

**“An Exploration of the Impact of Socialisation on  
the Decision of a Female to Become an  
Entrepreneur”**

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## ***ABSTRACT***

It is widely accepted that there is a strong need to increase the numbers of women participating in entrepreneurship. It is well publicised in Ireland that there is a small number of women choosing entrepreneurship as a career. There is also evidence to show that certain early socialisation experiences influence women's entrepreneurial intentions. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the influence of four early socialisation influences; family, education, social class and media; on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs.

The primary research for this study was conducted on a sample of eight female entrepreneurs based in South East Ireland. This involved examining the influence of four socialisation agents on these female entrepreneurs, exploring the nature of the impact of these influences and determining whether common socialising stimuli exist among these female entrepreneurs. Underpinned by phenomenological philosophy, the current study was conducted using a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the primary data, allowing the researcher to gain a truer understanding of the socialisation experiences of the respondents.

The research identified some important findings relating to the nature of these socialisation influences. Firstly, contrary to previous research which indicated that media is a major socialisation influence (Seaton, 2006), this current study found that media had no impact. However, the study did affirm that role models are an important influence for female entrepreneurs and that there is a distinct lack of visibility of high profile role models in the Irish media.

Family emerged as a powerful socialisation influence with the respondents stating that factors such as entrepreneurial family members, having responsibility in the home from an early age and family support as key influencers in their decision to start an enterprise.

Social class was a key influence on the decision of females in this study to become entrepreneurs. The respondents' social backgrounds offered them access to financial and human capital, such as lifestyle, education and exposure to success, which were deemed highly influential. According to this current research, the formal aspect of post-primary education did not impact on the respondents' decision to start an enterprise however the informal aspect, such as extra-curricular activity and participation in sports, was a positive influence.

This study adds to the growing body of literature on female entrepreneurship in general, whilst contributing specifically to the field of study focused on understanding the female entrepreneur. This research provides an understanding of the nature of the influence of four socialisation agents on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs, whilst also identifying the reasoning behind why these influences had an impact. This current research has implications for academics, educators, policy-makers, support agencies and future female entrepreneurs.

## ***DECLARATION***

I hereby declare that the material is entirely my own work and has not been submitted as an exercise or degree at this or any other higher education establishment. The author alone has undertaken the work except where otherwise stated.

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Margaret Durand

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# **Chapter 1**

# ***Introduction***

## **1.0 Chapter Overview**

This study explores the impact of socialisation on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs. The research seeks to examine the extent to which socialisation influenced female entrepreneurs to start their enterprises through exploring the socialisation experiences of a sample of women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial interest begins to develop at an early age therefore this research focuses on four early socialisation influences; family, education, social class and media. These influences were examined in order to determine the nature of the impact these factors had on female entrepreneurs and to establish whether common influential factors existed.

This chapter serves as an introduction to the research study, introducing the key elements of the research. Firstly, the rationale for undertaking this study is outlined, followed by a description of the research question and objectives. Next, the thesis layout is briefly presented and the limitations of the study are highlighted. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining the benefits and contribution of this study.

## **1.1 Rationale for the Study**

The importance of understanding how to influence more women into entrepreneurship becomes clear when one looks at the level of female entrepreneurship in Ireland. Recent GEM statistics (2006) showed that only 15-18% of entrepreneurs in Ireland are female. Ireland lags behind other countries in terms of women entrepreneurs with EU countries such as Portugal, Austria and France having more than double the rate of participation by females in entrepreneurship at 41% (GEM, 2004). Recent research has highlighted that this problem is even more pronounced in the South East of Ireland, where only 4% of entrepreneurs are female (O’Gorman, 2007).

Forfas (2007) dedicated a whole section of their report on entrepreneurship policy to women, highlighting that entrepreneurs tend to have “self-employed *fathers* ...the result of which is that daughters do not have the same gender role models as their brothers” (p.60). The report further emphasised the importance of having more representation from women in entrepreneurship in order to harness the latent potential of all those living in Ireland, hence safeguarding the economic future of the country through supporting indigenous enterprise. If Irish women were to start businesses at the same rate as women in the USA there would be an additional 56,000 businesses in Ireland (GEM, 2003). Experience in Finland and the USA demonstrates the success of putting targeted measures in place to support the development of women’s enterprise (GEM, 2006).

The first study on female entrepreneurship emerged in the USA only thirty years ago, thus it is still recognised as being an underdeveloped area of research (Greene, Hart, Gatewood, Brush and Carter, 2004). The majority of existing research in the field of female entrepreneurship centres on the typology of female entrepreneurs, differences between male and female entrepreneurs, the slow growth of female-led enterprises and the barriers to women entering entrepreneurship. It is widely acknowledged that there is an incomplete body of literature available in the area of female entrepreneurship (Birley, Moss and Saunders, 1987; Brush, 1992; McClelland, Swail, Bell and Ibbotson, 2005). Moreover, there are currently few studies that examine the link between socialisation and female entrepreneurship despite calls for further research being made. For example, Watkins (1982), Watkins and Watkins (1984) and Brush and Hisrich (1991) have recommended further research in this field. Thus, there is a need to perform research into the impact of socialisation on females in order to determine how socialisation might be used to increase the numbers of female entrepreneurs.

The current study explores the influence of four socialisation agents on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs. Traditional socialisation is widely acknowledged as an inhibiting factor in the development of entrepreneurial intentions among women. In fact, the idea for this study came from reading an article by Cromie (1987) in which he suggested that society requires women to adopt a nurturing role. He explained that this

socialisation discourages the creation of independent businesswomen. Cromie's study went on to call for socialisation that encourages women to become entrepreneurs. Further reading in the area indicated that certain early socialisation experiences can lead to women pursuing entrepreneurial careers (Dyer, 1994; Catley and Hamilton, 1998; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003).

Influences on socialisation include family, education, peer groups, media, work, marriage, social class, legal systems and cultural context (Giddens, 2001). The current research study focuses in detail on just four socialisation influences; family, education, social class and media. The researcher selected these four influences for several reasons. Firstly, the selected influences are inextricably linked to each other. Family, education and social class are closely linked as each will have an effect on the others. For example, someone from a deprived social background is unlikely to have a successful self-employed parent as a role model hence may be socialised not to see self-employment as a career option (Henderson and Robertson, 1999). Media will also be examined in tandem with these agents as it serves as a socialising agent for parents, children and educators. It does not exist in isolation but is a reflection of society's values and beliefs therefore media exposure can impact on the socialisation of a woman from an early age (Giddens, 2001). Secondly, the selected influences all have an impact on socialisation from a very early age and it is during this early stage of development that the roots of a person's social, gender and personal identities are planted (Giddens, 2001). Thirdly, these influences are a constant influence in a person's early life, for example while peer groups might vary from year to year, family, social class and education generally remain constant (Browne, 1992).

This current study is unique because it takes four key agents of socialisation and examines them concurrently in order to explore the impact of socialisation on the decision of a female to become an entrepreneur. Gaining an understanding of the impact of socialisation may help to identify specific socialisation experiences that can influence the development of entrepreneurial intentions and action. The findings could be used by

academics, policy makers, educators and support agencies to develop an enterprise policy that would increase the numbers of women choosing entrepreneurship as a career.

## **1.2 Research Question and Objectives**

The research question and objectives are determined in order to provide direction for the subject under investigation. Good research is based on a clear research question and achievable objectives that will assist in the resolution of the research problem. The research question is:

***To what extent does socialisation impact on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs?***

To address this question, the following research objectives were identified:

1. To explore the socialisation process and the impact that socialisation influences had on female entrepreneurs.
2. To examine the extent to which family, education, social class and media have an effect on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs.
3. To understand whether certain agents of socialisation have more of an impact on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs than others.

Underpinned by the phenomenological philosophy, the methodology used in this study is qualitative in nature. The primary data for this research were gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted with a sample of female entrepreneurs who were deemed to have met the research criteria. The research criteria prescribed that the interviewees should be founders of the business, should be raised in Ireland and should be based in the South East of Ireland. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to access rich, detailed, meaningful information related

to personal experiences that impacted on each of the respondents choosing to become entrepreneurs.

### **1.3 Thesis Structure**

The thesis begins by introducing the research problem and by outlining the key elements, limitations and benefits of the study.

The thesis continues by reviewing and synthesising literature in the fields of entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship and socialisation in order to provide a knowledge base upon which to build this current study. Thus, Chapter Two outlines definitions of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur and highlights the importance of entrepreneurship, paying particular attention to the effect of the contribution of female entrepreneurs. The chapter goes on to describe a typology of the female entrepreneur, providing an understanding of traits, motivations and barriers associated with female entrepreneurs. The remainder of the chapter discusses socialisation, focusing on four agents of socialisation and their impact on female entrepreneurs.

Chapter Three describes the methodology employed in this current study. The chapter clarifies the research problem, identifies the research question and objectives and outlines the rationale behind the choice of methodology. The chapter focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of the research philosophy and method chosen, while describing the sample selection, data collection and analysis, and measures taken to ensure reliability and validity of the research.

The primary findings of the research are presented in Chapter Four. The data are examined under the strands of enquiry of the study, namely background, motivations, family, education, social class and media. The findings are presented in the context of prior research, with key outcomes being emphasised.



Chapter Five discusses the findings of the current research, expanding on the major themes that arose from the study. Emphasis is placed on those aspects of socialisation that were deemed most influential by the majority of respondents.

Finally, Chapter Six draws conclusions from the discussion and the study as a whole. The chapter focuses on those socialisation agents that had an important impact on the interviewees, concluding that family, social class, education and role models were key to influencing the decision of females to become entrepreneurs. The thesis concludes by highlighting the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

#### **1.4 Limitations of the Study**

As with any research there are a number of limitations associated with the current study. Firstly, the study is inherently limited by the sample size, which consisted of eight respondents. This obviously constrains the generalisability of the study. Furthermore the fact that the sample is limited to the South East of Ireland limits the reach of the study. The lack of an official database disaggregating businesses by gender limited the accessibility of a sample for the study. This led to the researcher using a sample frame of female entrepreneurs who were committed to a ‘Grow Your Business’ training programme. Thus, the sample may be different to the general population of female entrepreneurs further limiting the generalisability of the study. These and other limitations are presented in detail in Chapter Six.

#### **1.5 Benefits of the Study**

The current research contributes to the growing body of literature on female entrepreneurship, a topic of research that is in its infancy in Ireland and is also considered to be under-developed on a global level. To the best of this researcher’s knowledge, this research is unique as it examines four early socialisation agents in tandem with a view to determining their collective impact on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs. This study enhances our understanding of socialisation influences that could influence

policy provision and assist in increasing the numbers of female entrepreneurs over time. Thus, this research has implications for academics, educators, policy-makers, support agencies and future female entrepreneurs.

## **1.6 Summary**

This chapter introduced the current research study, briefly outlining the rationale for the study, the research question and objectives. The chapter then presented an outline of the thesis structure, the limitations and benefits of the study. Chapter Two reviews the literature that informed the current study.

## ***Chapter 2            Literature Review***

### **2.0 Introduction**

The purpose of the literature review is to form a foundation for the current research and to synthesise previous studies in the research area. This current study is an exploration of the socialisation influences that impact on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs. Therefore, this chapter explores the literature in the areas of entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship and socialisation in order to examine the link between socialisation and female entrepreneurship.

This current study seeks to determine the impact of four key socialisation agents, family, education, social class and media, on female entrepreneurs therefore the literature review focuses on these agents in particular. The literature review also examines literature pertaining to key focus areas such as the motivations, antecedent influences and challenges that face female entrepreneurs.

This chapter is divided into the following sections; entrepreneurship, the importance of entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship, socialisation, family, education, social class and media.

### **2.1 Entrepreneurship**

The definition of entrepreneurship has been long debated and despite a large number of studies the definition continues to be the subject of debate (Thompson, 1999; Alstete, 2002; Howorth, Tempest and Coupland, 2005). Entrepreneurship has been developing as an area of study and as such the definitions associated with it are also subject to evolution and adaptation (Thompson, 1999; Alstete, 2002). Gartner (2001) argued that it is necessary to build a body of definitions and theories of entrepreneurship as the area is

open to change and so should not be described with one over-riding theory. Thus, this section will explore definitions of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur.

Thompson (1999; 2004) suggested that the value of entrepreneurship is the creation of economic, social or aesthetic capital. He explained that entrepreneurs create wealth and jobs, social entrepreneurs create social capital through ventures that benefit communities and community welfare, while artists, musicians and architects, whom he refers to as aesthetic entrepreneurs, create aesthetic capital that makes a difference in people's lives. Further to this, the European Commission (2003) in its green paper on entrepreneurship described entrepreneurship as a 'mindset' that creates or develops economic activity. Thus, it could be argued that entrepreneurship is a process of creation (Thompson, 1999; Alstete, 2002; European Commission, 2003; Thompson, 2004). Bygrave and Hofer (1991) described entrepreneurship as a process that "changes the external environment from one state to another" (p. 17). This definition agrees with Schumpeter's 1976 definition of entrepreneurship as a radical change process that revolutionises patterns of production (Hamilton and Harper, 1994). Thompson's (1999) study also emphasised the role of change and innovation in entrepreneurship.

Broadening these definitions, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) suggested that entrepreneurship was "the study of sources of opportunities; the processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities, and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate and exploit them" (p. 220). Schramm (2006) mentioned risk as a key element of entrepreneurship describing entrepreneurship as "the process in which one or more people undertake economic risk to create a new organisation that will exploit new technology or innovative processes that generate value to others" (p.59).

The entrepreneur is central to the process of entrepreneurship, therefore it is important to examine the entrepreneur in the context of defining entrepreneurship (Hamilton and Harper, 1994; Littunen, 2000; McKay, 2001). Littunen (2000) explained that because starting an enterprise is an individual decision the individual is central to the study of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, it has been found that there are common characteristics

and traits associated with entrepreneurs that are crucial to the process of entrepreneurship such as innovation, the will to act, the willingness to take on risk and the ability to pursue an opportunity without regard to current resources (Hamilton and Harper, 1994; Thompson, 1999; European Commission, 2003).

Two theories that are commonly applied when describing the entrepreneur are McClelland's (1961) theory of the need to achieve and Rotter's (1966) locus of control theory (Littunen, 2001). According to McClelland, individuals with a strong need to achieve often become successful entrepreneurs, however he also cautions that individuals with a high need to achieve can be over confident which can lead to venture failure (McClelland, 1961). Nonetheless, need to achieve is widely accepted as a motivational factor for entrepreneurs (Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991; Catley and Hamilton, 1998; Littunen, 2000). Rotter (1966) outlines the theory that an individual can have an internal or external locus of control, explaining that those with an external locus of control tend to look to external forces such as fate, luck or chance as the determinants of achievement. On the other hand, those with an internal locus of control look to themselves, considering their successes or failures to be a direct result of their actions, behaviours and characteristics. Rotter (1966) further argued that internal locus of control was related to entrepreneurial action, which is supported by later studies by Catley and Hamilton (1998) and Alstete (2002). Need to achieve and internal locus of control are viewed as "pull" factors that encourage individuals to start enterprises. "Pull" factors also include factors such as a high sense of self-efficacy, being one's own boss, using creative skills and independence and are deemed as positive motivations that can lead to successful enterprises (Hisrich and Brush, 1984; Alstete, 2002; Wilson, Marlino and Kickul, 2004).

The Goodbody Report (2002) defined the entrepreneur as "one who creates and grows new enterprises and demonstrates characteristics of risk-taking and innovation" (p. 3). According to Casson (1982) the characteristics typical of an entrepreneur are the ability to take risks, innovativeness, knowledge of the market and business acumen. Carson (1998) stated that the entrepreneur is a risk taker, innovator, change agent and an achiever. These characteristics were also identified in other studies such as those of

Cunningham and Lischeron (1991) and Catley and Hamilton (1998). Thompson (1999) compiled a comprehensive overview of the characteristics commonly associated with entrepreneurs; the following list is a summary of these features:

- Entrepreneurs are people who make a difference, they translate ideas into reality
- Entrepreneurs spot and exploit opportunities, they are comfortable with ambiguity and can clarify patterns that escape others
- Entrepreneurs find the resources required to exploit opportunities and will seek out resources where none currently exist
- Entrepreneurs add value through transformation of an idea into a customer benefit
- Entrepreneurs are good networkers who know how, who and where to obtain the required resources
- Entrepreneurs create capital including financial, social and artistic capital
- Entrepreneurs quickly assess, take on and manage risk, they take responsibility and tend to view risk differently to others
- Entrepreneurs are determined and tenacious in the face of adversity, they are motivated to succeed and possess determination and self-belief
- Entrepreneurs are creative and innovative

(Adapted from Thompson, 1999, p.210-212)

Thompson (1999) and McCarthy (2000) argued that these characteristics are not present in all individuals, meaning that not everyone has the potential to be an entrepreneur. While McCarthy (2000) posited that entrepreneurs are born not made, Thompson (1999; 2004) argued that entrepreneurial skills can be taught hence creating entrepreneurs from individuals who might not have pursued entrepreneurship without intervention. Many authors such as Hisrich (1990) and Henderson and Robertson (1999) concur with Thompson, suggesting that entrepreneurship education can be an important contributor to the creation and development of entrepreneurs. According to Cunningham and Lischeron (1991), Dyer (1994) and Peterman and Kennedy (2003) the best time to acquire basic knowledge about entrepreneurship and to encourage entrepreneurial behaviour is during childhood and adolescence.

## **2.2 The Importance of Entrepreneurship**

The importance of entrepreneurship to a healthy economy was first recognised by Richard Cantillon in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. A founding father of economic thought and an Irish exile, Cantillon saw entrepreneurs as the drivers of trade and the economy (Deakins and Freel, 2003). The importance of the entrepreneur is still recognised today, according to Bateman (1997 cited in Morrison, 2000, p. 62) those economies and regions which have flourished in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century have in common a business culture which can be broadly described as “entrepreneurial”, that is compatible with the needs of a changing market economy, and receptive to changing demands, innovations, products, opportunities and technologies.

It is widely accepted that entrepreneurship is a vital and integral part of a strong economy, for example the Forfas National Competitiveness Report (1999) illustrated how the G-8 group of countries (the world’s largest economies) has given increasing emphasis to longer-term aspects of economic policy, such as the development of SME’s. While Henry, Hill and Leitch (2003) outline the argument that high levels of entrepreneurship are conducive to high growth and the creation of employment.

Henderson and Robertson (1999) postulated that there is an obvious need to increase the supply of entrepreneurial talent and widen the pool of potential job opportunities and wealth through promoting entrepreneurship among the entire population. A supporting argument posited by Henry, Hill and Leitch (2003) highlighted evidence that almost all new jobs created in the U.S.A., U.K. and Europe tend to be generated by start-ups or early growth stage firms and that small businesses are increasingly being recognised as important creators of jobs.

During the last thirty years, entrepreneurship has enjoyed high priority on the political agenda as countries view the small business sector as a major force in job creation, with entrepreneurship viewed as a socially desirable action that serves as an engine for change, growth and innovation (Dreisler, Blenker and Nielsen, 2003). Companies are currently

operating in a rapidly changing business environment where technology is constantly accelerating the pace of change; this gives an advantage to entrepreneurial companies who have the responsiveness that allows them to be competitive (Zimmerer and Scarborough, 1998). The onset of globalisation and the emergence of industrialised economies such as Eastern Europe, India and China have led to a change in paid employment opportunities in developed economies. There is a new emphasis on entrepreneurial activities for promoting job creation and increasing economic activity (Arenius and Kovalainen, 2006). According to Henderson and Robertson (1999) the future will most likely mean a portfolio career for people; involving periods of salaried employment, self-employment, and unemployment, in which case entrepreneurial skills will be paramount. The day of the “job for life” in a large company has passed and entrepreneurship would seem to offer a solution to future-proofing the economy, as it promotes a healthy economy and is critical for sustaining wealth and new job creation (Henry, Hill & Leitch, 2003).

### **2.2.1 Economic Conditions in South East Ireland**

As part of the discussion on the importance of entrepreneurship to the economy, it is pertinent to pay attention to the geographic region which is the subject of the primary research, South East Ireland. The South East region comprises of the counties Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford. The region has a lower population density than the rest of the country and is primarily rural with each county having a major urban centre (REFORM, 2006). The region is generally considered to be an economically underperforming region compared to the other regions in Ireland (O’Gorman and Dee, 2004; Walsh, 2005). The economic structure of the region is heavily reliant on agriculture, manufacturing and construction, with a below average proportion of employment in services. According to Jordan and O’Leary (2007) the South East region lags behind other Irish regions in terms of living standards, labour productivity and disposable income. While the region has experienced growth and development in recent years, it still underperforms significantly in comparison to the country as a whole (DRIVE, 2006). The economic performance of the region could be vastly improved



through innovation and the introduction of new products and services, which is largely dependent on the emergence of more entrepreneurs (Jordan and O’Leary, 2007).

Having examined the importance of entrepreneurship to a healthy economy the next section will look specifically at the importance of women’s contribution to entrepreneurship. The next section will outline the argument for attracting more women into entrepreneurship, looking at the benefits of participation by females in entrepreneurship, such as wealth and job creation.

### **2.3 Importance of Female Entrepreneurship**

Reports by GEM (2004, 2006) and Forfas (2007) pay attention to the role of female entrepreneurship in sustaining the economy. These reports have identified females as an untapped resource who should be encouraged to pursue a career in entrepreneurship. Deakins and Freel (2003) stated that the most entrepreneurial countries in the world have high levels of female participation in entrepreneurship. Supporting this argument, the OECD identified female entrepreneurs as a major force for innovation and job creation in 1997, re-iterating in 2004 how self-employed women have a major impact on the economy both in terms of employment creation and growth (OECD, 1997 and 2004). Therefore, it is evident that female participation in entrepreneurship is very important.

Stimulating female participation in entrepreneurship has an impact on economic growth and employment, it is clear that a country can only maximise its entrepreneurial potential through equal participation in entrepreneurship by men and women (Henry and Kennedy, 2002). Authors such as Watkins and Watkins (1984), Cromie (1987) and Henry and Kennedy (2002) have called for a policy to promote entrepreneurship among women.

To put this argument in context it is pertinent to look at countries where policies are in place to support women entrepreneurs. Women are responsible for 38% of all new businesses in the USA. If women were to be as active as entrepreneurs in Ireland as they

are in the USA there would be an additional 56,000 entrepreneurs in Ireland (GEM, 2003). Comparing Ireland to Sweden, where policies were put in place during the late 1960's to encourage an increase in dual-income households, the level of female participation in entrepreneurship is 25%, with 30% involved in new business start-ups (Jay and Rosengren, 2001). In the UK the importance of small business was formally recognised with the establishment of the SBS (Small Business Service) in 2000. The SBS is a service established to assist in the development of small business and to reduce barriers to entrepreneurship for minority groups such as women. The SBS strategy was a success in that there is currently a 27% rate of female participation in entrepreneurship, which represents an increase of approximately 10% over the last four years (Prowess UK, 2006).

## **2.4 Ireland and Female Entrepreneurship**

Ireland is viewed as one of the leading countries in Europe in terms of entrepreneurship and is fast nearing the levels of early stage entrepreneurial activity, such as nascent entrepreneurs and early start-ups, prevalent in the global leader, the USA (GEM, 2005). The Irish population is ranked among the top in the world in terms of cultural perception of entrepreneurship (GEM, 2005). Yet, it is estimated that only 15%-18% of Irish entrepreneurs are female (GEM, 2006). For a country with an even gender population split, Ireland has one of the lowest rates of female entrepreneurship in the developed world (O'Gorman & Terjeson, 2006). Female entrepreneurship is closely related to the general conditions for entrepreneurship in a country and where there are high levels of entrepreneurship one will generally find a high participation rate by female entrepreneurs (Verheul, Van Stel and Thurik, 2004). Yet, in Ireland, an entrepreneurial country, there are only 29 female entrepreneurs for every 100 male entrepreneurs (GEM, 2004). In order to understand why there are so few female entrepreneurs it is worth considering how enterprise culture in Ireland has developed over the last forty years.

Traditionally there was not a strong enterprise culture in Ireland, in fact it was not until the mid to late 1980's that the importance of indigenous start-ups was recognised

(Brophy, 1985; Henry and Kennedy, 2002). Since independence in 1921 until the 1960's the country's economic policies were protectionist and insular, the government viewed self-sufficiency through agriculture as being key to Ireland's economic development (Brophy, 1985; Garvin, 2004). This policy focus meant that the country was not industrialised and there were few women in the workforce. Policy changed in the 1960's moving to a focus on inward foreign direct investment, this did bring more women into the workforce but there were still barriers in place for working women. Equality laws for women in the workforce only came into effect in the 1970's. The 'Marriage Bar', a law requiring women to retire from employment upon marriage, was not abolished until 1973 meaning much fewer employment opportunities for women. Furthermore, until the mid 1990's only widows or married women who were not supported by their partners could apply for re-instatement to the Civil Service (Henry & Kennedy, 2002). While one might assume that this state of affairs would encourage women into entrepreneurship, it hindered progress in general. There was a societal view that women should be at home rearing children to prevent negative social effects such as a lower birth rate and social deviance by neglected children (The Economist, 2006). That view was caused in part and further re-enforced by the Catholic Church's moral view on women as homemakers which was embedded in Irish politics and policy until recent years (Garvin, 2004).

This history has contributed to a situation where there are no female-specific supports in the area of entrepreneurship (Henry and Kennedy, 2002). According to Henry and Kennedy (2002) this lack of policy needs to be tackled if the balance is to be redressed hence sustaining the economy through an increase in the number of female entrepreneurs and consequently jobs.

Having discussed the societal aspects that have contributed to the low levels of female entrepreneurship in Ireland, this current study will outline the socialisation factors that can influence women to become entrepreneurs. Before discussing the literature on socialisation it is important to gain an understanding of the typical female entrepreneur in

order to better understand the common characteristics, motivations and challenges associated with female entrepreneurs.

## **2.5 Typology of a Female Entrepreneur**

Female entrepreneurs tend to start businesses in the traditional sectors such as retail, services, craft and catering (Hisrich and Brush, 1984; Henry and Kennedy, 2002; Greene, Hart, Gatewood, Brush and Carter, 2004). However, Langowitz (2001) and OECD (2001) have identified a trend whereby women are beginning to establish businesses in high growth potential industries such as construction and high-tech. Traditionally, women-led businesses have low costs of entry, low growth potential and the female entrepreneur tends to self finance the business. Women's businesses tend to be smaller, younger and less hierarchical than those controlled by men, and many women operate their businesses on a part-time basis (Catley and Hamilton, 1998). Other authors such as Stevenson (1990) and McKay (2001) have been keen to highlight that female entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group, emphasising that it is impossible to describe all female entrepreneurs as the same. However, for the purpose of providing an understanding of the female entrepreneur this literature review will describe attributes *generally associated* with female entrepreneurs.

### **2.5.1 Motivations**

The typical female entrepreneur is the first-born child of middle-class parents, she is usually married to a professional, has children and starts her first business in the helping or service industries in her mid-thirties having obtained a third level qualification in liberal arts (Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Lee, 1996). Female entrepreneurs will usually start their business having held at least four previous jobs and will have displayed a strong work ethic and restless nature during their earlier careers (Buttner, 1993). A high proportion of entrepreneurs are related to someone who is self-employed, usually a

parent. Research suggests that starting a business becomes a feasible option when the entrepreneur can refer to family context and identify a self-employed role model within their close environment (Matthews and Moser, 1995; Orhan and Scott, 2001).

Women are motivated to start enterprises for various reasons. Some of their motivations are similar to those of men; a high need to achieve, having a viable business idea, wanting job satisfaction, a need for independence, a high locus of control leading to a desire to shape his/her own destiny and various economic motivators (Catley and Hamilton, 1998; Greene et al, 2004; Langowitz and Minniti, 2007). According to Shane and Venkataraman (2000) opportunity recognition is the core motivation for starting a business however De Bruin, Brush and Welter (2007) argued that it is more likely that women with positive self-perceptions in terms of entrepreneurial capability will recognise viable opportunities.

There is evidence that some motivations for entering entrepreneurship are female specific; the female entrepreneur tends to want to 'make a difference' with many women being at the helm of social enterprises (Orhan and Scott, 2001; Prowess UK, 2007). Cromie (1987) suggested that women do not tend to start businesses to make money, while Buttner (1993) added that women are not motivated by making a profit. Langowitz and Minniti (2007) further argued that the decision to start a business is more complex for women, with females being more sensitive to nonmonetary issues. Women are often pushed into entrepreneurship due to dissatisfaction with career prospects in larger organisations, a need for flexibility in order to fulfil her role as primary carer in the family or a desire to be her own boss due to negative conditions in the workplace (Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Moore and Buttner, 1997; Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Mero, 2000). Research suggests that it would be better for women to be pulled into entrepreneurship, as firms run by entrepreneurs who have started their businesses due to pull factors tend to have higher survival rates (Hisrich and Brush, 1984; Orhan and Scott, 2001; Alstete, 2002).

### **2.5.2 Challenges**

The main challenges facing the female entrepreneur are a lack of capital, lack of resources, lack of managerial experience, low self-confidence and an aversion to risk (Buttner and Rosen, 1989; Buttner, 1993; Scherr, Sugrue and Ward, 1993; Moore and Buttner, 1997; Brindley, 2005). Women are less likely to accept a loan than men and therefore have a tendency to have insufficient start-up capital to facilitate long-term sustainability and/or scalability (Alexander, 2007). The female entrepreneur tends to run smaller businesses than her male counterpart with lower and slower growth, which has been accredited to a mixture of lender discrimination (Buttner and Rosen, 1989; Coleman, 2000), the female entrepreneur's desire for controlled growth (Cliff, 1998) and the traditional socialisation of women (Brush and Hisrich, 1991). Added to these factors is a lack of confidence in her ability and a high fear of failure which can inhibit women from firstly setting up in business and secondly growing her business once it has been established (Buttner and Rosen, 1989; Scherr, Sugrue and Ward, 1993; Marlino and Wilson, 2003). This lack of confidence leads women to feel under constant pressure to prove themselves to customers, suppliers and employees (Birley, 1989; Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Mero, 1999; DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Harding, Cowling and Ream, 2004). Women tend to start businesses in fields unrelated to their previous work experience which puts them at an immediate disadvantage (Birley, Moss and Saunders, 1987; Buttner, 1993). This lack of experience is often attributed to poor previous career prospects in companies with 'glass ceilings' or a lack of education in business or technical areas due to traditional gendered education (Birley, Moss and Saunders, 1987). Women entrepreneurs also tend to lack relevant skills, such as management and planning, when they start in business (Loscocco, Robinson, Hall and Allen, 1991; Heilbrunn, 2004).

Another major challenge for female entrepreneurs is networking, firstly women have historically been excluded from the 'old boy networks' so they start off with less resources to draw from (Buttner, 1993). They then have to form their own networks,

which tend to be made up of other women. However, women are underrepresented in professions critical to entrepreneurial success. For example, venture capitalists, solicitors, bankers and creditors are predominantly male; therefore women are at a disadvantage in the make-up of their networks (Hisrich, 1986; Cromie and Hayes, 1988; Buttner, 1993; Garcia and Morena, 2005). Furthermore, there is evidence that men utilise their networks more effectively in a commercial sense, they network for utility, while women tend to have social networks and tend to network for the sake of relationships without tapping into the business benefits of these relationships (Buttner, 1993; Carter, 2000; Ireland, 2007).

Having gained some understanding of the female entrepreneur, this current study will now focus on socialisation because it is partly through socialisation that entrepreneurial intentions are formed (Cromie, 1987; Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Catley and Hamilton, 1998; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). The purpose of this current research is to determine the impact of socialisation on females to become entrepreneurs, thus the following sections will explore literature in the area of socialisation, specifically focusing on studies that have investigated family, education, social class and media.

## **2.6 Socialisation**

Socialisation can be defined as the process by which individuals learn the culture of their society, it is a powerful process that begins at infancy and continues throughout a person's life transmitting values and norms from the previous generation and contemporaries that become internalised to form part of a person's personality (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004).

Essentially, socialisation has three goals:

- a) impulse control
- b) role preparation and performance (including gender roles)
- c) the cultivation of sources of meaning, what is important and what is to be valued

(Source: Arnett, 1995, p.618)

People are socialised into gender roles; gender refers to the translation of biological differences between males and females into different sets of social roles and responsibilities which affect access to resources, benefits and opportunities (Browne, 1992). For the most part socialisation happens almost subconsciously, it is paradigmatic, the 'way things are'. However, it is assisted by public policy, legislation and formal codes of behaviour. It can be overt, for example the dressing of male babies in blue and female babies in pink or it can be covert, for example the hidden curriculum in schools (Browne, 1992). Socialisation is vital for fitting new members into society; it is a means of transmitting values from one generation to the next. Murdock (1949) outlined the use of the nuclear family as a means of maintaining social equilibrium through the clear sexual division of labour with the woman staying at home to nurture and raise the family while the man goes out to 'hunt and gather'. According to Arnett (1995) socialisation means the establishment of limits, these limits are adhered to through social control. Social control means that society's members are discouraged from deviating from the norm to maintain order (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). Therefore, the influences of socialisation promote the maintenance of social norms primarily because these influencers have been socialised in the same manner themselves (Browne, 1992). Social control is also influenced by policy and national culture, therefore a change in one, for example policy, should affect the other (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004).

Influences on socialisation include parents, education, peer groups, media, work, marriage, social class, legal systems and cultural context (Browne, 1992; Giddens, 2001; Adya and Kaiser, 2005). The current research study will focus in detail on four of these influences as to examine a wider range of factors would require a larger research study and longer timescale. These influences are family, education, social class and media. The researcher proposes to examine these particular agents of socialisation together as these influences all have an impact on socialisation from a very early age and it is during this early stage of development that the roots of a person's social, gender and personal identities are planted (Giddens, 2001). Family, education and social class are closely linked as each will have an effect on the others, for example someone from a deprived



social background is unlikely to have a successful self-employed parent as a role model hence may be socialised not to see self-employment as a career option (Henderson and Robertson, 1999). Media will be examined in tandem with these agents as it serves as a socialising agent for parents, children and educators, it does not exist in isolation but is a reflection of society's values and beliefs therefore media exposure can impact on the socialisation of a woman from an early age (Giddens, 2001).

Western societies are said to promote broad socialisation, that is to say that individualism, independence and self-expression are encouraged. However, the socialisation of girls tends to be narrower, with obedience and conformity being held as more important values for females. Research shows that in childhood as well as adolescence females are given more work and responsibilities, there are greater requirements for impulse control and a greater obligation for obedience and conformity (Arnett, 1995). Given that conformity and obedience suppress imagination and innovation and that innovation is a key characteristic of entrepreneurship, this paradigm does impact on the socialisation of women entrepreneurs (Arnett, 1995; Littunen, 2000).

Cromie (1987) suggested that society requires women to adopt a nurturing role, which often leads to unsatisfactory, truncated careers where women do not realise their full potential and that this socialisation discourages the creation of independent businesswomen. Authors such as Watkins (1982) and Cromie (1987) suggested that the socialisation of women needs to encourage entrepreneurship. Research argues that the best time to acquire basic knowledge about entrepreneurship, to foster positive attitudes towards it and to encourage entrepreneurial behaviour is during childhood and adolescence and that certain early socialisation experiences prepare women for an entrepreneurial career (Dyer, 1994; Catley and Hamilton, 1998; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). Therefore, this current research examines early socialisation agents with a view to examining the link between socialisation and the creation of female entrepreneurs.

## 2.7 Family

Family is the primary socialisation influence as children are conditioned according to family values from birth; from the toys that they are given to play with to the clothes they are dressed in (Browne, 1992; Dryler, 1998). Therefore family has a major impact on the socialisation of a female entrepreneur.

The family unit exists within the cultural context of society, people are socialised into norms and roles that fit with their culture. Parents, therefore, are conditioned into parental roles that were filled by their own parents and so on (Arnett, 1995). Traditionally there are four ways in which parents socialise children into gender roles:

- 1) Manipulation: a child's self-concept is affected by manipulation e.g.: a parent chastising a girl for getting their clothes dirty while out playing but encouraging their sons to be adventurous stating 'Boys will be boys'
- 2) Canalisation: the direction of boys and girls towards different objects e.g.: dolls for girls
- 3) Verbal appellations: causes children to identify with their gender and to imitate adults of the same gender for example saying 'good girl' when a female child behaves appropriately
- 4) Different Activities: boys and girls are directed towards different activities e.g.: girls are encouraged to become involved with domestic chores

(Source: Oakley, 1974 cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2004 p.100)

In addition to parents being socialised into parental roles, children are conditioned by the use of one or a combination of the techniques listed above (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). Furthermore, people comply with the demands of their socialisers because they wish to avoid sanctions for non-compliance. Most particularly in the case of family, because of their emotional attachment to their socialisers, they wish to please their parents and gain warm positive feedback (Arnett, 1995). Socialisation can be described as the preparation of people for the 'proper' fulfilment of gender roles and as such society discriminates against those who step outside gender-appropriate behaviour (Morrison, 2000; McCarthy, 2000; Cunningham, 2001.b). The mother's role in the home serves as a means of sex role identification for female children (Aldous, 1972; Boyd, 1989). Coltrane (2000) and Cunningham (2001.a.) highlighted that parents can encourage gender bias through the gendered assignment of tasks in the home. Cunningham (2001.a) further elaborates by saying that positive gender role perceptions can impact on children having less stereotypical career goals. In addition to this, Jackson, Gardner and Sullivan (1993) suggested that more highly educated parents may encourage their children to pursue less traditional careers.

Parents will raise their children to fit into their view of society, encouraging them to pursue activities in line with the 'proper' fulfilment of gender roles (Tovey and Share, 2000). Entrepreneurship often goes against the traditional view of the female role; the term 'entrepreneur' is not usually associated with women (Thompson, 1999). In fact for many, the term 'entrepreneur' is synonymous with the image of a white, middle class male (Fielden, Davidson, Dawe and Makin, 2003). Morrison (2000) further explains that a person's immediate family environment will encourage or discourage certain behaviours, such as entrepreneurship, according to the family unit's social values and level of support for independence and deviation from the norm. Therefore, if participation in entrepreneurship is viewed as 'the norm' in the family context it is more likely to be encouraged (Brush and Hisrich, 1991). For that reason, it is not surprising that a high proportion of entrepreneurs have a parent or close family member who is self-employed, hence making entrepreneurship a feasible career option (Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Matthews and Moser, 1995; Morrison, 2000; Orhan and Scott, 2001).

Social learning theory suggests that even a low performing entrepreneurial parental role model will encourage an entrepreneurial career in their offspring (Matthews and Moser, 1995). This theory also emphasises the environmental determinants of behaviour, telling us that risk-taking behaviour, which is an inherent trait of entrepreneurship, can be viewed as learned behaviour from parents (McCarthy, 2000). These parental role models pass on entrepreneurial values to their children. For example it has been found that many entrepreneurs were given responsibility at home from an early age which can help to develop the entrepreneurial ability to take on responsibility (Henderson and Robertson, 1999). A study by Matthews and Moser (1995) highlighted that females with a family business background showed far greater interest in entrepreneurship than females without any family entrepreneurial role models, this emphasises the importance of the family in creating female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, Brush and Hisrich (1991) and Welter (2004) highlighted that women entrepreneurs tend to have very supportive immediate family (such as parents and spouses). Mistick (1998) suggested that the family is changing with a much higher instance of dual income households, a higher number of single-female households and single-parent households, which is changing family values, gender roles within the family and the way that children are raised, hence opening the door to entrepreneurship for more women.

Having explored the impact of family on the socialisation of female entrepreneurs the next section will discuss education.

## **2.7 Education**

The schools that children attend play an important role in socialisation as this is one of the first arenas through which people learn the social norms and behaviour of their society (Browne, 1992). From pre-school, children are socialised into gender roles and the development of certain aptitudes begin at the early stages of education. For example giving pre-school girls dolls to play with re-enforces the stereotype of women as carers

while giving boys constructional toys can help to develop scientific and mathematical concepts (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). Furthermore, early educational reading can propagate these stereotypes with books portraying males in active roles while females carry out domestic chores. A study by Best (1993 cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2004, p. 760-761) showed that there was a highly disproportionate number of heroes and heroines portrayed in early educational books with a ratio of 2:1 of male to female characters. Schools form the basis for the workplace, preparing children for adulthood and the place where they will spend a substantial part of their waking day (Arnett, 1995). Browne (1992) highlighted how there is a hidden curriculum in schools deliberately created in order to socialise people into conforming with society's norms and values from an early age.

The following table is a sample of the hidden curriculum for explanatory purposes:

Features of Hidden Curriculum	What is Being Taught
School rules, detentions and suspensions, rewards like merit badges, prizes, good marks, etc	Conformity to society's rules and laws, whether you agree with them or not
Males and females playing different sports, having different dress codes and being steered into different subjects, further education courses and careers. Many teachers have higher expectations of boys and pay them more attention.	Males and females are expected to conform to gender stereotypes, with males as 'breadwinners' and women working in a narrow range of 'female occupations' which are often extensions of the domestic role.
Grading by ability and exam success/failure	The differences in pay and status between social classes are natural and justified-those higher up are more intelligent and better qualified

Table 2.1, Adapted from 'The Hidden Curriculum' (Source: Browne, 1992 p.270)

Parents and teachers may expect more from boys than girls as the future breadwinners giving more attention and opportunities to boys, encouraging their natural curiosity, while girls are encouraged to be patient and 'ladylike' (Francis, 2000.a.). There is evidence to suggest that because boys tend to be more boisterous and confident in class, mixed schools can encourage girls to take a back seat hence stunting the development of independence which then impacts on girl's career choices (Giddens, 2001). Girls tend to rate themselves lower than boys do in certain critical business skill areas, including managing money, working with numbers, problem solving and decision making (Marlino and Wilson, 2003). Haralambos and Holborn (2004) suggested that this lack of confidence can be partly attributed to the attention given to boys in terms of criticism for lack of neatness and misbehaviour, concluding that the better behaviour of girls in class leads them to believe that their failures are due to an inherent intellectual inadequacy.

Another area that impacts on the socialisation of females into certain career paths is subject choice. Francis (2000.b) argues that females are still less likely to choose subjects such as science, engineering, technology and economics, leading to a dearth of female talent in these areas in the jobs market. Many schools encourage this paradigm by limiting the numbers of places for either sex who want to study non-traditional subjects and by packaging these subjects in an overtly 'masculine' or 'feminine' way (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). A study by McPherson (2007) clearly highlighted that women self-select themselves out of areas that are packaged in a masculine way or use technical or 'masculine' imagery and language in communicating their message, for example a glance at a Science textbook cover can communicate the message that this subject is for boys. Yet Hisrich and Brush in their 1984 study of female entrepreneurs, which was incidentally the first of its kind ever carried out in the USA, highlighted the importance of females being educated in finance, science and engineering in order to prepare them for higher earnings potential.

Another area that schools contribute to and that can serve to socialise young people is extra-curricular activity and playground activities. Participation in sports has long been accepted as a positive influence instilling confidence, teaching competence, responsibility, role-taking abilities, temporal perspective, co-operation, cognitive and motor skills and prepares the child for social intercourse yet fewer girls than boys take part in sports (Goldstein and Bredemeier, 1977; Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Mero, 2000). In a similar vein extra-curricular activity, such as membership of clubs and societies, can teach responsibility, give organisational skills, build confidence and enhance a sense of self-efficacy among females (Rombokas, 1995). Children's play can also impact on the early development of gender identity and core skills which are needed later in life, according to Coates and Overman (1992) traditional 'boys play' leads to the development of skills necessary for business success such as teamwork, competition, independence and confidence. Furthermore, Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Mero (2000) highlighted that having a mixed gender or predominantly male peer group can play a part in the development of entrepreneurial intentions.

Smith, R. (2000) argued that education systems must structure themselves to enable young people to acquire the ability to act as experts, extend the frontiers of knowledge, to question, reframe and develop ideas, while instilling a culture of entrepreneurialism in the next generation. Entrepreneurial attributes can be positively influenced by educationalists (Henderson and Robertson, 1999), therefore the school attended has an impact on the fostering of entrepreneurial intentions in women. It is only in recent years that entrepreneurship is beginning to appear on the curriculum in some schools. Watson, Quatman and Edler (2002) suggested that independence and the pursuit of high prestige non-traditional careers were more likely to be promoted in single-sex schools. Supporting this argument, Adya and Kaiser (2005) highlighted that girls who attend mixed schools are less likely to pursue gender atypical careers such as entrepreneurship. Therefore, it would seem that type of school attended can play an important role in the creation of female entrepreneurs.

Higher level education forms the basis for careers and female entrepreneurs tend to be well-educated (Kim, Aldrich and Keister, 2003; Winn, 2004; GEM, 2006). However, they tend to be educated in areas unrelated to their businesses (Brush and Hisrich, 1991). This may be tied to the socialisation influences of early education, which directs females from a young age towards gendered subjects, play and career aspirations (Birley, Moss and Saunders, 1987; Smith, L., 2000).

## **2.8 Social Class**

The division of social class is no longer as clear cut and obvious as it used to be; a globalised economy, high geographic mobility, the onset of the information age and the evolution of capitalism have contributed to a decline in class politics and the break-up of traditional social divisions (Tovey and Share, 2000). However, class analysis is still important in explaining how class links the following three key elements of social life and therefore is still highly relevant when discussing socialisation:

- a) material interests: the means of maximising economic welfare, this relates to power, wealth, property, income, education and work
- b) the lived experience of everyday life: a very broad term encompassing numerous aspects of a person's existence such as work, family, values and consumption
- c) the capacity for collective action: how people may act together in the world based on their membership of a broader social entity and their level of attachment to this social group, examples include gang warfare, social movements, industrial action, political behaviour and social protest

(Source: Tovey and Share, 2000 p136)

These three elements of social life impact on people from all social backgrounds and the effects can act as socialising influences that shape people's interests and collective



experiences as a class. For example, financial resources and human capital variables such as education and work experience are linked to social class (Kim, Aldrich and Keister, 2003). Social class has an impact on both family and education, for example middle class people tend to be more highly educated (Browne, 1992). Furthermore, Browne (1992) argued that people from a working class background are more likely to underachieve in education due to a mix of parental attitude, parental level of education and a lack of finances for educational materials and tools. Young people in schools in economically-deprived areas tend to view entrepreneurs more negatively than those in wealthier areas (Henderson and Roberston, 1999). Margo and Dixon (2006) highlighted the fact that young women living in disadvantaged areas have less access to information, support and connections. This is further compounded by the fact that they are also less likely to be able to afford to move to an area where these resources are accessible.

Becoming an entrepreneur depends on access to resources so those from a deprived background will not have equal means, for example a non home-owner will not have as much equity to invest in a start-up as a home-owner and will have more difficulty in accessing finance (Deakins and Freel, 2003). Females from more privileged backgrounds are three times more likely to aspire to a professional career (Margo and Dixon, 2006). Research has shown that those with high personal wealth are more likely than those with little personal wealth to become self-employed, for example receiving money from an inheritance can significantly increase the likelihood of self-employment (Kim, Aldrich and Keister, 2003). A recent GEM study in the UK (2006) highlighted that affluent women are twice as likely to be entrepreneurial as financially deprived women. Therefore it can be argued that equal access to resources for all classes is likely an important part of socialising female entrepreneurs.

A young woman's social class can be one of the most important predictors of participation in education and the outcome in terms of career. The literature has already established that a female entrepreneur is likely to hold a third level qualification but those from economically deprived backgrounds are less likely to pursue higher education

(Margo and Dixon, 2006). Winn (2004) further stressed that community attitudes towards entrepreneurship can play a role in discouraging a woman's interest in entrepreneurship. A 2004 study by Fielden and Dawe highlighted how there are socially constructed barriers to entrepreneurship for women from socially deprived backgrounds, that women from these backgrounds felt that entrepreneurship was 'something other women did' and that this negativity could be attributed to a lack of role models, lack of finances, lack of affordable childcare and a lack of support from partners/family. The lack of support from family was accredited to the fact that many of these women were in some form of paid employment and the risk of losing a weekly wage was seen as too high a risk. According to Fielden and Dawe (2004) these issues are compounded by an underlying lack of confidence and self-belief. It is important to caveat this argument by mentioning that Dyer (1994) highlighted that many entrepreneurs come from deprived social environments and endure childhoods filled with poverty and neglect, hence turning to entrepreneurship in order to take control of their own environment. However, women from deprived social backgrounds face both financial and social barriers to entrepreneurship which can prove difficult to overcome (Fielden and Dawe, 2004; Winn, 2004; Margo and Dixon, 2006).

While limited financial resources are not a complete barrier to entrepreneurship other factors associated with class can prove to be major inhibitors to entrepreneurship; it is far more likely that a woman with access to financial resources plus previous work experience, a good education, social networks and an entrepreneurial family background will become an entrepreneur (Kim, Aldrich and Keister, 2003). While there are arguments and proven cases of entrepreneurs coming from deprived backgrounds in all fields and across many developed regions, it can be said that, in general, entrepreneurs are less likely to come from a socially deprived background. It can also be said that a person from an upper class background, with a secure and high income, is less likely to enter entrepreneurship as the perceived risk is higher and the projected benefits lower (Kim, Aldrich and Keister, 2003).

Interestingly, while there is evidence that a socially deprived background can inhibit entrepreneurship among females in Western economies, it has been found that women in low income countries are more likely to be self-employed than their counterparts in developed economies. While there are class systems in existence in poorer countries, the general population is financially deprived therefore entrepreneurship can often serve as a means to survival. This is markedly different to developed economies such as Ireland, where social supports such as benefit payments are in place to alleviate poverty (Minniti and Arenius, 2003).

The following section will examine literature in the area of media, in order to highlight the potential impact of media on the decision of females to become self-employed.

## **2.10 Media**

Media is an important influencer on, and reflection of, social values and norms at a given time (Nelson and Lear, 1994). While it seems clear that family, education and social class are all key influences of the socialisation process on an individual, the wider social arena is also reflected by the mass media, it supports the values of society through the messages and imagery transmitted (Henderson and Robertson, 1999). Children's socialisation as consumers begins at an early age and the media that they consume provides frames of reference for understanding the real world (Smith, R., 2000; Seaton, 2006). Children use the media to learn about social interaction, facilitate self-expression and social conformance (Preston, 2004).

Studies have shown a connection between children's media use and sex-related stereotypical perceptions. For example, Adya and Kaiser (2005) have advocated that media has the power to enhance gender stereotypes. The media nurture and cultivate children, as children are more receptive to any influence and they quickly adopt precepts

and concepts from the media and hence learn and maintain habits on this basis (Knobloch, Callison, Chen, Fritzsche and Zillmann, 2005).

Busby (1975) and Knobloch et al (2005) emphasise that sex roles portrayed in the media are consistently stereotypical. The media are male-dominated and this is reflected in television programming, magazines and newspapers, these media all show women in distinct sex roles which children will typically emulate (Busby, 1975). Knobloch et al (2005) highlighted similar problems in media portrayal of women to Busby's study some thirty years earlier; programmes targeting children feature females in submissive or traditional roles while male characters are invariably portrayed as heroes. For example, males and females in programmes directed at children show characters with the following characteristics:

When compared to the females, the males were	When compared to the males, the females were
More ambitious	Less ambitious
More knowledgeable	Less knowledgeable
More independent	Less independent
More logical	Less logical
More outgoing	More of a homebody
More of a leader	More of a follower

Table 2.2 Adapted from 'Males and Females in TV Programmes Directed at Children'

(Source: Busby (1975), p.112)

Social cognitive theory, which posits that children learn behaviour through observational learning and vicarious experience, would suggest that a large amount of information about social values, behaviour and aspirations are gleaned from the mass media (Bandura, 2001). Attitudes towards people, how to interact with others and images of

what a good life should be are communicated by the media (Seaton, 2006). A study by McGhee and Frueh performed in 1980 showed that children who watched a lot of television (25 or more hours per week) had more stereotypical perceptions of sex roles than light viewers (10 or less hours per week). While television is the primary source of information for most children, books are still an important means of capturing children's imagination, yet the characters in most children's books remain stereotyped with most heroes being male (Seaton, 2006). On the other hand, Singer and Singer (2001) and Knoop (2007) highlighted that certain genres of book such as fantasy can stimulate imagination, which is linked to the development of creativity, which in turn is inextricably linked to entrepreneurship (Ward, 2004).

According to Henderson and Robertson (1999) positive perceptions of entrepreneurship can be hampered by poor media presentation of identifiable role models. They call for a more enlightened attitude towards promoting entrepreneurship among young people. The media is pervasive, with the onslaught of globalisation and in the information age, it has become even more omnipresent than previous generations. Therefore it would seem important that female entrepreneurs are presented in a more positive light by the media in order to encourage more women into entrepreneurship in the future. Henderson and Robertson (1999), Winn (2004) and Forfas (2007) argued that the media should be a source of role models for aspiring female entrepreneurs.

## **2.11 Summary**

This chapter has examined relevant literature in the areas of entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship and socialisation. The chapter highlighted that entrepreneurship is vital to the health of the economy, and that it is a key driver of Western economies. The literature also demonstrated that equal participation by men and women in entrepreneurship is important.

Generic characteristics, motivations and challenges associated with female entrepreneurs were also examined. This review highlighted that female entrepreneurs are usually the eldest children of middle class parents who run businesses in traditional sectors such as craft, retail and services. The literature review also demonstrated that female entrepreneurs are motivated by a need for flexibility and a desire to 'give something back'. Even so, some of the typical barriers to entrepreneurship that a female faces are lack of finances, resources, networks, prior experience and skills.

The area of socialisation was also explored and it concluded that females are socialised primarily by family and that the presence of familial role models can be an important influence on the creation of female entrepreneurs. The literature also highlighted the importance of gender roles in the home and family support for the venture. Education was highlighted as a key socialising influence; factors such as school attended, extra-curricular activity, play, subjects chosen and the hidden curriculum in schools were viewed as important socialising influences.

Social class is an important basis for the development of entrepreneurial intentions, the literature has demonstrated that access to resources, both financial and human, are key. This chapter indicated that access to education, experiences and finance are important aspects of the socialisation of female entrepreneurs. The literature also focused on media, concluding that media is a reflection of societal norms and values, and is pervasive in its

effect on children. Therefore, the images portrayed through the media can impact on the socialisation of females.

There is a growing body of research in the area of female entrepreneurship and socialisation in general. The four elements under investigation in this current study, family, education, social class and media, have been researched individually but to the current researcher's knowledge their collective influence on female entrepreneurs has not been examined. Therefore this study seeks to explore the impact of family, education, social class and media on female entrepreneurs in Ireland. The following chapter will present the methodological approach undertaken in order to answer the research question, which is to explore the impact of socialisation on female entrepreneurs.

## ***Chapter 3: Research Methodology***

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter informs the reader of the research methodology and methods that were employed in the current study. The chapter begins by outlining the research problem and defining the research question and objectives. The research process will then be examined, within the context of the research process onion model identified by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003).

The philosophical paradigms of positivism and phenomenology will then be explored in order to provide an understanding of the characteristics of each paradigm and a rationale for the methodology used in this current research. The areas of qualitative and quantitative research are then examined with a view to establishing the most appropriate type of research for this current study.

This chapter concludes with a detailed examination of this study's chosen method and research instrument. This researcher will provide an argument for selecting what was deemed to be the most efficient and effective instrument for the purpose of this study. The advantages and disadvantages of the instrument, in addition to its limitations are then discussed.

### **3.1 Research Problem**

Since the first article on female entrepreneurship was published in 1976 there has been an increasing level of interest in the field of study (Greene et al., 2004). This increased interest has coincided with and has been driven by a dramatic rise in the number of women starting businesses. Moore and Buttner (1997) highlighted that women-owned businesses are one of the fastest growing segments in the small business sector in the USA. National and



International bodies concerned with Western economies have consistently recognised the importance of women-led businesses to economic sustainability and have continually called for the promotion of female entrepreneurship (OECD, 2004; GEM, 2005; Forfas, 2007).

While Ireland is viewed as one of the foremost countries in Europe in terms of entrepreneurship and the Irish population is ranked among the top in the world in terms of cultural perception of entrepreneurship (GEM, 2005), there is a distinctly low level of participation by females in entrepreneurship in Ireland. For a country with an even gender population split, it is a country with one of the lowest rates of female entrepreneurship in the developed world (O’Gorman & Terjeson, 2006). It is estimated that only 15%-18% of Irish entrepreneurs are female (GEM, 2006). Deakins and Freel (2003) stated that the most entrepreneurial countries in the world have high levels of female participation in entrepreneurship, this is borne out in countries such as Iceland and Australia where the rate of female entrepreneurship is double that in Ireland (GEM, 2004). There is therefore a clear need to gain insight into what influences women to enter entrepreneurship.

While there is a wealth of literature available in the areas of the characteristics of female entrepreneurs, the differences between male and female entrepreneurs, the slow growth of women-led businesses and financing for female entrepreneurs, there are few studies that examine the socialisation factors that influence women to become entrepreneurs. Previous research suggests that the best time to acquire basic knowledge about entrepreneurship, to foster positive attitudes towards it and to encourage entrepreneurial behaviour is during childhood and adolescence and that certain early socialisation experiences prepare women for an entrepreneurial career (Dyer, 1994; Catley and Hamilton, 1998; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). Therefore, this study seeks to understand the impact of four key early socialisation agents on female entrepreneurs with a view to gaining an understanding of what aspects of socialisation might influence entrepreneurial intentions.

To the best of this researcher’s knowledge the current study is unique, as it is focused specifically on examining four socialisation factors in tandem; family, education, social

class and media; with a view to establishing how these factors impact on a woman's decision to start a business. The study focuses on women in the South East of Ireland, where only 4% of new enterprise start-ups, formed between 1990 and 2001, were by female entrepreneurs (O'Gorman, 2007).

The current research will provide insights into what socialisation agents influence a female to start a business.

Having identified the research problem, a conceptual framework was developed in order to provide clarification for the research question and objectives. The conceptual framework is outlined in Figure 3.1. The research question forms the basis for the framework with the study areas that inform the research depicted as interconnected subsets of the main subject area. The conceptual framework forms a roadmap for understanding the relative concepts and theories that provide the foundation for the current research study.

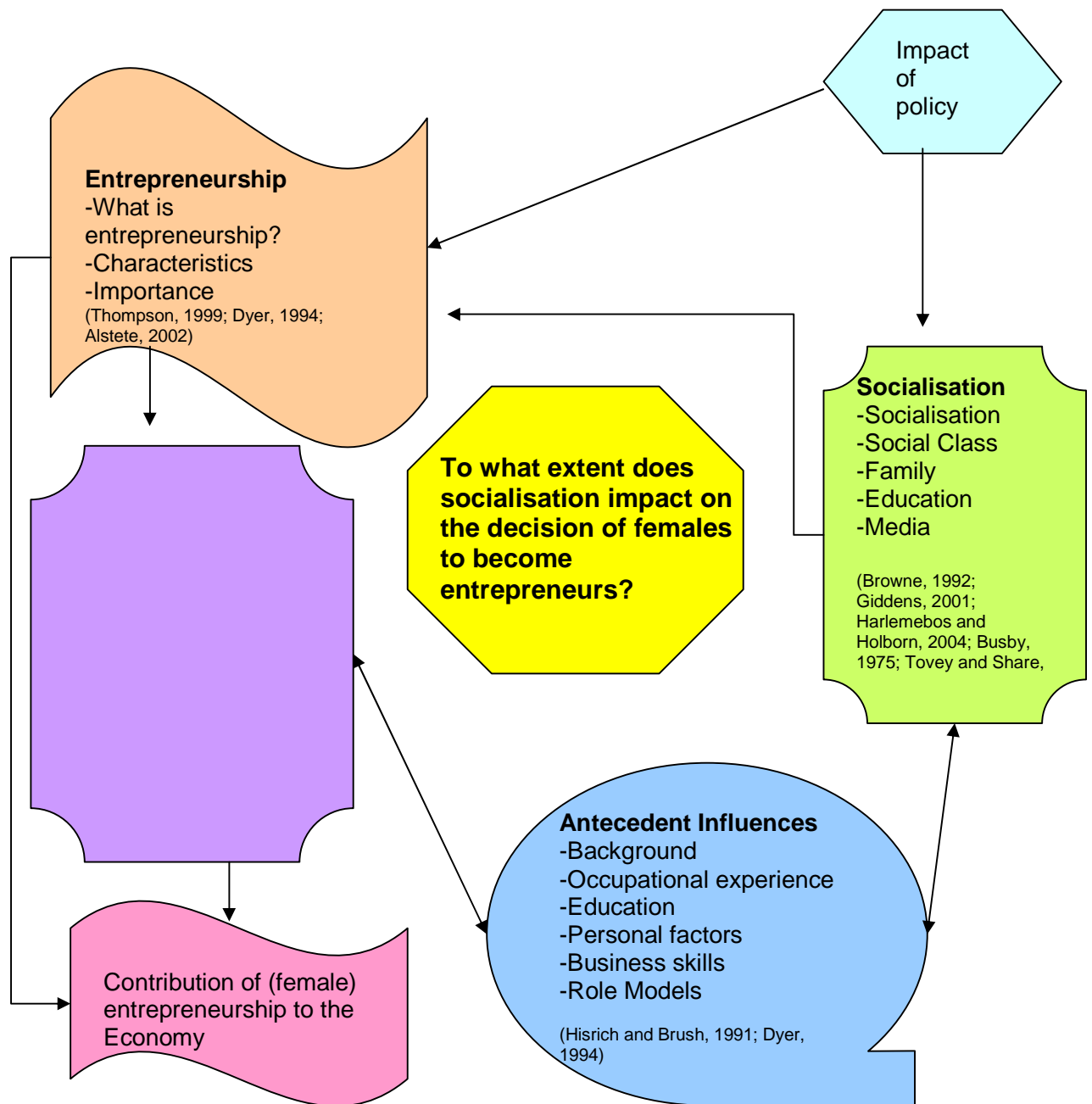


Figure 3.1 Conceptual framework (Source: Current research)

Once the key areas of literature had been identified a comprehensive review of this literature took place. As analysis of available secondary data is an essential step in the problem definition process, it is important to thoroughly examine the secondary sources of information before planning to collect any primary data (Domengan and Fleming, 1999). The literature review enabled the researcher to clarify the research question and objectives while informing the current research and researcher of studies that had been previously conducted in the area.

### **3.2 Research Question and Objectives**

According to Aaker, Kumar and Day (1998) research problems are rarely clear-cut and it can be difficult to frame the research question. The authors argue, however, that accurate problem definition is paramount to the research process and that it is vital to clearly define the research objectives to ensure that the research question is answered. Bryman and Bell (2003) concur, postulating that the research question is crucial to the overall research process. Mason (2004) elaborated further stating that it is the research question that defines the research study. Aaker, Kumar and Day (1998) stated that research objectives are “statements of what information is needed” (p. 48) highlighting the importance of clear research objectives to the overall enquiry.

The primary aim of the study was to examine whether socialisation plays a major role in the creation of female entrepreneurs. The research sought to determine whether female entrepreneurs have been exposed to common socialisation influences that impacted on their decision to become entrepreneurs. This study examined how female entrepreneurs are socialised and whether the socialisation of a woman will be a key influencer on whether or not she becomes an entrepreneur. The primary focus of this current research was on four key agents of socialisation; family, education, social class and media.

Therefore, the research question for the current research is:

***To what extent does socialisation impact on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs?***

Once the research question has been clarified the research objectives can then be identified. Research objectives should be directly derived from the research question (Saunders et al, 2003). Without a clear goal, there is no way of knowing when the objective has been achieved (Cohen, 1998), therefore the objectives must be clearly defined in order to reach the next stage in the research process.

The research objectives or goals of this current study are:

1. To explore the socialisation process and the impact that socialisation influences had on female entrepreneurs.
2. To examine the extent to which family, education, social class and media have an effect on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs
3. To understand whether certain agents of socialisation have more of an impact on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs than others

The primary research undertaken in this study endeavoured to address both the research question and the set of objectives. The research process and research methods will now be discussed.

### **3.3 The Research Process**

Mason (2004) informed us that a good research design will have a clearly defined purpose and will have consistency between the research questions and the proposed research methods. Authors such as Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991) and Malhotra and Birks (2000) described research design as a framework for the research, further describing the process as a linear step by step model. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), while acknowledging the step by step nature of the research process, suggested that the researcher will revisit each stage of the process and so they developed a Research Process Onion model to explain this process. The Research Process Onion model illustrates the research process as a layered process, with researchers peeling back each layer as they progress with their investigations. Figure 3.2 reproduces this illustration showing how the first layer of the process is the question of which research philosophy to adopt, the second layer considers the research approaches, the third layer includes the research strategies available to a researcher. The fourth layer examines time horizon for the research being investigated and the fifth and final layer considers the methods available to a researcher.

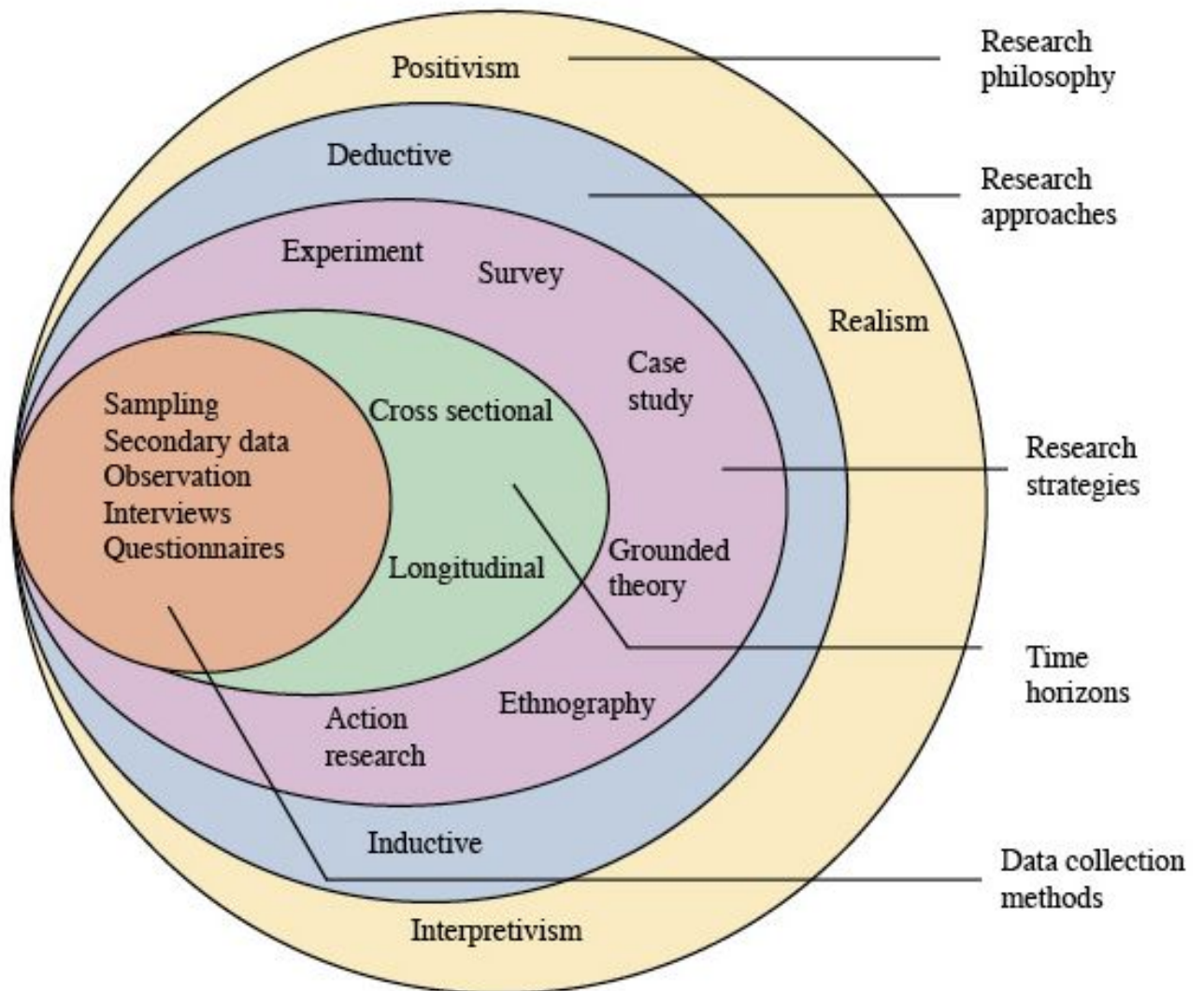


Figure 3.2 The Research Process Onion Model (Source: Saunders et al, 2003, p. 83)

### 3.4 Research Philosophies

Easterby-Smith et al (1991), Hughes (2002) and Saunders et al (2003) all advocate the importance of understanding the philosophical paradigms of research, as failure to consider the philosophical issues can impact on the quality of research. Having a clear grasp of the philosophical paradigms can help clarify research designs while assisting the researcher to make informed decisions about research design and enabling him/her to identify designs outside of their past experience (Easterby-Smith et al, 1991). Proctor (1997) advocated the need for consistency between the research study, research question, the methods employed and the personal philosophy of the researcher. Thus, it is important to have an understanding of the research philosophies.

Until recently there were only two recognised philosophical paradigms, Positivism and Phenomenology (Easterby-Smith et al, 1991; Proctor, 1997; May, 2001; Chia, 2002; McNeill and Chapman, 2005). However, as can be seen in Figure 3.2, Saunders et al (2003) identified three views that govern the literature on philosophy; positivism, interpretivism (also known as phenomenology) and realism. They described realism as being based on the belief that “there are social forces and processes that affect people without their necessarily being aware of the existence of such influences on their interpretations and behaviours” (p. 85). Like positivism, realism also takes an objective stance, however it is essentially a form of phenomenology as it does not view people as objects and advocates interpretation of events and meanings. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the current researcher viewed positivism and phenomenology as the two available research philosophies.

The following sections will provide a more in-depth examination of these two paradigms and the rationale for this researcher choosing the philosophical school that she selected upon which to base this study. Easterby-Smith et al (1991) provide a summary of the two philosophies, which is illustrated in Table 3.1. The table outlines the key aspects of each philosophy under the headings basic beliefs, what the researcher should do and preferred methods.



	<i>Positivist Paradigm</i>	<i>Phenomenological Paradigm</i>
<b>Basic Beliefs:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The world is external &amp; objective</li> <li>- The observer is independent</li> <li>- Science is value-free</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The world is socially constructed &amp; subjective</li> <li>- The observer is part of what is observed</li> <li>- Science is driven by human interests</li> </ul>
<b>Researcher Should:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on facts</li> <li>- Look for causality &amp; fundamental laws</li> <li>- Reduce phenomena to simplest elements</li> <li>- Formulate hypotheses &amp; then test them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on meanings</li> <li>- Try to understand what's happening</li> <li>- Look at the totality of each situation</li> <li>- Develop ideas through induction from data</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred Methods Include:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taking large samples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small samples investigated in depth or over time</li> </ul>

Table 3.1 Key features of the positivist and phenomenological paradigms (Source: Easterby-Smith et al, 1991, p. 27)

### 3.4.1 The Positivist Approach

As highlighted in Table 3.1 positivists focus on the facts at their disposal, the world is viewed as external to them and they act independently and objectively from social reality. The researcher assumes a neutral role and does not allow his/her views to bias the research (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). According to Durkheim (1964, cited in May, 2001) the positivist approaches research “in the same state of mind as the physicist, chemist or physiologist when he probes into a still unexplored region of the scientific domain” (p.10). Thus, quantitative methods are usually used by positivists who look to large samples for the collection of data and seek to provide law-like generalisations from their findings. Jancowitz (2000) outlined the basic assumptions that form the basis for the positivist approach:

- Knowledge is something we develop by gradually discovering more and more about what's out there.
- Phenomena can be analysed in terms of variables.
- Data can be collected by a dispassionate outside observer.
- Given evidence, we are always capable of distinguishing what is true from what is untrue, and are therefore enabled to agree on the real reasons for things if we wish to do so.
- The purpose of enquiry is to build theories; these are general statements which validly explain phenomena.
- Once such theories have been developed sufficiently, we should seek to apply them for productive purposes.

(Source: Jancowitz, 2000, p. 113)

Easterby-Smith et al (1991) and Crossan (2002) argued that this approach produces limited data that provides a mere surface view of the phenomenon being investigated. While Silverman (1997) and Hughes (2002) argued that it is simply not possible to separate the researcher's personal values from the research. Conversely, in support of the positivist school McNeill and Chapman (2005) stated that positivists produce research that is reliable, repeatable and verifiable.

### **3.4.2 The Phenomenological Approach**

In contrast to the positivist school of philosophy, Table 3.1 illustrates that the phenomenological approach views the world as subjective with the researcher being part of what is being researched. Phenomenology argues that science is driven by human interests and it seeks to understand the human experience holistically and inductively (Patton, 2002). Crossan (2002) argued that humans are not objects therefore they are subject to many influences on behaviours, feelings, perceptions and attitudes. McNeill and Chapman (2005) explained that phenomenology is based on the premise that "the causes of social action lie in people's 'definition of the situation', their interpretation of

events...it follows that, if we want to explain social actions, we have to first understand them in the way that participants do” (p. 19). Thus, the phenomenologist seeks to understand a subjective reality of events and meanings.

Phenomenology tends to be associated with qualitative data collection methods as this allows the research to focus on meaning and look at the phenomena as a whole, the methods employed are concerned with determining shared meanings and interpretations from the findings (Crossan, 2002; McNeill and Chapman, 2005). According to Hussey and Hussey (1997) there are a number of characteristics that are inherent to the phenomenological school of thought. They say this approach tends to be qualitative in nature, the data produced are rich and subjective and the researcher is part of this approach, which also tends to be low in reliability but high in validity.

Thus, it can be stated that positivism is concerned with descriptive techniques that allow for generalisability and assume researcher neutrality, while phenomenology is concerned with observation techniques that allow for deep rich meaning and assume the researcher is integral to the research (McNeill and Chapman, 2005).

### **3.4.3 Selection of Research Philosophy**

Silverman (1997) argued that a researcher’s own preference and comfort level with the philosophy will impact on the research design. Saunders et al (2003) stated that “the different approaches are ‘better’ at doing different things...which is better depends on the research question you’re seeking to answer” (p. 85).

The research philosophy employed in this study was phenomenology as it aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of socialisation on female entrepreneurs. This involved investigating areas such as the background of female entrepreneurs, their motivations and socialisation experiences with particular reference to family, education, social class and media. This research aimed to gain an in-depth insight into the

socialisation experiences of female entrepreneurs. McNeill and Chapman (2005) suggested that the study of people and behaviours is best suited to a phenomenological approach. Denscombe (2005) further argued that good phenomenological research has the ability to provide a detailed authentic description of the experience being examined.

This study sought detailed, meaningful information about personal experiences of female entrepreneurs. The research required rich personalised detail that does not lend itself to statistical analysis particularly as from the outset the research sought to determine commonalities which might not necessarily exist. Some of the information required was sensitive in nature and much of the information required was anecdotal, therefore the researcher considered the phenomenological approach to be the only appropriate choice for this current research. As Denscombe (2005) stated, the phenomenological approach is suitable for gaining a clear picture of people's experiences.

### **3.5 Quantitative and Qualitative Research**

The philosophical schools of thought are associated with two different types of research; positivist with quantitative and phenomenological with qualitative.

According to Myers (1997) quantitative research methods were developed in the natural sciences to study ordinary phenomenon, while qualitative methods were developed in the social sciences to study social and cultural phenomena. Examples of common quantitative methods are survey methods and numerical methods such as mathematical modelling, while examples of qualitative methods include action research and case study research. Quantitative research is confirmatory and deductive in nature, while qualitative research is exploratory and inductive in nature (Saunders et al, 2003).

According to Saunders et al (2003) quantitative research is based in meanings that are derived from numbers and it lends itself to statistical analysis. Denscombe (2005) further argued that quantitative research is based on objectivism and does not take account of the

researcher's values. McNeill and Chapman (2005) argued that because quantitative research is statistically verifiable and repeatable it is a reliable form of research.

Jankowicz (2000) stated that "qualitative research is about the nature and content of what is being said – its meaning – rather than the number of people saying it, or the frequency with which it is being said" (p.127). Qualitative research is based in meanings that are derived from experiences and feelings of respondents in their own words (Malhotra and Birks, 2000). It is an inductive approach which involves the generation of theories, embodies a view of social reality that emphasises the ways in which individuals interpret their social world and views the social world as constantly changing and evolving (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

Patton (2002) summarised and simplified the differences between the two approaches by stating that the main difference between the two is the trade-off between breadth and depth. Quantitative research methods allow for a large breadth while qualitative methods allow for depth in research.

The approach used in this current research was qualitative because the type of information sought in this study was highly personalised and descriptive. The study sought to understand the socialisation experiences of a cohort of women and therefore the required information was rooted in feelings, attitudes and motivations, which are best explored using a qualitative method. Malhotra and Birks (2000) have listed a number of reasons why it is more advantageous to use a qualitative approach:

- Sensitive information: respondents may be unwilling to answer certain questions or give truthful answers to questions that they feel invade their privacy, embarrass them or have a negative impact on their ego or status.
- Subconscious feelings: the respondent may not always be able to provide answers related to values, emotional, drives and motivations residing at the respondent's subconscious level unless probed on a one to one basis.

- Complex phenomena: the nature of what respondents are expected to describe may be difficult to capture with structured questions
- Qualitative research seeks to gain a holistic outlook or comprehensive view of the phenomena being examined.

(Adapted from: Malhotra and Birks, 2000, p. 159)

As the main focus of the study is to gain an understanding of the socialisation experiences of women entrepreneurs these criteria listed above are core to this research. Thus, the qualitative approach was selected. There is some criticism of the qualitative approach, authors such as Burns (2000) and McNeill and Chapman (2005) point to the level of researcher bias and lack of generalisability of qualitative research. Therefore this current researcher paid attention to the guidelines of Mason (1996) who outlined that qualitative research must be:

- Systematically and rigorously conducted
- Strategically conducted
- Flexible and contextual
- Reflexive
- Produce social explanations for intellectual puzzles
- Produce findings that are somewhat generalisable or at least have wide resonance

(Adapted from Mason, 1996, p.5-6)

In order to systematically and rigorously perform this current research the researcher set out suitable criteria for selecting the research sample and method. A research method is a technique for collecting data (Bryman and Bell, 2003). The chosen research method for the current study was semi-structured interviews. There are other methods that could have been used by the researcher such as questionnaires, telephone interviews and focus groups however semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate method for the current study. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they lend themselves to flexible, probing collection of data on an individual basis whilst also allowing for replication. This will be further elaborated on in Section 3.6.4.

### **3.6 Research Method**

Figure 3.3 demonstrates this study's research method. The figure illustrates the process that the researcher underwent when selecting and designing the research method. Highlighting the stages in the process, such as defining the research criteria and piloting the interviews, the research method is illustrated as a step by step model. The key stages will be discussed in the following section under the headings research criteria, sample selection, selection of research instrument and data reliability and validity.

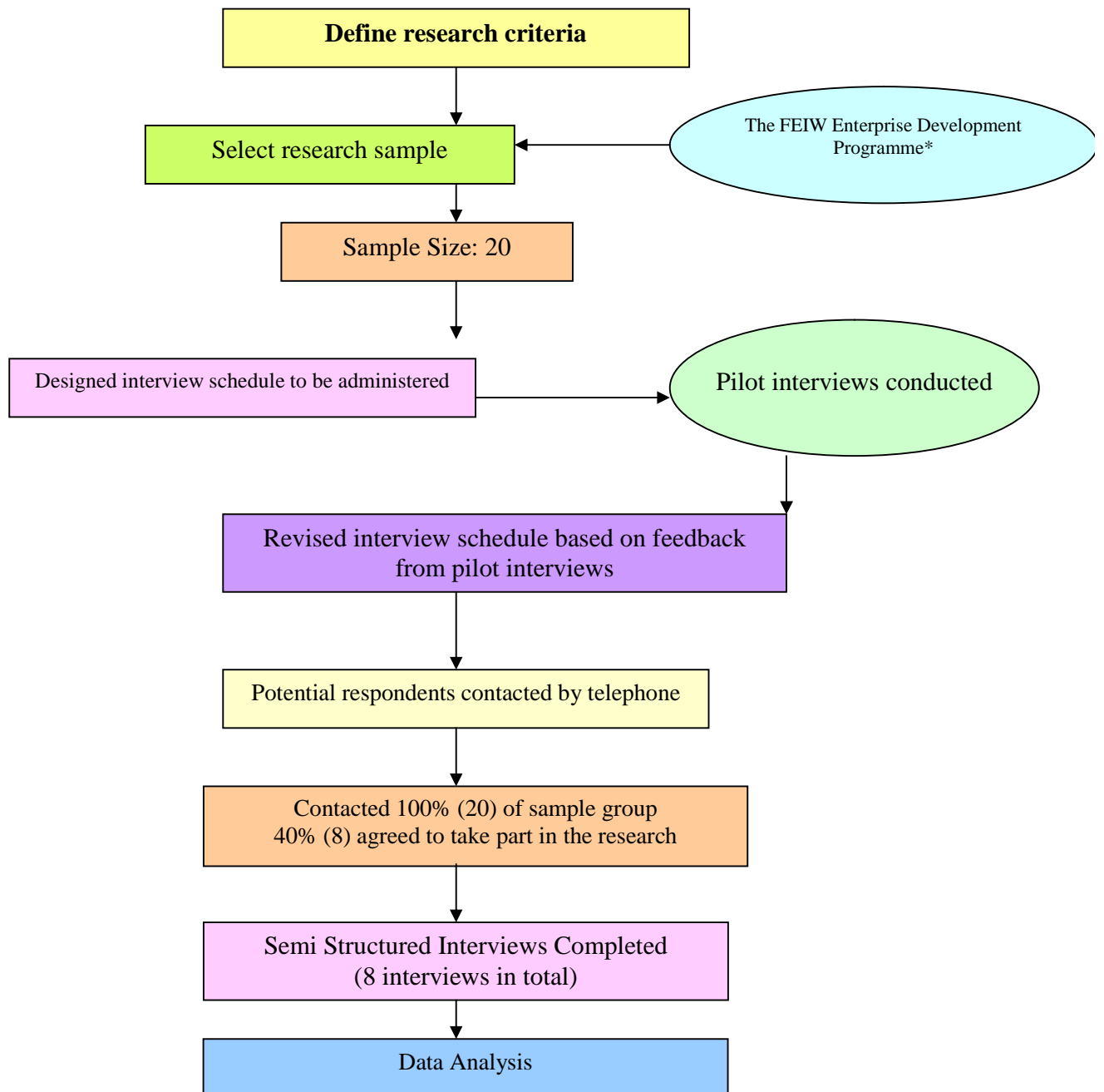


Figure 3.3 Research Method (Source: Current research)

\* The FEIW (Female Entrepreneurship Ireland and Wales) Enterprise Development Programme is part of an INTERREG IIIA funded project managed by the Centre for Entrepreneurship, Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), Ireland in partnership with Aberystwyth University, Wales. The project was born of a desire to facilitate the growth and development of women-led businesses in South East Ireland and South West Wales. The FEIW Enterprise Development Programme was tailor-made for women in business. It considers the issues that women face when running and growing their businesses and provides training that delivers a growth-focused comprehensive management skill set to programme participants.



### **3.6.1 Research Criteria**

As can be seen from Figure 3.3, the first step of the research process was to decide on the research criteria that would help to select the most suitable respondents for this current research. For inclusion into this research participants needed to meet the following criteria:

1. She must be a female entrepreneur
2. The female entrepreneur must be owner/manager of the business
3. The entrepreneur's business must be based in the South East of Ireland, which encompasses the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford
4. The respondent must have been brought up in Ireland
5. The respondent must have been educated through the Irish school system

### **3.6.2 Sample Selection**

May (2001) refers to a sample as a subgroup of the population selected for participation in the study being undertaken. Chisnall (2001) stated that a sample was a microcosm of the population. Sampling and selection relate to the means by which a researcher identifies, selects and gains access to the appropriate subjects (Mason, 2004). Saunders et al (2003) advocated that sampling allows a researcher to reduce the amount of data that they need to collect by examining only a subgroup of the total population.

The sample for this study consisted of female entrepreneurs who were owner/managers of their businesses and were based in the South East of Ireland. However, acquiring the names of businesses owned by female entrepreneurs was extremely difficult. This is partly due to the fact that in Ireland business data are not disaggregated by gender. This problem has previously been acknowledged by Henry and Kennedy (2002) who also found in their study of women owned business in Ireland that statistics relating to the gender of business owners does not exist. Another mitigating factor was that there is a

very low level of female-led businesses in South East Ireland, only 4% (this is only 29 of 805 enterprises were founded by women) of all businesses in the region are owned by women (O’Gorman, 2007).

There are two forms of sampling; probability (random) and non-probability (Rogan, 2000). In probability sampling each person in the population has an equal chance of being part of the sample, the opposite is true of non-probability sampling (May, 2001). Probability sampling includes simple, cluster and stratified sampling, all of which involve giving each member of the population a number and making a mathematically random selection of the sample (Chisnall, 2001). According to McNeill and Chapman (2005) non-probability sampling is often used where no sampling frame exists or when it is not vital to have accurate statistical representation of the population. There are numerous choices available within non-probability sampling, for example quota, convenience, snowball and purposive sampling. As regards the current study purposive sampling was used, this method involves making a selection of those to be researched based on a known shared characteristic. In the case of this research the shared characteristic refers to the fact that the sample consisted of female entrepreneurs participating on a ‘grow your business’ training programme based in South East Ireland. “The power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied” (CEMCA, 2008, p.47).

It was decided to use purposive sampling for two reasons, firstly as outlined above there were difficulties accessing a sample for research. Secondly, the research question was concerned with understanding socialisation experiences, which inherently requires sensitive information. Trust is important when one is seeking personal information (Silverman, 2000). Thus, the researcher used a sample known to her for the current research in an attempt to overcome the difficulties of accessing a sample in the South East and in order to overcome mistrust. The sample used was a group of women involved in the FEIW (Female Entrepreneurship Ireland and Wales) Enterprise Development programme at Waterford Institute of Technology. The FEIW Enterprise Development programme was a twelve month programme aimed at women

entrepreneurs. The course was open only to female entrepreneurs based in South East Ireland who were owner/managers of their businesses; therefore the criteria for this current research matched the criteria for the training programme. The women on the programme varied in age, business sector and length of time in business, therefore the sample represented a good cross-section of the population of female entrepreneurs in the South East region.

### 3.6.3 Respondent Profiles

Table 3.2 outlines the respondents' coded names, their industry sector and length of time in business. A full profile for each interviewee is available in Appendix A.

<b>Coded Name</b>	<b>Industry Sector</b>	<b>Length of Time in Business</b>
<b>FE1</b>	Business services	20 years
<b>FE2</b>	Retail	26 years
<b>FE3</b>	Construction	3.5 years
<b>FE4</b>	Leisure	2 years
<b>FE5</b>	Construction	12 years
<b>FE6</b>	Business services	16 years
<b>FE7</b>	Retail	2 years
<b>FE8</b>	Health & Beauty	7 years

Table 3.2 Respondent Profiles (Source: Current Research)

### 3.6.4 Selection of Research Instrument

Having identified the research criteria and selecting the sample, the researcher selected the research instrument most suited to the current research. In order to answer the research question, the researcher could have used a questionnaire, a telephone interview, a focus group or personal interviews. Having evaluated the options, the researcher selected personal interviews. Questionnaires were dismissed because they do not allow for the flexibility necessary to capture information related to attitudes and feelings

(Chisnall, 2001). Telephone interviews were not selected because the level of personal information required necessitated a face-to-face approach. Focus groups were not chosen because the type of information required was better suited to an individual approach. Thus, due to the level and nature of the information required, personal interviews were deemed the most fitting research method.

There are inherent advantages and disadvantages associated with personal interviews. The benefits of using personal interviews are many, according to Hester (1996) personal interviews:

- Provide an accurate picture of the respondent's true position on some issue
- Result in free exchange of information
- Provide depth of information and detail
- Provides a means of observing behaviour, body language, facial expressions, discomfort, animation and emotion
- Offer flexibility and control to the researcher
- Encourage the development of 'rapport' between the interviewer and respondent, hence improving the quality of information shared

(Adapted from Hester, 1996, p. 186)

These advantages are all important requirements for obtaining the answer to the research question and meeting the research objectives. Aaker et al (1998) highlighted the disadvantages as follows:

- Editing, coding and analysing of results can be difficult
- Can be expensive and time consuming
- Open to researcher bias: responses are open to interpretation
- Bias due to reluctance on the part of the interviewee to give accurate data and/or a desire to give the 'right answer'

(Adapted from Aaker et al, 1998, p. 238)

The current researcher noted these disadvantages and took measures in order to improve the quality of the research. Firstly, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and the lack of a 'right' or 'wrong' answer to the respondents in order to reduce respondent bias. Secondly, the researcher devised a template for categorising the responses following transcription of each interview. An analysis document was then devised by the researcher using Excel in order to compare the responses in a structured manner. This document was examined and approved by two independent parties, the researcher's supervisors and an academic known to the researcher (See Appendix D for sample of document). These measures helped to reduce the difficulties associated with editing, coding and analysing of responses. Thirdly, the researcher conducted interviews with respondents within her geographic region and planned the timing carefully, hence reducing the effect of the time-consuming and expensive aspect of interviewing. Finally, the researcher did not ask leading questions, she recorded and carefully transcribed the interviews and then loaded the data into the analysis document using the original words of the respondents in order to ensure accurate analysis of the data and to offset researcher bias.

Personal interviews can be categorised as fully structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Fully structured interviews involve presenting each interviewee with exactly the same questions in the same order, hence avoiding variance and allowing for reliable aggregation of responses. Conversely, unstructured interviews focus in a non-directive way on the interviewee's perception of their experiences, allowing for free-flowing conversation with the interviewee talking about a topic of interest with little or no input from the interviewer (Burns, 2000). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study as this type of interview allows specific topics to be raised, whilst also allowing the researcher to judge and assess the timing required, type of language used and how to approach the questions to be asked (Chisnall, 2001). According to Jancowitz (2000) semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to acquire information regarding personal, attitudinal and value laden information. It was decided that the most appropriate means of obtaining the required information was through semi-structured interviews as these interviews allow the researcher to put some shape on the interview while allowing

for flexibility to veer from the interview schedule as necessary (See Appendix B for interview schedule).

Semi-structured interviews consist of a combination of open ended and closed questions and are suitable when both factual and attitudinal information needs to be collected (Saunders et al, 2003; McNeill and Chapman, 2005). This was relevant to the current study where factual information such as the respondent's age, time in business and marital status needed to be collected in addition to attitudinal and behavioural information. Denscombe (2005) asserted that semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility within the interview process, that the interviews can follow a non-standardised format allowing for deviation from the schedule where necessary. As already stated, this flexibility was important for this current research as socialisation experiences can be varied and the interview had to allow for the varying experiences of the respondents. Semi-structured interviews do require the interviewer to have a general list of themes and questions prepared in advance. As the research question sought to understand the impact of socialisation influences while also exploring the common influencers among the sample it was important to follow a similar line of enquiry across the interviews.

### **3.6.5 Data Reliability and Validity**

It is important that data are both reliable and valid (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). According to Silverman (2000) data reliability is concerned with the consistency, precision and repeatability of the data. Chisnall (2001) further explains that reliability refers to the stability and consistency of results from research. Essentially, if data are reliable the same results could be obtained by re-using the same methods of sampling, questioning and analysing. In order to ensure reliability, this researcher designed an interview schedule that followed a structure which allowed for repeatability and consistency. Furthermore, the transcriptions and analysis document allowed for precision in recording and analysing data.

Chisnall (2001) informs us that validity refers to the extent to which the research method measures what it claims to measure. Thus, the researcher was careful to match the interview schedule to the research objectives in order to ensure validity. According to Burns (2000) other factors that can impact on validity are how comfortable the respondent is with the topic and whether the respondent feels confident that their identity will be protected. He argued that these factors can impact on the truthfulness of the respondents and hence the validity of the research. The respondents to this current research were assured that their anonymity would be preserved and their participation was on a voluntary basis, having been informed of the research subject.

This current research was conducted in a manner that allowed for reliability and validity however it should be noted that the qualitative nature of the study inherently limits its reliability.

### **3.7. Pilot Interviews**

According to Malhotra and Birks (2000) it is vital to pre-test the research instrument as it allows the researcher to get feedback, to check the effectiveness of the interview schedule and to evaluate the practicality of the analysis to be employed. Piloting can be conducted through personal or professional contacts. The aim is to obtain reliable useful feedback. The current interview schedule was pre-tested by businesswomen who were already known to and were friends of the researcher. Two pilot interviews were conducted, which provided valuable feedback. This feedback highlighted that some questions were unclear and needed to be reworded. It was also discovered that some questions were not providing relevant information to answering the research question, these questions were deleted. There were also some issues with the analysis system which was amended as a result of the pilot interview.

### **3.8. Interview Content**

Interviews aim to achieve both breadth and depth of coverage of the relevant issues (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Broadly, there are two types of questions used in interviews; content mapping questions that raise issues to be discussed and content mining questions that explore the issues in detail. Through the use of closed and open-ended questions the interview schedule raised and explored the issues under investigation. Closed questions were used to obtain information on basic factual data related to the demographics of the business owner and of the business. Saunders et al. (2003) proposed that questions should be open-ended and probing, a guideline followed in this current research. Such questions addressed issues which needed an in depth exploration and addressed areas such as motivations, attitudes, experiences and perceptions that may have impacted the female entrepreneur. In order to gain a real understanding of the socialisation of each respondent the researcher made use of questions such as “what”, “why”, “how”, “explain” and “when”. See Appendix B for a copy of the interview schedule.

### **3.9. Interview Protocol**

A total of eight semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. This researcher contacted twenty women entrepreneurs from the FEIW programme by telephone in order to obtain their agreement to partake in the study. These phone calls obtained a 100% response rate. During these calls the researcher explained the purpose of the research and invited the respondents to take part in the study. In total, 40% or eight female entrepreneurs, agreed to participate in the research. Having obtained the respondents' consent to be interviewed, a suitable time and location was arranged during this phone call.

This preliminary contact also allowed the researcher to prepare the respondents for some issues that may have caused discomfort. These issues were the use of a Dictaphone and the issue of confidentiality. When the respondents were advised of the purpose of the Dictaphone they gave their full permission for it to be used. The researcher assured the



respondents that the information that they provided would be treated in the strictest confidence and that their anonymity would be preserved throughout the process. The researcher also assured the respondents that any documentation used solely by the researcher to identify them would be destroyed once the thesis was complete, including the interview recordings and transcriptions. These two issues were also raised at the start of each interview and written confirmation of agreement obtained. A copy of the consent form given to the respondents is available in Appendix C.

It was decided to allow the interviewees to choose the location for the interviews to ensure that the respondents were comfortable with their surroundings. Two respondents chose to meet the interviewer at their businesses premises, the remaining six selected hotels close to their businesses. The interviews lasted an average of an hour each. Having piloted the interview schedule, the interviews ran smoothly with the respondents speaking freely about their experiences. The only issue was one minor interruption in the case of one respondent who had chosen to be interviewed from her offices. The respondent had to leave the room to take two calls, which disrupted the flow of the interview. In order to prevent a re-occurrence of such disruption, interviews were scheduled at quiet times for the remaining respondents; in three cases this meant meeting the respondents outside office hours.

### **3.10 Note-Taking & Recording**

According to Denscombe (2005) note-taking is an important part of recording an interview as it allows the researcher to record issues such as body language, tone and atmosphere. Jankowicz (2000) highlighted that note-taking alone is only appropriate for interviews that last approximately twenty minutes. Based on the experience of the pilot interviews, the researcher estimated that the interviews in this current study would last an average of an hour each. Thus, it was decided to use a Dictaphone in addition to note-taking in order to accurately record the interviews. Saunders et al (2003) support the use of a recording device explaining that it allows the researcher to concentrate on the

interviewee, it provides an unbiased recording of the interview and it allows the researcher to accurately input the data for analysis as it can be re-listened to repeatedly.

Bryman and Bell (2003) argued that recording can negatively impact on the interviewee by making them self-conscious or alarmed. The researcher tried to overcome this effect by informing the interviewees of the purpose of the Dictaphone and by obtaining their permission to use it. The respondents agreed to be recorded and expressed satisfaction with the researcher's commitment to destroying the tapes following the completion of the research.

Many authors such as Kvale (1996), Malhotra and Birks (2000) and Bryman and Bell (2003) highlighted the importance of transcribing the interviews when possible. Transcription allows for an understanding of what is being said and the manner in which it is said. The researcher transcribed all eight interviews which was a time consuming but worthwhile task. Jancowitz (2000) suggested that every hour of interview takes approximately seven hours to transcribe. The current researcher found that each transcription took between six to eight hours. Following the transcription of each interview the researcher read each transcript in full in order to gain an understanding of each respondent's socialisation experiences, to identify emerging themes and to get an overview of the information obtained.

### **3.11 Data Analysis**

Following the transcription of the interviews, the data were input to Excel for analysis. This spreadsheet categorised data according to the strands of enquiry, for example responses to questions regarding family were sub-categorised into the specific areas being investigated under the heading 'family' such as position in family, mother's role, chores in the home and entrepreneurial family members (See Appendix D for copy of the document). This categorisation allowed for transparent analysis of the data, whilst also facilitating the identification of emerging themes. The categorisation of data also allowed for cross-analysis in that the data could be easily compared across categories.

### **3.12 Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the process that the researcher followed when designing the research methodology and methods for this current study. The research problem was defined, followed by an outline of the research question and objectives that were developed. The research process was examined using the “Research Process Onion” developed by Saunders et al (2003). The next section reviewed the schools of philosophical thought and provided an overview of qualitative and quantitative research.

This led into a description of the research criteria and the rationale behind the identification and selection of the research sample. The primary data collection tools used in this study were discussed and a reasoning provided for the researcher’s choice of instrument. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to obtain deep, rich, meaningful responses, facilitated structured collection of data and also allowed the researcher to veer from the interview schedule as necessary.

The research design allowed the researcher to systematically collect and analyse data from the sample group. The findings from this study will now be presented in Chapter Four.

## ***Chapter 4            Research Findings***

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the current study. The aim of this research was to establish the impact of four distinct socialisation agents; family, education, social class and media on female entrepreneurs. This study endeavours to determine if there are factors within these socialisation agents that play a more important role than others in influencing women to enter entrepreneurship whilst identifying commonalities among the sample's socialisation experiences. The chapter also examines peers and motivations as these feed into the aforementioned core research areas.

The businesses represented in this study are from a diverse range of industry sectors, including retail, professional services, health and beauty and business services.

This chapter is divided into the following headings: background, family, education, social class and media. This chapter ends with a section summarising the current study's findings.

### **4.1 Background Information**

This section outlines the demographics of the key informants of this research and it also presents some background information on the female entrepreneurs' career socialisation through examining their previous work experience. The purpose of this section is to build a picture of the female entrepreneurs in this sample in order to form a foundation for the current research findings. The section is subdivided under the following headings: demographics, business and previous work experience and ends with a summation of the female entrepreneurs' backgrounds.

### 4.1.1 Demographics

Table 4.1 outlines the demographic characteristics of the interviewees at the start-up stage of their first businesses, in addition to highlighting each respondent's length of time in business.

	FE1	FE2	FE3	FE4	FE5	FE6	FE7	FE8
<b>No. Years in Business</b>	20	26	3	2	12	13	2	7
<b>Age Starting First Business</b>	25	22	29	35	36	30	34	28
<b>Marital Status at Start-Up</b>	Single	Married	Married	Single	Married	Married	Single	Single
<b>No. Of Children at Start-Up</b>	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0*

\*Parental responsibility for 2 siblings

Table 4.1 Respondent Demographics (Source: Current Research)

Previous research indicates that women tend to set up a business in their mid-thirties (Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Lee, 1996). However, the respondents in the current research were on average 30 years of age when setting up their businesses which indicates that the women in this study started to enter entrepreneurship at a younger age.

According to research produced by Brush and Hisrich (1991) female entrepreneurs are usually married with children when starting their businesses. The current research contrasts with this as only 25% (n=2) of the interviewees were married with children when setting up their first business. This finding may be a reflection of the trend remarked upon by Gillespie (1999) and Van de Kaa (2001) whereby women are having fewer children and are waiting until later in life to start their families.

FE8, while unmarried and not a mother did have parental responsibilities for two of her younger siblings. The business was set up in order to provide for them following the loss of both of her parents.

Two of the respondents said that they intended starting their families when they set up their businesses. This supports previous research that indicates that many women choose to start a business in order to create flexibility and to balance work and family (Moore and Buttner, 1997; Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Mero, 2000).

#### **4.1.2 Business**

The ‘typical’ female-led business is in traditional sectors such as retail, craft or business services (Henry and Kennedy, 2002). Therefore, it was not surprising to find that most of the current respondents’ businesses fit this ‘typical’ profile. Langowitz (2001) identified a trend whereby females are starting to set up businesses in non-traditional sectors and two respondents in this sample, FE3 and FE5, have set up businesses in a traditionally male-dominated industry; construction.

According to Westhead and Wright (1998) female entrepreneurs are not generally serial entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, for half of the respondents in this study their current business is not their first business. Furthermore FE1 actually runs three different businesses.

#### **4.1.3 Previous experience**

The interviewees’ previous work experience, the roles undertaken, their previous businesses (if any) and their current businesses is outlined in Table 4.2.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Previous Employment</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Previous Business</b>	<b>Current Business</b>
<b>FE1</b>	Legal/Patents	Support staff	Retail with interior design element	Interior Design
<b>FE2</b>	Financial services, Construction, Hospitality and Agriculture	Support staff	Retail and haulage	Retail
<b>FE3</b>	Construction	Building Surveyor/Management	N/A	Planning Applications
<b>FE4</b>	Media	Management	N/A	Adventure Holidays
<b>FE5</b>	Construction	Architect/Management	N/A	Construction-Architect
<b>FE6</b>	Accountancy	Support staff	Book-keeping	Business Services-Training
<b>FE7</b>	IT	Project management	N/A	Retail
<b>FE8</b>	Social Services	Management	Health and Beauty	Business Services-Training

Table 4.2 Interviewee's previous work experience (Source: Current Research)

All of the respondents worked fulltime prior to starting in business. According to Buttner (1993) and Buttner and Moore (1997) female entrepreneurs do not tend to have management experience when setting up in business. However, contrary to previous research the majority (62%/n=5) of the interviewees worked in management roles prior to starting their businesses, while only three interviewees worked in support roles.

The majority (75%/n=6) of the current interviewees run businesses in different sectors to their former employment which supports previous research such as that by Birley, Moss and Saunders (1987). Only FE3 and FE5 run businesses in the same industry sector as their former employment. It is interesting to note that these interviewees are also the ones whose businesses are in male-dominated industries; this reflects previous research that

indicates that women who start businesses in non-traditional sectors have relevant experience (Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Nero, 2000).

All of the respondents agreed that the skills gained from their previous experience were useful to them in some way when setting up their businesses except for FE1 who said that her previous skills were of “no use at all”. FE3, FE4, FE5, FE7 and FE8 all stated that they brought management and organisational skills from their former experience to their new ventures. FE3 and FE5 stated that their industry-specific skills were invaluable to them in setting up their businesses, while FE2 stated that she had gained people skills from dealing with the public, which were very important in her own business. This finding would appear to contradict previous research that indicated that a female entrepreneur starts a business with few relevant business skills (Loscocco, Robinson, Hall and Allen, 1991; Heilbrunn, 2004).

Women and men network for various reasons but previous research has indicated that women network primarily for social reasons while men use their networks primarily for utility (Carter, 2000; Ireland, 2007). It was interesting, therefore, to find that three of the interviewees mentioned that their industry contacts were extremely useful to them when they set up their businesses. Furthermore, these three respondents worked in male-dominated industries prior to starting their businesses; FE3 and FE5 worked in construction while FE4 worked in the media. This indicates that the women in this sample who worked in male-dominated sectors make better utility of their networks than those in traditional sectors and therefore were better placed to harness the benefits of their networks when they started these enterprises.

Past work experience had varying levels of impact on the current respondents' decision to set up in business. In some cases the prior experience had meant that the respondents had seen ways in which they would “do it better” (FE3 and FE4) while others were influenced by a lack of recognition from their employers (FE2, FE3 and FE6). FE2 related how she had been passed over for promotion in a previous employment because she was not the right grade within the organisation. Yet she ended up training the person who did get the job. FE1 stated that she did not see a future working for somebody else;



she recalled how women did not progress to senior roles in her former workplace. She related how she made a decision not to accept a career in a support role with no upwards mobility. These findings support previous research that indicates that women often reach a glass ceiling in their employment, which pushes them into entrepreneurship (Moore and Buttner, 1997).

A common theme that emerged while discussing past work experience was the concept of *reaping the rewards of their work*. Every respondent except FE5, FE7 and FE8 stated quite strongly that they were not interested in earning money for an employer, instead they wanted to 'get out what they put in'. The respondents all showed confidence in their abilities which they stated helped to influence their decision to become self-employed.

#### **4.1.4 Background Summary**

In summation, the female entrepreneurs in this study:

- Were slightly younger setting up in business than female entrepreneurs in previous studies
- Brought relevant business skills to bear when they started their businesses
- Set up a business in traditional sectors
- Had more former management experience than previous research indicates
- Related that they had confidence in their abilities and skills in addition to a desire to reap the rewards of their work.
- The majority of interviewees (75%/n=6) did not have children when setting up their businesses
- 50% (n=4) of respondents to this study were serial entrepreneurs having started more than one business.
- Those who were in non-traditional industries appear to use their networks to their advantage when starting their businesses.

## 4.2 Family

Family is the primary socialisation agent as children are conditioned according to family values from birth (Browne, 1992). Furthermore, family can be said to be one of the most influential agents of socialisation (Dryler, 1998). Therefore, it is not surprising that family emerged as a very strong influencer on the female entrepreneurs in the current study with all the respondents citing family influences as important in making entrepreneurship seem a feasible option for them. It was interesting to note that only three of the current respondents were the eldest in their families as previous research such as that by Brush and Hisrich (1991) highlighted that female entrepreneurs tend to be the eldest. Family will be explored under the headings; parental education and occupation, entrepreneurial family members, chores/duties and mother's role.

### 4.2.1 Parental Education and Occupation

Table 4.3 outlines the interviewees' parents' education levels and occupations.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Father's Highest Level of Education</b>	<b>Father's Occupation</b>	<b>Mother's Highest Level of Education</b>	<b>Mother's Occupation</b>
<b>FE1</b>	Primary	Self-employed steel erector	Secondary	Owner/Manager B&B
<b>FE2</b>	Primary	Farmer	Third Level	Owner/Manager B&B
<b>FE3</b>	Secondary	Farmer	Third Level	Doctor
<b>FE4</b>	Secondary	Self-employed milkman	Secondary	Housewife
<b>FE5</b>	Third Level	Engineer	Secondary	Admin
<b>FE6</b>	Secondary	Farmer	Secondary	Housewife
<b>FE7</b>	Secondary	Self-employed carpenter	Secondary	Housewife
<b>FE8</b>	Primary	Butcher	Primary	Butcher

Table 4.3 Parental Education and Occupation (Source: Current Research)

Previous literature suggests that entrepreneurs often have a self-employed parent (Matthews and Moser, 1995; Orhan and Scott, 2001). Therefore the finding of the current research that 75% (n=6) of interviewees have self-employed fathers and 38% (n=3) have self-employed mothers supports previous research. Jackson, Gardner and Sullivan (1993) suggest that more highly educated parents may encourage their children into less-traditional sectors; this is borne out in the current research by the finding that both FE3 and FE5 have a highly-educated professional parent and both run businesses in non-traditional sectors.

#### **4.2.2 Entrepreneurial Family Members**

All of the respondents except FE1 and FE7 have self-employed family members in their extended family. FE3 stated that her family are “steeped in entrepreneurship” with self-employment extending back five generations. FE5’s great grandmothers were both self-employed, while FE6 and FE8 both have uncles who are very successful entrepreneurs.

When asked if the presence of entrepreneurial family members impacted on their decision to become self-employed, only 38% (n=3) of interviewees said that their presence had little or no influence. FE4 stated that her decision was more personal and based on her desire for a quality of life, while FE5 stated that she was driven to entrepreneurship by circumstances (redundancy). FE7 stated that her father had always been very negative about entrepreneurship and actively discouraged his children from following in his footsteps. She attributed this attitude to his being “a brilliant tradesman but a very poor businessman”.

Of those that did find the presence of entrepreneurial family members an influencer, a common theme that emerged was *independence*. They related how they admired the independence of their entrepreneurial family members and how their parents had encouraged them to be independent themselves. For example, FE1 stated that:

“My mother’s attitude was always you make your own money, own your own house and your own car. Be independent”

The interviewees explained that they saw self-employment as a career option because seeing self-employment in the family made the option ‘do-able’. The interviewees qualified this idea further by stating that traditions pass through families and that people bring their predecessors’ experiences with them. For example, FE6 stated that self-employment was “in the genes”, while FE2 explained that she believed she followed in her parents’ footsteps and that her own children are following in hers.

When asked if the decision to go into business was supported by their families, all respondents answered ‘yes’. The levels of support that the respondents received from their families ranged from emotional support and encouragement to practical support, assistance with finance and help with the day-to-day running of the businesses. This support and encouragement was seen as a key success factor by the interviewees who highlighted that it would have been very difficult for them to start their businesses without family support. This finding supports previous research by Welter (2004), which states that family support can be a very important factor for female entrepreneurs.

#### **4.2.3 Chores/Duties**

Previous research highlighted that entrepreneurs often have responsibility in the home from an early age (Henderson and Robertson, 1999). Therefore it was not surprising to find that all interviewees had chores and duties in the home and 50% (n=4) of respondents helped out with their parents’ businesses.

A common theme that emerged from the current research was that the chores gave the interviewees a sense of *responsibility* and made them feel ‘grown-up’. For example, FE1 stated that the chores were “great training” and that they gave her a strong work ethic, while FE3 stated that doing chores “made me feel grown-up and responsible”.

People's perceptions about gender roles are formed early, for example according to Coltrane (2000) and Cunningham (2001.b) parents can encourage gender bias through the gendered assignment of tasks in the home. Cunningham (2001.a) further explains that positive gender role perceptions can impact on children having less stereotypical career aspirations. Half of the interviewees came from homes where the housework was divided equally, while three came from homes where there was a gender split in favour of their brothers. In the homes where tasks were not assigned by gender, the respondents were aware that their homes were different to many of their friends' and they felt that it was only right and fair that everybody pitched in equally. For example FE5 stated that she was aware that her home was more equal than would have been the norm but she felt that it was justly so. Some strong feelings emerged from the respondents who came from homes where tasks were not equally divided. A common theme that emerged among these interviewees was one of resentment towards inequality. FE3 summed up their feelings when she stated that she found the gendered division of labour unfair and illogical. The interviewees stressed that their strong feelings gave them a sense of injustice towards gender inequalities, which drove them to overcome gender barriers and ultimately made entrepreneurship seem a feasible option for them. For example, FE3 stated that seeing a gender bias in her own home made her very determined not to be held back by her gender, while FE4 explained that:

“I've always been quite strong in my view that men and women should be equal, that view always kept me open to new experiences, it is part of why I am where I am today”.

#### **4.2.4 Mother's Role**

The interviewer next explored the interviewees' mothers' roles in the home because females first learn about their role in society from their mothers through sex-role identification (Aldous, 1972; Boyd, 1989). The majority of respondents (75%/n=6) described their mothers' roles as that of homemaker. When asked how they felt about their mother's role the respondents stated that they felt the arrangement was fair as their

fathers were working so home-making was their mother's job. They did however state that this role was not one that appealed to them. FE7 summed up the sentiments of the interviewees when she stated that:

“In one sense I just appreciated what she (my mother) did but I didn't see it (home-maker) as a role I'd like to take on in my own home”.

FE1 and FE3 stated that their mothers worked a lot outside the home and that their role in the home was one of 'rule-maker' and disciplinarian. Those whose mothers' primary roles were outside the home spoke about how they saw their mothers as “inspirational”, that they saw their mother's independence and wanted it for themselves and that they saw entrepreneurship as a means to achieving the same level of independence.

### **4.3 Education**

This section explores the interviewees' educational experiences and attainments with a view to establishing if these experiences influenced the interviewees' desire to become self-employed. The section is divided under the headings; subjects studied, sports and extra-curricular activity, career guidance and level of education.

#### **4.3.1 Subjects Studied**

School subjects are often categorised as 'masculine' or 'feminine', generally science subjects are considered masculine while arts subjects are considered feminine. Many masculine subjects are linked with the problem-solving skills needed in a business and the creative skills required for innovation (Francis, 2000.b). Therefore this section explores the interviewees' subject choices at school as outlined in Table 4.4. The subjects in the table are colour coded with the masculine subjects in blue and the feminine subjects in pink. The stereotypical colour code has been intentionally chosen to ease reading of the table as these colours hold meaning of masculinity and femininity for most people.

	FE1		FE2		FE3		FE4		FE5		FE6		FE7		FE8	
Subject	Subject Choice	Subject Taken	Subject Choice	Subject Taken	Subject Choice	Subject Taken	Subject Choice	Subject Taken	Subject Choice	Subject Taken	Subject Choice	Subject Taken	Subject Choice	Subject Taken	Subject Choice	Subject Taken
Maths	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IT	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Science	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chemistry	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Physics	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Technical Graphics	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Woodwork	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Metalwork/Engineering	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Home Economics	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Art	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Languages	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Drama	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Social Science	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

Table 4.4 School Subjects (Source: Current Research)\*

\* 'Subject Choice' means the interviewee had the option to take the subject

'Subject Taken' means that the interviewee took the subject

The findings outlined in Table 4.4 indicate that the interviewees in general took more feminine than masculine related subjects. Furthermore, their options in terms of ‘masculine’ subjects were limited. For example, only FE8 who attended a mixed vocational school had the opportunity to study engineering, woodwork and technical graphics. FE2 and FE3 told stories of how Honours Mathematics was not available to them in their schools and that the only way they could take the subject was to travel to the local boys’ school for class. FE3 further explained that this was made very difficult for students as the schools were 15 minutes apart. Both stressed that sitting Honours Mathematics was not encouraged but the option was there. FE5 related that Physics was not available in her school until a mother of a pupil lobbied the school to make the subject available. The option to take Physics at the boys’ school was then given.

It is interesting to note that no obvious differences emerged in terms of masculine subjects studied by the interviewees in traditional industries and those in non-traditional industries.

#### **4.3.2 Sport and Extra-Curricular Activity**

All respondents except FE8 played team sports in school, the sports were all single sex and were competitive sports such as hockey and basketball. This finding supports research by Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Mero (2000) that highlighted that women in professions such as entrepreneurship participated in competitive sports as children.

Both FE5 and FE6 stated that sports were a marvellous means of building confidence and fostering independence, and that they can see sports impacting positively on their own children. FE5 has been coaching swimming for over twenty years and she explained by saying:

“I see the effect the discipline has...you do see it spilling over into the other parts of the kids’ lives ...they learn self-discipline from it ...that they bring to the rest of their lives, it follows through.”



This view is in line with previous research by Goldstein and Bredemeier (1977) who identified that playing team sports can encourage discipline, help with networking and build confidence, all attributes linked to entrepreneurship.

The majority of interviewees (75%/n=6) related that they had partaken in extra-curricular activity, such as public speaking, debating and drama, while at school. Participating in extra-curricular activity at school can teach young people responsibility, give them organisational skills, build confidence and enhance their sense of self-efficacy (Rombokas, 1995). The interviewees in the current research stated that the extra-curricular activity had given them confidence and social skills. For example, FE6 explained how participating in her local Macra Na Feirme\* had gradually brought her out of herself and that her confidence had soared through involvement with the organisation. She doesn't believe she would be running a business today if she hadn't overcome her natural shyness through her participation in Macra Na Feirme.

It is clear from the responses that sports and participation in extra-curricular activity helped build confidence and promote social skills in 88% of the interviewees involved in this research.

#### **4.3.3 Career Guidance**

It was interesting to note that the majority of interviewees (88%/n=7) attended a single sex school. Previous research by Adya and Kaiser (2005) indicated that girls who attend mixed-sex schools are less likely to pursue gender atypical careers such as entrepreneurship because they are under more pressure to conform to traditional roles. Furthermore, Watson, Quatman and Edler (2002) suggested that independence and the pursuit of high prestige non-traditional careers were more likely to be promoted in single sex schools. However, the interviewees in the current research reported that their schools did not promote the pursuit of atypical careers. The interviewees explained that the career

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\* Macra na Feirme is a voluntary organisation for young people between the ages of 17 and 35. The organisation consists of a nationwide network of clubs with five key areas of activity: agriculture, sports, travel, public speaking and performing arts. Macra na Feirme is committed to the personal development of members and puts emphasis on social interaction and participation.

guidance given was very limiting. They explained that their career guidance counsellors had encouraged them to follow one of three very traditional career paths; teaching, nursing or secretarial. Career guidance was explored in order to determine whether the career guidance received by the interviewees impacted on their entrepreneurial intentions. It became apparent from the interviews that the career guidance given was not well-received. All of the interviewees stated that the career advice they had been given had not impacted on their decision to enter entrepreneurship, which supports research by Henderson and Robertson (1999) who said that career guidance is lacking in the area of entrepreneurship.

#### 4.3.4 Level of Education

There was a broad range of education levels among the respondents; however the majority (62%/n=5) attained a third level education. A further two have trade qualifications in areas related directly to their businesses (FE1 and FE8). Only 38% (n=3) of the interviewees' businesses are not related to their studies, which contradicts previous literature by authors such as Brush and Hisrich (1991) who stated that female entrepreneurs usually start businesses in areas not related to their studies. Table 4.5 outlines the interviewees' education levels and whether their businesses are related to their studies.

Respondent	Highest Level of Education	Related to Current Business
FE1	Trade qualification	Yes
FE2	Secondary	N/A
FE3	Bachelors Degree	Yes
FE4	Some Third Level	Yes
FE5	Bachelor's Degree	Yes
FE6	Secondary	N/A
FE7	Some Third Level	No
FE8	Some Third Level and Trade qualifications	Yes

Table 4.5 Education and Business (Source: Current Research)

#### 4.4 Social Class

Social class plays an important role in the access to resources that a person has, which in turn can influence the decision to enter entrepreneurship. Social class can be one of the most important predictors of career success with people from more privileged backgrounds being three times more likely to aspire to a professional career than those who experience disadvantage early in life (Margo and Dixon, 2006). Financial resources and human capital variables such as education, work experience and start-up experience are linked with social class as well as being linked with the likelihood to enter entrepreneurship (Kim, Aldrich and Keister, 2003). Therefore this section explores the social background of the interviewees, examining its impact in detail.

Social classes are a means of identifying and categorising groups of people based on their shared social and economic status. For the purpose of clarity the interviewer defined the social classes in this research on the Webster Dictionary (2003) definitions, as follows:

Upper Class:	People occupying the highest position in the social hierarchy; those who do not need to work to support themselves
Upper Middle Class:	People who have a higher intermediate position between the upper and working classes. It includes professionals, executives, etc
Lower Middle Class:	People who have a lower intermediate position between the upper and working classes. It includes skilled workers, frontline managers, etc
Working Class:	People who are engaged in manual or unskilled labour, or are dependent upon it for support; labourers, operatives, etc

(Source: Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, 2003)

This section will be explored under the following headings; impact of social class on education, impact of social class on access to opportunities, impact of social class on

career choices and impact of social class on the decision to run a business.

#### 4.4.1 Impact of Social Class on Education

The majority (88%/n=7) of interviewees come from middle class backgrounds, supporting the findings of Brush and Hisrich (1991) who stated that female entrepreneurs generally come from a middle class background. Table 4.6 outlines the class that each interviewee assigned to themselves, based on the classifications outlined in section 4.4.

Respondent	Social Background
FE1	Lower Middle
FE2	Upper Middle
FE3	Upper Middle
FE4	Lower Middle
FE5	Upper Middle
FE6	Upper Middle
FE7	Lower Middle
FE8	Working Class

Table 4.6 Social Backgrounds (Source: Current Research)

All interviewees agreed that their family's social background impacted on their education, in some cases positively and in other cases negatively. In all cases the financial aspect of the interviewees' social class was raised as a key to accessing education. Those from the upper middle class believe that their background afforded them greater opportunities in education and that their social backgrounds meant there were never any barriers to education and moving forward. For example, FE5 stated that:

“Well we could afford it; somebody not earning wasn't an issue ...irrespective of what budgeting went on the money was there for education”

Those from the lower middle class believe that their social background allowed them to attain a certain standard of education but that because they were not from a wealthier

background their educational options were somewhat limited. FE1 summed up the feelings of these respondents when she stated that:

“I’d say if they (my parents) were professional I would have gone to college, I didn’t go because they thought we all did well to do a Leaving Cert...college was something for solicitor’s daughters and sons”

The respondent from a working class background believes strongly that her background hindered her education and served as a barrier to her getting to third level. However, she was determined to get there and worked her way through, which she believes gave her qualities such as tenacity and determination, which served her well when she started her business.

#### **4.4.2 Impact of Social Class on Access to Opportunities**

Having access to opportunities emerged as a strong factor in the decision to become an entrepreneur, which supports previous research that suggested that a person’s access to resources and opportunities was key to facilitating the development of entrepreneurial intentions (Deakins and Freel, 2003; Fielden and Dawe, 2004). Those in the current study who had opportunities to travel and to meet a wide variety of successful people reported an enhanced openness to taking risks and grabbing opportunities themselves. All respondents except FE2 agreed that their family’s social background impacted on their access to opportunities. FE2 believes that she made her own opportunities indicating high locus of control which is a trait of entrepreneurship.

FE1 believes that on one hand her mother’s business, with its large number of foreign tourists, opened her eyes to a wider world, while on the other hand she believes that her parents’ work ethic stopped her taking advantage of many opportunities as she was busy with chores, and leisure time was considered a luxury. FE3 believes that because her parents would have seen more opportunities, she immediately had more access to opportunities, purely through an awareness that they were there. Interestingly, FE8 who

comes from a working class background further supports this opinion as she says that her background and location (she lived in a remote rural area) meant that she was not aware of opportunities while she was growing up, her family could not afford for her to partake in school-organised trips. She stated that when she started working as a nanny for a very wealthy Dublin family in her late teens her eyes were opened to another world and that this finally let her see the opportunities for advancement. FE4, FE5 and FE6 further support this opinion as they believe that their backgrounds meant that anything was possible.

#### 4.4.3 Impact of Social Class on Career Choices

The responses were mixed in this section, with the majority (62%/n=5) of respondents saying that they did not feel their social background impacted on their career choices. Table 4.7 outlines the interviewees' responses. There does not appear to be a direct link between social class and career choice with varying responses coming from interviewees from varied social backgrounds.

Respondent	Social Class	Social Background Impacted on Career Choices
FE1	Lower Middle	No
FE2	Upper Middle	No
FE3	Upper Middle	No
FE4	Lower Middle	No
FE5	Upper Middle	Yes
FE6	Upper Middle	Yes
FE7	Lower Middle	No
FE8	Working Class	Yes

Table 4.7 Social Class and Career Choice (Source: Current Research)

Of those that answered 'no' to the question their reasoning was that their decisions were based on personal preference and not social circumstances that they felt that they had the necessary skills to follow their chosen careers and were determined to do so. This supports research that says that entrepreneurs have high self-efficacy (Wilson, Kickul and

Marlino, 2007). FE5 and FE6 believe their social backgrounds gave them the financial security to pursue whatever career path they wanted. FE8, the only entrepreneur from a working class background, believed that her circumstances hindered her career as it reduced her career options. She further elaborated by explaining that her only option for secondary education was to attend the local vocational school, a trades-oriented school that was not structured to support those who wished to go on to third level education. The more expensive local convent school, which was academically-focused, was not accessible to her because of her social background. Therefore, she feels that her career options were limited because of her background.

#### **4.4.4 Impact of Social Class on Decision to Become Self-Employed**

While the majority of respondents did not associate their social background with their career choices, 75% (n=6) of interviewees agreed that their social background impacted on their decision to become self-employed. The reasoning behind their responses was that seeing the lifestyles that their parents were afforded through their social backgrounds made them want a career that would give them the same standard of living. They explained that they saw entrepreneurship as a means of making such a living. In the cases of those with entrepreneurial families, they felt that the fact that their parents could successfully run a business made the option feasible for them and showed them the kind of lifestyle that running a business could provide. FE2 summed up the feelings of the interviewees when she said that “when you have your own business you have the potential to do so much more, we were never short (of money) growing up and I never wanted to be”

Of those that said their background did not impact on their decision to become self-employed their reasoning was that the decision to go into business was more motivated by circumstance and their background did not affect the decision. For example FE5 was made redundant and FE8 had younger siblings to support because their parents died.

## **4.5 Media**

The following section in the interview schedule was designed in order to explore the respondents' interactions with the media, the perceptions that they developed from the media as they were growing up and whether these perceptions and images impacted on their decision to go into business. It is said that media is a reflection of society and can influence perceptions through the messages communicated (Nelson and Lear, 1994) and that it has the power to enhance gender stereotypes (Adya and Kaiser, 2005). However, it became apparent to the current researcher when analysing the findings that media had little or no influence on this sample, therefore the findings in this section are very limited and will be discussed briefly under the headings media influence and role models.

### **4.5.1 Media Influence**

The current research examined all aspects of the media, TV, Radio, Cinema, Books, Magazines and Comics; however the respondents did not view these as entrepreneurial influences.

One finding that did emerge was in relation to the development of creativity, which according to Ward (2004) is a core skill associated with entrepreneurship. It was very interesting to note that 88% (n=7) of respondents to the current research showed a preference for reading fantasy books. This is interesting because previous research indicates that reading fantasy can stimulate the imagination and that imagination is inextricably linked to creativity (Singer and Singer, 2001; Knoop, 2007).

Another interesting point to note from the media discussions with the respondents is that FE7 pointed out that the prominence of businesswomen in the UK media struck her immediately when she moved to the UK twelve years ago. She believes that this prominence influenced her to consider the prospect of starting a business as a feasible option. She believes that women are still not to the fore in the Irish media, which may serve to explain why the other respondents do not register media as an influencer. FE7



explained that she felt that highlighting female role models in the media was important by saying that profiling female entrepreneurs “puts the idea of entrepreneurship out there in a way that makes it appealing to women.”

#### **4.5.2 Role Models**

Role models who may have influenced the interviewees to enter entrepreneurship were explored under the heading of media. However, it emerged during the course of the interviews that the majority of the role models that the interviewees referred to were not known to them through the media but through direct contact. Matthews and Moser (1995) found that females with familial role models were more likely to show an interest in entrepreneurship than those without, indicating that females may respond to role models closer to home. However, Winn (2004) and Forfas (2007) highlighted the fact that public role models can positively influence women into entrepreneurship but that women have few role models in the public eye. Given that the interviewees cited having no role models in the media it may simply be the case that the sample did not have access to public role models, therefore they looked to familial role models.

The only interviewee who alluded to having a role model in the media was FE3; she referred to her favourite actress stating that: “she (Greer Garson) was so ahead of her time, even for the 1930’s, even for today ...she was just so ... independent”. FE3 further explained that she admired the actress’ independence and aspired to achieving independence herself from a young age.

FE1 explained that she had no role models apart from her parents and that it was their influence that made running a business seem an achievable possibility. FE2 agrees, she believes that her mother was her “hero” because she managed to run a successful business while being a good mother to FE2 and her siblings. FE3 believes that the biggest influence on her decision to go into business was a desire “to be someone (special) and to have something of my own”, like her immediate and extended family had. FE4 explained that she really admired her Guide leader as she was involved in many things and seemed

to “have it all”; success, happiness, ability, intelligence, financial security- while still managing to remain personable, wise and young. FE6 has a famous cousin who works in broadcasting and he has always been an inspiration to her. She tells how he made her feel anything was possible because he is a huge success but he is very approachable. She believes that the realisation that he is both successful and a member of her family meant that she felt that her own options were unlimited, that she could do anything.

FE8 feels very strongly that her influences for entrepreneurship came about in her late teens/early twenties. She feels that working as a nanny for a wealthy entrepreneurial family is the reason that she saw entrepreneurship as a possibility. She explained how the experience of working in an affluent household meant that she was exposed to successful business people all the time. She further elaborated by explaining that she had met several successful people such as government ministers and entrepreneurs and that these people became tangible role models for her as they made success seem attainable.

This current research indicates that female entrepreneurs do benefit from role models as the interviewees highlighted the positive effects of their familial role models. Furthermore, the current research found that the interviewees had little or no access to role models through the media, which would seem to support research by Winn (2004) and Forfas (2007) who called for more public role models for female entrepreneurs.

#### **4.6 Peer Group**

According to previous research by Browne (1992) and Adya and Kaiser (2005) peers are a socialisation influence and consequently can play a part in influencing career choices. Therefore, this current research explored peer group influence with the interviewees. The findings from this section indicate that peers was not a major influence on the interviewees’ decision to enter entrepreneurship. In fact only 38% (n=3) of interviewees acknowledged that their peer group made an impact on their career choices.

#### 4.6.1 Play and Playmates

Children's play can impact on the early development of both gender identity and core skills which are needed later in life. Previous research indicates that boy's play leads to the development of skills necessary for business success such as teamwork, competition, independence and confidence, while girl's play leads to the development of cooperation and passivity (Coates and Overman, 1992). Therefore the current research explored whether the interviewees participated in typically male or female play activities through examining whether the group classed themselves as 'tomboys' or 'girly girls' growing up. As outlined in Table 4.8 the majority (62%/n=5) of the interviewees described themselves as tomboys.

Prior research suggests that having a mixed gender or predominantly male peer group can lead to the development of entrepreneurial intentions (Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Mero, 2000); therefore it was not surprising to find that 75% (n=6) of respondents reported mixed gender or male playmates as highlighted in Table 4.8. The gender of the group's siblings was also examined in this context and 75% (n=6) of the interviewees had more brothers than sisters.

Respondent	Tomboy/Girly Girl	Gender of Playmates
FE1	Tomboy	Mixed gender
FE2	Bit of Both	Mostly male
FE3	Tomboy	Mixed gender
FE4	Tomboy	Mostly female
FE5	Tomboy	Mixed gender
FE6	Girly Girl	Mostly female
FE7	Tomboy	Mixed gender
FE8	Girly Girl	Mixed gender

Table 4.8 Childhood Play (Source: Current Research)

## **4.7 Motivation**

As outlined in the introduction, the final section of the interview explored the respondents' motivations for starting a business. This section is divided under the following headings; motivators and starting the business.

### **4.7.1 Motivators**

Table 4.9 outlines the respondents' feelings about particular common motivating factors for female entrepreneurs and their perceptions as to the importance of each for them when they set up in business. The scale was marked 1-5, where 1 was not important at all and 5 was very important.

Scale:

Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Important	Very Important
1	2	3	4	5

Motivator	FE1	FE2	FE3	FE4	FE5	FE6	FE7	FE8
To advance myself	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	1
To Make Money	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5
To earn a good living	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	3
To expand my professional network	2	3	3	3	4	5	4	3
To achieve a better balance between work and family	3	3	4	5	3	5	4	5
To have a better lifestyle	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	3
To have more time for leisure activities	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	3
To give something back to the community	1	1	1	4	3	4	4	1
To be my own boss	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	2
To have greater independence	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
For self-achievement	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2
Because of economic necessity	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	5
Because of redundancy	3	1	1	1	5	3	5	1
Because of lack of opportunities in previous career	1	1	5	1	3	4	4	1
Because of dissatisfaction with previous career	3	1	5	1	3	4	4	1
Because I saw an opportunity	3	2	5	5	3	5	4	5
Something I always wanted to do	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	2
To grow a business	4	5	5	1	3	5	5	3
A desire for recognition	3	5	5	3	5	5	4	2
Other*							4	

Table 4.9 Motivations for Starting One's Own Business (Source: Current Research).

*List of motivations compiled from literature on motivations of female entrepreneurs such as Buttner and Rosen, 1989; Buttner 1993; Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Buttner and Moore, 1997; Catley and Hamilton, 1998*

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\* To build self-confidence

According to Table 4.9 the top motivators for the interviewees to start their own businesses were:

- To advance themselves
- To earn a good living
- To be their own boss
- To have greater independence
- Self-achievement

These are common motivators for female entrepreneurs and a theme that can be seen here is one of independence and autonomy. This theme is similar to that which emerged in section 4.1.3 whereby it became apparent that the interviewees were keen to reap the rewards of their work and be self-sufficient. This supports prior research which indicates that female entrepreneurs have high self-efficacy, a need for achievement and a desire for autonomy (Catley and Hamilton, 1998).

Every respondent stated that making money was important to her which is contrary to previous literature that indicates that women entrepreneurs are not all that concerned with making money (Cromie, 1987).

The majority (88%) of respondents started a business because they 'always wanted to', which would indicate that contrary to earlier research, which suggests that many women are pushed into entrepreneurship (Moore and Buttner, 1997); the respondents to the current research chose to become entrepreneurs. This is further supported by the fact that 62% of the interviewees rated dissatisfaction with their careers or lack of opportunities in their careers as unimportant motivating factors for them.

Work/life balance is often cited as a major concern for female entrepreneurs, therefore it was surprising to find that only 50% of interviewees rated striking a balance between work and family as important while starting their businesses. This can possibly be

attributed to the fact that only 25% of the interviewees had children when they started their businesses.

As this sample was taken from a group who attended a ‘grow your business’ (FEIW Enterprise Development Programme\*) course it is not surprising to find that growing a business was an important motivator for the majority (62%) of respondents from the beginning.

Contrary to previous research by Orhan and Scott (2001) which stated that women often want to ‘make a difference’ and to enhance their communities, only three respondents started their business to give something back to the community.

#### **4.7.2 Starting the Business**

A common theme that emerged when the respondents were asked why they set up their business was the idea of ‘being my own boss’. Only FE5, who was made redundant and FE8, who had not intended starting in business until after her travels did not mention this reason, although both said that once they had started working for themselves they enjoyed the independence offered by self-employment. All the respondents except FE5 and FE8 stated that they ‘always knew’ they would set up a business at some stage in their careers. For example FE1 relayed how she’s always known she would start a business; the only question for her was in what industry.

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\* The FEIW (Female Entrepreneurship Ireland and Wales) Enterprise Development Programme is part of an INTERREG IIIA funded project managed by Centre for Entrepreneurship, Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), Ireland in partnership with Aberystwyth University, Wales. The project was born of a desire to facilitate the growth and development of women-led businesses in South East Ireland and South West Wales. The FEIW Enterprise Development Programme was tailor-made for women in business. It considers the issues that women face when running and growing their businesses and provides training that delivers a growth-focused comprehensive management skill set to programme participants.

## 4.8 Summary

This chapter has provided the reader with an insight into the findings from this study's primary research. The socialisation influences pertaining to a woman's decision to set up her own business have been explored in detail and the motivations, previous experiences and attitudes of the women entrepreneurs in this study have also been examined.

A number of significant findings have been uncovered in this study. For example, the demographics of a 'typical' female entrepreneur from this sample are different than indicated in previous research by Brush and Hisrich (1991) and Lee (1996); she is younger starting her business, is not necessarily married and is less likely to have children. Her business is in traditional sectors such as retail, craft or business services. However, in a reflection of earlier research by Langowitz (2001) who identified that women are starting to set up businesses in non-traditional sectors, 25% of the respondents to this current research started businesses in construction, a typically male-dominated industry.

The previous experience of the female entrepreneur in this study, while generally not in the same business sector that they set up their businesses is in professional or management roles, meaning that she brings relevant experience with her when she sets up in business.

The female entrepreneur in this sample wants to reap the rewards of her work and relays confidence in her ability to do so. This is further supported by the fact that the interviewees all cited advancing themselves, earning a good living, being their own boss and desiring greater independence and self-achievement as important motivators for them to set up in business.

It appears that women who work in male-dominated industries in this sample may be better placed to harness the benefits of their networks when they move into entrepreneurship.



Family is a key motivating influence on the female entrepreneur in this study. The interviewees cited recognising the independence of their entrepreneurial family members as being very influential. It also emerged that the female entrepreneurs' parents instilled a sense of responsibility in them through giving them chores and duties in the home from a young age. The interviewees also explained that having entrepreneurial family members made entrepreneurship become a feasible option for them. Family support is viewed as a key success factor by the female entrepreneur in this current study.

Previous research indicates that boy's play leads to the development of skills necessary for business success such as teamwork, competition, independence and confidence, while girl's play leads to the development of cooperation and passivity (Coates and Overman, 1992). In support of this statement, the respondents to the current research were found to have mixed play groups, more brothers than sisters and a tendency to be 'tomboys' growing up.

Education also plays an important part in the socialisation of a female entrepreneur with many entrepreneurs likely to have taken part in sports and extra-curricular activities. The current research highlighted that the sample group did more 'feminine' than 'masculine' subjects, including those in non-traditional industries. Post-secondary studies would seem to correlate to the business set up with most interviewees (62%) running businesses in the same discipline as their studies. The interviewees did not rate the career guidance that they received as important in their decision to become self-employed.

The current study found that social class has an impact on the socialisation of female entrepreneurs. The respondents regarded the access to both financial and human capital afforded them through their social backgrounds as being important. Accessing and recognising opportunities are important aspects of the development of entrepreneurial intentions (Margo and Dixon, 2006). Therefore, it would seem important that females from all social backgrounds have access to similar opportunities. The interviewees perceived a strong link between social class and the decision to become self-employed,

with the majority (75%) stating that entrepreneurship offered a lifestyle and social standing that were highly desirable.

The media is a prominent source of role models in general, however according to Winn (2004) and Forfas (2007) it would seem that there are few public role models for aspiring female entrepreneurs. This current research concurs with these findings, family members and people with whom the interviewees had direct contact served as the only available role models for the respondents to this current study.

The next chapter will discuss the findings from this study and will examine these findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

## ***Chapter 5            Discussion***

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings that were presented in Chapter Four. The research has identified that socialisation does have an impact on the decision to become an entrepreneur and that the agents of socialisation have varying degrees of influence. The current research has unearthed some interesting socialisation experiences that contributed to the respondents starting an enterprise.

The research question centred on four key socialisation influences including media, however, the findings revealed that media was not perceived by the respondents to the current research as an important socialisation influence. Contrary to previous research that indicated that media is a major socialisation influence (Nelson and Lear, 1994; Smith, R., 2000; Seaton, 2006) the interviewees believed that media had no impact on their decision to become self-employed. The respondents had various levels of media use, with some being heavy media users while others rarely watched TV, listened to the radio nor read newspapers or magazines. Regardless of their levels of media use, the respondents were adamant that exposure to the various media was not an influencer. For this reason the discussion will not focus on media.

The discussion will focus on the three socialisation influences identified as being key to the development of entrepreneurial intentions; family, education and social class. The chapter will also discuss the findings in relation to role models as these were deemed an important influence by the respondents. Family and social class were perceived by the interviewees as being very influential. Entrepreneurial family members, family support and having chores and duties in the home were viewed as being important elements in the interviewees' decisions to start a business. Social class, in terms of access to finance,

resources and experiences was also viewed as being influential by the respondents to this research.

Conversely, education, although perceived as important was not viewed as a key influence, as the interviewees were not directed towards entrepreneurial careers through the education system. Role models were viewed as a key influence however the respondents referred only to familial and personal role models and they reported a lack of high profile role models. The following sections will discuss these findings in detail.

## **5.1 Family**

Family was viewed as a major socialisation influence on all the entrepreneurs in this study. The respondents stated that their families were instrumental in their decision to start an enterprise. The interviewees referred to particular key influences within their family units, the first of which was their entrepreneurial family members. The majority (88%) of respondents to the current research had at least one parent who was an entrepreneur; in fact three of the respondents had two self-employed parents. All the respondents had extended family that were self-employed. The interviewees in this current research stated that having entrepreneurial family members had been a key influencer, explaining that seeing their immediate and extended family running businesses successfully made entrepreneurship seem a viable career option. These findings concur with previous research that indicated that entrepreneurial family influence can be important in the development of entrepreneurial intentions (Morrison, 2000; Orhan and Scott, 2001). These findings also support research by Matthews and Moser (1995) and Tovey and Share (2000) who found that females with a family business background were more likely to become entrepreneurs. By means of explaining this paradigm, Tovey and Share (2000) stated that parents raise their children to fit with their view of society. Entrepreneurial parents are more likely to view entrepreneurship as an appropriate career for their daughters, who are in turn more likely to consider self-employment thanks to their upbringing (Morrison, 2000). Therefore the current research indicates that family influence is a key socialising influence on a female entrepreneur.

The second factor that emerged as important in driving the respondents' desire to be self-employed was having responsibility in the home from a young age. The interviewees stated that having chores and duties in the home growing up had given them a sense of responsibility that served them well when they became self-employed. The respondents indicated that this ownership of duties in the home had helped to shape their desire to be self-sufficient through entrepreneurship. For example, FE2 stated that:

“Having my own jobs around the house and the farm gave me great pleasure. I liked having my own thing (responsibility) and decided very early on that I would have my own thing (business) when I grew up”.

FE1 stated that having responsibility in the home was “great training”. This concurs with research by Henderson and Robertson (1999) who suggested that entrepreneurs often have responsibility in the home from a young age.

The gendered assignment of tasks in the home was also instrumental in the development of the current interviewees' career aspirations. Those who came from homes where tasks were not assigned by gender felt that their upbringing had given them a sense of equality that inspired them to follow their dreams regardless of gender, while those who came from homes where there was a gender imbalance in the assignment of housework had developed a tenacity that drove them to overcome gender barriers. For example, FE3 stated:

“I thought it was illogical that my brothers had different chores than us girls, I couldn't understand how my mother, who was an intelligent woman, could distinguish between us based on gender. It made me all the more determined not to allow my gender dictate what I did with my life”.

Coltrane (2000) and Cunningham (2001.a.) argued that the gendered division of labour in the home impacts on the formation of gender role perceptions and can influence children

to have less stereotypical career aspirations. The current research demonstrates that in the case of the current sample the respondents were determined to fulfil their ambitions regardless of the gender role lessons that they were taught at home. Thus, the current research indicates that having chores and duties in the home is a positive influence, even if those duties are gender-biased.

The third factor within the family context that was viewed as influential was the support the interviewees received from their families. The interviewees referred to both their birth families and their spousal families, however for the purpose of the discussion this section will focus on birth family support as it is an early socialisation influence, which is the subject of this study. The respondents mentioned emotional, financial and practical support from their families, stating that they could not have started their businesses without this vital support. FE1 spoke about the difficulty she had securing finance for her first enterprise she explained that the bank refused her loan and she had to rely on her parents to secure her first premises. FE7 explained that her family “*did all the leg work*” for her when she was setting up her enterprise as she was living in England at the time and the business was in her home town. This supports previous research with authors such as Brush and Hisrich (1991) and Welter (2004) highlighting the importance of family support for women entrepreneurs. In the case of FE8, she started her business as a means of supporting her younger siblings after her parents passed away. She explained that the support offered by her uncle and his family was absolutely vital to her starting the business. Therefore, it can be concluded that family support was a key influencer on the female entrepreneurs in this sample.

## **5.2 Education**

Interesting findings emerged under the topic of education with the respondents explaining that their formal education and work-based learning were key influencers therefore this section will discuss both formal education and work experience.

This research study found that the majority (75%) of respondents have some higher level education, 50% attained a third level education, 13% have trade qualifications and 12% have both third level and trade qualifications. This supports previous research by Kim, Aldrich and Keister (2003), Winn (2004) and GEM (2006) who stated that female entrepreneurs tend to be well-educated. The majority (62%) of interviewees run businesses in sectors related to their studies, which contradicts prior research by authors such as Brush and Hisrich (1991) who indicated that female entrepreneurs usually start businesses in fields not related to their studies. Thus, for the respondents in the current research their higher level education was an important influencer.

The respondents' post-primary education experiences were not deemed as important socialising influences. The respondents studied 'feminine' subjects at school due in the main to a lack of alternative study options. The respondents also mentioned that the pursuit of 'masculine' subjects such as Higher level Mathematics and Physics was discouraged. This supports research by Francis (2000.b) who stated that children's study tends to be gender-led by schools. The respondents had very negative views regarding the career guidance that they received at school. They explained that they had been encouraged to follow very limited career paths. They further elaborated by stating that the schools they attended viewed teaching, nursing and secretarial work as the most suitable career options regardless of individual aptitude. While they felt negatively about this guidance they stated that it did not influence their career decisions.

The vast majority of respondents (88%) in this study attended single sex schools which are viewed by previous researchers (Watson, Quatman and Edler, 2002; Adya and Kaiser, 2005) as being important in guiding girls towards non-traditional careers. However, the respondents to this current study indicated that their schools, despite being single-sex, were very much focused on directing their pupils towards traditional careers, therefore the current research contrasts with earlier research. Prior researchers such as Birley, Moss and Saunders (1987) and Smith, L., (2000) suggested that traditional gendered education served as a barrier to women developing entrepreneurial intentions. The current research concurs with these earlier findings as post-primary education acted as a barrier that the

current interviewees overcame. Despite being encouraged into traditional careers through their education the current respondents pursued a career in entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, a factor that did impact on the respondents' socialisation was the extra-curricular activity that they partook in at school. All respondents except FE8 played team sports in school, the sports were all single sex and were competitive such as hockey and basketball. This finding supports research by Goldstein and Bredemeier (1977) and Anna, Chandler, Jansen and Mero (2000) who highlighted that women in professions such as entrepreneurship participated in competitive sports as children. The majority of interviewees (75%) stated that they had also partaken in extra-curricular activity, such as public speaking, debating and drama, while at school. Participating in extra-curricular activity at school can teach young people responsibility, give them organisational skills, build confidence and enhance their sense of self-efficacy (Rombokas, 1995). The interviewees in this current research stated that the extra-curricular activity had given them confidence and social skills. For example, FE4 stated that debating had "helped me to come out of myself, it gave me confidence". It is clear from the responses that sports and participation in extra-curricular activity helped build confidence and promote social skills in 88% of the interviewees involved in this research.

This confidence was key to the respondents starting their businesses; the respondents stressed that they had always felt that they were capable of any task set to them, explaining that when they worked for others they saw things that they "could do better" and that they were confident that they could reap rewards from their abilities. The respondents in this study demonstrated a strong confidence in their skills. Every interviewee spoke about their skills, such as management, people and organisational, with self-assurance, listing the relevant skills with conviction. Contrary to this, previous research indicated that female entrepreneurs have low levels of confidence (Buttner and Rosen, 1989; Scherr, Sugrue and Ward, 1993; Marlino and Wilson, 2003). Thus, the current research suggests that participation in sports and extra-curricular activity can contribute to the building of lasting confidence that can be important in the socialisation of the female entrepreneurs.



The respondents' work experience was influential in their career path to entrepreneurship. The majority of interviewees in the current study held management positions prior to starting their businesses. Previous research contrasts with this finding with earlier studies highlighting that female entrepreneurs have a lack of relevant experience (Buttner and Rosen, 1989; Buttner, 1993; Scherr, Sugrue and Ward, 1993; Buttner and Moore, 1997). The respondents to this study viewed their work experience as a key success factor in their enterprises, which is a view shared with researchers such as Birley, Moss and Saunders (1987) and Buttner (1993) who stated that relevant experience is an indicator of business success. The interviewees in the current research also stated that they had relevant skills when starting their businesses. They referred to skills such as management, people and organisation. This again contrasts with previous research that indicated that female entrepreneurs do not have relevant skills when starting a business (Loscocco, Robinson, Hall and Allen, 1991; Heilbrunn, 2004). Thus, work-based learning was an influential socialising agent as it gave the respondents relevant experience and skills to succeed in starting an enterprise.

### **5.3 Social Class**

Social class was viewed as an important influence on the female entrepreneurs in this study. The interviewees described how they enjoyed experiences and opportunities throughout their childhoods that they viewed as a direct effect of their family's social class. They explained that the lifestyles afforded to them through the self-employment of their family members made self-employment seem a desirable option that could offer them a similar lifestyle. They further elaborated by saying that their social class had provided them with a good education, enjoyable experiences and exposure to success. The majority (75%) of respondents stated explicitly that social class was an influence on them starting an enterprise. These findings indicate that when a female in this study viewed a desirable social class as being a result of entrepreneurship she considered entrepreneurship as a career.

The findings from this current study may provide some understanding of the findings of earlier studies that typified female entrepreneurs as coming from middle class backgrounds (Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Kim, Aldrich and Keister, 2003) because the respondents to the current study attributed their self-employment in part to their social backgrounds. The views of FE8, who was the only respondent from a working class background, illuminated some interesting aspects of the influence of social class. She explained that her social background excluded her from many activities at school; it dictated the type of school she attended and limited her experience and access to success. When she started working for a wealthy entrepreneurial family her perspective changed and her access to success and role models opened her mind to the possibility of entrepreneurship. It is clear from this current research that access to resources, role models, education and experiences afforded by the respondents' social class played a part in developing their entrepreneurial intentions. The current study would certainly appear to support previous research that indicated that access to resources and education through some level of affluence afforded by coming from a socially privileged background can encourage entrepreneurship (Deakins and Freel, 2003; Fielden and Dawe, 2004).

#### **5.4 Role Models**

Role models were viewed as a key influence by the respondents, which supports research by Matthews and Moser (1995), Henderson and Robertson (1999) and Orhan and Scott (2001). The role models that the respondents referred to were all people known to them personally. In many cases the role models were familial, which supports previous research that indicated that women respond to familial role models (Matthews and Moser, 1995). The respondents could not identify role models in the media; they did not refer to any influential persons in the public eye as being inspirational. One interesting finding is that FE7, who worked in England for twelve years, suggested that the media in Ireland does not highlight women in business. She suggested that she was influenced by the media in England, which frequently focused on successful women entrepreneurs. In light of this it is pertinent to mention that recent Irish Government research has advocated that

there are too few role models in the Irish media for female entrepreneurs. The report cited more public role models as a key to attracting more females into entrepreneurship (Forfas, 2007). It can be concluded therefore, that role models are an important influencer for female entrepreneurs but that there is a call for more high profile role models in Ireland.

There would also appear to be a link between role models and social class, as previously discussed FE8 did not have access to successful entrepreneurial role models until she worked for an affluent entrepreneur in her late teens. Her social background had precluded her from interaction with entrepreneurial role models. This finding concurs with research by Henderson and Roberston (1999) and Margo and Dixon (2006) who stated that women from a working class background are less likely to have access to identifiable role models. Therefore, the call for more high profile role models is even stronger when one considers that all of the population do not come from middle class backgrounds.

## **5.5 Summary**

The main point of this discussion was that family and social class are key socialisation influences for female entrepreneurs. These two agents played a vital role in socialising the respondents to this study towards a career in entrepreneurship. Education was also an important influencer however it was not the respondents' early formal education that was the primary influence. The interviewees were primarily influenced by their extra-curricular activities and work experience, in addition to their higher level education.

In accordance with previous literature the female entrepreneurs in this study viewed family as one of the most influential agents of socialisation (Dryler, 1998). The respondents were influenced by their entrepreneurial family members, were assisted in their desire to become self-employed by family support and were conditioned to being responsible and self-sufficient by their roles in the home. It would seem that having

access to self-employed family members and having family support are key parts of the socialisation of females to become entrepreneurs.

This research found that the majority (88%) of respondents were from middle class backgrounds, which supports previous research by Brush and Hisrich (1991). The qualitative nature of this research allowed the researcher to examine why the respondents found social class an important influence. It emerged that the experiences and access to resources afforded by the respondents' backgrounds were key in forming a desire for self-employment among the sample. This has implications for stimulating interest in entrepreneurship among women from different social backgrounds.

Early formal education was not deemed to be an important influence on the respondents to this study; in fact the interviewees expressed a distinct discouragement from the pursuit of non-traditional careers in their early education. They explained how they were directed towards 'feminine' subjects and traditional careers. The respondents attended single sex schools, which have been regarded by former researchers (Watson, Quatman and Edler, 2002; Adya and Kaiser, 2005) as being instrumental in the encouragement of females into entrepreneurship, yet the current respondents stated that their schools discouraged deviation from traditional careers. On the other hand, activities such as sport, debating, drama and membership of societies and clubs were viewed as influential. Informal or 'on the job' education in the art of management and the development of core business skills were also seen as highly influential.

Role models were a very important influencer on the current respondents; they explained that they admired entrepreneurial role models known to them. In the main these role models were familial. The respondents stated that these role models' lives were desirable and that having contact with them was an important factor in their desire to become self-employed. There was a stated lack of high profile role models available to the interviewees, which may have implications for aspiring female entrepreneurs who do not have access to role models on a day-to-day basis.

This chapter discussed the findings presented in Chapter Four. The next and final chapter of this thesis presents the overall conclusions from this current research. It will also draw attention to a number of limitations associated with the study and make recommendations for future research in this field of study.

## **Chapter 6**      *Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations*

### **6.0 Introduction**

This study sought to explore the extent to which socialisation impacts on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs. This research examined four key socialisation influences that impact on a female entrepreneur from a young age; family, education, social class and media. The study also examined factors such as demographics, previous experience and motivations.

The objectives of this study were:

1. To explore the socialisation process and the impact that socialisation influences had on female entrepreneurs.
2. To examine the extent to which family, education, social class and media have an effect on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs
3. To understand whether certain agents of socialisation have more of an impact on the decision of females to become entrepreneurs than others

In order to obtain the answer to the research question and research objectives it was necessary to review literature pertaining to the research topic. Literature in the areas of entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship and socialisation was examined and synthesised in order to create a basis for the study. Primary data were then gathered through the use of in-depth interviews. The findings from this research were then presented and discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to draw conclusions from these findings and the research as a whole. Also included in this chapter are the limitations associated with the current research and recommendations for future research in female entrepreneurship.

## **6.1 Summary**

The research findings have indicated that the key socialisation influences for the current sample are family and social class. Higher level education and work-based learning were also found to be highly influential. Media was not deemed to be an influencer; however role models were viewed as key influencers.

The respondents in this current research viewed family as one of the most influential agents of socialisation. The respondents cited three factors within the family context as being most important; their entrepreneurial family members, the chores and duties that they were assigned in the home and the support that they received from their families. These findings concur with prior research by various authors including Dryler (1998) and Henderson and Robertson (1999) who advocated that family is a key influencer on the decision to become self-employed. It can therefore be said that family context is a key influencer on entrepreneurship among females.

Post-primary education was not seen as an important influence by the interviewees. The respondents reported that they were directed towards traditional careers in their post-primary education. The interviewees reported a lack of encouragement towards an entrepreneurial career both in terms of subjects available for study and career guidance given. Yet, the respondents went on to become self-employed, which indicates that post-primary education is not a core influencer in this instance. On the other hand, activities such as sport, debating, drama and membership of clubs and societies were viewed as influential. These activities were viewed as important in the development of relevant skills such as organisation, social skills and self-discipline.

Higher level education was viewed as being an important influencer as the majority of respondents (62%/n=5) run businesses in fields directly related to their studies. Work experience was also viewed as important as the respondents developed necessary entrepreneurial skills such as management, organisation and people skills through their earlier work experience. Thus, higher level education and work experience were influencers on the decision to become self-employed among the respondents to this current research.

The respondents to this study viewed social class as a key influence, it was stated explicitly that social class had been a contributing factor to the women in the sample becoming entrepreneurs. Accessing and recognising opportunities are important aspects of the development of entrepreneurial intentions (Margo and Dixon, 2006). The respondents to this current research argued that they viewed entrepreneurship as offering a highly desirable lifestyle and social standing because their self-employed family members enjoyed these benefits. It was also suggested that the level of education and range of experiences enjoyed by the respondents as a direct effect of their social class contributed to their desire to become self-employed. Thus, it would seem from this research that there are implications for developing entrepreneurial intentions among women from different social backgrounds.

Finally, role models were viewed as key influencers in the decision to become self-employed. The respondents explained that personal role models were inspirational to them and that these entrepreneurial role models made entrepreneurship seem a desirable option. However, the respondents also stated that there was a lack of high profile role models in Ireland. This argument has been supported by recent research by the Irish government who has suggested that there is a need for more high profile role models in order to encourage more women into entrepreneurship (Forfas, 2007). Thus, this current research argues that role models are a key influencer and should be more publicly visible by making entrepreneurial role models more prominent.



## **6.2 Limitations**

One of the main limitations associated with the current study was that the research was only performed on businesses from the South East region of Ireland therefore the research results may not be generalisable. For example, the industry sector mix may not be the same in the South East as in other regions of Ireland. Also, the number of industry sectors represented may not be the same as in other regions. Finally, the experiences of the female entrepreneurs in the South East of Ireland may not be applicable to other regions.

Secondly, because the research was qualitative in nature the sample was small, only containing eight entrepreneurs. While this offered rich detailed meaningful responses, it also inherently limited the generalisability and scalability of the research. Furthermore, the sample was taken from a group of female entrepreneurs who had committed to a 'Grow Your Business' course. Therefore, this sample has some bias in that the respondents have all committed to growing their businesses and were motivated to take a course so they may be different to the general population of female entrepreneurs.

The respondents in the current research were aged between 30-50; with half being aged 30-40 and half being aged 40-50. This narrow age range means that the respondents' experiences in terms of socialisation influences were confined to a generation. The research, therefore, is limited to the experiences of female entrepreneurs who grew up in Ireland during the 1970's and 1980's. This is a limitation as Ireland has been experiencing rapid change over recent decades and these changes were not reflected in the respondents' experiences.

The research was also limited in terms of the prior experience of the researcher. It is possible that a researcher familiar with association techniques could have gleaned more information from the sample, particularly in relation to media. Therefore the study was inherently limited by the experience of the current researcher.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

The limitations of this study bring to light a number of opportunities for future research. Primarily, it is proposed that a similar research study be undertaken on a national basis. A comprehensive quantitative study could be undertaken in order to determine if the findings of this study are generalisable.

Half of the respondents to this research were married when they started their businesses with half of these respondents also having children. These respondents explained that they would not have been able to launch and run their businesses without their husband's support. Research by Brush and Hisrich (1991) also found that spousal support can be vital for married women entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is a recommendation that further research on the importance of ongoing family support for female entrepreneurs be undertaken. If spousal support is as important an influencer as this study suggests further research is necessary in order to determine what factors within spousal support are important. Further research should examine what aspects of support are most influential such as shared child-care, housekeeping, advisory and financial support. This further research could have implications for enterprise policy in relation to female entrepreneurs.

Media was not viewed as influential by the respondents to this study. As the sample was small it is difficult to determine whether this finding is generalisable, particularly because previous studies advocated that media is a major influencer (Nelson and Lear, 1994; Smith, R., 2000; Seaton, 2006). Therefore, further research on a larger sample of female entrepreneurs is necessary in order to determine the impact of media. This research could determine what aspects of media influence the development of entrepreneurial intentions, if any. The findings could have implications for the messages communicated through the various media to females. The research could also serve as a guide to stimulating interest in entrepreneurship among females through the influence of media.

The respondents had negative experiences in terms of being encouraged towards entrepreneurship with their post-primary education and career guidance. This is possibly age-specific as the education system has undergone change since the 1980's. Given the government's commitment to promoting entrepreneurship it is recommended that further research be performed to determine the current level of support for entrepreneurship and also to determine how best to improve the promotion of entrepreneurship through schools. This further research should follow two strands of enquiry:

- a) Conduct longitudinal research with females who are currently in the education system to determine the current level of support for entrepreneurship in schools and to explore these girls' perceptions.
- b) Conduct research with teachers to determine teachers' attitudes towards the role and place of enterprise education in post-primary schools.

This research may inform educators and policymakers how best to promote entrepreneurship education among females.

Finally, the current respondents believed that their social class was an important influencer. The respondents were predominantly middle class (88%) and viewed the access to resources that they enjoyed as being highly influential. The one working-class respondent in the sample supported the views of the others when she said that her social class precluded her from certain experiences and activities that could have been influential in her becoming self-employed. As the sample was small it is very difficult to generalise this finding, therefore further research among females from various social backgrounds is recommended in order to determine the influence of social class on entrepreneurship. Elements such as access to resources, experiences and role models were viewed as important by the current sample. This further research may inform policy makers how best to simulate the relevant socialisation influences among working class women. For example, through the provision of specific entrepreneurial training and through the delivery of seminars by successful women entrepreneurs to children in disadvantaged areas.

Like the current research, this future research would have implications for academics, educators, policy makers and providers of small business support, this research will be of particular benefit to future female entrepreneurs.

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# **APPENDIX A**

## **Respondent Profiles**

### **An Overview**

#### **Respondent 1 (Referred to as FE1 from this point forward)**

FE1 is 45 years old and has been in business for herself for 20 years, she started her first business aged 25 in the retail sector, she sold that business as a going concern and built an interior design business with a retail element which is her current core business. She also owns a crèche and manages six properties. She is married but was single when she started her first business. She worked full-time as support staff in a patents office before leaving to travel, she started the first business on her return. She always knew she would run a business and can remember wondering what her business would be from an early age.

#### **Respondent 2 (Referred to as FE2 from this point forward)**

FE2 is 48 years old and has been in business for 26 years, she started into entrepreneurship aged 22 when her father-in-law asked her to run a retail business that he had. She went on to run a haulage company with her husband for 16 years and then started a retail discount chain, which is currently expanding. She was married with a 6 month old child when she started running the first business. She had various jobs before settling into business ownership, having worked in a Financial Institution, a Creamery and an Architects office in a support staff capacity. She always knew she would end up working for herself as both her parents were self-employed and lived a good lifestyle, which she wanted to emulate.

**Respondent 3 (Referred to as FE3 from this point forward)**

FE3 is 32 years old and has been in business for 3 ½ years, a professional with a building surveying background, she started her business in the construction industry following a very dissatisfactory career working for a large company. She was married when she started the business with no children. She is currently working towards expanding her business and has recently achieved one of the first National qualifications in energy efficiency which gives her an edge in her market. Very driven, she comes from a family “steeped in entrepreneurship” and she sees her business as a way of proving that she is “cut from the same cloth” as her predecessors.

**Respondent 4 (Referred to as FE4 from this point forward)**

FE4 is 37 years old and has been in business for 2 years, a former manager in the media sector she started her business with a view to enjoying a better lifestyle. Having taken time to travel and take a break from her pressured former role she decided to start a business in an area she was passionate about; adventure holidays. Having worked with travel agents through her former role she had a very strong knowledge of the industry and saw a gap in the market for her services. She says that she came to the decision to run a business gradually.

**Respondent 5 (Referred to as FE5 from this point forward)**

FE5 is 48 years old and has been in business for 12 years. An architect, she started her business due to redundancy in a time of high unemployment in Ireland. She had 3 young children when she started the business and says that, while she was pushed into entrepreneurship she most certainly would have started a business eventually anyway. She believes that it is more difficult for a woman today than in the 1970’s when she was starting her career as there is little choice today, women are under pressure to be and have everything, she believes that while the options were limited years ago there was also real choice.

**Respondent 6 (Referred to as FE6 from this point forward)**

FE6 is 43 years old and has been in business for 16 years. Having run her business on a part-time basis for 12 years, she recently changed her focus to training and re-launched the business with a new service offering, the support of a National brand and a vision for growth. She sees her business as a means to securing her independence but also sees her marriage as the foundation that allows her to run a business while having a fulfilling personal life.

**Respondent 7 (Referred to as FE7 from this point forward)**

FE7 is 36 years old and has been in business for 2 years. She worked in a hectic project management role in the UK for 12 years and decided to come home and set up a business for herself when her role became redundant. She wanted quality of life and did not see a future in the IT industry so she decided to try her hand at retail. She believes that the visibility of high profile businesswomen in the UK media over the years made the option of running a business very viable for her and she believes that the decision may not have come as easy if she had been working in Ireland at the time.

**Respondent 8 (Referred to as FE8 from this point forward)**

FE8 is 35 years old and has been in business for 7 years. She recently sold her beautician's business as a going concern and is currently embarking on her new venture in training for salons. A former manager for Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC), FE8 re-trained in health & beauty with the intention of travelling when personal circumstances meant that she had to come home and raise her younger sister and brother. She was offered first refusal on a premises close to home and took it on the basis that it would help her to support her family, however after running the business for a time she developed a passion for it and has since grown the business to maximum capacity and sold it at a profit.

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Schedule

#### Background Information

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?  
20-25 ☐    26-30 ☐    31-35 ☐    36-40 ☐    41-45 ☐    46-50 ☐  
50+ ☐
3. What is your business?
4. Is this your first business? If not, what were your previous business(es)?
5. How long have you been in business?
6. How old were you when you started your first business?
7. When you founded your business were you.....  
Single ☐  
Married/Co-habiting ☐  
Separated ☐  
Divorced ☐  
Widowed ☐
8. When you started your business did you have children? Yes ☐ No ☐  
If yes, how many? And how old were they when you started your business?
9. Prior to starting your business did you have a job? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 9.b) Did you work full time or part-time?
- 9.b) (i) If you worked part-time, what were your reasons for this?
- 9.c) What industry did you work in?
- 9.d) What type of role did you have?

10. a) Were the skills gained in your previous experience useful to you in setting up your business?

10.b) Did your previous experience influence your decision to start your own business?

11. Why did you give up your job?

11.b) What time period elapsed between leaving your job and starting your business? Why did you take so long/little time?

12. Why did you decide to start your business?

### **Family**

13. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

14. What is your position in the family? (Eldest, youngest, etc)

15. What was the highest level of education that your father achieved?

16. What is/was your father's occupation?

17. What was the highest level of education that your mother achieved?

18. What is/was your mother's occupation?

19. Were any of your immediate (*Mother, brother, father, sister*) family members self-employed? Yes ☐ No ☐  
If yes, who?

20. Were any of your extended (*Aunt, uncle, cousin, grandparents, etc*) family members self-employed? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, who?

21. Did the presence of entrepreneurial family members impact on your decision to become self-employed? Yes ☐ No ☐  
Please elaborate
22. Did your parents encourage you to follow a particular career path?  
Yes ☐ No ☐  
If so, what career path was this?
23. Was the decision to go into business supported by your family? Yes ☐ No ☐  
Please elaborate
24. When you were growing up, did you have any specific chores/duties in the family? Yes ☐ No ☐  
What were these chores? How did you feel about these chores?
24. b) Would you say tasks were equally divided in your home among boys/girls?  
Yes ☐ No ☐  
How did the division of labour make you feel?
24. c) Were tasks assigned by gender in your home? (*Eg: Girls did washup and boys mowed the lawn*) Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, how did this make you feel about your role as a woman?
- 24.d) What was your mother's role in the family? How did you feel about her role?

### **Social Class**

25. What would you say your family's social background was?
- |                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Working Class      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lower Middle Class | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Upper Middle Class | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Upper Class        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
26. Did you find that your family's social background impacted on your education?  
How?
- 26.b) Did you find that you family's social background impacted on your access to opportunities as you grew up? How?

26. c) Did you find that your family's social background impacted on your career choices? How?

27. Did your family's social background impact on your decision to run your own business? Please elaborate

### **Education**

28. Did you attend a mixed or single sex school?

29. Did you attend a religious or community school?

30. Did you have the option to take any of these subjects at your school and if so please indicate which subjects you took?

Subject	OPTION TO TAKE SUBJECT		SUBJECT TAKEN
	Yes	No	
Mathematics			
Information Technology			
Science			
Biology			
Chemistry			
Physics			
Technical Graphics			
Construction Studies/Woodwork			
Metalwork/Engineering			
Home Economics			
Art			
Languages			
Drama			
Social Science			

31. Did you participate in sports while in school? Yes ☐ No ☐  
What sports did you take part in? Were these sports single or mixed sex?



32. Did you participate in any extra curricular activity while in school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what activities?

33. Can you remember being given any career guidance in school? Yes ☐ No ☐

What advice were you given?

33. b) Did your Career Guidance advice influence your decision to go into business?  
Why?

34. What is the highest level of education that you achieved?

If you attended third level, what subject did you study?

35. Were your studies related to your current business?

## Media

36. Did you have access to a TV when you were an adolescent? Yes ☐ No ☐

37.b) Did you watch many hours of TV? Yes ☐ No ☐

How many hours?

1-5 ☐ 5-10 ☐ 10-15 ☐ 15-25 ☐ 25+ ☐

37. What were your favourite TV shows? Why?

38. Who was your favourite TV character? Why?

39. How often did you go to the cinema when you were growing up?

40. Did admire any actor/actress from the movies?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, who and why?

41. Did you have access to a radio when you were growing up? Yes ☐ No ☐

42.b) What was your favourite radio programme? Why?

42.c) Who was your favourite radio DJ and why?

43. Who was your favourite band/singer? Why?

44. What were your favourite books when you were growing up?
45. Did you identify with any characters from these books? Yes ☐ No ☐  
If yes, who is this character and why?
46. What newspapers did you read when you were growing up? What image of women did these papers portray?
47. What magazines did you read? Why?
48. Did you read comics as an adolescent? Yes ☐ No ☐  
What comics?
49. Did you identify with any characters from these comics? Yes ☐ No ☐  
If yes, who is this character and why?
50. Did you have a childhood hero who was in the public eye? Yes ☐ No ☐  
If yes, who was it and why?
51. Did you have a role model who you aspired to? Who and why?
52. Did any of the role models that you have described influence your decision to go into business for yourself? How?

### **Peers**

53. Would you say you were a 'tomboy' or a 'girly girl' growing up?
54. Were your playmates mostly:  
Male ☐ Female ☐ Mixed Gender ☐
55. To what extent would you say your peer group influenced your decision to set up a business?

## 56. Motivators/Influencers

Please indicate the importance of each motivating factor to you when you started your business.

Motivator	Very Important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
To advance myself					
To make money					
To earn a good living from the business					
To expand my professional network					
To achieve a balance between work and family					
To have a better lifestyle					
To have more time for leisure activities					
To give something back to the community					
To be my own boss					
To have greater independence					
For self achievement					
Because of economic necessity					
Because of redundancy					
Because of lack of opportunities in previous career					
Because of dissatisfaction with previous career					
Saw an opportunity					
Something I always wanted to do					
To grow a business					
A desire for recognition					
Other(s) (Please specify)					

*List of motivations compiled from literature on motivations of female entrepreneurs such as Buttner and Rosen, 1989;*

*Buttner 1993; Brush and Hisrich, 1991; Buttner and Moore, 1997; Catley and Hamilton, 1998*

57. When did you first realise that you wanted to start your own business? What prompted the realisation?

58. a) Which of the following factors had the strongest impact on your decision to go into business for yourself?

- |                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Family                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Class                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Media                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A combination of these factors | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None of these factors          | <input type="checkbox"/> |

56.b) Please explain

## APPENDIX C

### Consent Form

Margaret Durand,  
WIT Centre for Entrepreneurship,  
Carriganore Campus,  
Waterford

«FirstName\_» «Surname\_»,  
«Business\_Name\_»,  
«Address\_»,  
«Address1»,  
«Address2»

### RE: Letter of Consent

Dear «FirstName\_»,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview as part of my Masters by Research studies. My study is entitled '*The Impact of Socialisation on the Decision of a Female to Become an Entrepreneur*'.

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of various socialisation influences on women in business. Socialisation can be described as the process through which individuals learn their position and role in society. The purpose of the interviews is to explore your socialisation experiences and to understand how these experiences may have influenced your decision to start a business.

You can be assured that any information given in the course of this interview will be treated in the strictest of confidence and your anonymity will be preserved. The contents of the interview will be available only to myself and my supervisor. Excerpts from the interview may be used in my research, but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included in the research.

Thank you for your participation in my research it is very much appreciated. Please sign below if you are happy to be involved in the research.

-----

**I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary. I have been informed that I can withdraw from the study at any time in the process. I understand that my contribution to the study will be treated with the strictest confidence.**

Participant Signature:..... Date:.....

Researcher Signature:..... Date:.....

# APPENDIX D

## Sample Pages from Analysis Document

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Q.3 & 4	Current Business	First Business	Previous Business									
2		Description	Industry		Y	N		Description	Industry				
3	FE1												
4	FE2												
5	FE3												
6	FE4												
7	FE5												
8	FE6												
9	FE7												
10	FE8												
11													
12	Q.5	Length of time in business											
13		Years											
14	FE1												
15	FE2												
16	FE3												
17	FE4												
18	FE5												
19	FE6												
20	FE7												
21	FE8												
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36													

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Q.7	Marital Status starting business	Single	Married/Co-Habiting	Separated	Divorced	Widowed							
2														
3	FE1													
4	FE2													
5	FE3													
6	FE4													
7	FE5													
8	FE6													
9	FE7													
10	FE8													
11														
12	Q.8	Children when started business												
13		Yes	No		How many?	How old?								
14	FE1													
15	FE2													
16	FE3													
17	FE4													
18	FE5													
19	FE6													
20	FE7													
21	FE8													
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F56	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	0.9	<b>Job prior to starting business?</b>										
2		Yes	No	Fulltime	Part-time	If part-time, why?						
3	FE1											
4	FE2											
5	FE3											
6	FE4											
7	FE5											
8	FE6											
9	FE7											
10	FE8											
11												
12	0.9.b	<b>Industry</b>		<b>Role</b>								
13												
14	FE1											
15	FE2											
16	FE3											
17	FE4											
18	FE5											
19	FE6											
20	FE7											
21	FE8											
22												
23	0.10	<b>Skills useful in setting up business?</b>										
24		Yes	No	Reasoning								
25	FE1											
26	FE2											
27	FE3											
28	FE4											
29	FE5											
30	FE6											
31	FE7											
32	FE8											
33												

H < > | Q.3, 4 & 5 Business data | Q. 7 & 8 Marital Status | **Q.9,10 & 11 Previous Experience** |

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11														
12	0.24.b)	Chores equally divided among girls & boys?												
13		Yes	No	N/A	Feelings about division of labour?									
14	FE1													
15	FE2													
16	FE3													
17	FE4													
18	FE5													
19	FE6													
20	FE7													
21	FE8													
22														
23	0.24.c)	Chores assigned by gender?												
24		Yes	No	N/A	Feeling about role as woman?									
25	FE1													
26	FE2													
27	FE3													
28	FE4													
29	FE5													
30	FE6													
31	FE7													
32	FE8													
33														
34	0.24.d)	Mother's role?												
35		Role			Feelings about role									
36	FE1													
37	FE2													
38	FE3													
39	FE4													
40	FE5													
41	FE6													
Q.19, 20, 21 SelfEmployed faml Q.22 & 23 Q.24 Family Roles Q.25,26&27 FSB Q														
Ready														
CAPS NUM														