service: Sheffield

This does not mean that all women’s business start-ups in the West Midlands are like this, however, and Figure 4 uses the Challenges and Opportunities for Growth and Sustainability (COGS) data to illustrate that the region’s growth-oriented entrepreneurs had similar levels of turnover after their first year of trading and had created as many jobs as their female counterparts in the UK as a whole.¹³

| | West Midlands | | UK | |
|---|---------------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Turnover after first year of trading (£000s) | | | | |
| Median | 350 | 182 | 250 | 150 |
| Jobs created after first year of trading | | | | |
| Median | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

Figure 4

Median jobs and turnover created one year after start-up

Source: Delta Economics/COGS 2009

Figure 4 suggests that where women’s (and also men’s) businesses are set out on a growth path from the outset, their turnover after one year of trading is slightly higher than the median for the UK as a whole and the number of jobs they create is identical. In other words, the region’s growth sector has as much potential to create new jobs and to grow as elsewhere in the UK. The challenge is how to reach that point, given that so many women’s businesses in the region do not set out with, indeed are wary of, more ambitious growth plans.

¹³ The Delta Economics *Challenges and Opportunities for Growth and Sustainability (COGS)* study is an annual survey of founders of growth-oriented, sustainable businesses with turnovers of above £250,000 and that have been running for between 2 and 10 years. The survey, which is essentially looking at the “survivors” – those who have got through onto a growth and sustainability path beyond the first 24 months – was of 1,800 entrepreneurs in 2008 and 2,120 in 2009. Each year, 500 of these were in the West Midlands region; 13.7% were women.

Conclusions

This policy briefing has suggested that there is no evidence of a market failure at the level of start up activity and, indeed, that the region's growth oriented start-ups generated as much as (if not slightly more than) in terms of turnover and jobs as their UK counterparts. The evidence therefore suggests that the market failure is on the supply side – in the provision of skills training, coaching and mentoring to raise women's aspirations to create sustainable, growth-oriented businesses.

Also, the inefficient functioning of the support escalator, which de-risks the process of sustainable growth, is actually preventing women from growing their businesses rather than helping them. There is a high attrition between start-up activity and established businesses reported by successive GEM studies and by COGS and reinforced by the Barclays data that suggests the challenge for policy is to provide the escalator that allows women's businesses to grow.

Data from the US suggests that there is a strong and vibrant cohort of women's businesses that have survived to be older than three years, that have substantial turnovers of greater than \$100,000 and whose owners have growth and development aspirations for their companies.¹⁴ This so-called "Missing Middle" constitutes 91% of female entrepreneurs in total or 16% of all female entrepreneurs if micro-enterprises are excluded (with less than 10 employees). Based on a survey of 92 members of the National Association of Women Business Owners who met the age and turnover definitions, suggests that by helping the micro businesses alone to grow would increase their employment by 31%.

¹⁴ Womenable (2007): "Mapping the Missing Middle: Determining the Desire and Dimensions of Second Stage Women Business Owners. "
http://www.womenable.com/userfiles/downloads/ResearchinBrief_Missing_Middle.pdf

The “Missing Middle” in the West Midlands, then, is similarly represented by the women’s businesses that set up but never reach their full growth potential, either because the founder limits her growth aspirations or because the long-term planning for the business has restricted growth.

Policy has to see the start-up process for women in particular as a support escalator. It cannot neglect the women who become self employed as an alternative to inactivity or unemployment because these represent the “base of the pyramid” where, with the right support for human capital and social capital development (skills, networking, goal setting and planning), a vibrant entrepreneurial base can be achieved.

But equally, policy makers in the region have to provide the routes to growth for women who may ultimately develop long term growth ambitions, even if they do not have them at the outset. These growth and sustainability-oriented entrepreneurs are those who, through innovation and long term planning do create the jobs of the future.

WECOE believe there is no “one size fits all” policy to support start-up and growth and the two groups of entrepreneurs, while perhaps requiring different types of support at the outset may ultimately reach similar positions where their businesses are at least sustainable and possibly growth oriented.

Women's Enterprise Centre of Expertise (WECOE)

Policy Recommendations

WECOE Background & Context

WECOE was established by Advantage West Midlands (AWM) in Feb 2008 with the key aim of providing strategic support for the development of women's enterprise across the region. WECOE is a two year project funded by AWM and is also the first such 'arms length' policy innovation to have been undertaken by a Regional Development Agency (RDA).

WECOE's key areas of work have been¹:

- Providing strategic support for the development, growth and sustainability of women's enterprise across the West Midlands
- Influencing policy development and economic corporate planning
- Capacity building specialist business support providers

Augmenting the capacity building activity WECOE has also provided both leadership and management development training to women within the enterprise community and two specific bursaries: the Business Advisor Development Fund (SFEDI) and the Flagship Award.

WECOE works in parallel with the other three other Centres of Expertise (COEs) which AWM has subsequently commissioned (approximately nine months – one year post WECOE). These three COEs; MEECOE, SECOE and YPECOE are concerned with minority ethnic enterprise, social enterprise and young people's enterprise respectively.

The COEs work together to ensure that there is a complementary approach to potential 'cross cutting' themes (e.g. minority ethnic women's enterprise issues, women in social enterprise and young women's enterprise) whilst ensuring that the specific issues of region-wide women's enterprise are addressed.

¹ Waring, Jackie, (Nov 2009): Women's Enterprise Centre of Expertise Final Evaluation

When WECOGE was first established, the objectives set by AWM were more heavily weighted towards the capacity building activity and the related output targets than policy influence. However, given WECOGEs experience and the collective learning of the COEs and AWM; all the COEs now have a series of high level objectives as follows:

1. Develop market intelligence
2. Engage with stakeholders both regionally and nationally
3. Develop policy and influence the mainstream business support providers such as BLWM
4. Pilot new activities

The following set of policy recommendations are based WECOGE's two years of operation, commissioned research and four policy briefing papers:

- Challenges and Opportunities for Growth Survey: West Midlands²
- Women and Entrepreneurial Activity in the West Midlands: Evidence from GEM UK 2002-2008³
- WECOGE Policy Briefing: Developing an Enterprising Culture in the West Midlands⁴
- WECOGE Policy Briefing: Women's Start-up Enterprise Activity⁵
- WECOGE Policy Briefing: Existing Women Owned Businesses⁶
- WECOGE Policy Briefing: Access to Finance for Women-owned Businesses⁷

² Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009): Challenges and Opportunities for Growth Survey: West Midlands

³ Martiarena, M. and Hart, M. (2009): Women and Entrepreneurial Activity in the West Midlands: Evidence from GEM UK 2002-2008

⁴ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOGE Policy Briefing: Developing an Enterprising Culture in the West Midlands

⁵ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOGE Policy Briefing: Women's Start-up Enterprise Activity

⁶ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOGE Policy Briefing: Existing Women Owned Businesses

⁷ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOGE Policy Briefing: Access to Finance for Women-owned Businesses

Central to all WECOE Policy Recommendations is the “New Industry New Jobs” (NINJ) industrial strategy which was launched by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) in April 2009. The document seeks to support important sectors for the UK’s prosperity. It also aspires to help join up the skills, business support and innovation offers to business in support of these sectors. The areas covered by the NINJ document are innovation, skills, finance and infrastructure. It has specific focus on the following sectors:

- Low Carbon
- Digital
- Life Sciences and Ageing
- Composites
- Plastic Electronics
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Financial Professional Services
- Engineering Construction

These are sectors in which many successful female owned businesses operate. However, there are other women who through targeted business support have the potential to develop and grow their businesses within these sectors (the missing middle) and many other women who have transferable skills and or have achieved high level educational achievements but may be unaware of the opportunities there are to start businesses in these sectors.

1. Young People's Enterprise⁸

Developing an enterprising culture requires a concerted effort in inspiring and motivating more girls and young women to 'think enterprise'. Girls and young women across the region must be provided with adequate opportunities to develop enterprising skills and attributes which can be used to greater effect in creating both entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial mindsets for the future. This is particularly important in non-traditional areas where women tend to be under-represented, as referenced in the NINJ document.

WECOE recommend that the Young People's Enterprise Centre of Expertise (YPECOE) continue to lead on this strand of activity, including the integration of enterprise support for young women into the new young people's enterprise web portal and influencing education enterprise providers.

2. Visibility of Female Role Models⁹

The distinct lack of visible female entrepreneur role models does not help to promote women thinking of starting or growing business across the region and take advantage of regional business support infrastructures. Too few women are therefore receiving the vital support required to establish growth orientated businesses.

WECOE recommend that the Enterprise Culture Group a Sub-Group of the AWM Enterprise Board, identify successful female entrepreneurs from across the region and develop case-studies which can be used to promote their achievements. WECOE also recommend that the Enterprise Culture Sub-Group identify key stakeholders within the NINJ priority sectors, in order to influence and develop strategic relationships with, in order to raise the prominence and visibility of women already working within these sectors.

⁸ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOE Policy Briefing: Developing an Enterprising Culture in the West Midlands

⁹ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOE Policy Briefing: Developing an Enterprising Culture in the West Midlands

3. Encouraging More Women Into Enterprise¹⁰

There needs to be more emphasis on engaging with women during 'pre-pre start' stages using appropriately targeted outreach and awareness raising activities, including building confidence, generating ideas and identification of transferable skills. Often mainstream support structures are insufficiently coordinated to lead people through from the very earliest stages on to the enterprise journey; similarly they are too "one-size-fits all" to cater for the complexities which women experience at the pre-start stage. Advice and guidance available at pre-pre start stage is of variable quality and not universally available across the region.

In order to address this WECOEO recommend that Business Link West Midlands (BLWM) and AWM work with the Centres of Expertise in order to develop inclusive approaches to work with increased numbers of diverse women at the pre-pre-start stage.

In addition to this BLWM should offer a specialist adviser or coach/mentor who will work with individuals looking to start businesses to formulate an individual learning programme as well as a business development path.

¹⁰ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOEO Policy Briefing: Women's Start-up Enterprise Activity

4. Support to Existing Businesses (“Missing Middle”)¹¹

Evidence shows that many women who start businesses or social enterprises either ‘fail’, or are unaware of the opportunities to grow. Many of these businesses have great potential but are currently disengaged from mainstream business support. One way to address this is described earlier through early pre-pre start-up support and ensuring that businesses are then tracked. However, for other existing business who have never accessed business support WECOЕ recommends the following:

That policy makers and regional business support providers recognise the importance of existing female owned businesses and aim to target and support them through using “diversity proofed” (see Annex B) marketing and engagement tactics.

5. Access to Finance¹²

In addressing the issue of under-capitalised women owned businesses in the region, caused by insufficient business planning and unrealistic expectations. WECOЕ recommends that:

AWM and BLWM ensure that all Access to Finance (A2F) initiatives, which run in conjunction with regional funding /investment readiness programmes, are “diversity proofed” to ensure that women are engaged with and supported.

¹¹ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOЕ Policy Briefing: Existing Women Owned Businesses

¹² Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOЕ Policy Briefing: Access to Finance for Women-owned Businesses

6. Data Disaggregation and Evaluation

A key theme throughout all of these papers is the lack of data disaggregation. Although there has recently been a very positive dialogue between the Centres of Expertise (COE's) and BLWM to ensure that improvements can be made, similar conversations have also occurred at both regional and national level. WECOEO also recognises that BLWM is already developing its client management service to ensure that information around gender, ethnicity and age is captured. In building on this activity WECOEO recommends that:

BLWM and all regional business support providers must be required to collate disaggregated data for gender, ethnicity and age; which is tracked from 'pre-pre start' through to 'growth'. However in supporting BLWM in undertaking this exercise the COE's must provide advice, guidance and training to ensure that front line providers have the appropriate skills and confidence to do this.

7. Improving the Ethnic Diversity of Women-Owned Businesses¹³

In terms of entrepreneurial activity amongst women from ethnic minority communities in the region, those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities were particularly under-represented. There is insufficient regional research or evidence in this area to make any informed policy recommendations.

WECOEO recommend building upon the current work that all the COE's, in particular the Minority Ethnic Enterprise Centre of Expertise (MEECOEO), have initiated in order to further develop the research baseline on ethnic diversity in women-owned businesses and further influence policy in this area.

¹³ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOEO Policy Briefing: Women's Start-up Enterprise Activity and Existing Women Owned Businesses

8. Developing Social Enterprises¹⁴

WECOE findings over the past two years, additional commissioned research, and findings from Social Enterprise West Midlands (SEWM) has identified that established women business owners are more likely to run a social enterprise than other mainstream business models.¹⁵

WECOE recommend the COE's and SEWM continue to consider and report any identifying evidence that demonstrates the needs of women in social enterprise, and identifies the levels of engagement and business support required to facilitate growth.

WECOE also recommend the COE's and SEWM continue to represent social enterprise across the region and to lead the agenda for raising sector awareness through informing the key stakeholders who influence policy, actively engaging with commissioners across all public sectors, and advocating the needs for diversity proofing all levels of engagement which will strengthen the opportunities for all.

¹⁴ Harding, R. *Delta Economics* (2009) WECOE Policy Briefing: Women's Start-up Enterprise Activity and Existing Women Owned Businesses

¹⁵ 39% of the businesses mapped in the West Midlands (2008)

9. Promoting Non-Traditional Business Areas¹⁶

Key to everything that has been described above is the “New Industry New Jobs” strategy which states that in order to help drive regional economic growth; regions need to focus on the following sectors and industries:

- Low Carbon
- Digital and Creative Technologies
- Life Sciences and Ageing
- Composites
- Plastic Electronics
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Financial Professional Services
- Engineering Construction

WECOE have already highlighted that many women are now graduating with science engineering and technology degrees at graduate and post graduate level.

Therefore WECOE recommends that in order to address this opportunity, there must be a more proactive marketing strategy adopted by business support providers to target these types of graduates, and to work with universities and other key stakeholders in order to ensure that women are aware of enterprise and the opportunities within the sectors highlighted in the NINJ strategy.

¹⁶ WECOE Developing an Enterprising Culture in the West Midlands Briefing, WECOE Women’s Start-Up Enterprise Activity Briefing and WECOE Existing Women Owned Businesses Briefing

Annex A

“Missing Middle”: *women business owners who own established enterprises, yet who have not grown their firms to substantial levels of revenue or employment, as defined in a report [Mapping the Missing Middle: Determining the Desire and Dimensions of Second-Stage Women Business Owners](#)*

The report explored some of the key findings of a pilot survey conducted among a subset of members of the National Association of Women Business Owners (US), undertaken jointly by Julie. R. Weeks of Womenable and The Center for Women’s Entrepreneurship at Chatham University.

The final report published the results, exploring the desire, difficulties and dimensions of second-stage women business owners, the so-called "missing middle", which uncovered a large unmet desire and need for support and assistance among small, second-stage women business owners, often referred to as the “missing middle”.

Many programs support enterprise development in the United States, including some designed specifically for women. Yet most of the public policies, and the business development support stemming from them, are focused at the two ends of the entrepreneurial spectrum: either targeting start-up firms and those not yet in business or large corporations and fast-growth businesses.

Annex B

Diversity Proofing and Equality impact assessments

What is Diversity Proofing and Equality impact assessment¹⁷?

Diversity proofing and equality impact assessment is a systematic and evidence based process which improves the way we develop our policies and practices. That is, an assessment of the differential impact a policy option might have on minority ethnic, female, young and social entrepreneurs.

As a matter of good practice, policy options need to be 'diversity-proofed' or assessed for their equality impact; that is, there needs to be some consideration of the extent to which recommendations may impinge on the different strands of business.

Understanding the importance of diversity in the economy, and the drivers of and barriers to the establishment, survival and growth of diverse businesses, and acting on this understanding, can make a major difference to everyone's economic and social well-being.

Equality impact assessment and Diversity Proofing: Indicative questions

Awareness and understanding:

What is the particular demographic layout within the region?

- What are the particular needs demonstrated by diverse business communities
- What are the barriers to mainstream business support for these groups?
- What is the current level of communication with organisations responsible for delivering the programmes?

¹⁷ A collaborative response to "Diversity Proofing" on behalf of the Centres of Expertise by Minority Ethnic Enterprise Centre of Expertise. November 2009

Current Business Support Structure:

- What are the current access channels to business support for diverse business communities?

Accessing mainstream business support:

- Can customers access the appropriate service from any point of entry to mainstream business support?
- Is the route through the business support provision clear and comprehensive?