THE FOUR SHIFTS: FAMILY, WORK, ONLINE LEARNING AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION FOR FEMALE IN-SERVICE TEACHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2008

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The use of technology in distance education has been lauded as one the greatest changes to teaching and learning. This change has been credited with making it possible for working adults to pursue higher education from the comfort of their own homes. In this study, I explored the impact of integrating technology to a distance education program for female in-service teachers at the University of Botswana. It is argued in this research that the experiences of women with juggling family, work, distance learning and social commitments (four shifts) have largely been ignored in the zeal for technology.

I also argued that gender is an important factor in technology integration because of its historical bias against women. The sociocultural issues associated with the transfer of Western technologies to less-developed countries were also discussed. The study was framed by four research questions; 1) How does learning at a distance affect full-time work and family responsibilities? 2) How does studying at a distance impact the women’s participation in their communities? 3) What are the issues associated with the use of Western instructional technologies for women in less-developed contexts? 4) Can participants benefit from online communities of practice? The qualitative research involved ten female teachers and used unstructured interviews, observations and document analysis as data collection methods.
It was found that women experienced problems with childcare issues while attending tutorial sessions. It was also noted that the problem emanates from a failure to recognize domestic responsibilities as significant work that impacts women’s performance elsewhere. The women experienced difficulty managing work, domestic responsibilities and distance learning. Additionally, distance learning made it difficult for them to participate in social activities that are a significant part of their culture. The study also found that there was a tendency towards compartmentalization of the four shifts rather than recognizing them as interrelated.

The study concluded that for distance learning geared towards women to succeed it has to accommodate their multitasking lives. It was also concluded that it was crucial to create a network of resources and communities of practice to support the women in distance learning.
DEDICATION

For Chapson Jabavu Butale

in memoriam
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I begin by extending my gratitude to some people who in one way or another made this supported me through out this journey. First and foremost I would like to thank my committee for working tirelessly to make this a reality. I want to begin by thanking my adviser Dr. Richard Voithofer without whom this work would not have been possible. Your guidance and constructive criticism through out this study was invaluable. Your patience and reassurance kept me on the right track and for that I remain forever thankful.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................ ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION ................................................................................................................... iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ....................................................................................................... v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA ............................................................................................................................... vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS ................................................................................................... viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 .................................................................................................................... 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem statement ....................................................................................................... 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background .................................................................................................................. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diploma in Primary Education .............................................................................. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale ....................................................................................................................... 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for the study ........................................................................................................ 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework ............................................................................................... 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of the study ............................................................................................... 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions ..................................................................................................... 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology ............................................................................................................... 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions and limitations ...................................................................................... 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational definitions .............................................................................................. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance ................................................................................................................ 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 .................................................................................................................. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEW OF LITERATURE ............................................................................................ 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcolonial theory: a brief history .......................................................................... 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and women in history .............................................................................. 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first moment: pre-colonial education ................................................................ 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The second moment: colonial education ................................................................... 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The third moment: postcolonial education .............................................................. 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fourth moment: globalization ............................................................................ 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and globalization ............................................................................... 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and cultural hybridity ........................................................................... 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and technology ............................................................................................ 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity in global times ............................................................................................. 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s lives and multitasking ............................................................................ 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and gender ................................................................................................. 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminization and professionalization of teaching .................................................. 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why distance education? ......................................................................................... 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social participation ................................................................................................... 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and agency ..................................................................................................... 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of practice ......................................................................................... 58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

viii
Summary of literature review ....................................................................................... 62  
CHAPTER 3 ..................................................................................................................... 65  
METHODOLOGY ........................................................................................................... 65  
Site and entry ................................................................................................................ 66  
Time in the field............................................................................................................ 70  
Sampling and data collection....................................................................................... 71  
Focus groups ................................................................................................................ 73  
Study participants demographics............................................................................... 75  
Unstructured interviews ............................................................................................. 78  
Participant observation ............................................................................................. 80  
Document analysis ..................................................................................................... 83  
Data management and safe keeping......................................................................... 85  
Trustworthiness and reliability .................................................................................. 86  
Timeline ...................................................................................................................... 88  
Data analysis .............................................................................................................. 89  
Crisis of representation and self-reflection.............................................................. 92  
Chapter summary ..................................................................................................... 94  
CHAPTER 4 ..................................................................................................................... 96  
DATA ANALYSIS.......................................................................................................... 96  
Upbringing and identity formation ......................................................................... 97  
Multitasking: Work, family and distance learning .................................................. 100  
Time management in distance education ............................................................... 103  
Childcare and the working mother ......................................................................... 106  
What price do the students pay? ............................................................................. 110  
Distance learning and social participation ............................................................ 112  
Communication as botho ....................................................................................... 115  
Paying condolences as performance of botho........................................................ 117  
Distance learning and social issues ......................................................................... 120  
Adult learner motivation .......................................................................................... 122  
Work environment and learner motivation ............................................................. 124  
Communities of Practice as motivational system .................................................. 126  
Knowledge sharing forum ....................................................................................... 127  
Virtual versus face to face groups ......................................................................... 128  
Online learning and time management .................................................................. 130  
Technology and women’s work ............................................................................. 131  
Computer ownership vs. basic needs .................................................................... 132  
Resource sharing in distance education .................................................................. 133  
Technophobia or other issues? .............................................................................. 136  
Document analysis .................................................................................................. 138  
Chapter summary .................................................................................................... 140  
CHAPTER 5 ................................................................................................................... 142  
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .......................................................................... 142  
Culture and identity ................................................................................................ 144  
The education of women ......................................................................................... 146  
Global mobilization versus local tensions ............................................................. 147  
Social participation .................................................................................................. 148
Intersecting work worlds ................................................................. 150
Distance learning and domestic work ........................................ 150
Childcare and the working mother ............................................ 151
Can integration of online learning help? ................................. 153
Gender and computer anxiety ...................................................... 154
Implications for practice .............................................................. 161
The DPE as a Community of Practice ........................................ 161
Implications for global feminisms .............................................. 163
Theorizing multiple roles ............................................................. 167
Social participation as COP ......................................................... 170
Implications for practice in the DPE .......................................... 171
Resource sharing ........................................................................ 171
Decentralization of tutorial sessions ......................................... 172
DPE flexibility and learner retention ........................................ 173
Learner support ......................................................................... 173
Suggestions and Implications for future research .................... 174
Final Thoughts ........................................................................... 177
LIST OF REFERENCES ................................................................. 179
APPENDIX A ............................................................................. 190
CONSENT FORM ................................................................. 190
APPENDIX B ................................................................. 193
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ..................................................... 193
APPENDIX C ................................................................. 195
FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL .............................................. 195
APPENDIX D ................................................................. 196
OBSERVATION GUIDE ....................................................... 196
APPENDIX E ................................................................. 197
CODE BOOK ........................................................................ 197
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem statement

The introduction of technology to education has been touted as one of the greatest innovations in teaching and learning especially in distance education in the past 20 years (Van de Brande, 1993). Instructional technologies have significantly transformed the delivery and experience of distance education and to some extent made it more appealing for working adults to pursue higher education from the convenience of their homes (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). Moore & Kearsley (2005) further point out that “the use of computer networking for distance education got a big boost with the arrival of the World Wide Web, a seemingly magical system that allowed a document to be accessed by different computers separated by any distance…” (p. 43). Many proponents of technology sing its praises and how it has created the “communication revolution” and “the death of distance” (Cairncross, 2001).

However, Kramarae (2001) argues that these discussions of the benefits of online learning rarely address women’s experiences with this mode of learning. She argues that online learning is more complicated than it is purported to be particularly when it is used by women. Kramarae (2001) argues that when technology enters a woman’s life it has a
potential to be an added burden when it finds a life already full of multiple responsibilities such as domestic responsibilities, full time work and other social obligations. The need to investigate the implications of online learning as value laden media and what this means for professional women particularly in non-western contexts has remained largely unexplored. This research was intended to explore the interplay of culture and technology and how the issues associated with the two can affect women studying online. The main focus of the study was to explore the intertwining lives of women at home, work, distance learning and social networks. The study looked at implications of integrating technology into the Diploma in Primary Education (DPE) in Botswana and how this would affect female learners.

For technology to effectively promote learning it has to resonate with the user’s culture (Ladson-Billings, 2001) because knowledge construction is shaped by the learner’s sociocultural context. As a result this study sought the narratives of women in the DPE on the role culture plays in their decision making. It also looked into the implications of these influences on the integration of imported learning technologies. Culture is an important factor in any instructional program because learning and knowledge creation are historically collective and social (Kerr, 2005).

According to Kerr (2005) “the development of new ideas and perspectives is ‘socially constructed’ by all the actors present in a situation” (p. 1008). The argument suggests that culture shapes and influences an individual’s attitudes in both the creation and understanding of information. It is crucial for distance educators to consider the cultural context and the social roles it assigns their target population to avoid conflicting expectations between distance education (DE) on the one hand and other social
institutions. Cultural considerations are important in distance education because it takes place in a space that is normally reserved for family work and social participation. Failure to consider the roles and commitment expectations Tswana cultures impose on women was a constant source of friction because DE occupied the time for social participation. Considering the cultural context can also create room for negotiating space for DE without compromising other institutions within the learners’ networks. Women studying in distance education face problems associated with requirements to be physically present at college campuses for face-to-face tutorials which are in conflict with their many responsibilities. Technology mediated distance education is often described as flexible and portable therefore convenient for working adults. In the DPE the fact that the instructional materials are print based and there is a mandatory two week face-to-face tutorial required four times a year can be inconvenient. Its flexibility is limited as compared to those programs that include online components to make students more independent of the institution.

Historically, distance education has been used as a way of educating teachers due to its low cost and ability to train massive numbers of people (UNESCO, 2001). However, in spite of the wide discussions on the diffusion and use of technology (Cairncross, 2001; Moore & Kearsley, 2005) the study of gender specific and culturally situated experiences of women with distance education remain largely underdeveloped (Kramarae, 2001; Bush, 1983). This research therefore looked into how the Diploma in Primary Education could draw from its female learner’s lived experiences within different social networks and integrate these into a relevant online learning program.

1 Botswana is made up of several language groups some of which are not Tswana speaking for discussion purposes only I will reflect this diversity through the use of the plural Tswana cultures to refer to all cultures within the country.
Background

After Botswana attained independence from the British colonial rulers in 1966 the newly independent country experienced a shortage of trained citizen personnel. According to Tlou (1976) it became evident that the best way to alleviate this problem was to embark on a large scale education initiative. The Botswana government later introduced free universal basic education which mandated that every Motswana² child of school going age should be enrolled in school. The ensuing increase in enrolment gave rise to a shortage of trained primary school teachers. In response, the Ministry of Education (MOE) employed a number of measures to train teachers beginning with the distance education program at the Francistown Teacher Training College. The institution was temporarily turned into a dual mode (offering both distance and face to face education) institution to help meet this demand. According to Nage-Sibande (2005) the college ran a primary school teacher training program through distance education from 1968-1973 which had a graduation rate of eighty eight percent. The program was a more traditional form of distance education or correspondence education which entailed teaching and learning through the mail substituted by radio broadcast lessons (Nage-Sibande, 2005).

In 1999, the MOE through the Department of Teacher Training and Development (TT&D) collaborated with the University of Botswana’s Distance Education Unit (now known as the Department of Distance Education [DDE]) and embarked on a massive in-service teacher training program. According to Kamau (2001) this program was aimed at

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² The term Motswana refers to someone from Botswana.
upgrading all primary school teachers who were under qualified to diploma level\(^3\). Nage-Sibande (2005) stated that these teachers were estimated to be approximately eight thousand which meant that full time training was not financially feasible and also beyond the infrastructural capacity of the Teacher Training Colleges. Additionally distance education became the most feasible solution for the TT&D because they would be able to train the teachers without losing their services in the schools.

Kamau (2001) related that DPE’s instructional delivery system is characterized by print modules supplemented by audiotapes and face-to-face tutorials. The tutorials are held at the four primary school teacher training colleges (Francistown, Serowe, Tlokweng and Lobatse) and the two secondary school colleges of education (Molepolole and Tonota). Primary schools are spread throughout the country therefore it is not uncommon for teachers to work far from their home village making participation in community functions next to impossible. The requirement to attend face-to-face tutorial sessions during school vacations further complicates the situation as it leaves little time for them to fully participate in the activities within their social networks.

Maintaining active social networks in Tswana cultures is viewed as an integral part of performing botho. Botho is a Tswana cultural concept that emphasizes maintaining cordial inter-personal relationships within community members through social networking. These social networks are both spaces for socializing and also a support structure for the community members. Even though it is not explicitly stated that participation is compulsory, it is expected and failure to participation can lead to some form of social backlash including community members limiting support in times of need.

\(^3\) The DPE by distance is a four year program aimed at upgrading unqualified teachers in the Botswana public primary school system. At the end of the program the learners graduate with a Diploma in Primary Education.
One participant in this study related that faced with demands from distance learning stopped attending funerals and when her family was bereaved some of her community members did not come to support her. Comaroff & Comaroff (2001) describe social inactivity in Tswana culture as unacceptable and equivalent to “social death”. The cultural expectation to perform botho through participating in social events (which take place over weekends) predicates the need for distance educators to set parameters to prevent the learners’ social inactivity.

The Diploma in Primary Education

The Diploma in Primary Education (DPE) is a program that is aimed at training teachers within the Botswana public primary school system who was qualification below diploma level. According to the University of Botswana website, (2008) the program curriculum is comprised of 14 compulsory modules that are studied during the first two years of the program. These modules include Setswana, English, Math, Science, Agriculture, Communication and Study Skills, Home Economics and Religious Education. Additionally, it includes professional courses such as educational psychology and administration. From the third year the learners select an area of specialization in a combination of subject areas such as Math and Science or Setswana and English.

The instructional materials used in the DPE are designed by part-time writers drawn from different faculties within the University of Botswana and teacher training colleges under the supervision of the Department of Distance Education.
The DPE is taught by part-time tutors who are recruited from the faculty of both secondary and teacher training colleges. The majority of these tutors have Master’s degrees in the areas that are taught in the DPE.

Rationale

The DDE is planning to introduce online learning to the DPE program to improve accessibility and service delivery. In light of this development, this study took a closer look at technology and the likely effects (both negative and positive) it may have in the women’s lives. For purposes of this research, technology was used to refer to computing technologies such as the internet and its associated uses for online learning and communication. It has been argued (Damarin, 1998; Haraway, 1998; Turkle, 1998) that technology historically excludes women because of its roots in the fields of the military and engineering, which are dominated by men. Gurak (2001) observes that the internet emerged from the fields of science, engineering, and defense in the 1950s, which are to date still dominated by men. Any knowledge creation (including technology) is shaped by its creator’s situated knowledge and gender, therefore a system created by men will reflect their worldviews.

Margolis & Fisher (2003) found that most girls and women are consumers of technology rather than creators. They further argue that “if boys invent things, girls use things boys invent, a cyberspace culture will inevitably reflect the desires and sensibilities of males to the exclusion and often denigration of females” (Margolis & Fisher, 2003, p. 12, emphasis authors’). It is important to also note that the gender disadvantages are not only in the technology but also from sociocultural discourses (including schools) which
stereotype science, technology and math (STEM) fields as male domains. The cultural stereotypes contribute to the minimal participation of women in the STEM fields thus denying them the opportunity to contribute their perspectives in the creation of technology. Gurak (2001) states that the internet was developed in the 1950s in the military and any understanding of the technology and the viewpoints of its creators should be informed by the gender relations of that time.

In discussing the role of history in understanding the ideology embedded in any technology, Gurak (2001) argues, “Because technologies are created by people and within the norms of a given period, a history of the internet must ask about the culture of this time, particularly of the engineering world” (p.67). Fox (2006) asserts that the gender composition of people in engineering is important because it (engineering) is at the center of the development and application of technology. It is important therefore when considering integrating technology for women to consider how to bridge these inequalities. Botswana’s National Statistics on Education (2004) indicated that 78.8% of primary school teachers were female which makes attending to gender a significant factor in creating an online learning program.

A careful assessment of the cultural biases of technologies (Moyo, 2004; Sehoole & Moja, 2004) and the possible impact on non-western populations such as Botswana is crucial because information and communication technologies (ICTs) are typically developed in the West and exported without culturally specific adaptations to other locations. The problem according to Taylor & Konstantellou (1990) is that embedded within each technology products are their creators’ world-views influenced by their culture and gendered social standpoint.
When these technologies are transferred to different cultural contexts they are likely to clash with that culture in unanticipated ways affecting their adoption and diffusion.

Cook & Isgro (2005) found a common misconception about technology was that “it is presumed as a constant when a closer look at ICT development projects reveals that uses and understandings of technology vary with space and time” (p. 84). This means that the effects technology would differ from one context to another. It also means that how technology is received is also determined by what the particular society is experiencing at the time. For example, if a society is facing serious economic challenges people may choose to forgo access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) as cost cutting measure. At that point in time what matters is survival not whether they get to access their email.

Discourses on the use of technology (Van den Brande, 1993; Akubue, 2002) are primarily focused on access to technological hardware and software as indicators of progress towards the solution to the digital divide especially with regards to Less Developed Countries (LDC). Warschauer (2002) pointed out that the assessment of which side of the digital divide a community is located is mainly based on the ownership or access to computers thus ignoring economic, social and political issues that influence technology ownership and use. This line of thinking focuses on technology as a tool and not as a social construct that bears the cultural imprints of its creator and their knowledge system (Taylor & Konstantellou, 1990). Zhuang & Thomas (1987) write that sociocultural context plays a primary role in how people construct knowledge and that failure to consider this element has been a downfall of many technology transfer efforts from the West to less developed countries.
In addition to the issues associated with technology discussed above this study was also concerned with bringing the tendencies of both technology (Bush, 1983; Sanders, 2005) and Tswana cultures (Schapera, 1955; Peters, 1983) to subjugate women to the center of the discussions of the integration of technology into distance education. This is intended to avoid perpetuating culturally ascribed gender role stereotypes by making these roles a part of the discussion. Bush (1983) writes;

Technology always enters into the present culture, accepting and exacerbating the existing norms and values. In a society characterized by a sex-role division of labor, any tool or technique—it has valence, remember—will have dramatically different effects on men than on women. (p. 161)

It is the gender specific effects of technology that Bush discusses that were one of the key concerns of this study. I was interested in looking at the complications that result from the encounter of imported technology and local cultures in relation to women’s lives.

This research also focused on analyzing technology as a complicated system which places the creator and implementer (mostly men) in a position of power to decide what qualifies as knowledge and what should be excluded. The awareness of technology as a power infused knowledge system and a consideration of the subject positions the women in the study occupied at different points within the power relations in their society (Foucault, 1972; 1976/1990) could contribute to a culturally relevant online learning program.
Need for the study

The discourses about the convenience of online learning for training working professionals hardly ever consider how women experience this kind of learning “Few researchers have studied the way women handle the multiple responsibilities of income provider, parent and student” (Kramarae, 2001, p. 31). Based on Kramarae’s argument I also explored the subject positions that the study participants occupy in different social institutions and their impact on the women’s identity formation. Furthermore I looked into how technology could exacerbate the gender stereotypes in these institutions. It was important therefore to trouble the notion of technology as a sure way into the “information superhighway” and look at it as a power infused knowledge system which has the ability to further marginalize women. These possible complications if left unexamined have the potential to impede the success of any online learning program.

The introduction of technology for women finds lives, which are already complicated by culturally ascribed roles that are characterized by multiple responsibilities. The assumption is that since online learning is taking place away from the classroom it doesn’t interfere with their work and also leaves the participants with free time. Kramarae (2001) however, found that this is problematic for women “Institutions historically have been more concerned with separating the public, linear, formal work world than integrating the traditionally repetitive, multi-tasking, ‘feminine’ world and its rituals of the household, childrearing, and the private sphere” (p. 29).

The lack of consideration of other significant parts of the women’s lives such as domestic responsibilities and social obligations leaves women overworked. It is crucial to consider the role of women’s domestic responsibilities when consideration
implementation of online learning. This is necessary because they have implications on how much time (if any) a woman who is juggling teaching responsibilities and domestic chores would have to devote to online learning. It becomes an even bigger issue if the women do not have a choice to opt out of a DE program because they need to devote time to acquire the necessary skills for their job. The assumption that the domestic space (where distance learning also takes place) is “free time” is clearly a misconception. Kramarae (2001) argues that domestic responsibilities are a full time job that takes a significant amount of time.

For the women in the DPE it was also important to explore the role of social participation which is a significant part of Tswana cultures. It is important to note here that Botswana also has other language groups that do not consider Setswana as their first language (about ten). These other languages where made invisible after independence in the name of building a unified nation. The use of the term “Tswana culture” in this study is not any reflection of my subscription to that homogeneous view but to simplify my discussions hence the use of “Tswana cultures” in some parts of the text. In fact, before independence some languages such as Ikalanga were used in the curriculum in schools in the Bukalanga region of Botswana. Performing botho through social participation requires time because social events such as attending funerals take place over the weekends the same time slot that is now occupied by DE. Given this cultural context it is important for any learning initiative to consider how technology will factor into these multidimensional lives of the in-service teachers. This study was important as together with the participants we took a hard look at the women’s lives through their narratives to explore what a creation of gender responsive online program will have to consider.

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4 See a discussion of the use of Setswana and English as the official languages of instruction in Chapter 4.
Theoretical framework

The study was explored from postcolonial feminist perspectives which “…take the experience of Western colonialism and its contemporary effects as a high priority in the process of setting up a speaking position from which to articulate a standpoint of cultural, national, regional or social identity” (Schutte, 2000, p.59). This theory argues that to discuss issues affecting women in LDC it is fundamental to center local knowledge, cultures and the significance of the power relations within which women in these societies make sense of their lives. In this research technology and its use in distance education were looked at as gender issues whose impact is influenced by the sociocultural positions and identities of its users.

It was important to look at the impact of technology on women in the DPE through a postcolonial feminist lens because according to Cook & Isgro (2005) discussions of the digital divide “position women in LDCs as always or already in need of ICTs to improve the conditions of their lives” (p. 77). By so doing it is assumed that there is a homogeneous group whose problems and solutions are already known and have one solution. In order to effectively paint a picture of the women’s lives I also looked at the intersection of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial cultures and how they shaped the Tswana society over time. Under this framework I also explored the contribution of these significant eras to the shifting roles of Batswana women’s lives. The discussion of the three eras was important because they have contributed to identity formation for the female in-service teachers. Additionally, the global era or globalization driven by technology is inevitably also making its mark in their lives. I also argued that the intersection of the four eras which involve contact with other cultures result in hybrid
identities. Some postcolonial theorists argue that contact with other cultures through colonialism resulted in cultural borrowings therefore no culture can claim authenticity instead they are hybrids (Bhabha, 1994). These hybrid identities are an inevitable result of the colonial experience and globalization therefore they are important to discuss in conjunction with technology (Srebemy, 2006).

Objectives of the study

In order to discuss the above issues the following objectives were used to solicit the participants’ narratives on their experiences juggling their multiple roles. The objectives were also aimed at discussing the place of technology in their studies;

The first objective of the study was to bring to light how identity and experience influence learning in an online teacher training curriculum. These identities are usually formed as an individual interacts with other members of their respective communities. For an example, at work they may take on the identity of a teacher or the school principal, at home they may be the head of the household and a parent. Evidently, these different identities overlap as they move from one social institution to another and they all help shape their attitudes towards distance learning and ultimately technology.

Another objective was to analyze the power relations embedded in an imported technology including the resulting tensions and frictions that arise from interaction between the local cultures and imported knowledge systems. Using technology designed for other populations can create conflicts with the default users’ knowledge system and result in resistance. For example, the creator of a technology product may assume that because of its portability it is suitable for individual learners. This may be the case in
cultures where it is perceived normal to be in a social space like a bus and actually work on one’s laptop. However, this takes on a different meaning in a communal society like Botswana which emphasizes social networking. In this cultural context your behavior might be assumed as anti-social. This example, no matter how trivial it may seem indicates how what may look like an ingenious idea in one location may actually be culturally awkward in another.

Thirdly I sought the narratives of the women’s lives in relation to their sociocultural context in order to understand how online learning may affect their lives. Although the women in the study were all teachers and distance learners they each had their individual stories emanating from their lived experiences. Since experience like identity is influenced by the social context and relationships within the women’s lives, a number of different life circumstances such as upbringing and other experiences help shape their outlook. It was important to me to reveal their individuality to avoid the usual assumption that postcolonial feminists such as Mohanty (1995) accuse some Western feminists of; “the production of the ‘Third World woman’ as a singular, monolithic subject”.

The fourth objective of the study was to move women’s concerns and experiences from the margins to the center of the discussions of the digital divide. Given the fact that most technologies are created by men and exclude women’s situated knowledge this study sought to bring women’s respective knowledge systems to the core of the discourses on integrating technology.

The last objective was aimed at finding ways technology could be implemented effectively for the women in the DPE. This was important because the Central Statistics
Office (2004) indicated that of the teachers who needed upgrading to diploma level about 83.6% were women which means that most of them will go through the DPE program. Given these circumstances an assessment of technology and its impact on women was fundamental to the study.

Research questions

This research investigated the narratives of the female teachers’ lives as distance learners and how these relate to other subject positions they occupied in their society. I also looked at how the inclusion of their multiple identities could contribute to an effective online learning program. To find information on the characteristics of these learners the following questions guided the study;

1) How does learning at a distance affect full-time work and family responsibilities?
   a) How do participants juggle work and study?

2) How does studying at a distance impact the women’s participation in their communities?
   a) How can the women’s multiple and competing social responsibilities be incorporated into the in-service teacher training program?
   b) Can online learning create time for social participation?

3) What are the issues associated with the use of Western instructional technologies for women in less-developed contexts?
   a) Is technology an additional burden or can it alleviate the women’s workload?
   b) How can technology be used to improve learning and not perpetuate socially ascribed gender stereotypes?
4) Can participants benefit from online communities of practice/learning?

The above research questions helped me to break down the objectives and explore them in depth throughout the data collection exercise.

Methodology

The questions in the study were explored through qualitative research methods that included focus groups, document analysis, observations and individual interviews with the participants. I started off with four focus groups which comprised six participants at a time. At the beginning of the study, the distance learners were attending tutorial sessions at the colleges therefore the sampling for the focus groups and the interviews took place at those locations.

I later followed up with those participants who agreed to participate in the study to the schools where they teach for individual interviews and observations. Some of the interviews and observations took place in the participants’ home. I also had an opportunity to observe some participants at social events. I audio recorded the interviews and manually transcribed them. During observations I took notes to record what was going on in the location and later used them to make follow up interviews if I observed something that needed clarification. I also carried out a document analysis by analyzing some letters and official documents on education in Botswana in order to learn if they addressed gender in teacher education.

I analyzed the data corpus by first putting each participant’s response to an individual question into a separate file. I then created codes that identified a major component of each question. For example under question 1, after looking through the
transcripts I found that many participants complained about not having time to spend with their children. Therefore, I use “time with children” as one of the emerging codes under the question. I used this to identify any instances where this feeling was expressed. Later I distinguished between those who had the time and those who did not and the quality of time spent. This practice helped me to eventually reduce the data to focus on those responses that helped answer the research questions.

Assumptions and limitations

This study was based on the assumption that the current distance education program (DPE) does not support the needs of the female in-service teachers. The program does not accommodate their multiple positions in the domestic work, paid employment and social networks and the embedded power relations within these different social institutions in the Botswana society. However, I was aware of the possibility that the women may have different perspectives on the program and different concerns besides the ones raised in the study’s research questions. There was also a possibility that the participants may not be willing to narrate their life stories in enough detail to answer my research questions.

Another assumption of this research was that participants who work and live in villages would have different experiences from those based in cities such as access to fully equipped libraries and proximity to the institutional learner support personnel. It was also assumed that the pressure for social participation would be experienced differently by urban and rural based teachers.
I supposed that there were some disadvantages that the learners based in villages experienced compared to their city based colleagues and that technology can help bridge this divide through allowing online access to the library for instance or other learner support structures.

A large part of this study required that the participants discuss their domestic lives such as their marital status or role sharing with their partner. There was a possibility that they could withhold some experiences in their lives that they viewed too painful or sensitive to share with me. I therefore went into the field with an awareness that the narratives that they share with me could be limited to what they chose to reveal. The likelihood of participants concealing some information that could have a significant impact on the study was also a possibility. I was also working under the assumption that these women would share my views that Tswana culture is generally oppressive towards women and that they are burdened with culturally ascribed gender roles. However, I was aware of the possibility that they may not find their life situations problematic.

Due to financial constraints I stayed in the field three months which meant that some participants who take longer to warm up to people did not have the time to establish sufficient trust to reveal some deeply personal information. Another limitation was that the bulk of the study took place during the school term which meant that the teachers where fully engaged in their teaching responsibilities. The cancellation of appointments was always a possibility but this was the best time to find the teachers rather than during school vacations.
Operational definitions

In this research I used a number of terms that were significant to the subject of the study. The terms and the way they were used are defined below:

_Batswana:_ The term refers to people from the country of Botswana.

_Botho:_ This refers to the conception that one’s personhood is judged based on how they relate to others. One is defined as having or lacking botho depending on the frequency of their social participation and general amicable relations with members of their community.

_Communities of practice:_ The term refers to people working together to collectively create meaning and to acquire competence in a certain practice. For purposes of this study it was also primarily used to describe distance learners coming together to learn new skills. Wegner, McDermott & Snyder (2002) write that participation in communities of practice is beneficial to members because it “…gives them a chance to get help with specific problems, to learn what others are discovering, and to explore new technologies” (p. 3).

_Information and Communication technologies:_ In this study the terms ICT and technology are used to refer to computers and associated products such as the internet and its numerous uses in teaching and learning like online learning, virtual chats and discussion groups.

_Less developed countries:_ This term was used to refer to non-western countries particularly those in the South commonly referred to as “Third World countries”.

_Motswana:_ This refers to a person from Botswana.

_Rural:_ The term was used to refer to villages in Botswana.
Setswana: This term refers to one of the official languages (the other being English) used in Botswana.

Social participation: This is the notion in Tswana culture that for one to be considered a full member of their community they have to participate in communal activities such as attending funerals and weddings. Social participation involves helping out at the event taking place by providing free labor by helping to cook or serve the food. Helping out at these social events is understood as a way of banking favors and it is implicit that should a need arise the other members will return the favor. This is considered a central part of performing botho. Social participation is therefore a way for a community member to build themselves up to be considered a person of note within their community.

Tswana: It has the same meaning as Batswana but it is sometimes used to refer to the language spoken in present day Botswana and parts of South Africa. This term is mostly prevalent in colonial and early postcolonial literature on these language groups.

Tutorial session: These are mandatory two week sessions held at the six teacher training colleges which are scheduled for the end of every primary school term. These involve the teachers enrolled in the DPE attending face-to-face tutorials and taking tests and examinations on the different subject modules.

Urban: The term is used to refer to cities.

Village: These are less developed areas compared to urban areas or cities with fewer government facilities in contrast to urban areas. Village life is closer to traditional Tswana life as opposed to city life which is more Western influenced including the infrastructure and lifestyles. Populations in villages are also usually smaller than those in urban locations.
Significance

The Department of Distance Education (DDE) is planning on moving from traditional print and audiotape supplemented distance education to including online learning platforms (Nage-Sibande, 2005). This study was concerned with the tendency of institutions to ignore the needs of women when planning and integrating online learning. It was intended to help bring into the discussion the need to assess the female teachers’ experiences with working full time, distance learning, familial and social commitments and how technology can better serve them. This research sought the women’s narratives with the intention of availing the information to the stakeholders in the DPE program to assist in the creation of a gender responsive online learning program. Such a program would be one that takes into consideration their multiple responsibilities in the social institutions stated earlier and the amount of work they entail.

The findings of this study will be shared with the DDE and other stakeholders in the DPE program. The study is significant also given the fact that distance education providers tend to focus on cost effective instructional materials which at times may mean purchasing ready made course content. Given the implications of imported technology it was important to me that in the integration of technology the DDE looks beyond cutting costs and focuses on culturally relevant instructional products. The erasure of women and their life experiences from technology could be recognized and alleviated by bringing these issues into the center of the discussions of technology (Bush, 1983). In this study I explored the interplay of culture, gender and technology in the lives of women studying at a distance in a postcolonial context such as Botswana.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter I discuss the development of postcolonial theory and its relationship to Orientalism. I then discuss the rise of postcolonial feminisms and the hybridity argument in postcolonial theory. I use these theoretical frameworks to trace the lives of Batswana women through the historical moments that include pre-colonial era, colonialism, postcolonialism and globalization. I then discussed technology as a vehicle for globalization and its transformation of cultures through the flow of information resulting in cultural hybridity. I then looked at the implications of globalization and cultural hybridity on identity creation. I also talked about the impact of technology on women’s lives. Furthermore, I looked into the feminization of teaching and the implications for women’s pursuit of professional status. Additionally, I examined the how juggling the four shifts affects the women’s performance of the different responsibilities involved in each. I also argue that even though the women struggle with the multiple responsibilities they still have the agency to resist the power infused in the four shifts. Finally, I suggested that the use of communities of practice could help the women manage the four shifts.
Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (1998) explain that the term postcolonial was initially used by historians after the Second World War. They explain that Postcolonialism gained prominence as a theory in the literary world through such works as Said’s (1978) “Orientalism” which he defined as a “sign of the power exerted by the West over the orient” (Ashcroft, et al, 1998, p.168). Moore-Gilbert (1997) describes Orientalism as intended “…to study the connections between Western culture and imperialism, to argue that all Western systems of cultural description are deeply contaminated with strategies of power” (p. 34). Orientalism is concerned with the construction of the “Orient” as the other through “naturalizing assumptions and stereotypes” (Ashcroft, et al, 1998, p. 168). Gandhi (1998) argues that Orientalism reflects the beginning stages of postcolonialism.

According to Dirlik (2002) the term Postcolonialism also became associated with the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s in newly independent former colonies. It was associated with discourses of “national liberation” and “nation building” and the fight to cut political and economic control from Western colonizers. Thinkers at that time such as Frantz Fanon believed that nation building could be achieved by creating a national culture. Fanon (1994) argued that “the most urgent thing today for the intellectual is to build up his nation….The building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universal values” (p. 51-52).

The discourses of nation building were problematic because they entailed making one culture prominent at the expense of others. Loomba (1998) cited in Dirlik (2002) observed that “anticolonial nationalism also perpetuated colonial perspectives and practices of gender relations” (p. 437). The totalizing narratives on national unity through
creating a national culture were according to Dirlik (2002) contributed to “the erasure…of local cultures and the promotion of homogeneous national culture that would endow the nation with cultural identity”. It was against the backdrop of this “erasure” that postcolonial feminism emerged through the writings of non-Western women such as Spivak through her provocative work “Can the subaltern speak?” (Spivak, 1988). In this writing Spivak (1988) questioned the qualification of Western writers to represent or “speak for” the non-western subject. Mohanty (1995) additionally argues against “the production of the ‘Third World woman’ as singular and monolithic in some (Western) feminist texts” (p. 17).

It must be stated however that the development of postcolonial feminism was also in response to the continued marginalization of women’s experiences under the concept of national cultures as argued by Loomba earlier. Ashcroft et al. (1998) reflect that postcolonial feminism “has been concerned that categories like gender may sometimes be ignored within the larger formation of the colonial, and that post-colonial theory has tended to elide gender differences in constructing a single category of the colonized” (p. 103).

In conjunction with these protestations from postcolonial feminists against homogeneous discourses, postcolonial thought took another turn with some thinkers such as Homi Bhabha in his works “The Location of Culture” and “DissemiNation” respectively arguing that the premise of one national culture was flawed. Bhabha (1990) asserts that it is necessary to question the logic behind what he terms “nationalist pedagogy”. To do this, he suggests, one must “begin by questioning that progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion – the many as one – shared by organic theories of
the holism of culture and community, and theorists who treat gender, class, or race as radically ‘expressive’ social totalities” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 294). Bhabha’s arguments bring forth another side of Postcolonialism which rejects the notion of an authentic culture and instead suggests that all cultures are hybrids (discussed in more detail below) resulting from contact with other cultures.

Postcolonial feminist perspectives state that when studying the lives of women in non-western locations it is imperative to ground the analysis within the local sociocultural contexts. This is in opposition to the tendency of some Western feminists to use Western standards of “rationality and individualism” to assess the life situations of women in postcolonial contexts (Ong, 1994). The main argument of this theoretical perspective is that no discussion of issues affecting women in less-developed countries (LDC) can be fruitful without situating it within the relevant cultural context and the specific issues that affect their respective experiences and identities (Mohanty, 1995; Narayan, 2003).

The position of postcolonial feminisms is that failure to consider the context may perpetuate the colonial discourses that sought to superimpose Western ways of life on colonized societies. In studying the lives of women in a postcolonial location such as Botswana it is imperative to locate their narratives within their society’s experiences with pre-colonialism, colonialism and globalization. This will help shed light on the resulting impact on local cultures and the influences on the people’s attitudes towards western ideas and innovations such as technology.

According to postcolonial thought history plays a primary role in both knowledge and identity formation because “Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to
make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 63). Bhabha emphasizes the relevance of historical experiences such as colonialism as they help shape postcolonial identities and worldviews. The memories of experiences of domination associated with colonialism have made some people in LDC to view globalization (including technology) with caution. It has been argued that it (technology transfer) is a new form of colonialism that uses technology as a form of global occupation (Sreberny, 2006).

Even though there is growing literature on the role of technology in the lives of women in LDC (Harcourt, 1999; Hafkin, 2000; Munyua, 2000) the focus is largely on the use of technology by women in rural areas for agricultural purposes and micro level business or global feminist advocacy, while the impact on professional women such as teachers is generally overlooked. As stated earlier, women in LDC have generally been silenced by some Western feminisms in their misconception that they know their needs and can effectively represent them (Mohanty, 1995, 2003; Spivak, 1988). According to Cook & Isgro (2005) this is also the case with technology as they found that the United Nations discussions of non-western women’s technology needs failed to recognize them as diverse people with varying experiences. Spivak (1988) argues that to fight this marginalization, non-western women have to speak in their own voices, in terms that they believe better express their situated experiences. This study sought to establish what a relevant online learning program for women in the Diploma in Primary Education (DPE) would entail from their own perspectives. Following Spivak’s suggestion, the women participating in the study were given a platform to narrate their life experiences with paid employment, family, distance learning and social participation. The intention was to find out how they thought the integration of online learning could best serve them. It was
important to frame the study through the women’s narratives because Oblepias-Ramos (1998) asserts that, “for technology to be of genuine benefit to women, it must be developed within a conscious female framework” (p. 93).

Education and women in history

In order to outline the interrelation of societal changes and women’s positions and education I decided to frame Batswana women’s lives in the four significant periods in Botswana history. These historical moments are pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial and globalization. The idea of the historical moments as used here was borrowed from Denzin & Lincoln’s (2003) discussion of the seven moments in qualitative research. Their argument is that the moments “overlap and simultaneously operate in the present” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 3). In this discussion the four historical moments in the history of Botswana operate in the same manner as Denzin & Lincoln’s “moments”. Thus these moments build on one another without totally eliminating the other and cumulatively contribute to Tswana identities and experiences.

The first moment: pre-colonial education

Education in pre-colonial Botswana was in the form of traditional schools that were structured according to gender (Schapera, 1955; Mgadla, 2003). Attending these schools were rite of passage events for boys and girls moving from being teenagers to adulthood. In addition to being taught how to be productive members of their society boys were taught how to behave as men in their communities and future household heads while girls were taught how to carry themselves as women and ultimately wives and
mothers (Schapera, 1955). According to Mgadla (2003) traditional education was aimed at giving children practical life skills, “indigenous African education was functional, preparing young people to fit well into the society at large. Children learnt by doing, imitating and observing (p. 3). These traditional schools changed through the influences of missionaries who settled among the Batswana in the late nineteenth century.

*The second moment: colonial education*

The second moment came by way of mission schools established by church affiliated organizations such as the London Missionary Society (LMS) who introduced British style education systems to the Tswana society. Mgadla (2003) asserts that after the establishment of the Protectorate\(^5\) the missionaries introduced education whose purpose he describes as “…meant to convert Africans to the Christian religion by introducing bare rudiments of literacy, which included reading, writing and a small amount of arithmetic. Acquisition of these eventually led to conversion and baptism” (p. 4).

Schapera (1955) states that most of the students in the earlier days of mission schools were female since boys spent most of their time in the family cattle posts (ranches) helping out their older male family members. He also notes that the introduction of schooling and the church (and also the absence of most male folks) showed some shifts in women’s lives in that they developed economic power and some independence from male control. The observation points to the many subtle changes

\(^5\) The British declared Botswana (which was named Bechuanaland) a protectorate in 1895 to protect their interests in South Africa in the South and Zimbabwe in the North. This means that Bechuanaland was not a colony per se but due to its location between two mineral rich territories it was strategic to “protect Bechuanaland from any colonizer which may prevent the British from traveling through the country to do business between the already named territories.
throughout the moments in both the education of women and their status in the society which increasingly became pronounced with time. This challenges the narratives that Narayan (2000) argues tend to position women in LDC as victims of their cultures and absolutely powerless against their oppression. Foucault (1980) also troubles this kind of thinking, “Where there is power, there is resistance….These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network” (p. 95).

*The third moment: postcolonial education*

The third moment came in 1976 a decade after independence from the British when the Botswana government decided to offer mandatory free education for all. This was because students had to pay school fees in the second wave. As a result (Mulale, 1991) the system closed out those who could not afford the tuition fees. Mulale (1991) further states that traditionally some parents were hesitant to send their daughters to school because they feared they would get married before they graduated. He further argued that the increase in school fees in 1952 further elevated this gender stereotype and compromised the education prospects of some girls. The “education for all” policy gave rise to the demand for teachers particularly at the primary school level and resulted in the surge of female teachers into the system.

The education system was largely based on Christian (through mission schools) and British models with some minimal local elements (Tlou, 1976). Another issue according to Tlou (1976) inherent from the colonial education system was that at the time of independence the majority of teachers (79%) in local primary schools were non-citizens. The small percentage of citizens was mainly comprised of unqualified teachers.
The need to create a locally relevant curriculum became evident and the end result was a hybrid between the British and Tswana cultural influences. Alexander (2001) states that this is not a rare occurrence in the history of education around the world, “cultural borrowing happens; it has always happened. Few countries remain hermetically sealed in the development of their education systems, and for centuries there has been international traffic in educational ideas and practices” (p. 508).

During the colonial era education was largely provided by religious denominations but after independence government took over the education system. The result of an education system that is wholly controlled by the government however is the development of a national curriculum. It was primarily designed to encompass Tswana culture. The danger in this was that, as elaborated in the first moment men and women were assigned gender roles therefore the education system reflected these cultural practices. Apple (1996) asserts that national curricula have a hegemonic characteristic since decisions are made with regards to whose knowledge takes precedence and becomes official knowledge. Since there were few women in decision making positions it is safe to speculate that their knowledge systems were omitted. The designated “national curriculum” meant that the knowledge represented was from a male standpoint.

*The fourth moment: globalization*

The advent of globalization is characterized by technology advances and diffusion which resulted in the accelerated flow of information around the world (Appadurai, 1991). The primary discourses in this moment focus on bridging the digital divide through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in all spheres of
life including education. Botswana like other LDC is standing at the crossroads, still largely in the third moment but striving to cross into the fourth one. The main issue (Bush, 1983) that feminists have with this moment and its vehicle, technology, is that it excludes women. In a nutshell, this global moment challenges many established hegemonies relating to culture and national knowledge. In the process it opens new possibilities for marginalized groups such as women to forge identities that go against dominant discourses. The issues that face women in their multiple roles and how they try to forge their identities in the dawn of the fourth moment through online learning are the focus of the rest of the chapter.

Technology and globalization

Globalization has created situations whereby education and economies around the world are no longer just local issues but influenced by global trends. Sreberny (2006) explains that the change is due to the proliferation of ICTs that make national borders more fluid as information and virtual travel (through the internet) are no longer bound to a physical territory or space. Although technology has made communication easier some LDC scholars have voiced concerns with the fact that it is mainly designed and controlled by the West which in turn makes non-western people default users (Sehoole & Moja, 2004; Moyo, 2004).

According to Sreberny (2006) globalization is largely a one sided movement of goods and information, “globalization has often been applied to the spread of Western mediated products across the globe, from which few places are immune” (p. 613). It is therefore imperative in order to integrate technology effectively for institutions in non-
western contexts to consider the implications of this flow of information through technology from the West and its possible effects on local knowledge systems. An assessment of Western technology is particularly critical if it is imported without any changes to suit the local context.

Postcolonial feminists oppose some Western hegemonic assumptions that solutions to issues affecting women in their contexts will seamlessly fit the lives of women in non-western contexts (Mohanty, 1995; Narayan, 2003; Ong; 1994). These hegemonic attitudes are also evident in technology transfer to the LDC and as there are often assumptions that what has been used successfully in one context will work everywhere else. This is troubling to postcolonial scholars because they argue that colonialism spread through the same mindset. Moyo (2004) points out that; “there is ‘no-one-size-fits-all’ when it comes to the problems of using ICT in developing nations”. Instead he suggests that social, political and economic factors play a significant part in the lives of the intended users. These factors should ground selection or importation of technology from other locales to facilitate effective diffusion.

Warschauer (2002) further points out that the discourses on the digital divide are incomplete in that they focus on the divide between the “haves” and the “have-nots” thus ignoring social factors that have a great influence on the adoption of technology. Both in the United States (National Education Technology Plan [NETP] 2004) and internationally, governments and other stakeholders tend to associate bridging the digital divide with providing hardware such as computers and internet connectivity. The assumption is that people are not using technology because it is not available.
This shortsighted approach pays less attention to other pertinent issues such as gender, culture and socioeconomic factors (Grabill, 2003; Harper, 2003).

The gender divide within discussions of the digital divide in non-western contexts needs to be part of the discourse, particularly in patriarchal cultural contexts. It is important to bring women’s experiences into the discourses on technology and the digital divided. Bush (1983) points out; “It is crucial that feminists continue to unthink and rethink the cultural contexts of technology for a reason more significant than our systematic exclusion from it: it is dangerous not to” (p. 161). The suggested in-depth assessment of technology and its context is of great significance in places such as Botswana where stakeholders in education discuss bridging the digital divide and disregard its gender implications.

Botswana government documents such as Vision 2016 and the draft National Information and Communication Technology Policy (NICT) focus on the development of national information systems and providing “technology for all”. These homogenizing discourses fail to recognize the need to pay special attention to marginalized groups such as women. This silence is problematic given the gender disparity between Batswana men and women in relation to (STEM) careers (Duncan, 1989). The discourses contained in the NICT fail to recognize gender as a category that needs attention in the effective provision and use of technology.

There are different reasons for the digital divide and for the women in this study they varied from the need to provide basic necessities for their families to lack of necessary skills. James (2005) observes that the problem with the discussions of the digital divide is that it is often measured based on the number of internet users. As
reflected by the narratives of the women in this study access to ICTs such as computers and the internet may not be a priority compared to familial commitments. According to some women in this study they did not see the urgent need to buy a computer because they would still be limited by the high costs of going online. A more in depth analysis of the digital divide needs to consider the extenuating circumstances surrounding the failure to use ICTs.

Technology and cultural hybridity

Cultural hybridity is one of the results of past colonial contact and globalization in the Twentieth Century between the LDCs and the West. According to Ashcroft et al., (1998) hybridity “commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization….Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc” (p. 118). This definition of cultural hybridity suggests that there is no pure culture instead all cultures have elements from elsewhere which have become part of the fabric of that culture. Cultural hybridity is not as new as cultural puritans would like to claim because as long as people have been coming into contact with others changes have been taking place. Nederveen-Pieterse (2001) states that, “We can think of hybridity as layered in history, including pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial layers, each with distinct sets of hybridity, as a function of the boundaries that were prominent, and accordingly a different pathos of difference” (p. 231).The contact between Western colonizers and people in the colonies altered the local cultural landscapes as Comaroff & Comaroff (2001) explain, “…colonialism spawned relations that transected the lines of race, class, and culture, creating hybrid identities and
unexpected patterns of consociation” (p. 270). The colonial history of domination
between the West and the LDCs contributes to the unease expressed by some scholars
with the transfer of technology from the former to the latter. Mitchell (2006) observes
that “It is not exactly a coincidence that most LDCs are former colonies and perhaps
understandable why citizens in the post-colonial developing world are more sensitive to
the issue of cultural imperialism than are citizens from more developed countries”
(p.136).

The skepticism is well founded because of colonialism that was sold as a noble
effort to “civilize” people in “the dark continent” (in the case of Africa) and rescue them
from their “heathen ways” by introducing Christianity. This blatant lack of respect for
local cultures and religions left people in the postcolonial world cautious about
embracing Western ideas. Even though there are concerns about the one-way movement
of technology products and possible cultural imperialism it is still important to take into
account the fact that the flow of information from other parts of the world is inevitable.
Globalization implies increased mobility of people, goods and information around the
world that makes total resistance to ideas and cultures from other parts of the world next
to impossible.

As long as there is human contact across both territorial and virtual borders there
will always be hybridity and resistance to alien cultures in the interest of protecting
“national cultures” or as Nederveen-Pieterse (2001) puts it, “with boundaries come
boundary police”. Bhabha (1994) points out that the fluidity of national borders and the
increased movement of people can be useful because it challenges dominant discourses
such as those on national identity. Nederveen-Pieterse (2001) contends that border
crossing is not necessarily a bad development because “hybridity destabilizes hegemonies”. There has been some resistance towards the idea of hybridity as it is perceived as inauthentic and its association with negative connotation in colonial discourse. Ashcroft et al. (1998) cite Young (1995) who argues that “there is a difference between an unconscious process of hybrid mixture, or creolization, and a conscious and politically motivated concern with the deliberate disruption of homogeneity” (p. 120). Hybridity as argued by Young and Bhabha (1994) is a conscious rejection of an either/or existence and instead embracing the idea of identity as unstable and always in a state of being created and reformulated as people come into contact with other cultures in the global milieu. It also introduces the idea that identity is not bound to a fixed location as people are increasingly living away from the homeland and altering their identities in the diaspora. The resistance towards cultural hybridity is mostly based on arguments about retaining cultural integrity. This claim ignores the fact that culture is constantly changing with the natural passage of time and as people gain new experiences. These arguments are usually from cultural puritans rooted in patriarchal ideals. The thinking views the continued subjugation of women through cultural discourses as normal because;

Women are frequently taken as emblems of cultural integrity, so that defending beleaguered cultures becomes equated with preserving traditional forms of femininity…. Thus, women are situated in the vortex of contending social forces: on the one hand, centripetal tendencies toward increasing globalization and integration and, on the other hand, centrifugal tendencies toward nationalism and fragmentation. (Jaggar, 2000, 1)
Any changes that relate to challenging women’s culturally ascribed roles meet
with the most resistance because it is viewed as trying to change the “natural order of
things” or the culture. By so doing, culture is used to normalize the marginalization of
women thus portraying gender roles as natural rather than social constructs. The
transformation of women in Botswana and the ever increasing discourses of gender
equality have met with resistance from patriarchs who perceive the pursuit for equality
with wanting to be like men. Inevitably, cultural hybridity is in effect in Tswana cultures
as exemplified by women increasingly pursuing tertiary education. The University of
Botswana enrolment statistics indicate that 54 % of their students are female. Postponing
parenthood and marriage from the traditional late teens to mid to late twenties has
become common practice among college graduates. Increasingly women (mostly college
educated) are having fewer children than two decades ago. The change reflects a shift
from the traditional view of having numerous children as an extension of the family
lineage to considering financial resources and career ambitions as determining factors of
both the timing and number of children one can have. Hybridity therefore can bring
opportunities to challenge grand narratives about cultural preservation and nationalism
and open up spaces for marginalized groups like women to carve their own identities.
Hybridity offers a space to trouble these discourses and exposes the injustices they entail
for some groups.

When technology is introduced to these sites of resistance and border protection
discourses it could exacerbate the unfair gender relations unless deliberate efforts are
made to change the status quo. It is important to note that technology like any cultural
product has good and bad effects on any society. Postman (1993) underscores this effect,
“it is inevitable that every culture must negotiate with technology, whether it does so intelligently or not. A bargain is struck in which technology giveth and technology taketh away” (p.5). His argument is that the integration of technology can bring some positive changes and also in the process compromise some otherwise good aspects of a culture. Another side of this argument can be that whatever “technology taketh away” could help marginalized groups find a stance to resist their existence at the peripheries and demand to be heard.

Postman’s argument is a reminder that the quest by countries such as Botswana to provide ICT to its citizens will inevitably come at a social price. Some practices such as social participation may be compromised or reformulated as some people may retreat from the physical social space to the virtual space. Neil Postman goes on to warn that,

Once a technology is admitted, it plays out its hand; it does what it is designed to do. Our task is to understand what that design is-that is to say, when we admit a technology to the culture, we must do so with our eyes wide open (p. 7).

The integration of technology therefore requires context based planning and population specific needs assessment. The context is more significant when women are the end users but that is not always considered as most institutions tend to assume that technology is an all equalizer. The Botswana government’s National Information and Communication Technology Plan (NICT, 2005) as discussed earlier makes a mention of technology based on local culture but neglects to address gender issues especially for adult learners. The NICT (2005) also notes that there are more teachers at primary school
level in need of ICT training but again misses the opportunity to address the gender issues this entails. This is despite the fact that the Central Statistic Office report (2004) indicates that an overwhelming majority of primary school teachers are female.

Cook & Isgro (2005) in their assessment of United Nations and World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2005) documents found that discussions of the digital divide, “position women in LDCs as always or already in need of ICTs to improve the conditions of their lives” (p. 77). This assumption means that the women’s situated experiences and needs are not taken into account even by world bodies such as the UN which organized the WSIS which ironically was supposed to devote time to discussing the needs of LDC women in relation to technology.

Cooks & Isgro find this peculiar and suggest that “As the UN and other global organizations attempt to increase the capacities and resources of less developed countries (LDCs) through ICTs, it is worth pausing to ask what values and beliefs about technology, culture, and gender frame these visions …” (p. 72). This propensity to render LDC women’s specific needs invisible by their governments on the one hand and international entities on the other has been labeled as “double colonization” by some postcolonial feminists (Ashcroft et al, 1998; Gandhi, 1998). It is important when integrating technology for women to bear in mind these dangers as they have a role in whether a planned program succeeds or fails.

Women and technology

Technology is the driving force behind globalization and as a result it has contributed to many countries around the world scrambling to use technology to access
the global economy (Hafkin, 2000). This change is significantly noticeable in the West while most less-developed countries (LDC) are lagging behind primarily due to the high costs of technology and its incompatibility with their local knowledge systems (Moyo, 2004). The growing use of technology has lead to discussions of bridging the digital divide especially between the West and the LDC (Warschauer, 2002).

However, most discourses on the diffusion of technology overlook the gender issues it raises; “the tendency has been to view new technologies introduced into the global marketplace as gender neutral, having equal potential to be used by either men or women” (Rathgeber, 2000, p. 23). The perception of technology as gender neutral has greatly disadvantaged women particularly those in non-western contexts. The assumption is that these women’s needs are already known and there is one sure fix for their problems.

The integration of technology to educational programs for women is remarkably complicated since technology in its very nature is not only biased against women but systematically excludes them (Bush, 1983; Damarin, 1998; Sanders, 2005). The exclusion of women from the production of technology is an issue of concern for most feminists interested in the impact of technology on women (Turkle, 1998; Hanson, Flansburg & Castano, 2004; Sanders, 2005). Margolis & Fisher (2003) lament the fact that women largely use technologies such as the internet as consumers and that “few women are learning how to invent, create and design computer technology (p. 2)” These issues become more magnified if such technology is transferred wholesale to countries like Botswana because women are likely to face double jeopardy by being marginalized by Western (white, male and middle class) world views embedded in technology in
addition to the local patriarchal cultures. The world views assume among other things the affordability of ICTs and the availability of time to acquire the necessary skills to use it.

To begin to understand how technology relates to gender we need to read it as a cultural product that reflects the gender relations and stereotypes existent in the social context surrounding its creator (Sanders, 2005). The tendency to ignore the cultural context in technology integration emanates from the perception that technology is a tool therefore once its success is established in one place then it is universally applicable. Taylor & Konstantellou (1990) however caution that,

Social interventions such as instruction and instructional technology, both in their inception and subsequent histories, are never value-free or value-neutral. They resonate with the values of their creators who themselves are situated in a particular culture in a specific time and place (p. 113).

According to this assertion the socioculturally and gender shaped worldviews embedded within the technology should be carefully assessed and its implications weighed against the cultural context of the end users more so if they are default users. It also means that efforts should be made to have context awareness when purchasing technology products from other locations.

Gajjala & Mamidipudi (2004) in their discussion of women and technology in the less-developed world emphasized that technology diffusion in these contexts is more complex beyond the binary of “have” and “have-nots”,

42
In order to examine whether women in these contexts are indeed going to realize empowerment through the use of technology, we need to understand the complexity of the obstacles they face by considering the ways the conditions of their lives are determined by unequal power relations at local and global levels. (p. 9)

Since most of the ICTs used in education in less-developed countries originate from the West it is necessary to consider the implications associated with this West to South movement of knowledge. Discourses on technology use and government policies often focus on the quantitative indicators of technology ownership to assess the digital divide. Cook & Isgro (2005) assessed United Nations documents discussing technology and gender and found that it is often assumed that the context has to change to embrace technology. They argued that the technology and the context each need to be open to some degree of change,

When technologies are emphasized over context, technology is viewed as constructing and determining human progress, culture, and relations. When context is viewed as separable from technology, the presumption often exists that contexts could and should change, but that ICTs and uses of them do not (p. 75).

This perception of technology as constant is a sore point in technology transfer to LDCs. It is an issue because besides calling for these users to embrace technologies foreign to their context they are also being asked to place another culture above their
own. Thinking about technology in this manner usually breeds negative attitudes and delayed diffusion into society mainly because of contrasts between the two knowledge systems (Zhuang & Thomas, 1987). In spite of these difficulties facing the diffusion of technologies they still have an impact on local cultures. In the global era the claim to a homogenous cultural identity is strongly challenged by the increased intermingling of people and governments in international forums.

Identity in global times

Schwandt (2001) states that “identity (or the Self) is always fragmented, never integrated, never fixed and always being remade” (p. 122). This reflects the hybrid nature of identity because in its incompleteness and fragmentation there is also deconstruction and re-formation. Lyotard (1979/1984) asserts, “the self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever” (p. 15). In the global dispensation it is not unusual for a person to maintain close intercontinental ties through information and communication technologies. The hybridity argument in postcolonialism is also supported by globalization which is characterized by the increased mobility of people and information. This global travel and relocation leaves identity more open than ever to hybridity using cultural artifacts beyond the locality of national borders.

Turkle (1995) found that in virtual environments the user can assume different identities even to the extent of gender swapping to experience how one would be treated if they were a different gender. This ability to toy with different identities indicates that technology facilitates hybrid identities where through a few clicks of a mouse one can
create an identity that is totally different from their reality. Hybridity under the global
dispensation is more pronounced as it allows people to virtually “live” in different spaces
and assume different identities. For example, someone can be a school teacher in one
place and be an action hero in virtual environments like Second Life.

As discussed earlier, postcolonial feminisms take their point of departure from the
position that postcolonial discourses of establishing one national culture silence the
experiences of women. Some postcolonial thinkers (Bhabha, 1994; Gandhi, 1998;
Spivak, 1988) suggest that there is no homogenous national identity and instead suggest
that postcolonial identities are hybrids of experiences and cultures from pre-colonialism
through colonialism to globalization. Gandhi (1998) points out that “the political subject
of decolonization is herself a new entity, engendered by the encounter between two
conflicting systems of belief” (p. 130). The diversity of these identities results from
cultural borrowings as people increasingly travel around the world or live in the diaspora
leading to the increase in cultural and identity hybridity. Globalization through
technology and its ability to desseminate information offers a possibility for marginalized
groups such as women to find new ways of self-definition that can challenge patriarchal
hegemonies.

The above discussions on identity and postcolonial feminist concerns are
important to this study because of the complexity that technology presents in relation to
women and their identities. This study was interested in the identities the women assume
in their different relationships as teachers, distance learners, parents and general
community members. Tswana culture has historically designated the home space as
women’s domain which meant that their identities were bound to the home and activities
therein. However, over time these identities have extended to include careers and for some part-time learning. The addition of a career and distance learning to the identities of the women in this study show how their identities have morphed from the traditional stereotype to hybrid identities. These identities have embraced forms of work and learning that are originally alien to the local context. This change shows that identities change or hybrid over time whether we acknowledge them or not even for marginalized groups.

Under these circumstances, identifying the characteristics of the participants in this study was a complicated exercise but an important one for the integration of online learning. Wolcott (1994) points out that when studying individuals’ lives it is important to consider their subject positions which are “multiple and multileveled competencies in myriad groups, ranging from family or workplace to whole nation states (p. 1729). An awareness of the multiple social relationships a person can have and issues around identity formation can be useful in creating online learning programs in the DPE that leave room for the women to fit and reshape their identities. It is particularly important to pay attention to issues of both cultural and identity hybridity when creating a culturally situated curriculum to avoid centering one cultural identity. The narratives of the women in this research reflected that their hybrid identities resulted in struggles to manage the demands from the multiple roles.

Women’s lives and multitasking

Both employers and distance education institutions have a tendency to overlook women’s other responsibilities outside of the work environment when considering online
training, “Institutions historically have been more concerned with separating the public, linear, formal work world than integrating the traditionally repetitive, multi-tasking, ‘feminine’ world and its rituals of the household, childrearing, and the private sphere” (Kramarae, 2001, p. 29). These multiple responsibilities have a significant bearing on how women perceive a learning intervention and may determine whether they participate at all.

A consideration of the factors affecting the distance education learners’ lives (family, work, distance education and general social lives) are significant because “…the paid work that is done outside the home is in intimate relationship with work that is done inside the home” (Bhavnani, Foran & Kurian, 2003, p. 8). The exclusion of the multiple responsibilities that the women bring with them to distance education programs can in turn cause conflict with other parts of their lives. The common assumption is that because distance education takes place “part time” it does not interfere with the teacher’s lives. However, since most of the studying is carried out in the learners’ assumed “own time” which is usually the domestic space it has to contend with domestic work. Distance learning thus perceived ends up encroaching into a part of their lives that is already filled with other duties such as taking care of their households and other social obligations (Conway-Turner & Cherrin, 1998; Duncan, 1989; Kramarae, 2001).

The fact that distance education shifts learning away from school to the home is usually misconceived as a welcome relief for working women (Kramarae, 2001). However, it may be an additional burden because women’s domestic labor is constantly ignored. Conway-Turner & Cherrin (1998) found that even the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) definition of labor is limited to “all work for pay or anticipation of
profit” (p. 107). The danger in this perception of work is that women’s domestic labor is erased from the discourses of work. The worrying part of these discourses is that they are more concerned with associating work with space (home or office) on the one hand and compensation on the other. This focus on space and remuneration or lack thereof is problematic for women who have significant work that takes place away from the acknowledge work world. Ribbens & Edwards (1998) emphasize that the,

‘Public’ and ‘private’ are tricky and ambiguous concepts, which cannot simply be identified by reference to physical locations of home, neighborhood, workplace, or government, nor can they simply be mapped straight onto gender identities – although they also, of course, have strongly gendered implications. (p. 8)

The concept of work/space becomes an even larger concern when learning is also relegated to the home through distance and online learning. It runs the risk of disappearing from the ‘public’ world of schooling where it is a recognized time consuming academic pursuit to the home where it becomes domesticated and reduced to the shadows of unrecognized labor. In the domestic space it ceases to be regarded as work (read important) and becomes a chore (read insignificant).

One of the commonly cited advantages of distance learning for adults is that they can get their education and still keep their full time jobs. It is further assumed that online learning compared to traditional distance education makes it even more appealing (Moore & Kearsley, 2005).
Kramarae (2001) however argues that without attention to gender specific concerns in integrating technology to distance learning it can put an additional demand on women’s overworked lives as,

Women studying through online courses face more problems than men because a woman’s workday is usually overloaded with home responsibilities (first shift) before paid employment (second shift) and more home responsibilities after the day’s work. Studying online is almost like a third shift either in the morning, during free time between shifts, or late at night after the other two shifts. (p.158)

The three shifts each have responsibilities that in most instances are not restricted to a fixed block of time. Even paid employment, particularly in the case of teaching; straddles both spaces of the school and home in the form of grading students’ papers and general preparations related to teaching such as lesson planning.

Teaching and gender

According to Fischman (2000) the school as a social institution tends to reproduce the gender relations in the society within which it exists. Up until the late 1980s when the Botswana government signed the United Nations Charter to bridge gender inequality in the education system, girls and boys were socialized to choose careers based on their gender. Girls were implicitly tracked towards “female/caring careers” such as primary school teaching and nursing in so doing discouraging them from science, math and technology (STEM) related careers (Duncan, 1989). As in many societies around the
world the boys were assumed to have a natural aptitude for STEM and associated careers.

In Tswana culture being a woman is associated with motherhood and nurturing (Schapera, 1955). In such a cultural context girls would therefore be expected to follow “caring professions”.

Fischman (2000) notes that in most cultures around the world teaching has been commonly designated as a woman’s domain because it is perceived as what a woman would usually do when raising children. He states that good motherhood is associated with “…caring, passivity and self-sacrifice” (p. 31). Fidishun (2001) also describes a similar situation in early twentieth century United States, “…middle-class women began entering professions, but only those that were considered feminine, such as nursing, teaching, and social work. These required the feminine qualities of “nurturance, empathy and motherliness.” Against this background it is therefore no coincidence that Botswana’s Central Statistics Office’s (2004) report on education reflected that about 79% of primary school teachers in the public school system were female.

The tendency to make primary school teaching synonymous with presumed female characteristics is a result of the social construction of what it means to be a woman in patriarchal societies. These blurred lines between the definition of a good teacher and a good mother alludes to the association of teaching with mothering that Fischman and others discuss. The school is therefore a gendered space in which cultural constructions of a woman’s role permeate and influence the school’s perception of the female teacher’s identity.

Gaskell & Mullen (2006) argue that the surge of women into teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom respectively was mainly influenced by a call for
free public schooling. A similar surge in female teachers in Botswana came primarily with the introduction of free public education. Smulyan (2006) further states that the opening up of teaching to women redefined schooling as a social space,

schools, redefined as a continuation of the family and the place in which children developed knowledge, values, and morality, where not only acceptable places for women; they now seemed to require women teachers who could best fill these newly defined duties of teaching (p. 471).

As a result the school became a space for reproduction of cultural gender role stereotypes and it also became a site for the feminization of teaching. The implication for this research was that studying the multiple spheres in the women’s lives was not only complicated but also difficult to unpack as the different social spaces defined them according to assigned gender roles. As a result there is no clear demarcation between identities of women who are a teacher, a mother, a part-time learner and a member of the larger community. The definition of women in the multiple social spaces they occupy takes its point of departure from woman as mother.

The contradictory part of this situation is that even though the perception of a female teacher as “mothering” is acceptable at work when it comes to the needs of those who are actually mothers at home there is silence. The women are expected to play the mother role to do their work but their personal childcare issues are practically rendered invisible and excluded from planning for distance learning for example.
Letherby, Marchbank, Ramsay & Shiels (2005) explain the results of these contradictory discourses,

There is a tension between roles at home and at work, one that is shaped by the ideological dichotomy between ‘altruistic mother’ and ‘career woman’….Both the family and the academy are ‘greedy institutions’; that is, they are both places that require women to be constantly available and committed and where women are expected to cater to all the physical and emotional needs of others. (p. 205)

Clearly, the expectation of women to play the same roles they play at home challenge their stance as professionals compared to their male colleagues who do not have the same burden.

Feminization and professionalization of teaching

In most countries the surge of women into teaching was predicated by a shortage of teachers and to meet this need schools would usually employ unqualified women. The perception was that primary teaching (especially at the lower levels) did not require much skill except guiding and mothering. The best candidates according to Cortina & Román (2006) were supposedly women who were required to do little more than “to carry out a function that is more maternal than professional” (p. 7). Cortina & Román explain the relationship between culture and primary school teaching, “the transformations that parallel the evolution of school organization and cultural changes were ‘inextricably tied up’ with the gendered character of teaching and the view that it was primarily a women’s occupation (p. 2)”.
The flow of cultural gender stereotypes into the school results in what Goode (1960) defines as “role confusion” as female teachers are expected to be both care givers and professionals. Cortina and Román (2006) blame this role confusion for the “…deprofessionalization of women’s work in education” (p. 8). Their argument is that it is difficult for female teachers to divest the role of “mother” and pursue professional status when they are constructed as lesser than their male colleagues. Letherby, et al., (2005) discuss the extent to which gender discourses disadvantage women in academia, “when men are responsive to students it is often seen as additional to their responsibilities and as more of a gift, whereas when women [care,] it is seen as a natural aspect of their femininity and part of their job” (p. 212).

Jiron-King (2005) found that as a mother and a returning student she felt the silent judgment of her status in the dual roles. She states that she felt that when she disclosed her status as a mother it seemed to cast doubt on her commitment to her scholarly work. Jiron-King (2005) further shares that,

The greatest challenge of being a mother and a graduate student is convincing my peers that I am a serious and committed scholar…If I can avoid letting people know about my motherhood right away, I get a chance to demonstrate that I should be taken seriously without having to explain myself” (p. 25).

Jiron-King’s experiences with having to be a closeted mother for her to be recognized in the school space as capable reflects the mixed messages that the school sends to women in academia. The overlap of roles and embedded messages makes it hard
for female teachers or mothers who return to school to bring their identities as mothers without being stereotyped and compromises their attainment of professional status.

Why distance education?

Distance education has been used in teacher training for a long time because of its cost effectiveness and ability to train larger numbers of people compared to classroom based training (Peters, 1994). Calder (2000) also states that “…the development and introduction of many distance and open learning initiatives is driven by the desire to introduce simple and low cost solutions to complex social and economic problems” (p. 2). The logic behind distance education encourages homogeneity in that it aims for instructional materials that can be generalized.

Distance education, argues Peters (1994) “…is remarkably consistent with the principles and tendencies of industrialization”. Peters’ comparison of distance education to a factory assembly line system used in industrial production emanates from the tendency to mass produce educational materials and learners. However, this is not to argue that distance education is not concerned with quality education but that institutions at times lose sight of meeting the specific needs of students in the interest of creating cost effective materials (Peters, 1994). The end result may be that in an endeavor to create educational products that are reusable, dominant knowledge systems take precedence over those of the marginalized learners.

Perraton & Potashnik (1997) observe that distance education is a largely economic way of training since the returns are greater than the investment; “…the cost per successful student in a distance learning format may fall between a half and two-
thirds that of a conventional program” (p.1). This argument is compelling in situations where an employer needs to upgrade the skills of a large number of its staff. Distance education also has an advantage when used for in-service training because it makes skills transfer from distance learning to the participants’ job immediate thus improving performance.

Perraton & Potashnik (1997) point out that, teacher training through distance education is very popular in LDC because besides its cost effective nature it ensures maintenance of the human resource in full time employment instead of losing them to conventional classroom based training. Moore & Kearsley (2005) explain that one of the reasons for using distance learning in adult training is for “offering combination of education with work and family life” (p. 8). This is the logic behind its popularity because it is argued that everyone wins; both the employer and the employee. The advantage for the employee is that they get to keep their full income as opposed to having to survive on none or reduced income as would be the case if they studied full time.

Social participation

In addition to Kramarae’s three shifts, for the women in the DPE I included a fourth shift that is in the form of social participation. Comaroff & Comaroff (2001) found that social participation is a significant part of every adult Tswana because personhood or botho (as it is known in Setswana) is expressed through constant social participation and maintenance of social relations. They observe that the “first principle of contemporary Tswana personhood; referred not to a state of being but to a state of becoming. No living self could be static. Stasis meant social death” (p. 271).
Social death can result from failure to maintain relationships with a community member’s social networks. The maintenance of these relations is performed through both attending and helping out at social events such as funerals and weddings.

The current distance education program at UB as described by Nage-Sibande (2005) excludes this communal nature of the Tswana society. The program does not foster a sense of community because it is based on individual learning and most of its activities coincide with weekends and school vacations that would normally be used for social participation. This is in contrast with the principle of botho that states that individual good should not take precedence over communal good. It is commonly expressed (Sehoole & Moja, 2004; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001) as; “I am because we are”. Botho is an important cultural aspect that influences Botswana’s actions in most if not all areas of their lives as outlined in Botswana Government’s Vision 2016 (1997) which states, “If botho is to become one of the central principles of Botswana society, then it is essential that fellowship of mankind, co-operation, selflessness, compassion and a spirit of sharing be built into all policies and programs” (p. 56). For online learning to be effectively introduced to the DPE it will have to be grounded in this cultural principle.

Power and agency

It is important to note that the tensions between the multiple shifts women work do not mean that they are powerless and passively comply with the numerous demands. Foucault (1972) argues that power exists in relationships and that these relationships are asymmetrical meaning that there is no top-down movement of power but it is rather multi-directional. This suggests that women are not always at the receiving end of power
but that there are places where they may exert power. Social institutions are fused with power and women as social actors resist and negotiate power as they navigate through the different social spaces. For example, some women in this study stated that they found the obligation to participate in social events taxing and decided to stop participating while some decided to limit their degrees of involvement.

Resistance can be exercised either overtly or in a subtle manner to maintain some kind of control over the work involved. As women multi-task they decide what is most important and negotiate ways to make work manageable to avoid what Goode (1960) terms “role-conflict”. According to Goode role conflict is when different roles compete for time. Goode (1960) further argues that where there is role strain or role conflict there is likely to be “role bargain” which he defines as “a continuing process of selection among alternative role behaviors, in which each individual seeks to reduce his (her) role strain. These choices determine the allocations of role performance to all institutions in society” (p. 483).

Goode’s assertion speaks to the idea that every person in their capacity as a social actor weighs roles in their daily lives and schedules them according to perceived importance. Giddens (2002) also asserts that people have agency that he defines as “…a continuous flow of conduct” (p. 233). Giddens (2002) further points out that, “…all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them” (p. 240). This argument is in line with Foucault’s assertion that where power exists; so does the possibility of resistance to it.
Resistance to institutional powers and role bargaining characterize the circumstances of women who multi-task because the possibility exists that the different roles may have demands that are in conflict with one another.

These arguments (Goode, 1960; Foucault, 1972; Giddens, 2002) affirm that social institutions are places where power is always being resisted or negotiated and in the process some roles are reformulated or repositioned. Goode (1960) sums up the power relations in social relations “the individual’s problem is how to make his (her) role system manageable, that is, how to allocate his (her) energies and skills so as to reduce role strain to some bearable proportions” (p. 485). Another form of making roles manageable is through communities of practice which provide a space to negotiate role obligations to find a suitable solution for all members.

Communities of practice

Lave & Wenger (1991) define a COP as “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98). Learning thus defined implies that it is constructed collectively through negotiation among members of a community of practice (COP) (Lave & Wenger, 1996). A community of practice should not be interpreted to mean a cohesive group with common interests but on the contrary “members have different interests, make diverse contributions to activities and hold varied viewpoints” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, P.98). Wenger (1998) suggests that communities of practice are a part of everyday life and are usually informal in nature.
He explains that COP can be anything from a family trying to organize their daily activities to function as a unit to students working together to address a common challenge.

According to Lave & Wenger (1991) COPs function through legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) which “provides a way to speak about relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice” (p. 29). LPP is a form of apprenticeship where “old-timers” (those with advanced skills) and “newcomers” participate in a community of practice until the newcomers also become old-timers. LPP is a cyclical kind of relationship in which newcomers ultimately become full participants in the COP and in turn work with newcomers (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Lave & Wenger emphasize that their use of the term periphery is not the same as the usual center/periphery binary which implies dominant/subordinate relationships but use it to talk about skill levels in a COP. They instead argue that both the newcomer and the old-time are important to the community, “to take a decentered view of master-apprentice relations leads to an understanding that mastery resides not in the master but in the organization of the community of practice of which a master is a part…” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 94). Wenger (1998) further argues that the success of any COP depends on mutual engagement which entails both newcomers and old-timers contributing to the success of the group. Hay (1996) however, troubles the concept of apprenticeship, he argues that “from personal experience, apprenticeships, as well as communities of practice, can be sectarian, dictatorial, controlling, divisive, exploitative, cliquish, etc. The community can sometimes leave the students with a binary choice of in or out…” (p. 92).
COPs like any social institution are sites of production of power which if left unchecked can create an environment where the old-timers assume control leaving the newcomers with very little input on the activities of the community. Lave & Wenger (1991) acknowledge the possible disadvantages of LPP on newcomers but argue that as in any community conflict and peace co-exist. They further state that the “interplay of conflict and synergy is central to all aspects of learning practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 103). Wenger (1998) sees conflict or disagreement within a COP as productive energy as it shows that members are involved in shaping the identity of the community. He concludes that “as a form of participation, rebellion often reveals a greater commitment than does passive conformity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 77).

For any COP to function effectively the members need to negotiate fair rules of engagement to allow less experienced members to contribute to the learning process. To guard against Hay’s observations about LPP above the community should have parameters that allow the negotiation of power in the COP. Wenger (1998) acknowledges that getting a COP to function effectively takes a lot of effort and organization from all the members. He cautions that mutual engagement needs to be continuous, “The work of ‘community maintenance’ is thus an intrinsic part of practice….Even when there is much in common in the respective backgrounds of participants, the specific coordination necessary to do things together requires constant attention” (Wenger, 1998, pp. 74-75).

The concept of COPs is important to this research as it offers tools for discussing the four shifts as communities and the different forms of participation possible. For example, viewing the family as a COP opens up space for the woman to negotiation with other family members for a fair distribution of communal activities (domestic chores).
among community members to suit her other identities (teacher, distance learner and social participant). In COP (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) both meaning and identity are constructed collectively through constant negotiation. This characterization of identity and meaning reflect that hybridity is a central condition to the functionality of any community of practice. The constant re-creation of the identities of the COP to reflect the transformations among the members is in accordance with the argument by some postcolonial theorists discussed above that identities hybrid as new people and experiences are encountered.

Lave & Wenger (1991) argued above that there is always a possibility of an abuse of power in COP which can disadvantage those who are not yet full participants or old-timers. Power relations play an important role in this research because all the four shifts as COP are fused with power which at times places women in unfavorable positions. For example, the feminization of teaching places women in a position where they are regarded as less professional compared to men who are in the same COP (teaching). For the women to be considered as full participants or old-timers in the profession they have to negotiate and redefine what it means to be a woman and a teacher from their own perspective. They have a choice of buying into the stereotype or negotiating new terms of participating in the community of practice that is teaching.

COPs can also be an important component in distance learning because they can offer an opportunity for learning together and for the members to pool their skills to achieve success in their studies. When used in learning it is important to consider that they can have negative effects as discussed above (Hay, 1996). In using COPs in teaching and learning it is important to set out clear rules for the community to avoid domination
of some participants by those who are better positioned. The negotiability of identity means that marginalized groups can negotiate their way to full participation in their society. Wenger (1998) explains “negotiability allows us to make meanings applicable to new circumstances, to enlist the collaboration of others, to make sense of events or to assert our membership” (p. 197). As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, postcolonial feminists advocate against the marginalization of women’s experiences in postcolonialism. As the positions of women continue to change in the postcolonial world women can negotiate for the recognition of their hybrid identities that have resulted from changes in the society through out the four historical moments discussed above.

Summary of literature review

In this chapter I started off by discussing postcolonial theory and its relationships to Orientalism and postcolonial feminisms respectively. I then traced the historical influences that shaped Batswana women’s identities and education that include pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial and globalization. The transformation of the women’s roles as homemakers and childcare givers in pre-colonial society to their beginning to enroll in schools (albeit in limited numbers) in early colonialism reflects how history impacts identity. In the colonial era few women also began working away from home although it was in gender stereotyped jobs such as working as migrant domestic workers in South Africa (Schapera, 1955). After independence (postcolonial) women increasingly enrolled in schools and forged careers. In the process their identities morphed to include a career, family responsibilities and for some part-time learning. These changes bear testimony to the arguments by Bhabha (1994) and others that postcolonial identities are

62
characterized by hybridity. Batswana women’s respective identities in the global
dispensation differ from their pre-colonial and colonial predecessors. I also discussed the
overlapping characteristic of hybridity in which in the process of contact with other
cultures identities are altered without totally erasing older ones but instead are reshaped
to create new ways of being. Hybridity in the four historical moments has resulted in
redefinitions of ways of being Batswana women.

However, the discourses on national culture and identity perceive them as trapped
in a time capsule in the name of cultural preservation. The changes in Tswana society
through the first three moments show that even what is designated as “national culture” is
a hybrid, a product of decades of inevitable changes. This is important to this study
because it reflects the need for social institutions such as the family to embrace women’s
hybrid identities as gainfully employed women and redefine and share roles in the home.
It also implies that social participation as other social institutions has not remained stable
therefore it is important for members to redefine what participation means.

I also assessed the increased movement of people around the world and the
resulting hybrid cultures. The implications of hybridity are that cultures are not stable nor
are they pure. As people come into contact with other cultures around the world they gain
new worldviews and ways of self definition and identification. Hybridity it should be
noted is a part of the life cycle of any society and it is as old as human existence. Gandhi
(1998) argues that hybridity did not begin with colonialism and that contact among
people whether through war, trade or intermarriage has always bred cultural and identity
hybridity.
The feminization of teaching and the position of women in the teaching profession were also discussed. I looked at how the gender stereotypes of women as “mothering” were transferred into the school and negatively affected the perception of women as professionals. This chapter also discussed the importance of assessing the significance of gender roles and women’s multi-tasking lives to create an effective online program in the DPE. Communities of practice were also discussed as a form of analyzing the four shifts as spaces for the negotiation of meaning, identity and power. It was argued that viewing the four shifts as communities of practice shows that communities can also be sites of both empowerment and disadvantage if mutual engagement is not fairly negotiated.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research was an ethnographic study of female in-service primary school teachers studying for a Diploma in Primary Education at a distance at the University of Botswana. The study focused on the interrelationships and tensions between the multiple positions that they occupied in different social locations including family, work, distance learning and social participation. The research explored the following questions:

1) How does learning at a distance affect full-time work and family responsibilities?
   a) How do participants juggle work and study?

2) How does studying at a distance impact the women’s participation in their communities?
   a) How can the women’s multiple and competing social responsibilities be incorporated into the in-service teacher training program?
   b) Can online learning create time for social participation?

3) What are the issues associated with the use of Western instructional technologies for women in less-developed contexts?
   a) Is technology an additional burden or can it alleviate the women’s workload?
b) How can technology be used to improve learning and not perpetuate socially ascribed gender stereotypes?

4) Can participants benefit from online communities of practice/learning?

Site and entry

The research was carried out in the north and south of Botswana in both rural and urban settings. In the south my study sample was derived from teachers from the villages of Lerole and Letebele neighboring the city of Gaborone and within the city. In the north the participants were drawn from within the city of Francistown and nearby villages of Emasakeni, Matombo and Gwizi. The choice of these locations was influenced by the need to diversify the locations of the participants and possibly the experiences related to these locations. Facilities and life in general differ between cities and villages hence the decision to choose participants from both rural and urban locations.

Gaborone is the capital city of Botswana and is also where the main campus of the University of Botswana (UB) is located. It is also where the headquarters of all government ministries are located including the Botswana parliament, foreign embassies and major corporations. Compared to other cities it is very diverse with people from different parts of the country and the world. The city is very much westernized both in the way of life and infrastructure. People within the city generally do not have the same allegiance to communal life as is the case in the villages. Gaborone is a rapidly growing city and it has been expanding into the neighboring villages due to a shortage of land. This expansion has transformed the infrastructure and population of the villages because some people from the city have moved to these villages escaping high home rental and

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6 All the village names used in this study are pseudonyms while I used real names for the two cities.
prices. Due to these changes the villages have better facilities compared to other villages around the country. The teachers in these villages had access to more reliable public transportation system which made it easier to access services such as libraries quicker.

Francistown is the second largest city after Gaborone and is located 274 miles north of Gaborone and it hosts the UB’s oldest satellite campus housing the CCE which is the home of the DDE. Francistown is not as developed as Gaborone but it has been experiencing accelerated growth due to a boom in the mining industry around the city. Unlike Gaborone, Francistown has not expanded into the surrounding villages, which means they do not have the same influx of people from the city. The villages that I visited in this region had poor roads that were hard to navigate especially since my research took place when the country was experiencing its heaviest rainy season in decades.

Most of the schools either were in the process of having electricity installed or had none at all. I was surprised to note that in one of the largest villages all the government institutions including the junior and senior secondary schools had electricity. However, the primary school had been left out and was at the beginning stages of electrification. The teachers in these villages had to travel to Francistown to use the library which in some cases was as far as 50 miles away. This was made even more difficult by the costly and unreliable transport system. The teachers in these villages were more disadvantaged compared to their counterparts in the south. These teachers had a harder time researching for their distance learning assignments compared to those teaching in the outskirts of Gaborone.

Since the interest of the research was to explore the experiences of the participants in the different roles that they occupy, the research took place at a number of
places including the participants’ homes and other places that I negotiated with the participants such as their schools. It also included other locations where the participants participated in social events. Additionally, I also visited the primary schools where the participants teach and observed some of their classes.

Typically when carrying out research in institutions such as schools there are people who are in charge of operations in that location commonly known as gatekeepers (Seidman, 2006). In the case of this research there was a hierarchy of gatekeepers beginning with the Ministry of Education (MOE) which is responsible for assessing and granting permission for research in schools in the country. To carry out research in the first two areas (the home and social events) I did not need any special permission besides the informed consent form that the participants signed as a way of agreeing to be part of the study (see Appendix A). In most cases when scheduling follow up interviews the participants preferred to meet over the weekend in their homes. This was an advantage because it offered an opportunity for me to observe them in this context with their families.

The next permission was sought from the individual school principals where the participants teach. Seidman (2006) emphasizes the need to make a good impression on the gate keeper who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the location (in this case the school principals) where the research will take place because they have control over how much access you ultimately get and any perception that you are undermining their authority may limit the amount of access and cooperation the researcher gets.
This means that from the very first contact with the principals I had to acknowledge their authority by giving them as much information as they needed without compromising the research participants.

The majority of the principals I talked to were enthusiastic and willing to work with me to make my data collection as fruitful as possible. They were interested in what the study entailed and asked a lot of questions. Consequently my first visit was mainly spent chatting with the principals and briefing them on the research. In return I learned a lot about the politics involved in the distance education program and the school system in general as they shared their challenges catering for the in-service teachers and maintaining order in the schools. One principal who was also in the DPE program was not willing to participate in the study. She explained that she had a serious staff shortage and in addition to her administrative responsibilities she was also teaching a class.

As the principals are the gatekeepers in the schools, I had to consult them to get access to the teachers during working hours. In my first visit to every school I met with the principal and explained to them what the study was about. I then gave them an opportunity to ask any questions they might have concerning the study. I found that afterwards they were very helpful and courteous during my visits. They were also helpful in making the teachers available for class observations and also offered space for me to carry out interviews. The principals were instrumental in giving me the names of the teachers in their schools enrolled in the DPE. Generally they did not interfere with my data collection in any manner.
Time in the field

According to Jeffrey & Troman (2004) ethnography traditionally requires prolonged engagement with the participants during which the researcher lives among the people whose lives they are researching. This would include participating in their daily lives to come up with in-depth descriptions of their life experiences. However, due to limited financial resources and time constraints my stay was for a period of three months. This shorter stay in the field did not mean that the quality of my data was less credible; on the contrary I had a very rich experience and managed to gather more information than I had initially anticipated. I triangulated multiple methods (interviews, observations and document analysis) to maximize data and I additionally took detailed notes. Geertz (1973) argues that an extended stay in the field does not guarantee the best results because one can never absolutely know people and that; “Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is” (p. 29). I knew I had enough data when I kept on getting similar responses to my questions and interviews were not revealing anything new.

However, staying longer in the field can help establish firmer relationships that may encourage participants to open up more and share experiences they wouldn’t otherwise share with a stranger. During the course of fieldwork I noticed that in the initial interviews the participants were more reserved and were more interested in questioning me about my family background especially in the north compared to answering my questions. Most participants it turned out were just asking out of curiosity and never brought it up again. However, on two separate occasions during interviews the woman would begin to

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7 My late father represented the region in parliament for twenty years until 2004 therefore my last name prompted them to ask if we were related.
tell me about how she had to leave school because of lack of funds or to help support the family and she would then say, “but then you wouldn’t know anything about that, would you?” I found this very uncomfortable and I wriggled out of the situation by reminding them that I was part of a generation that had access to free education. Even though I have relatives with a similar story as hers I had to avoid the discussion being about what they assumed by life was and instead refocused on them. I later realized that it was some kind of a test or their way of weighing how much they could tell me.

One of the women later confessed that she felt bad about it when I didn’t become emotionally charged and defensive as she had expected. She actually ended up being one of my most supportive participants. After the initial awkwardness they became more disclosing and began sharing stories about their life experiences. The more time I spend with the participants the more candid they became. This may however, be an insider’s advantage because I was a local and spoke their languages which may have helped them warm up to me. In the focus groups I noticed that the women tended to talk less or responded very briefly to questions when we discussed cultural issues such as botho. I therefore decided to try out using Setswana and Ikalanga respectively where necessary and the women became more detailed in their responses. I continued using English with an option to code-switch when the need arose. I usually took my cue from the participant expression that it was difficult to explain a particular issue in English.

Sampling and data collection

As this was a qualitative study I triangulated multiple methods of data collection including focus groups, individual interviews, observations and document analysis. The
triangulation of methods in qualitative research is not intended to establish the truth value of the data as it is believed that meanings are varied and socially constructed (Schwandt, 2001). It is instead aimed at diversifying and increasing the data pool. The advantage of a diverse data pool is that it helps bring in varied viewpoints on the issue under investigation. This may challenge the initial hunches of the researcher or popular views among the participants and offer another way to explain the phenomena under investigation. Triangulation is also important in qualitative research because it contributes towards establishing trustworthiness of the data. Jones (2002) states that triangulation is, “One of the ways in which researchers can check their own subjectivity and ensure the trustworthiness of their findings” (p.469). Trustworthiness is important in qualitative research because it increases confidence in research findings through the use of multiple research methods and data sources (Glesne, 2006, p. 36). Glesne (2006) also states that the researcher’s continual awareness of her biases throughout the course of fieldwork can be a way of increasing trustworthiness for their data.

The sample selection was small and purposeful to maximize interaction with each participant to establish rapport. I selected the sample after focus groups (discussed below) with the participants during their residency at the colleges for tutorial sessions. I later followed up with those who had stories that promised to help answer my research questions.

Four of the participants came into the study through snowball sampling where one participant would recommend a friend or colleague who might be interested in sharing their story.
In total my sample included ten teachers. This enabled me to get in depth narratives of their lives. As Glesne (2006) points out that “For in-depth understanding, you should repeatedly spend extended periods with a few respondents and observation sites” (p. 36). Patton (2002) points out that purposeful sampling is a powerful practice in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to select “information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 230). The sample size allowed me to carry out follow-up interviews, observations and member checks more frequently to establish the reliability of my data.

Focus groups

As stated above the first sampling exercise was carried out through focus groups. Patton (2002) notes that focus groups; “involve conducting open-ended interviews with groups of five to eight people on specially targeted or focused issues” (p. 236). My sampling was done during lunch break because it was easier as students sat in groups usually based on friendship or because they worked together. They were already acquainted with one another therefore they were comfortable talking in front of one another from the onset. I initially recruited four groups with six members each but when the actual focus groups took place seven did not turn up. I ended up negotiating with the participants to split into three groups, one group of five and two of six. During the focus groups I audio recorded the interviews and also took notes. The participants were busy with tutorials and preparing for examinations as a result we agreed to have two 45 minute long interviews per group. The focus groups had a general tone and I got an impression
that the participants were not willing to discuss the specifics of their lives and experiences in a group forum. Probably it was because they were not yet comfortable enough to discuss their private lives in a group forum. This was confirmed when after each focus group one or two participants would walk with me as I was leaving and continue talking.

These conversations were more personal than they were in the focus groups, for example, they were able to relate specific information about their experiences. I took this opportunity to ask four of the women to participate in the study to which they agreed. I later asked two others whose stories met had some of the attributes mentioned below. I got four of the participants through snowball sampling. During the focus groups we discussed the general issues that the teachers experience as distance learners and full time teachers and how that affected other parts of their lives such as family and social networks (See Appendix C for focus group questions). Madriz (2003) argues that focus groups are an important method when studying women’s lives because it helps them realize that their experiences are not unique but that other women face similar challenges. She further argues that, “interactions occurring within group accentuates empathy and commonality of experiences and fosters self-disclosure and self-validation (p. 375).”

The selection of the final participants was based on those participants whose narratives indicated they were most affected by the four shifts. These were represented by attributes such as being single household heads, parents of young children, those who held positions of responsibility at work and other characteristics that could answer my research questions.
Study participants demographics

Tebogo\(^8\) is a 43 year old single mother of two. Her youngest child is a first grader in the same school she teaches. She doesn’t have a babysitter therefore her son waits for her to finish teaching so that they can go home together so he sat in during our first interview in her mother’s classroom. I met her when I went to her school to interview some of her colleagues who had joined the study. She approached me and was eager to share her experiences which lead to her dropping out of the DPE. She confesses that she became a teacher by default after failing to perform well in her Junior Certificate exams.

Kitso; is a 56 year old married mother of four grown children. In addition to being a distance learner, she is a principal. Kitso has a supportive husband and family who are always prepared to share the domestic chores. She stated that she had to leave school at Junior Certificate level because her family’s funds became depleted. Kitso has a Primary School Teacher’s Certificate (PTC) and is one credit away from graduating from the DPE. At the suggestion of her husband she intends to continue with her studies after she graduates from the current program. I asked her to participate in the study because she reportedly has a supportive family and I wanted to find out if this context helped her manage the four shifts.

Kuda is a 49 year mother of four whose husband died a couple of years into the DPE. She initially wanted to go to nursing school but they took long to respond she ended up teaching. Since losing her husband she struggles with being a single parent and finding childcare to attend tutorial sessions. She is responsible for most of the domestic work and occasionally gets help from her daughter over the weekends.

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\(^8\) All the participants’ names are pseudonyms.
I wanted her in the study because I wanted to find out how she coped with this difficult time in her life and whether the program made any concessions for her.

Setso is 42 year mother married mother of three. She was the oldest child in her family therefore in addition to helping with the domestic work she also babysat her siblings. She was initially interested in a career in agriculture but ended up in teaching because it had less stringent admission requirements. She admits that her husband is “lazy” and doesn’t do anything around the house. I was interested in how she conceptualizes her parenting style compared to her childhood socialization.

Boipuso; is a 53 year old widowed mother of one. In addition to her teaching duties she is also a coach in one of the extracurricular activities. Her son helps with domestic work that makes it easier for her to manage other responsibilities. She is very determined to do well because she wants to set a good example for her son. She is a strong believer in social participation and is very critical of some of the younger teachers who do not care much for this practice. I recruited her to find out how the deals with social participation in addition to her other responsibilities.

Kabo; is 45 year old married mother of four boys. She tells me she does most of the work in her house because her husband won’t help and her kids don’t do much either. Ever since she joined the program she stopped in social events because she was always tired by the weekend and need to rest. She suffered some repercussion when some of her community members did not show up when her family was bereavement because she did had disappeared from the social networks.

Chedza; is a 56 year old other of three (two gown and the youngest who is 13 lives at home. She left school at JC because of a lack of funds. Her father decided that she
was not a worthy investment because she was likely to grown up and marry. Her brothers on the other hand were allowed to continue with their education. Ironically, she never married as her father had claimed. The circumstance around her leaving school was of interest to me.

Tawanda; is 47 years old and married with three children. She became a teacher because it was the only prestigious profession for women at that time. She mentions that nursing was another available option but she was not interested. Her husband doesn’t cook or clean as a result she does all the work herself with occasional help from her children. She has a computer at home but has not bothered to learn how to use it. If she wants some work typed she asks her husband or kids to help out. She claims she doesn’t have the patience to learn.

Tashata; is a 50 year old single mother of two. When she attends tutorial sessions her mother baby-sits for her. Even though she has a teenage daughter she does all the domestic work because she wants her daughter to concentrate on her school work. She started school just before independence. She informs me that they were taught in Ikalanga. I recruited her because I wanted to find out more about this language issue. She is a first grade teacher and she uses both Ikalanga and Setswana in her class. She had mentioned briefly that at her grade level she was expected to “mother” the children and I wanted to see what that entailed.

Tsholofelo; she is a 45 year old single mother of three. She was an only child until she was 17 year old therefore she was taught to do all chores regardless of gender. After she was unable to proceed to senior secondary school she taught as a temporary teacher for three years before going to teachers’ college. She single handedly takes care of her
family but her brother looks after the kids when she is away. She doesn’t use computers
at the University of Botswana because she doesn’t want to be ridiculed by the young UB
students.

Unstructured interviews

Since focus groups (Patton, 2002) involve large numbers of participants they
usually yield non-specific data. However, I used them to get the general thoughts on the
program and also to select the information rich cases which made up my research
participants as discussed above. I carried out in-depth interviews which ranged between 1
to 11/2 hours with each participant the purpose of which was to get their narratives on
their multiple positions in family, work, social networks and distance learning.

In-depth interviews were a valuable method in this study because it gave the
participants the platform to describe their own lives from their own perspectives. Even
though English is the official language in Botswana and the participants’ fluency in the
language was not in doubt the participants were questioned in English and allowed to
respond in Setswana, Ikalanga or English. This was because the study was soliciting the
participants’ life stories within their cultural context and translating cultural codes into a
second language can be complicated as discussed below. Allowing them to use their
preferred languages gave them the freedom to switch from Setswana/Ikalanga to English
at will thus allowing them to be as informative as possible. As the researcher and also a
cultural insider I was comfortable with interpreting and translating their narratives into
English during transcription and data analysis.
Seidman (2006) describes unstructured interviewing as based on “…an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p.9). Even though these interviews were unstructured to allow for flexibility and spontaneity I used interview guiding questions (see Appendix B) generated from the research questions to address the objectives of the study. I had anticipated that there might be some unwritten rules emanating from internal politics within the school system that affected the participants’ performance of some of their roles. In some schools the teachers shared that their principals were not very helpful and refused to give them study leave to prepare for examinations. Most of the issues were administrative and I was fortunate enough to have a principal as one of the participants and she helped shed light on some of the issues. She told me that she was doing her best to accommodate the needs of the in-service teachers but adamantly stated that she will not do that at the expense of the students. She reasoned that even though the inception of the DPE was a good development they still have to function with the same number of teachers as before and excusing them from duty would compromise the students.

I audio recorded all interviews and transcribed them immediately after the interviews. Transcription proved to be a time consuming exercise, with an hour-long interview requiring up to three hours of transcription time. Darlington & Scott (2002) emphasize that this step is important in data collection and analysis since it allows the researcher to get acquainted with the data. Immediate transcription after data collection helped in identifying gaps in the narratives and gave me the opportunity to go back to the participants for clarification. For instance, after an initial interview with Kabo
I listened to the tape and realized that she had told me that she retook her Junior Secondary School Certificate (JC) examinations at the University of Botswana. I later learned from her that in the 1980s, the University used to have a micro teaching program in which students in the final year of the secondary school teacher certification program (Post Graduate Diploma in Education) would practice teaching on students who were working on retaking their examination.

According to Silverman (2000) besides helping the researcher to better understand their data, transcription is an important first step in data analysis since emerging themes can be recognized. Initial interpretations of the interviews and observation notes also served as a form of member checks as I gave the participants a chance to look at them and assess if my representation of their narratives was accurate and make any necessary changes. I member checked with Setso, Kitso and Boipuso respectively and this resulted in minor changes. Six weeks into the fieldwork I met with the same women, this time in a focus group and I gave them the beginning analysis of what I had collected thus far. They were generally satisfied and added more information in some places where they felt they had something more to say. The session ended up being another data collection opportunity because as they read through the data it would prompt a conversation and I took notes.

Participant observation

Participant observation (Darlington & Scott, 2002) is an important data collection tool as it allows the researcher to observe the behavior as it is lived out by the participants as they go about their daily lives. I carried out observations in the women’s classes to get
a feel for their lives as teachers. During these observations I was interested in finding out how the workload in this context impacted their other activities. One of the classes I observed was Tashata’s first grade class. In an earlier interview she had mentioned that teaching first grade was very stressful because she was expected to “mother” the students. I decided to visit her class to find out why she found teaching first grade so exhausting. During the class observation I took notes about the activities going on in the class and noted issues I needed clarified in the follow up interview. Glesne (2006) advises that through out the fieldwork a researcher should keep a field log which “…becomes a place for ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging. It also becomes a place for exploring the researcher’s reactions” (p. 55).

While observing Tashata’s class I noticed that she kept on switching between Ikalanga and Setswana when communicating with the students. This behavior was interesting to me because Ikalanga is not one of the official languages of instruction. As I continued to observe this going on in her class I realized that I was watching the argument against “national culture/identity” happening in front of me. In a follow up interview Tashata explained that most of her students spoke Ikalanga as a first language therefore she started off teaching in this language and gradually introduced them to Setswana. I began to write down questions in my research log about the implications of language and marginalization in education and Tashata’s class served as both a trigger for this idea and a place to witness resistance. Glesne (2006) states that follow up interviews are important because the researcher can ask for explanations of specific behavior.

One of the outstanding observations was in Tebogo’s fourth grade class. I observed that the class was just too neat but the longer the class went on the more I felt
like the whole set up was a performance for my benefit. It didn’t sound natural and the students were tense and only those who were called by name responded to questions. During analysis I looked at my field notes on Tashata’s class and compared them with Tebogo’s class and other classes I had visited. I started wondering how much of what I saw or was told was for my benefit and how much of it was rehearsed. I observed several classes during the fieldwork to get an idea of what their teaching experiences entailed.

During fieldwork I took detailed notes because they were a crucial record of my perceptions of what transpired in the observed setting. A research log was also a very useful as an avenue to reflect on my experiences and general frustrations while in the field. It also served as a record of my initial perceptions and helped me track how they changed during my stay in the field. Although I audio taped all my interviews, I still took some notes to keep track of the issues I wanted to probe further. Field notes were also a valuable source during observations because I noted behavior that I needed clarified afterwards. During observations I looked for the kind of interactions going on between the participant and other people in the context, was it family, friends, colleagues or students? Who was in charge of the activities? How much time did they spend at that location? My intention was to try to assess the amount of work involved and also the group dynamics.

For example, when observing I would look at whether they were solely responsible for the work in that context or if they had assistance how much was it? If it was a class I looked at the number students and made sure to inquire afterwards about the amount of grading involved. One of the important things I looked for in classrooms was the students’ behavior whether they could work independently or required constant
supervision. I found that when I was observing in the teacher’s classrooms some of them tended to be nervous when they saw me taking notes. After I explained that I was not assessing their teaching and offered them to look at my notes they started to relax. When observing in their homes I wanted to see to what degree their family members relied on them. The notes I took during all these interactions helped me flesh out my data.

Document analysis

The public school system in Botswana is solely funded and controlled by the government through the Ministry of Education (MOE). It was my assumption that there would be informative sources such as policy documents that traced the developments in teacher education. The documents that I found were mainly reports of National Commissions on Education (NCE, 1977, 1993) which were primarily focused on formal schooling with some discussions of teacher education. In addition to these official documents I read a series of letters from Bagnall ⁹(1966-1974) which gave insights into education in the early years of independence in the 1960s.

I also found the draft National Information and Communication Technology (NICT, 2005) document and its education specific counterpart dubbed Thuto.net which outlined government’s plans for making ICTs accessible to all Batswana. I used critical discourse analysis to assess the Ministry of Education’s teacher training policies. I was also wanted to find out if they had historically included the sociocultural context and gender issues. Price (1999) states that a critical analysis of language is intended “to go

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⁹ Sheila Bagnall was an English teacher who came to Botswana with the assistance of Oxfam just before independence to teach science at Swaneng Secondary School. During her stay in the country she constantly sent letters back home to England sharing her experiences about living and teaching in Botswana. The letters were later donated to the University of Botswana.
beyond simply describing conventions of language form and use to show the ways in which such conventions are tied to social relations of power” (p. 581). Fairclough (1995) asserts that “a piece of discourse is embedded within sociocultural practice at a number of levels; in the immediate situation, in the wider institution or organization, and at a societal level” (p. 97). According to these arguments discourse is a product of its context therefore when carrying out a critical discourse analysis (CDA) it was crucial for me to assess the ideology that produced the views expressed in the documents.

There was no mention of gender but the tendency was to talk about teachers in a homogenous manner without addressing any gender differences. Through out the reports they used referents such as “all teachers”, “the teachers”. Even where they cited statistics reflecting the qualifications of the teachers in schools gender was omitted as a category. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) I assessed the language in conjunction with the sociocultural context within which the homogeneous discourses and the silences on gender were constructed. According to Fairclough (1995) “the characteristic of a dominant ideological discursive formation is the capacity to ‘naturalize’ ideologies, i.e. to win acceptance for them as non-ideological ‘common sense’ (p. 27). He suggests that to show their dominant formation it is necessary to “denaturalize” them by “showing how social structures determine properties of discourse, and how discourse in turn determines social structures” (p. 27).

Fairclough uses Foucault’s characterization of power embedded in ideological discursive formations as an ‘unstable equilibrium’. Foucault (1980) observes that
“Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it…” (p. 101). It was the goal of this discourse analysis to expose that power and show the subject positions it creates.

According to Rossman & Rallis (1998) document analysis plays an important role in qualitative research because it can supplement the data attained from interviews and observations with documented information. After analyzing the official discourses I compared my findings with the female teachers’ narratives to identify disparities and find out ways of addressing them in the online learning program. I also used discourse analysis to track whether the teacher education policies have changed over time in line with the general changes such as the move towards gender equity in education.

Analyzing the women’s narratives and official documents helped in giving a clearer picture of how the women viewed their situation based on their experiences in contrast to official discourses. It helped to look at these discourses within the overall context of the Botswana patriarchal society and assess how this context influenced both perceptions on equitable teacher training policies.

Data management and safe keeping

Seidman (2006) asserts that to keep track of the data in qualitative research it is important to develop a data management system. During the course of the data collection the DDE provided an office for which I had exclusive access. The office contained a lockable storage cabinet that I will use to store some of the data. I open up a file for each participant and kept the data from all my interactions with them. To make the data quickly accessible I used a color coding system to identify each data collection method.
For example, I used yellow for all initial in-depth interviews and blue for the follow up interviews and so on. This color coding helped me to keep track of what I had collected from an individual participant at a glance without having to read through all the transcripts.

These files were labeled with the participant’s pseudonym and the date and duration of each data collection. Seidman (2006) advises that it is important to label everything from the data files to audio tapes because “…every moment the researcher spends paying attention to order, labeling, filling, and documentation at the beginning and in the formative stages of the study can save hours of frustration later” (pp. 112-113). This organizational scheme came in handy in data analysis because it saved me from a potentially overwhelming task of sifting through massive and disorganized data. I typed and analyzed the data in my personal computer for which I had sole access to ensure safe keeping of the data and confidentiality of the participants. The research data as encrypted to avoid any unwelcome access from anyone besides the researcher.

Trustworthiness and reliability

Although the focus of the qualitative researcher is not to test some a priori theory or establish the “truth” value of the participants’ narratives, it is still necessary to establish trustworthiness for their data. Trustworthiness is concerned with rigor in research and working towards representing the participants’ narratives as much as possible through exercises such as member checks. Other ways to increase trustworthiness can be through the triangulation of data collections methods and sources (Glesne, 2006). In this study I triangulated research methods (focus groups, individual
interviews and participant observations) and data sources (participants and documents) in an effort to establish reliability for the data. Schwandt (2001) explains that scholars differ on the definition of reliability but one of them states that “reliability is a matter of assembling dependable evidence and methods used to assembly this evidence matter” (p.227). Triangulation is important in qualitative research because it can contribute to multiple perspectives and yield more data (both confirming and disconfirming cases) to improve trustworthiness of the researcher’s findings. The inclusion of both confirming and disconfirming data was helpful later in data analysis as I was able to see instances in which there was a difference of opinion among the participants. For example, when I asked each woman in the interviews the reasons why they left school at JC\textsuperscript{10} nine of them had reasons ranging from a lack of funds to having to help support their families. However, Kabo admitted, “Actually I failed twice, so I decided to look for a job and teaching was the only opportunity available”. Her confession prompted me to wonder if maybe there more like her who were not so open about their experiences.

Glesne (2006) suggests that, “Part of demonstrating trustworthiness of your data is to realize the limitations of your study. Your responsibility is to do the best you can under certain circumstances. Detailing these circumstances helps readers to understand the nature of your data” (p. 169). Disconfirming data or what Silverman (2000) calls “deviant-case analysis” can help find those cases that challenge the dominant perceptions. Another step I took towards reliability was through member checks which involved giving some participants of the study parts of the data such as the initial interpretations of

\textsuperscript{10} At the end of tenth grade, which is the end of junior secondary school (junior high) students take exams. These are qualifying exams to continue to senior secondary school. The certificate the students get is after exam is commonly known as the Junior Certificate (JC).
the interviews and observations. This was so that they could confirm or disconfirm my interpretations and where necessary make adjustments accordingly.

Although the use of member checks is a good technique in qualitative research Geertz (1973) cautions that; “Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is” (p. 29). This however, does not mean that rich data cannot be collected but instead it speaks to the need to use “thick descriptions” in writing and reporting (Geertz, 1973). It entails describing the participants’ narratives with as much detail as possible. In the case of this project I used narrative vignettes (Erickson, 1986; Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul, 1997) which are direct quotations from the participants’ assertions as another form of establishing reliability.

Timeline

As discussed above the data collection took place over a period of three months. My position as an insider in the DDE helped me escape the usual delays associated with gaining access, entry and getting participants which under normal circumstances could cut deep into the time in the field. Unforeseen circumstances (Glesne, 2006) such as cancellations of appointments by participants were a factor from time-to-time but we always managed to reschedule immediately. The research began the last week of November when the potential participants were in residency at the colleges for the face to face tutorials which ran for two weeks. I had initially planned to spend alternate weeks in the south and north respectively but it was not feasible at times due to conflicts with the participants’ work related activities. After trying to make that work for a few weeks I settled into spending two weeks in each side that way I was able to accommodate
rescheduling. It also helped to establish rapport quicker because I got to see them more often within a couple of weeks than I would in a week. The fieldwork ran from the last week of November, 2007 to the end of February, 2008.

Data analysis

The research process involved three major stages; data collection, analysis and writing. In principle these stages are allocated time but for the most part overlapping with one stage beginning before the other is over. According to Patton (2002) this is because the “fluid and emergent nature of naturalistic inquiry makes the distinction between data gathering and analysis far less absolute” (p. 436). During the course of data collection and analysis I carried out analysis and preliminary writing simultaneously to prevent the piling up of data. Although Wolcott, 1994 (cited in Silverman, 2000) advises that “you cannot begin writing early enough”, at the beginning there was more collection than analysis due to the time needed to complete the interview transcriptions (p. 122). After the field work was complete I then combine analysis and writing with similarly at the beginning the former took precedence over the latter. Gradually my focus shifted to more writing than analysis after the data was significantly reduced. Data analysis involved identifying themes and categories in the field notes which were initially emergent and broad and became more focused as the data analysis advanced (Darlington & Scott, 2002).

At the beginning of the analysis process I read through the data once to get a general feel of the data. In the second reading I began to identify broad themes and categories which were refined as I continued to work with the data. I then coded the data
based on the research questions and other emerging themes from the data. Rossman and Rallis (1998) note that; “coding entails thinking through what you take as evidence of a category or theme” (p.180). Due to its selective nature, coding is a subjective process determined by the researcher’s perceptions of what is significant and what should be left out. To create the codes (see Appendix F) I looked at each question and picked out phrases in the data that captured the main idea(s) in the question. I then abbreviated the codes to make them easier to use when coding the data. For example, for botho is used BOT and for multitasking I used MUT. After some time the codes became more specific as the analysis continued and related ideas were grouped together in the form of themes. At this point the evolving ideas were more focused and some codes were changed to embrace this change. For example, I started off with a code DC to represent domestic chores but as I went on with the analysis I grouped together domestic chores, child care and family support under one theme, Family work. The codes still existed but they were now categories under the umbrella term “family work”. My intention was to discuss the different kinds of work that go on in the home and how they cumulatively affect the women’s workload.

In this research I used inductive analysis as opposed to having a priori fixed variables as is common practice in quantitative inquiry. Patton (2002) notes that “inductive analysis begins with specific observations and builds toward general patterns. Categories or dimensions of analysis emerge from open-ended observations as the inquirer comes to understand patterns that exist in the phenomenon being investigated” (p. 55-56).
In the analysis process those themes that did not fit in with my research questions but bore significance to the study were discussed in the concluding chapter as they offered possibilities for future research.

Marshall & Rossman (1999) state that data analysis is the most difficult stage in research as it requires reading the data several times to find themes and categories. However, this is a necessary step because these themes and categories are useful in beginning data reduction, analysis and ultimately the write up of the findings. I initially considered using data analysis software but during data collection I decided against it. I manually transcribed and analyzed that data because I felt it would help me have a deeper understanding of the issues during the exercise. This was helpful in beginning data analysis and also in identifying any links between different data sources.

After coding I began analysis by printing out the data and went through each transcript highlighting all codes associated with each question with a different colored pen. Miles & Huberman (1994) explain that “codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the data” (p. 56). They further state that the codes generate themes with which to group ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The next step was to go back to the computer and cut and paste every part of the data corpus associated with every respective theme. Each theme and its associated assertions were combined into one document to create a quick visual display of the data which made analysis easier. The system also made for a quicker reference system to the data and specifically the participants’ statements for citation during the writing process.
Crisis of representation and self-reflection

The role of researcher is a position of power because it entails making decisions about what questions to ask and which narratives to include or exclude in the final report. Achieving some balance of power though difficult can be realized through constant awareness on the part of the researcher of their standpoint and their possible biases emanating from their own biography and experiences. According to Mulinari & Sandell (1999) researcher self-awareness is important when studying women’s lives, “reflexivity in the sense of continual consideration of the ways in which the researcher’s own social experience affect the data gathered and the picture of the social world produced has been a paramount project for feminist research” (p. 289). In this research an awareness of my standpoint was significant because in addition to being a Motswana woman thus a cultural insider to some extent, I am an employee of the DDE which is responsible for the DPE program. As a result I was cautious to avoid disclosing some information that I was privy to because of my job at the DDE and instead let the participants tell their stories without my arguing with their perceptions.

I came to appreciate the difficulty position of a researcher who is also an insider because at times the participants invited me in to affirm their narratives as a cultural insider through statements such as, “you know how it is in our culture….” Or at times I was called upon to be part of the collective memory when they would allude to the curricula changes over time for example and I would be called upon to recall how the curriculum was when I was at primary school. There were other instances when I could feel my position shift to an outsider when they discussed issues they believed I had not experienced such as childrearing or working full time and studying.
I was aware that it was not possible to capture people’s narratives exactly in the sense they were expressed but it was still a concern. My dilemma was that we were discussing Setswana culture which in turn I had to write for English speaking audiences who are situated in a different cultural context. Perhaps Ashcroft (1995) captured my anxiety when he asked, “But how does the non-English speaker, for instance, mean anything in English? Firstly, writers, like the language, are subject to the situation, in that they must say something meaneable (p. 302)”. For example, Setswana idiomatic expressions were challenging for me to translate because when they are devoid of their context they did not seem to mean much. In my first interview with Kuda she was telling about the challenges of being a widow and taking care of the children on her own and she remarked, “Mmangwana o tshwara thipa ka fa bogaleng”. Its direct translation to English is, “A mother holds the sharp edge of a knife”. This makes no sense in English but the general sense of the idiom is that a mother would go to any length for the well-being of her children.

I was worried about what would get misunderstood and what would get lost in translation. Schutte (2000) addresses this complexity, “no two cultures or languages can be perfectly transparent to each other. There is always a residue sufficiently important to point to what I shall refer to more abstractly as a principle of (cross-cultural) incommensurability….A minus effect to cross-cultural communication” (p. 50). The struggles I had are commonly referred to as the crisis of representation which is the understanding in qualitative research that it is not possible precisely capture or represent lived experience. Rather such experience is created in the social text written by the researcher (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). The crisis of representation for this research was
also intensified by the fact that I was working under the binary of cultural insider and outsider due to the fact that in addition to being Motswana I was also studying in a Western institution.

Inevitably, my interpretation of the participants’ lives was influenced by my social position(s) and knowledge situated in both contexts. Narayan (2003) observes that this dual existence can be a double edged sword because “…although it may lead to an ‘epistemic advantage,’ it is likely to exact a certain price. It may lead to a sense of totally lacking roots or any space where one is at home in a relaxed manner” (p. 316). A constant awareness of this possible bias though difficult was necessary because it helped me guard against leaning heavily on the Western lens when discussing the women’s views on technology.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I discussed my time in the field from negotiating entry to sampling and data collection. I carried was in the field for three months during which I collected data using interviews, observations and document analysis. During the period of fieldwork simultaneously transcribed the interview data and began preliminary analysis. After the fieldwork was over I began to focus on analysis and writing. I also discussed the challenges I faced researching in my own cultural context and dealing with my outsider issues resulting from the fact that I am studying in a Western institution.

In Chapter 4, I will share the findings of this study framed by the participants’ narratives. I will also trouble these hegemonic discourses and also the silences on gender. I will also analyze how these discourses are shaped by ideologies of both cultural
domination and patriarchy which “naturalize” the marginalization of other groups and cultures.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

In the previous chapter I discussed the data analysis method used in this study. During the process of data collection I began a preliminary analysis which entailed a general reading of the data for emerging themes. The exercise is necessary to identify those areas related to the research that may have been initially overlooked but have a potentially significant impact in addressing the research questions. The data corpus was derived from individual interviews, focus groups and observations. After collection and transcription, the data was coded using the following research questions as a guide;

1) How does learning at a distance affect full-time work and family responsibilities?
   a) How do participants juggle work and study?

2) How does studying at a distance impact the women’s participation in their communities?
   a) How can the women’s multiple and competing social responsibilities be incorporated into the in-service teacher training program?
   b) Can online learning create time for social participation?
3) What are the issues associated with the use of Western instructional technologies for women in less-developed contexts?
   a) Is technology an additional burden or can it alleviate the women’s workload?
   b) How can technology be used to improve learning and not perpetuate socially ascribed gender stereotypes?

4) Can participants benefit from online communities of practice/learning?

In writing this report I quoted heavily from the data to substantiate my assertions. Erickson (1986) advises that in writing a fieldwork report it is important to support one’s assertions with “evidentiary warrant” from the data. He states that this can be done through direct quotes from the data and further argues that without this evidence the researcher unfairly expects the audience to, “…take the author’s assertions on faith (p.149). Following Erickson’s advice I used both confirming and disconfirming data where available to show instances of dissonance among the participants on any given issue raised. This move was also important to trouble or question the perceptions that I brought to the field.

Upbringing and identity formation

In my interactions with the participants some themes that were not directly related to the objectives of the study emerged but since I used the research questions to guide this analysis I will only discuss them in the next chapter. The purpose of this study was to investigate how women in the Diploma in Distance Education (DPE) at the University of Botswana (UB) negotiate the multiple “shifts” in their lives. These entail responsibilities
emanating from their lives as full time teachers and distance learners in addition to their social and personal lives. In my attempts to make sense of the women’s narratives I had to revisit their childhoods and their upbringing. This was intended to understand how those experiences might have helped shape them into the women whose experiences I was seeking.

The women revealed that they grew up in traditional households which meant that chores were divided according to gender. When sharing her story Kitso stated, “domestic chores were divided according to gender but we (girls) worked harder.” Setso also recalled, “As the first and oldest girl, I had to take care of my siblings; babysitting and everything. Come to think of it, I practically raised them.” Most participants related similar stories of childcare duties and helping their mothers with domestic chores. In listening to their stories I sensed that their work as girls indicated some kind of apprenticeship as they shadowed their mothers’ duties as if to prepare them for future motherhood and responsibilities. The gender stereotyped chores would later define their adult lives as narrated later on.

I was also interested in finding out whom or what influenced their career choices. They related that it was common at the time to leave school after Junior Certificate (JC) mainly due to lack of school fees. When funding became a problem for parents it was assumed that the JC was a good enough place to end schooling and seek employment. Some of the women’s narratives suggested that in some circumstances the decisions about who should drop out or continue were based on gender with the girl being the casualty. One woman shared her experience:
My father decided that because there weren’t enough funds to pay fees for all the children, the girls would only go up to JC and then find jobs. My brothers were allowed to continue all the way to tertiary level. He explained that we (girls) were going to get married at some point therefore he wasn’t willing to spend anymore money only to have our future in-laws benefit from his investment.

The father’s argument was based on the cultural understanding that children take care of their parents and that when a female marries they are primarily responsible for their in-laws while her brothers (if she has any) will always take care of his parents.

Eight of the women revealed that for them teaching was more a career of convenience than anything else. They revealed that at the time (seventies and early eighties) there was a shortage of teachers; therefore to meet the need, the profession was more receptive to untrained teachers. Tashatha who had to leave school after the passing of her father because of a lack of funds and to help meet the family’s financial needs stated, “Due to a shortage of teachers at the time it was easier to find a job as an untrained teacher. I taught for five years before going for training.” Some participants however, stated that they became teachers due to a genuine love of the profession while others argued that they failed to get good enough grades to proceed to senior secondary school.

This background information set the foundation for my discussions with the participants as they shared their life stories. In our interviews we explored how they juggle the multiple roles that characterize their lives. The discussions that follow are my perspectives of the participants’ lived experiences based on their narratives.
Multitasking: Work, family and distance learning

During the course of the interviews the participants revealed that they found combining full time teaching duties with distance learning and family commitments difficult. One of the complicating factors is that teaching related duties such as grading the students’ work continue well after the end of the school day. The women explained that after the school day is over they go home and carry out family related responsibilities which leave no time for their studies. In response to my question about how she fits in teaching, family and distance learning Kabo related:

I get home from work tired to the bone and after making dinner and helping my youngest son with his homework going to bed is more appealing than studying. Most of the time I don’t do any studying on my own unless I have assignments then I would push myself to get some work done. Some days I am successful and can put in three to four hours but on others my husband would wake me up snoring on top of the desk with nothing gained but a stiff neck.

Typically the women’s formal work day starts as early as six in the morning and ends at around four or five in the afternoon. Most of their days are characterized by starting off early to take care of the family’s needs before going to work. Chedza stated, “My day usually starts at around 5:45am when I wake up and help my son to get ready for school and then I make him breakfast and get myself ready for work.”

There appears to be no clear demarcation between the duties in the shifts expect perhaps some part of the formal work day which has a fixed time schedule from around
seven in the morning to one in the afternoon. However, most participants stated that when school lets out they usually stay behind for a few hours to prepare for the next day of work or to participate in extra curricula activities. As Kabo explained:

Usually after school I stay behind to prepare my teaching materials for the next day and after that is done I would grade my students’ work. If I have time afterwards I would do a bit of studying before I go home around four or five in the afternoon.

Some women also stated that they were involved in coaching some sports such as netball and they found that taxing since enrolling in distance learning. Clearly their full time work occupies most of their day and at the end of the formal work day they have domestic responsibilities such as preparing meals for their families and helping their children with homework which doesn’t give them a lot of time to rest. Tashata stated:

After I get out of school I have to go home and rest a little bit before I prepare dinner. I get really exhausted but I still have to help the kids with their homework, you know, as a teacher a lot is expected from your children by their teachers so you have the added pressure to make sure they do well.

In spite of all the work involved in these women’s work there is no indication that neither their employers nor their families recognize the challenges they face everyday.

11 An indoor or outdoor game similar to basketball, usually played by girls or women in which goals are scored by throwing a ball through a raised net. Players can hand or throw the ball to each other but not run with it. - Encarta Dictionary.
trying to meet all their obligations. Tashata is a typical stereotype of the teacher as “mother”. When I observed her first grade class I noticed that she had to constantly deal with complaint “he is pulling my hair”, or “she is just hit me”. She also told me after the observation that she had to serve the children their lunch and also supervise them while they eat to make sure they don’t get burnt by the food. Although I was only there as an observer I found her class of twenty nine energetic six to seven year olds very overwhelming. When I asked how she handled it she stated that it was both mentally and physically exhausted. After a full day’s work the women continue with their other job which involves taking care of their family’s needs which they mainly do without much help. When I asked the participants; “Who helps you with your domestic chores?” Seven of them responded; ‘in my house I do all the domestic chores’. The more work they have to do the later their bed time becomes which adds more stress to their already overworked lives. It appears common that there is no equal division of labor on the home front as the women are expected to do most of the work without the support of their families. The situation makes it difficult for them to find time to do work for their distance education studies. Boipuso revealed:

I don’t actually have time for distance education study before 9 at night and that is only when I really have to. Over the weekends I make sure that I do my domestic chores and then I study at night or in the early hours of the morning.

Based on the teacher’s narratives on what their typical day entails it seems they work as hard in their full time paid employment as they do in their unpaid family related
work. Actually given that after a full day’s work they put in more hours of work shows the significance of the load that they carry even though there is a tendency of disregarding the weight of the unpaid work. It also calls to question the perception that distance education is not expected to interfere with paid employment because it is done in the teacher’s “free time.”

According to the teachers their teaching load has remained the same in spite of the reality that with the addition of distance education and familial responsibilities their work load has increased significantly. When I asked Boipuso about her teaching load since she enrolled in the distance education program she responded, “It has remained the same and I even maintained my extra curricula activities as a sports coach. We were told that since distance education is part time it doesn’t have to interfere with our work.” After interacting with these women and seeing how hard they worked particularly in those shifts that are supposed to be done in their “spare time” I reflected in my log, “Who really has the right to decide what qualifies as work? Who draws the line between work and just a responsibility?”

Time management in distance education

Time management is a major problem arising from the teachers’ circumstances as they end up not having enough time to spend with their children doing the usual things associated with childrearing. This is a significant issue that bothers most of the teachers as Kitso narrates a conversation with one of her children:
I try to manage my time as best as I can but I remember an incident in which one of my daughters was talking to me and apparently I didn’t look up and she said, ‘mum, it would be nice if once in a while you could look at me when talking to me.’ I am always so engrossed in my books that I don’t have much quality time with my kids.

Insufficient time appears to have created a situation in which some women consistently “borrow” time from one shift to do work for another. For example, some teachers confessed that when they have assignments due for their distance learning they sometimes give their students work that doesn’t impose any extra work on them (the teachers). These teachers used class work to baby-sit the students to get time to do their assignments. Numerous teachers voiced concern that their families end up getting less attention because they have the pressure to perform well both at work and in their studies as the outcomes have a direct impact on their professional progress. Tsholofelo asserts, “…it is important for me to commit to my teaching duties because that is my meal ticket.” Kabo also agreed, “I find myself having to make a choice between my full time job and distance learning and the former always wins because that is where I make my living and my performance should be seen to be up to standard.” The limited amount of time they have has led to a priority system of what gets done first and others follow in order of the significance of the consequences.

The burden of juggling the multiple roles appeared to weigh heavily on the teachers as most of them expressed that there just isn’t enough time to do all the work in their jam-packed lives. The feeling of being pulled in different directions was common
among the women as Tawanda succinctly observed, “I am only one woman and I feel like everyone expects too much from me.” The sentiment was shared by some of the participants who felt frustrated that people around them (both at work and home) choose to ignore the fact that due to distance learning they have more work. Instead of making some compromises to help them out their families instead expect things to go on as usual.

This is possibly a result of the cultural expectation that the home and the associated responsibilities are a woman’s domain. In a conversation about her domestic chores and her husband’s involvement in the day to day running of her household Tawanda responded:

He doesn’t cook at all he would rather do the dishes or sweep the house and that is only if I am away from home for an extended time. He used to try when the children were younger but now if he is left with the youngest child he would rather go out and buy fast food.

Evidently, the lives of these women differ from the lives of women in colonial Botswana because they are gainfully employed and enrolled in school in addition to their culturally ascribed gender roles. There is no doubt that the changes that have enabled more Batswana women get an education and paid employment has significantly empowered them. However, these changes have to some extent compromised the social support system they used to reach out to when they needed help with work and other responsibilities.
Childcare and the working mother

The changes in women’s lives though beneficial have also come at the cost of losing the social system that traditionally rendered childrearing a communal affair. As western concepts of work have gradually permeated the Botswana society since colonial contact the society has increasingly adopted some individualistic traits that are alien to the local cultures. The result has been the morphing of local culture from primarily communal to a hybrid culture which in some parts tip towards individualism. Childcare is one example of such a change. While in the past one could leave their children under the care of neighbors and relatives that circle is becoming increasingly smaller leaving the parents and by extension their mothers as the sole caretakers for their children.

Judging by the participants’ reported problems finding childcare, it is safe to say that it no longer takes a village to raise a child but a mother who is juggling a job, part time schooling and other demands. In their quest for a solution some mothers find themselves having to depend on older children or their mothers as I found out during a focus group:

Researcher: Who takes care of your children while you are here (tutorial sessions)?

Participant1: My kids are actually left on their own when I go for tutorial sessions. But since I don’t live far from here I see them in between lessons but on days when I don’t have free time between lessons I spend a night or two in the college and end up seeing them after a couple of days. I find
myself depending on my teenage daughter a lot to take care of her siblings while I am attending the tutorial sessions because she is usually on school holiday at the time.

Participant 2: For those of us who teach far from our home villages and are enrolled in colleges that are further away it is difficult. Usually the weekend between the end of the school term and the beginning of the tutorial session, I take them home to stay with my mother. I trust her to take better care of them than to leave them with my husband. If I did I would be worried all the time about whether they are well-fed (my kids are very picky eaters) the youngest needs someone to patiently feed him or he would starve.

Participant 3: Men don’t have the same patience and diligence when taking care of the kids as we do (laughter all round).

Participant 4: Exactly, I leave mine with my older sister and I am sure my husband is relieved because he never complains.

The women express a tendency to trust female family members to help with childcare more than their spouses or male relatives. The association of good childcare with females is most likely influenced by the cultural stereotype that women are supposed to take care of children.
The cultural stereotype has been normalized to such an extent that the women have accepted it as their role. They believe that females are better positioned to take care of the children.

The impact of these gender stereotyped childcare practices becomes a significant problem for a mother who works outside the home and has to leave home to attend face to face tutorial sessions. Kuda, who was widowed a couple of years into the program narrates her worries about all of a sudden finding herself a single parent. She narrated that she worried about leaving her children without adult supervision:

It has been even more difficult since I lost my husband because I don’t have a sense of security that my children will be taken care of when I am away either at a tutorial session or attending a study group. I especially worry now about leaving my teenage daughter what with boys and everything. When her father was alive I knew I could leave and they would be safe but now I constantly worry about their safety.

The sentiment was not unique to this mother as other teachers also expressed their anxiety when they are away from home and their children. I observed the problems the women have with childcare when I had an interview appointment with Tebogo during her lunch hour at her school and she brought her first grader son with her. She explained that she didn’t have a baby-sitter and since her older child didn’t get out of school until four in the afternoon, he usually waits for her and they go home together.
However, not all the women struggled with trying to juggle a multitude of responsibilities without help. There were some participants who attested to the fact that they benefited from familial support. Family support plays a significant role in the success of the distance learner because it can relieve them of some of the responsibilities that they have and make it easier to focus on learning. This was affirmed by Kitso who said that she had a supportive husband and found that it made it easier to manage working as a school principal and a distance learner:

I have a very supportive and progressive husband who does not care much for the traditional notions of leaving all domestic chores to his wife. That is how I manage to do well in my distance learning because he takes care of the children and the household while I am away at tutorial sessions. Even at times when I am home and have a lot of school work to do he doesn’t see any trouble with cooking and cleaning.

The majority of the women I talked to were not as fortunate, they solely responsible for their family’s welfare including domestic duties. Another complicating factor for some of these women is that schools are spread all over the country therefore people do not necessarily live next to their kinfolks anymore. Opportunities of finding a sympathetic relative to baby-sit have been diminished by these work related relocations.
What price do the students pay?

The narratives of the women in this study suggest that ignoring the multiple responsibilities that the female distance learners have to contend with has a negative impact on the performance of their teaching duties. Due to the insurmountable task of dealing with overlapping duties and not enough time, some women end up resorting to unpopular choices. Setso confessed:

If I have assignment due I make sure I give my students work that will not be too demanding on me as far as grading is concerned. This allows me to have time to do my assignments my assignments in class while I keep the students occupied. There is an element of being artful with my time and coordinating of activities around what is going on at the time.

Keeping the students occupied with work that is “less demanding” appears to be a common practice amongst those participants who are unable to come up with a plausible time management system. During a focus group interview, one of the participants also affirmed this practice that they acknowledge is unethical but sometimes a necessary evil:

I know it is not fair to give other people’s kids work without supervision and do your homework all the time but sometimes I am so pressed for time that I find myself doing it. Of course, I feel guilty about it but I feel like there isn’t enough time to fit all the responsibilities in my life at the moment. So, I steal a minute or two here and there and keep on going.
Taking away time from engaging with the students or giving “easier work” that some of these teachers resort to may suggest a compromise of teaching standards. This trend points to an urgent need to find a workable solution to keep the women’s performance up to par and still allow them time to do their distance learning. The argument allegedly forwarded by the teachers’ employers that distance education is “not supposed to interfere with their work” is challenged by this practice which threatens both the quality of the education system and the success of the students under their tutelage. The students in this situation are the one who are losing out with teachers who are too pre-occupied with trying to meet deadlines and get good grades than deliver on their obligations as teachers.

However, there are exceptions to this behavior as some participants argued that studying at a distance has never interfered with their teaching duties. Chedza recalled; “When I started off in the program I had a tough time keeping up with the busy schedule but at this point I am used to it. I am able to handle my time allocation better than before.” I must state however, that I observed that of the teachers who expressed not experiencing any problems with time management, a majority had adult children who can either help out or no longer lived at home. As Tawanda related, “…my children are seventeen and nineteen years old therefore when I prepare for assignments or tests they know that they need to take over and do everything around the house.” One can therefore argue that it may be easier for them since they don’t have childrearing duties which relatively reduce their workload affording them time to concentrate on their studies.
Setso mentioned that, “I am lucky that my children are older so I don’t have a lot of worries because I know that they are independent. I had a tough time in the beginning when they were younger but not anymore.”

Distance learning and social participation

In my discussions with the participants it was constantly reported that finding time to do all the work involved was a struggle. As a way of finding a solution some participants related that they had resorted to doing distance learning related work over the weekends. When relating that she doesn’t do much work during the week Chedza explained, “Normally we arrange study groups over the weekends with a group of ladies who are also in the program.” Reserving the weekends for distance learning creates a scheduling conflict with social activities which traditionally take place during that time. Some participants voiced misgivings with the situation because it made social participation next to impossible. In response to my inquiry on the impact of distance education on social participation, Setso said:

…when you are in this program your life just stops. You are unable to attend important events such as funerals because of time constraints. You find yourself scrambling to do things because the program is demanding and it runs for up to four years. This means that you end up distancing yourself from your community for an extended period of time.
The lack of time and the resulting failure to attend social events has contributed to some of the women being perceived as antisocial because they are always making choices that are in contrast with the cultural expectation of social participation. Therefore having to make the tough choice between their studies and social participation has been a source of struggle.

They constantly worry about the situation because their social networks are very important to them. In one of the focus groups, one participant mentioned:

I suspect people in my community think I don’t have botho, and I have become anti-social because they hardly ever see me. The fact that classes in the distance education tutorials are scheduled for school vacations compromises our ability to participate in social events.

The relationship between the participants and their community is negatively affected by their failure to show up at social occasions. They have to contend with negative perceptions from within their social circles as they are accused of not having botho. Social participation in the form of attending funerals is an important part of their culture as it is one of the key tenants of performing botho. As a result it plays a significant role towards how one is perceived by their community. Ludo explained:

You are expected to attend to events such as funerals because people back in the community don’t understand what is going on.
If you don’t show up they assume that you are now educated (*read westernized*) and don’t feel the need to participate in communal activities. That is to say due to your education you have lost botho.

Clearly, it matters a great deal to the participants that their communities do not write them off as inactive members of the group because of an assumed lack of botho. A good number of them agreed that the current structure of the distance education program does not accommodate this important part of their lives and thus creating conflict with their communities. The repercussions resulting from a failure to participate in these events can be unpleasant as Kabo relates:

This program has created a rift between my relatives and I because I am away most of the time. If we have events at my family home most of them don’t turn up because they claim that they never see me anywhere when they have events. Obviously these events coincide with group or tutorial meetings therefore if I want to succeed in my studies I have to step back from these social activities and concentrate on my studies.

Social participation carries a lot of weight in Setswana culture but the participants’ current circumstances have to some extent contributed to some women’s social inactivity.
Although there is no doubt that the women stand to benefit a lot from furthering their studies they are paying a heavy social price to achieve this goal. They run the risk of being perceived as cultural deviants resulting in their being ostracized by their respective communities.

A number of women were concerned that their social networks may be so compromised that they may not be able to mend them after the program is over. Malebogo indicates the significant social pressure they are under, “Since enrolling in this program I haven’t been able to show up to most social events and you know, you hear rumors that you think you are better than everyone else.” The perception bothers them because to them they are genuinely occupied with an equally important pursuit in their lives that they cannot abandon.

Communication as botho

There was no full consensus on the perception that studying at a distance and working full time made it impossible for the women to participate in communal events. Kitso felt that failure to attend social events does not necessarily have to destroy relationships within one’s social networks if one explains the reasons for their absence, “…botho also implies explaining to people that you have commitments you can’t get out of but when you pop in once in a while they will understand.”

According to this argument sharing information about what it entails to work full time and study part time goes a long way to help people understand that your absence doesn’t reflect that you have lost affinity with your community.
Tsholofelo recalls her experience when someone in her community passed away and she couldn’t attend the funeral since it coincided with a study weekend. She stated that she let the family know that she wouldn’t be able to attend, “They understood because I managed to visit them during the week and explain to them that I had examinations and wouldn’t be able to show up. I found them very appreciative of my gesture.”

However, even communication cannot totally make up for continuous absence as Setso argued, “The program takes all of my time as a result it isolates me from my community and makes me feel irresponsible when I continuously give the same excuse.” It is understandable how one would feel frustrated because the program normally runs for a period of four years, which is long enough to cast doubt in some people’s minds about the truth value of their explanation.

Some of the women emphasized that the issue of social participation was very important to them and they went to great length to keep attending albeit at a limited rate. Boipuso shared her efforts at keeping her social networks active:

- Usually I visit the bereaved family and explain the reasons for my absence. I think it is easier for people to accept my situation because before I enrolled in this program I used to regularly attend social events whether it was a funeral, wedding or just a family reunion. At the end of the day it all boils down to how you prioritize things because no matter how busy I get I try to find time to show up once in a while because my bond with my community is very important to me. I am nothing without them therefore I make an effort to be visible. Some people
(especially the younger ones) take advantage of being in the program and just withdraw from all social events, to me that shows a total lack of botho.

The above argument was a common sentiment among older participants who felt strongly that the performance of botho should be catered for because it is too important to ignore. The younger participants tended not to feel so strongly about the lack of social participation, actually one of the women acknowledge that it is possible to participate once in a while but she deliberately chose not to, “I know that I could show up if the event doesn’t coincide with a tutorial session but in my case I made a choice not to participate and use the free weekends to rest.”

Paying condolences as performance of botho

In my interaction with the participants I noticed that they felt guiltier about missing funerals than other social events. Since it is not feasible for them to always explain their absence or to participate some mentioned that they practice the tradition of visiting after the funeral know as matshediso. The practice entails visiting a bereaved family after missing the funeral to convey your condolences. It does not have to happen immediately after the funeral but the act on its own conveys to the family that you empathize with their situation. Kitso elaborates, “…the big issue is attending funerals but then if you are unable to attend it is best to visit the family afterwards to go and express you condolences it is very much appreciated and it shows botho.”

Judging from the women’s arguments on the issue of social participation it appears that whether one has botho or not is mostly based on one’s performance and how
the society in turn perceives the behavior. Chedza agrees that matshediso plays a key role in keeping those social networks active and maintaining the goodwill:

A big part of showing botho is how you communicate with people; being truthful, honest and expressing your commitments and their role in your absence goes a long way. If you use distance education as an excuse for not meeting your social obligations even when it is not true then you don’t have botho. There are things you can do like matshediso; just showing up after missing a funeral to convey your condolences indicates that you truly care.

Although the participants had different experiences and opinions regarding their limited ability or inability to attend social events there was an exceptional case of Tebogo who remained largely active in her community. She asserted that:

I haven’t experienced a lot of constraints because my home village is near the college where I attend tutorials. If there is something like death in the community or any other occasion I can easily commute from the village everyday and still be able to participate in both the even and the tutorials.

The woman’s experience is different because she is fortunate to be registered at a college that is in close proximity to her home village. Unfortunately, most participants attended colleges not only far from their home villages but they also worked in a totally different part of the country. The situation is very common amongst the women and it has
contributed in part to their failure to actively play a part in their communities. In one of our discussions Lesego explained, “Those of us who work far from home end up not going to our home villages for the entire year until the December holiday since it is longer and we have some vacation time left after the tutorial session.”

Some participants articulated the need for society to recognize that as the society has evolved over time to embrace western style education and more women have joined the workforce some changes need to take place. Along with the growth of the economy as it becomes more global it has become apparent that it is not feasible to appear at every occasion and that doesn’t mean that people care any less. Kitso argued that with the changes in life within the Setswana society the concept of botho also needs to change:

People should understand because these days it is common to come from one part of the country and work in another. As a result it is not always possible to attend every event or visit consistently even without distance learning.

It appears that as the society grows larger and social networks expand the notion of close neat communities is changing. Although individuals are now linked to more people than they would have been decades ago the closeness between members of these networks has mostly weakened except with close relatives. Kuda stated that she had reduced her participation, “I don’t have much time but I try to attend events especially funerals that involve close relatives as much as I can.”

The woman’s utterance may suggest that the sense of community has become smaller as people feel less obliged to participate in activities that involve those members
of their community who are outside their inner circle. Although the women’s experiences suggest that cultural expectations place an extra burden on them, it is important to also consider the distance education program and its role in this complexity.

Distance learning and social issues

The participants complained that the program is not flexible enough to accommodate social participation and other responsibilities. Kuda related her experience after she took time off to take care of her sick husband who ultimately died:

My school work suffered because I wasn’t given time to do all the modules that I missed. I had to take time off my school work when my husband was sick and when I came back I was expected to cram all those modules in a short time and write all the tests that I missed.

The inclination towards viewing paid employment, family responsibilities and distance learning as separate worlds that are not supposed to cross at any point creates problems for the participants. The above narrative indicates that these worlds are not only intertwined but can also create a chain reaction on one another. The woman’s experience suggests that the structure of distance learning may not be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseen circumstances in the other areas of their lives.

In some instances participants argued that when they went through some personal hardships it negatively affected their motivation to stick with the program. These issues point to a need to take into account the fact that these adult learners bring with them real
life issues that can negatively affect distance learner retention. Tebogo, who experienced family problems and ended up dropping out of the program, narrated her story:

…the first couple of years I was enthusiastic and doing very well. At the end of the second year my brother fell ill and I couldn’t concentrate on my studies and my grades started slipping. My brother and I are very close and I was distraught so much I couldn’t concentrate on my studies. I started having self doubt and became nervous when handing in assignments wondering if my performance was up to standard. It was a very challenging time for me and I ended up dropping out before I sat for my third year exams.

These experiences vary but they all seem to indicate a dire need for flexibility in the DPE as expressed by Kuda, “I think this program should be made more flexible to allow us to attend to personal and communal matters.” Setso further makes a similar observation about the current structure of the DPE, “lack of flexibility leaves us without much of a choice and sometimes people choose to drop out if they cannot cope with the social isolation.” The feelings of isolation and low motivation have traditionally been some of the most cited reasons for dropping out of distance learning programs before graduation (Moore & Kearsley, 2005).
Adult learner motivation

It is often assumed that adult learners bring with them to a learning environment a sense of self efficacy which intrinsically motivates them to excel in their studies (Huang, 2002). However, as the participants’ experiences suggest even that may not be enough to motivate them as they grapple with feelings of isolation and loneliness resulting from studying on their own. When asked about her feelings about studying at a distance Tashata expressed mixed feelings:

It is convenient in a way because you don’t have to always go to class but it can be lonely. There are days when my motivation is so low that I could do with some moral support but because I am on my own I sometimes end up not getting anything done.

It appears motivation is a problem that continues to trouble the distance learners and they acknowledge that working with fellow learners could help. Kuda stated, “collaborative learning could help with motivation particularly for people like me who find it hard to study after a full day’s work and the myriad of domestic chores.” Many of the participants I talked to affirmed that they need a support system that could alleviate their feelings of isolation. Malebogo also stated that if it was conducive they would study with other participants for help with their school work and support:

I find it a struggle to study on my own because when I need clarification on something I don’t understand during my studies there is no immediate help.
Learning on my own makes me feel helpless and there have been times when I felt discouraged. In addition to that there is no strong learner support from the tutors and that can be very frustrating. There was a time when I considered quitting because I was struggling with math and I couldn’t find anyone to help me on a regular basis. I ended up engaging a tutor which was obviously a very expensive option but it was my last resort.

For the most part the participants expressed similar sentiments about experiencing loneliness and uncertainty when studying on their own compared to when they were full time learners at Teacher Training Colleges. In her narrative Tsholofelo worried that in distance education there is no sense of community while in full time study help was easily accessible, “…because it was easy to get a study group together as were together in one location. In distance learning we are spread all over the country making group work difficult.”

The value of study groups was consistently mentioned during many discussions with the participants about their experiences in distance learning. There was also a feeling that the consistent need to travel to group meetings was problematic and contributed to some of them not getting involved. In one interview the Kuda related her experiences:

I am not actively involved with any discussion group at the moment because the one that I joined is not convenient and I haven’t been able to attend for a long time.
I find learning on my own very difficult because if I have problems understanding the study materials there is no one to ask for clarification and calling is pretty expensive especially since a lot of people use cell phones these days.

Although study groups would be a sensible addition for the distance learners they are in most instances not feasible because of different factors such as time conflicts among the members. Some participants stated that due to work commitments in their respective schools they ended up canceling many meetings which ultimately led to the break up of the groups.

Work environment and learner motivation

In explaining why it is often difficult to engage in study groups one participant noted that sometimes school administrators where the teacher works have a stake in their success or failure. Kitso explained that some teachers had problems with school administrators who unequivocally stated their lack of sympathy for the distance learners:

My former school-head was very supportive because it can be difficult if you have an unsupportive principal. I have heard stories from other teachers whose principals were uncooperative and told them that distance education was a waste of time. They made it clear that they did not feel the need to accommodate their needs. For example, if the teachers wanted the study leave that we are allowed to take by TT&D most of them refused.
The principals’ attitudes may emanate from the tendency by some educators to consider distance learning as second rate compared to the traditional classroom based instruction.

Those principals who were either distance learners themselves or where generally supportive of the program were more willing to find ways to relief the teachers either through allowing them to take leave before examinations or excusing them from extra curricula activities.

The Department of Teacher Training and Development (TT&D) allows the distance learners ten days study leave per annum but some teachers revealed that their school principals refused to let them benefit from this arrangement. Those facing such hostility ended up under pressure to prepare for their tests and examinations last minute and pulling all night sessions before an assessment activity. Kuda related, “when I get to the tutorial session I don’t sleep much because I have make up for insufficient study during the school term.”

Some participants also experienced problems with the Principal Education Officer12 (PEO) in their region refusing them permission to take leave to study. The obstacles that these participates experienced may be indicative of different nodes of power that fail to value distance learning and view it as a hindrance to the running of the school system. It may also suggest that some stakeholders have not bought into upgrading teachers through distance education. Whatever the reasons for their behavior, they create an environment that is not conducive for the distance learners which may lower their motivation.

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12 The PEO is responsible for human resource issues such as the transfer of teachers, leave and other related issues.
Communities of Practice as motivational system

The few participants who were involved in study groups acknowledged that it was a source of motivation. Communities of practice (COP) in education are usually made up of people who are in the same program of study for purposes of discussing content or working on group projects. The definition is wide and varied depending on the objectives set forth by its members. In the case of the women in this study they considered the sense of having a support system as the primary role of a learning community. Chedza shared her observations on the role of her study group, “It feels like a little comfort zone where we are free to share our frustrations with anything from our school administrators to our families and of course the program itself.” The participants acknowledged the value of group support in distance learning and some noted that they benefited a lot from this environment because they found studying on their own impractical. Setso stated:

I enjoy being in a study group because after discussions I feel like I can handle things better. The group gives us a safe environment where we can ask questions and also sound off our research ideas before submitting to our tutors.

The participants indicated that they were able to cope with their work because they got to share their struggles with their groups. The support they got from the group kept them motivated as a Tsholofelo reflected, “If you are with others sharing ideas you gain confidence and direction.” Setso also observed that some of the issues that affected their participation in study groups could be solved, “If we all had computers and access to
the internet it would reduce the problems that we experience with study groups such as having to cancel due to transport delays for those of us in rural areas or bad weather.” In our discussions of COP the participants emphasized that an online component could assist them in facilitating study groups and accessing learner support services because it would reduce the current problems.

Knowledge sharing forum

A community of practice is more than a support and motivational system but can also function as a knowledge sharing forum. According to the participants an online learning community would enable them to get help from their peers with regards to their course work as Tashata argued, “The biggest advantage is that you can learn from others through sharing ideas especially when we are working on projects.” There are different kinds of collaborations that the participants envision such as one that would include the tutors and another one that would be solely made up of the learners. The latter appears to be the most popular as Kabo reasoned, “I find group work very helpful because I get answers to my questions in a friendly environment unlike if I ask a tutor during a tutorial session because some of them have a condescending attitude.”

Learning together and sharing skills is an important function of a community of practice and those participants who have benefited from study groups appreciate this characteristic. When sharing her experiences in a study group, Chedza said:

I appreciate the group work we do at tutorial sessions because we spend time helping one another outside class. For example, if one of us is good at math they
take a lead in our discussions and answer our questions while someone else may be good in English and they would be our resource person in that subject.

This sharing of expertise is common in communities of practice and it is these collective efforts that help group members to improve their individual performance. The environment can also contribute to the learners’ motivation and confidence in their studies. The success of communities of practice therefore depends on each member bringing a set of skills that the others may lack and combining these respective skills to achieve a common goal. In the case of the participants of this study COP could help imitate to some extent the communal spirit that is a pillar of their culture.

Virtual versus face to face groups

Online communities of practice could resolve scheduling problems that the women have blamed for their failure to engage in study group activities. They are convinced that if they had online learning communities they would not have to travel all the time for study group meetings. Chedza argues, “Online collaboration could be helpful because we can have time to do group work without much travel.” They perceived online communities as suitable because they could schedule meetings at convenient times. When reflecting on the convenience of online communities, Kuda said, “I would probably be able to set up meetings with my group to meet late at night after I have had time to rest.”

Not all participants were enthusiastic about the prospects of online communities. Chedza further argued that online groups would be a significant development but she emphasized that the face to face component should not be removed because it is a very
important cultural component. She argued, “Face to face is also very important and should not be eliminated because some things are better discussed face to face as the Setswana saying goes; ‘mafoko a matlhong’ (communication is more effective face to face)” The participants were emphatic in their arguments that an online component was necessary but they still needed to keep some level of face to face contact with other learners and tutors. As Tebogo put it,

Online communities would be great but I think face to face discussions are sometimes better since you can take care of a lot of concerns immediately. The problem I see with online discussions is that it won’t be easy for people like me who can’t type or surf the net but I guess we can always learn. The other problem I see is that we don’t have computers at home.

In addition to the culturally influenced need for face to face communication, there is also the question of the participants’ preparedness to use online learning as the above concern reflects. Throughout our interactions when they expressed any potential benefits of an online component they would quickly outline the realities around them such as the expense involved in computer ownership, internet connectivity and their lack of or limited computing skills. Another concern about online communities was that if not combined with face to face it may still make the participants feel isolated. This reluctance to go completely online may be influenced by their communal culture. They didn’t appear to consider mediated communication alone as satisfactory though convenient.
Online learning and time management

The majority of the participants expressed a lack of knowledge of the possible uses of technology for instructional purposes. Their knowledge appeared limited to its use as both a basic communication tool and a time saving device. When I asked them questions about how technology could be used to improve their learning situation the most common responses were, “It would help us get quicker responses from our tutors” or “it would be cheaper because I won’t have to spend so much money calling my tutors.” I found it somewhat surprising that the participants only associated online learning with simple communication but as I later reflected in my log; “maybe I am fishing for responses based on my knowledge background but maybe that is the use that matters the most to them.”

I had to explain the numerous instructional technologies available such as social networking sites like youtube and myspace. I also mentioned that they could use ICTs for podcasting and blogging. They then indicated that if such avenues were available they could help them stay connected with other learners and their tutors. I gave these explanations because they failed to respond to my questions on how they thought they could benefit from online learning citing the lack of knowledge of the ICTs available and how they work. After several interviews during which I had to explain to every participant I encountered what online learning entailed I was disappointed. Frustrated with this turn of events, I later wrote in my log:

Do I really have to give a lecture on instructional technology to every single person I interview?
So, much for participants narrating their own views! Can I really trust their responses? Are they giving me their opinions or are they just giving me back what I just told them?

When I went into the field I had some inkling that the participants may have minimal skills in the use of computing technologies but I was not prepared for how much they were uninformed. I started questioning the wisdom of actually asking for their opinions on something they hardly knew anything about. In one of my journal entries I questioned what I perceived as their lack of initiative, “I wonder why they don’t take the necessary steps to learn particularly those who work in the cities. There are ICT training schools all over town.” I was to get my answer when during a focus group one of the members shared that she had taken some evening classes on basic computing. Some participants in the group affirmed that they were aware of that option but it was too expensive for them and Setso summed it up, “…besides, after a full day’s work, I cannot attend an evening class. Not only am I tired at that time but my family would be expecting dinner.” One of the concerns they had was the constant absence from home therefore evening classes would be unconceivable under the circumstances.

Technology and women’s work

The most common use that the women for online learning that the women anticipated was that it could help ease their workload. They argued that using technologies such as the internet would allow them to do some things such as spending
time with their families and participating in social activities. Malebogo believed that they could use the internet to access other services they have been unable to utilize,

With internet access we would be able to do online research and generally use the library at our convenience. Teachers in rural areas without libraries could access the big libraries such as the UB. We could also work with our project supervisors online without having to physically chase them around or travel to their places of work.

The participants appear to also put emphasis on using online communication primarily as a form of learner support. Judging by their concerns discussed thus far there is a significant need for learner support and an online component may as well be the missing link. Malebogo revealed, “I feel like the learner support in the program is weak because there is this attitude that the module is supposed to replace the teacher therefore some tutors just don’t want to help.” They also reported that in the current set up there are delays in communication with their tutors which means that they don’t receive feedback in a timely manner. They anticipated that online forums could provide the necessary system to speed up feedback.

Computer ownership vs. basic needs

In spite of their enthusiasm about the possibilities an online component could offer, the reality is that most of them don’t own computers. Of the few who own them one only used it for typing while the others did not use it at all. Tawanda revealed, “I
have a computer in my house but I don’t know how to use it. I depend on my husband and kids if I want some work done like typing. Kuda also confessed, “I have a computer but only my children use it. When I asked her why she doesn’t use it, she shrugged her shoulders; “I think I’m too old to learn.” Besides the lack of ownership and limited skills there were other issues that were revealed which suggest potential obstacles to the use of online learning.

In an interview with Tashata when I asked why she did not use the TT&D scheme that enables them to buy computers through a loan scheme she responded, “I am aware of the arrangement but I am not ready to buy a computer because it is not affordable. I have more important obligations like paying school fees for my children and supporting my elderly mother.” Kuda contended, “I am sure the scheme was created in good faith but then they overlooked the fact that the computers are still expensive and we can’t afford to connect to the internet.” Tebogo also agreed, “my salary is tied up on other things and since I don’t really know how to use it (the computer), it didn’t seem that urgent to buy one.”

All these arguments suggest that the decision to acquire computers may be determined by whether their family’s needs are met first. The need to buy a computer pales in comparison to paying a child’s school fees for example.

Resource sharing in distance education

The participants’ limited knowledge on the use of instructional technologies is troubling given that the DDE is considering online learning as another instructional mode. On the other hand the Ministry of Science, Communications and Technology
(MSC&T) is at an advanced stage of setting up internet hubs known as ‘Kitsong Centers’ throughout the country but the actual task of imparting the necessary skills to benefit from these facilities has largely been ignored. The well meaning efforts of government run a risk of only serving those members of the society who already have the technical know-how and in turn falling short of bridge the digital divide. The participants in this study mentioned that they were never taught how to use computers or conduct a basic online search. Setso explained, “We only learned about computer use in one module but we have never actually had hands on experience.” If they had the necessary skills they would benefit from the internet hubs especially since they are being erected in villages to benefit those in rural areas.

I also found out from the teachers that the colleges of education (COE) have computers but they are not allowed to use them when they are attending tutorial sessions. These sessions take place during school vacations when the full time students are away to accommodate the distance learners. However, the participants relate that they have limited access to the same facilities that their full time counterparts use in their studies such as computer laboratories and libraries in these colleges. According to Kitso the problems started from the very beginning of the program and they have been hard to adequately resolve ever since:

At the beginning of the program there was confusion about whether we are University of Botswana (UB) students or if we belonged to the Colleges of Education. Due to this confusion the UB library did not allow us to use their facilities.
All of the institutions in question are government funded therefore one would think that they would be able to work together to avail their facilities to the DPE learners. As exemplified above there is an indication that there is a prevalent attitude of considering the distance learners as outsiders who are not entitled to the same privileges as their full time counterparts.

These institutions have computers with internet access and in the case of the UB they actively use technology with their full time students. Tawanda shared their experiences when attending tutorials at the colleges:

We have limited access to the library and we are not allowed to use the computers. If you are lucky enough to have a tutor who teaches in the college full time and is willing to use their discretion to let you use the computers then you may learn something.

As a result of this limitation most distance learners have been disadvantaged compared to those who go through full time training. On my inquiry as to the reasons why they were denied access they Tawanda informed that, “…if something goes wrong with the computers it is going to be difficult to hold someone accountable since we are not their students.”

The frequently advanced reason for using distance education for in-service training is that it is cheaper than the conventional method. In fact, distance education programs are anchored on training at the most cost effective manner possible.
I would have expected that the sharing of computer labs and other facilities in the colleges for distance learners would be a logical step. There is clearly need for the stakeholders to pool their resources together if they are to make online learning a reality.

Technophobia or other issues?

Although the participants are now allowed to use the UB library, they are hesitant to use it because they missed out on the usual new student library orientation that the university holds for its incoming students. The library is the largest in the country but the women revealed that they are hesitant to use it. Kitso captured the common sentiment:

It is intimidating because it is large and you have to search for books through the computer and I don’t have the skills to do that. You see, we were never taught how to do research in the University library. With the smaller libraries it is easier because I can do an old fashioned search by locating a subject area and going around looking for books shelf by shelf.

Their lack of confidence in the use of the UB library was associated with their limited computer and internet searching skills. Tsholofelo also admits, “We are scared of the students (full time UB students) because we don’t want to be seen as old and unfamiliar with new technology in the library like online searches and using computers.” When I suggested that they would fare better if they contacted the help desk at the library Kabo responded,
I don’t know; it is just embarrassing to let people know that you don’t know how to use a computer especially in an environment like the university amongst those young students. They will probably start looking at me and thinking; ‘there goes another old woman who can’t use the computer’.

The fear of being perceived as “old and unfamiliar with technology” may be one indicator that staying away from the use of technology maybe a generational issue as the participants seem to associate their lack of skills with their age. It is possible that the participants may be reluctant to change and buy technology wholesale unlike their younger counterparts. Some participants indicated that when they visited libraries they conduct shelf by shelf searches but clearly that is not easy with larger libraries.

The fact that they have no confidence in their skills does not mean that they have no interest in using technology. During my interactions with the participants they communicated a desire to know how to use instructional technologies both in their teaching and learning. A number of them voiced that it worried them that the reluctance to share facilities has disadvantage as Tsholofelo said,

What worries me is that, we are about to graduate but we have no practical experience with technology. This is a disadvantage because those who go to full time teachers’ colleges have experience with technology. Our school recently had computers donated but they are only used by teachers with full time training while some of us in the distance education program are disabled by our lack of skills.
Since the National ICT policy envisions the use of technology in schools and the elimination of the digital divide the participants have every reason to be concerned. The fact that there are teachers who do not possess the necessary skills to make this policy a reality by imparting the skills to their students reflects a blind spot in government’s efforts to make this happen.

The women’s narratives about their experiences both with technology and other shifts prompted me to look at official documents. I wanted to find out how the documents addressed teacher education through distance education and also their plans on training teachers in the integration of technology in schools. My intention was to find out if the documents address gender as an issue in teacher training through distance education and in the use of technology in the classroom.

Document analysis

I carried out a critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the National Commission on Education (NCE, 1977, 1993) and the draft National Information and Communication Technology Policy (NICT, 2005) documents. Since Botswana is a patriarchal society it was not surprising that specific issues that affect female in-service teachers were not addressed. What was surprising was that although the tendency of technology to disadvantage women is well documented (Campbell, 2003; Rosser, 2006; Sanders, 2005) the NICT discussed the need to train teachers in the use of technology but ignored its possible impact on female teachers. These omissions are not coincidental but a reflection of the patriarchal ideologies dominant in Setswana culture which render women’s experiences invisible.
Fairclough (1995) states that text/discourse is produced in a larger social context and reflects the dominant ideologies. He argues that these ideologies can become engrained in discourse and in turn naturalized as is the case with patriarchal ideologies embedded in the documents. The ideologies have achieve such a degree of normalcy that their marginalization of women is generally invisible to people. It is acceptable that official documents would address issues affecting “all Batswana” and opt to use pluralities such as “the elderly, people with disabilities, students…” but refuse to acknowledge gender as a category.

Another evidence of these dominant ideologies was in one of Bagnall’s letters after she first arrived in Botswana in the 1960s to teach at Swaneng Hill School. She writes, “all boys learn building” and that for the girls the school had organized “a vegetable co-operative at which they sell what they have grown or made”. The gender role stereotypes related by Bagnall (although slightly different) are similar to the experiences of women in this study who have to contend with cultural stereotypes that are perceived as normal.

Fairclough (1995) states that “the determination of what positions…are socially available as well as the subjection of real individuals to these positions…are all shaped in ideological processes of discourse” (p. 73). The document analysis made explicit the “naturalized” patriarchal ideologies which are functional in every sphere of Tswana society. This also helped reveal the ideologies around the experiences of the women in

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13 This school was the brainchild of Patrick van Rensburg whose philosophy was to create an education that reflected the needs of the rural communities (NCE, 1977).
this study narrated elsewhere in this chapter. For example, the failure to recognize women’s domestic labor as work reflects the normalization of the gender stereotype of women as homemakers.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I discussed the women’s experiences juggling full time teaching, distance learning, family and social commitments. I outlined how each of these areas of their lives impacted one another creating a network of complex relationships which were in most instances at odds with one another. The result was that most women felt overworked and unable to devote time to some responsibilities because of time constraints.

It emerged that for the most part the DPE does not accommodate local cultures creating a conflict situation which compels the participants to choose between academic achievement and social participation. Most women felt torn between the need to maintain ties with their communities through the performance of botho on the one hand and succeeding in their studies on the other. Another complicating factor was that the work that women do in the domestic space was not considered in planning the DPE. The assumption was that the home or private space is free time therefore women can do distance learning without disrupting other responsibilities. This oversight resulted in the women struggling to meet their commitments to both their families and distance learning. They particularly struggled with childcare when they were in residency at the colleges for tutorial sessions because they needed to find someone to take care of the children.
The women in this study expressed that they felt isolated because they spent a lot of time studying on their own. However, due to time constraints they were unable to actively participate in study groups. The use of online learning was explored as a possible medium for learner support and motivation. The use of virtual COP was also considered as one avenue for providing the learners with peer support and creating time for social participation. I also analyzed some documents to find out if the complexities that the women expressed a result of working full time and studying at a distance were addressed in the discourses of teacher training. I also examined the document on the implementation of ICTs in Botswana to find out if they addressed gender issues associated with the use of technology. Through the women’s narratives I also discussed the struggles of being caught in the crossroads of women’s empowerment through education and paid employment on one hand and cultural expectations on the other.
The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between the multiple tasks that characterize the female in-service teachers enrolled in the Diploma in Primary Education (DPE) at the University of Botswana (UB). I looked at how the women coped with full time work, distance learning, social and familial obligations. These responsibilities are discussed as the four shifts the idea was derived from Kramarae (2001) discussion of women working full time, taking care of families and studying online which she called “three shifts”. The four shifts in this study were analyzed in relation to the UB’s intention to integrate online learning to the DPE. The interest of this study was to look at the implications of online learning on the women’s multitasking lives.

The women’s narratives were analyzed from a postcolonial feminist theoretical framework which advocates for an assessment of the impact of both colonialism and globalization in shaping the lives of women in Less Developed Countries (LDC). I looked at how the cultural construction of Batswana women affected the identity formation of the female primary school teachers’ respective identities. My primary focus
was to trouble the notion of portraying technology as social equalizer and instead discuss it as a value laden (Taylor & Konstantellou, 1990) knowledge system that bears the culturally influenced worldviews of its creator. This study was also motivated by a desire to discuss what the implications of imported technology are on the women who are already juggling the four shifts.

The research was carried out through focus groups, interviews, observations and document analysis with the study sample derived from the female in-service teachers in the DPE. I sought the participants’ narratives of their lived experiences with the four shifts and perception of possible role of online learning. This was done through the following research questions:

1) How does learning at a distance affect full time work and family responsibilities?

How do participants juggle work and study?

2) How does studying at a distance impact the women’s participation in their communities?

How can the women’s multiple and competing responsibilities be incorporated into the in-service teacher training program? Can online learning create time for social participation?

3) What are the issues associated with the use of Western instructional technologies for women in less-developed contexts?
Is technology an additional burden or can it alleviate the women’s workload?

How can technology be used to improve learning and not perpetuate socially ascribed gender stereotypes?

4) Can participants benefit from online communities of practice/learning?

In this chapter I will start by discussing the findings from Chapter 4 and then I will briefly discuss the research questions. I will finally look at the implications of the study for practice, theory, stakeholders and future research.

Culture and identity

Mgadla (2003) noted that, in Tswana culture children learned their gender roles through an apprenticeship whereby they watched and worked alongside the same-gender parent to acquire the necessary skills. This form of apprenticeship was reiterated by the participants’ narratives on the domestic chores that they were assigned as girls. They were assigned roles such as babysitting, cooking and cleaning which were supposedly what a female should do for their family. These gender roles manifested themselves into women’s work and for the women in this study shape their identities as primary school teachers. Tashata who is a Standard 1 teacher narrated how she was expected to literally serve and supervise her students during the daily lunch that the school provides. The symbolism of “mothering” did not go unnoticed as she also shared that most Standard 1 teachers are women because they are supposedly better equipped to teach such young children.
I also found out from the participants that older women generally taught lower grades than men because the former were considered to be more patient with young children.

The problem with this perception is that it plays to the stereotype that motherhood is synonymous with womanhood. It implies that “mothering” skills which include caring and nurturing are natural characteristic of women as opposed to culturally constructed gender roles. The consequence of this fallacy is that women who enter the field of primary school teaching (particularly at lower grades) have to contend with the expectation for them to “mother” their students. Arguments (Bassett, 2005; Cortina & Román, 2006; Fischman, 2000) have been made about the feminization of teaching around the world and the challenges it poses on women in this field.

Cortina & Román (2006) argue that generally teacher preparation courses neither address the perception of teaching as a feminine profession, “nor the question of how the cultural construction of teaching as a gendered occupation influences the identity of teachers as they enter the classroom” (p. 3). It is important to weigh the role of culture in gender role allocation and identity formation for women in primary teaching because it clearly affects their professional identities. The danger in ignoring the implication of culture means that both their professional and domestic roles and identities are perceived as interchangeable. Since women’s responsibilities in the home are not valued as work, primary school teaching is equally subjected to the same treatment thus casting doubt on their professional status (Cortina & Román, 2006).
The education of women

According to Mgadla (2003) in Tswana culture education was primarily gender role apprenticeship. When Western style education was introduced to the Batswana it found an environment in which women’s work entailed taking care of their family’s needs. Under the new education system parents had to pay school fees for their children and as discussed in Chapter 2 most parents could not afford these fees. Mulale (1991) found that given a lack of funds most parents chose to educate the boy-child as it was argued that the girl was likely to marry before they completed their education. Some of the women in this study were a product of this cultural bias and one participant shared that when there was a shortage of school fees in her family the girls were made to drop out while the boys continued. Another woman narrated how her father justified his decision to discontinue her education by arguing that he was not likely to get a return on his investment because when she got married she would support her in-laws. This stereotype sacrificed the education of a lot of women who had their education cut short when there were insufficient funds based solely on their gender. One woman who was told to go seek employment after completing junior secondary school (junior high) stated that her brothers, who were clearly less gifted than she was, continued to senior secondary school with lower grades and got even poorer grades at that level. This treatment of girls was based on her cultural construction as a future homemaker not someone who could potentially have a worthy career preceded by tertiary education.

However, some participants indicated that they equally experienced disruption of their education as their brothers. They stated that their parents solely made consorted efforts to educate their children regardless of gender and that they dropped out of school
to help support their parents and siblings. Some of the participants shared that they felt compelled to help support their families because they were the eldest child. Some of them had to work and help educate their younger siblings by paying their tuition fees. The participants in this study went to school at a time when most parents were either not educated or had minimal education. It was also common at this time to have only the father gainfully employed while the mother was a homemaker.

Global mobilization versus local tensions

Contact between different nations over the centuries from colonization to globalization has infused new elements into local cultures around the world (Appadurai, 2006). The result of this contact between cultures has inevitably reshaped and in some instances challenged established practices. The participants’ narratives about the challenges they faced with social participation and distance learning are reflective of a change in Tswana social dynamics. The traditional practice in which women’s work evolved solely around the home and social participation is experiencing a strong challenge from globalization. In the global economy women are increasingly working away from home and are more mobile both socially and physically from the parameters of the home to wherever the tide of paid employment takes them.

This transformation has been gradual and has slowly changed the Tswana society including women’s lives from 1) colonial contact (Schapera, 1955), 2) to newly independent Botswana of the sixties to early eighties where the demand for citizen human resource saw a surge of mostly untrained women joining the teaching profession 3) to the United Nations pressure through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which
stipulated that the signatory countries should achieve gender equality through creating enabling environments for women particularly in science and technology 4) to the race to bridge the digital divide.

The most significant of these changes has been through globalization which has led to information and knowledge from other locations either fusing with local cultures or creating frictions. The growing influence of international bodies such as the United Nations on issues affecting women globally and the number of initiatives that member countries sign to ensure gender equality have moved concerns for women’s issues from the local to the global space. The resulting impact has been some conflicts with local cultures that in some cases view these changes as imposing western cultures and deeming them superior to local cultures. In the interest of international cooperation most governments such as Botswana are signatories to many of these international accords and have set in place policies to implement these agreements. However, the official discourses on women’s empowerment though noble face difficulty in changing relations within the home which remain a challenge. As the narratives of the women in this study reflected, they were caught up between government’s efforts to empower them and the traditional roles that made working and learning part-time difficult.

Social participation

Social participation is a Tswana cultural practice which involves attending and helping out at events in their communities such as funerals. This practice is at the core of Tswana culture and it is considered as an indicator of botho. Botho generally means an indication of goodwill towards others by supporting them in their time of need. Failure to
participate in social events can contribute to being labeled a social outcast which would mean at times the lose of support from the community. The women in this study related that they found social participation challenging because of their multiple responsibilities. Most women mentioned that because of their workload it was next to impossible to participate in social events.

There seemed to be disparity between the attitudes of the younger participants and their older counterparts when it came to performing botho. The younger ones tended to be comfortable with not participating in social events or only limiting their participation to events affecting close members of their social networks. The older women in the group on the other hand felt a closer affinity to their social networks and tried to compromise by attending as frequently as they could. The differences in attitudes towards social participation may reflect that the younger generations value their individuality above communal ties. They still expressed the need to maintain relations with their communities but preferred to do it in their own terms or at their convenience. This may be indicative of a transitional moment in the performance of botho in which the younger generations sometimes try to fight the power that their culture wields over their social lives. The changes in social participation are an example of how cultures change with continued contact with other knowledge forms. The fact that the women in this study work full time and study part-time in addition to other obligations gave birth to this new version of performing botho.
Intersecting work worlds

From the participants’ narratives it was evident that all the shifts are interrelated and as a result have an impact or influence on one another. Judging from the participants’ statements the shifts are so tied together that there is a chain reaction type of relationship amongst them. What happens in one has a direct effect on the other as exemplified by one woman who related that she dropped out of the DPE because she was dealing with the emotional turmoil resulting form her brother’s illness. Some women lamented how being in the program had led to social isolation and also spending less time with their children. Another indicator of the interrelation among the shifts was the disturbing admissions by some teachers that they had to resort to lowering the standards of the classroom activities they assign their students to create time for distance learning.

Distance learning and domestic work

Distance education moves learning from the recognized public space that is the school to the home where it is reduced to learning to be done in “spare time”. The discourses and expectations change from one location to another from the “formal” schooling world with time-scheduled activities to the distance learning world of weekend and “spare time” learning. Distance learning has been reduced to the same level as a hobby, something one does when all the important tasks in their schedules are done. It occupies and fights for time with domestic work that is also considered as more of a responsibility or chore rather than work.

The definition of work is mainly tied to location with paid employment being more important while other forms of work are insignificant because they take place in
private. Studies (Conway-Turner & Cherrin, 1998; Kramarac, 2001) have shown that most of women’s work takes place in the home and that means that it is rendered invisible. The result is that they have to create time for work that supposedly doesn’t exist in addition to the recognized paid employment. When distance learning is introduced to such an environment it makes women’s lives even more complicated as they struggle to find time to do all the work. In the case of the women in the DPE it was more complicated because their full time work was not confined to the school because they constantly took students’ work home for grading. This work in addition to the other two shifts was done in the part of the day considered “after working hours”. The time they usually spent with their families was compromised as they had a lot to do in little time.

Childcare and the working mother

Childcare is another pertinent issue that is lost in the fissures of the invisible world of “domestic chores”. One of the down sides of distance learning has been the difficulty finding reliable childcare when the women attend distance education related activities. Childcare is a cause of significant worry for most working mothers but very few employers take that into consideration when they decide to use distance learning for in-service training. In the DPE the significant impact that attending to distance learning has on the women’s childcare responsibilities has been ignored. According to the narratives of the participants in this study, the family dynamics have been hard hit by this oversight. Mothers of young children complained that juggling work and learning does not leave them enough time to spend with their children and in some instances the children have to practically raise one another.
Since childcare is bracketed under “domestic duties” it does not appear in the discourses regarding women’s work and they in turn are expected to deal with it as a private matter and not let it affect their public lives as teachers. However, as the women repeatedly stated childcare is a real problem that follows them to their other shifts and a cause of serious anxiety and frustration. Letherby, Marchbanks, Ramsay & Shields (2005) argue that women who worked as educators and also had responsibilities caring for their families at one point or another “felt in/visible and/or in/validated...” (p. 212). Their argument was that women in teaching professions can at times be accepted because of their “motherhood” or not taken seriously for the same “feminine trait”.

The breakdown or loosening of ties within the women’s social networks has contributed significantly to the childcare problems. There was a time in Tswana cultures when childcare was a communal activity which allowed a mother to be able to get free babysitting services from their neighbors. Usually these neighbors would be related to the mother but with increased mobility of people due to work it is likely for families to live far from this support system. The solution may lie in a reformulation of the cultural expectation that lays childcare related responsibilities squarely on women’s shoulders. Although there is an urgent need for change, the women have also embraced this cultural expectation and it has been normalized through socialization from childhood. Through out my contact with them they did not articulate any feelings of subjugation or unfairness of the situation but rather lamented the need for more time to spend with their children. Most of the women tended to give their men a free pass from childcare responsibilities because they believed that men were less capable of taking care of the children and
trusted female family members to do a better job. The buy-in into this cultural stereotype means that the women are subconsciously contributing to their overloaded lives.

Can integration of online learning help?

The integration of technology to learning environments is potentially a site of friction between Western developed technology and local cultures. As the DDE explores online learning it is important to consider techno-networks and their potential impact on local cultures that are largely oral and anchored in face-to-face communication. There is a need to anticipate possible tensions and to find ways to use online learning without compromising this important tenet of Tswana cultures. The women in this study welcomed the use of online learning but they also emphasized the importance of face-to-face interactions.

According to Tswana cultures the self is shaped through relationships with others in the community instead of dependent on individual definition, as is the case in some Western cultures. Since technology products portray their creator’s situated knowledge it is important to assess the suitability of products to local users before integrating them. This has significant implications for the implementation of technology to distance education in Botswana. An online learning program that is primarily based on individual learning may have more difficulty integrating into this cultural set up than one that leans more towards the use of learner communities that emulate the local context. It will be important to develop a cross between individual and communal learning. Online learning communities could help the distance learners because they stated that due to time constraints they were unable to actively participate in study groups. They shared that
group work was valuable because it provided a source of support, as they felt isolated learning on their own. They also stated that working with their peers was also handy when they needed help with the course materials because they could discuss with the group in a comfortable environment. However, it will be necessary for the local cultures to also be flexible for technology integration to be effective.

The question of whether integrating technology could alleviate the women’s workload is clearly a complicated one. Besides its dependence on how technology is implemented it is also necessary to consider that there might be some resistance to technology. The participants were not particularly helpful in discussing this issue, as they did not know of any other uses of instructional technologies except for basic communication purposes such as sending and receiving e-mail. They also believed that online learning could give them more time to meet all their obligations. Malebogo anticipated that technology would be beneficial, “It could help by reducing traveling if we have to work at home through the internet for example. This could give us time to spend with our families and attend some social events we have been missing.”

Gender and computer anxiety

When interviewing the participants I learned that they were hesitant to use computers in public spaces such as the university library because of a lack of confidence in their skills. Sanders (2006) found that this behavior is more common among females than males because of the stereotypes associated with women and their computing skills. She states that, “A study of college students found that the presence of another person results in lower performance on a computer task among women with little previous
experience than when alone” (p. 313). She goes on to explain that this behavior is influenced by fear of perpetuating the stereotype about their limited skills, “…the issue of stereotype threat, the anxiety felt in evaluative contexts by people who identify with groups about which a negative stereotype exists because they are concerned they might confirm the stereotype about their group or themselves” (p. 313). The women in this study expressed similar anxieties around computers and mentioned that they feared being judged as incompetent by the younger students at the University. The significance of the lack of confidence is that online educators will have to pay special attention to the gender issues associated with educational computing and find effective ways of addressing them.

The themes discussed above helped to some extend to answer the research questions listed above. I will however, briefly address the questions directly;

1. How does learning at a distance affect full time work and family responsibilities? How do participants juggle work and study?

The participants in this study indicated that they were constantly struggling with the numerous roles from juggling paid employment, family, distance learning and social participation. They also indicated that due to the amount of work involved in these shifts they found themselves having to perform responsibilities based on their urgency. Goode (1960) stated that in cases when participants feel role conflict they may set aside what they were doing before the crisis came up and attend to the more urgent role obligation. Keeping with Goode’s analogy, the women in this study are constantly operating in crisis mode because family roles have constant responsibilities as well as paid employment.
Distance learning is equally stressful and the pressure goes even higher when they have assignments due or preparing for examinations. When this happens the participants indicated that they would normally “steal time” from their teaching responsibilities to study so that they could meet the set deadlines. In the midst of it all the demands of distance learning coupled with their teaching responsibilities have created a situation where the roles related to family such as spending time with their children took a back seat.

2. How does studying at a distance impact the women’s participation in their communities? How can the women’s multiple and competing social responsibilities be incorporated into the in-service teacher training program? Can online learning create time for social participation?

The participants narrated that since enrolling in the distance learning program they had either stopped or drastically reduced their social participation. The reasons for this state of affairs were different but mainly were motivated by time conflicts between social events and distance learning work. They explained that during the week they were preoccupied with their teaching duties and taking care of their families. As a result they usually did distance education related work over the weekends, which is the time when social events normally take place. Other women related that although they did their studying late at night during weekdays they chose not to attend social events and instead used weekends to rest. Some women indicated that they had limited their attendance of social events to only those involving close family and friends.
The conflict between social participation and distance learning indicates that the women’s multiple responsibilities were not considered in the planning and design of the current program. If the DPE is to retain the learners in the program it is crucial to take into account the fact that for women the home is not a space where they have “free time” but that most of their work takes place there. The TT&D needs to take stock of the amount of work the teacher do in the teaching responsibilities and find measures to create a favorable solution for both the teachers and their students. Clearly the thinking that studying part time does not interfere with the teachers’ performance of their teaching duties is misguided.

The use of online learning platforms could alleviate the situation by not compelling the learners to attend all face-to-face tutorial sessions but allowing them to sometimes participate online. This would allow them to devote time to other responsibilities such as social participation. For example, if a social event that is important to the learner coincides with a tutorial session, they can choose to participate in the event and do their tutorial online at a later date. It is imperative that the planning for the integration of technology be grounded on the realities of women’s multi-tasking lives instead of singling out one shift as important. The women’s experiences juggling the four shifts are testament to the fact that these roles have a significant influence on one another.

3. What are the issues associated with the use of Western instructional technologies for women in less-developed contexts? Is technology an additional burden or can it alleviate the women’s workload? How can technology be used to improve learning and not perpetuate socially ascribed gender stereotypes?
As discussed above the addition of online components such as communities of practice could serve to motivate the women who expressed feelings of isolation and lowered motivation when learning on their own. Technologies such as laptops, PDAs and other portable devices are often sold as able to make communication and learning mobile through the “anytime, any place clichés”. However, this may be true in developed locations where the internet is more accessible especially since the development of wireless internet (WI-FI). On the contrary, in LDC the mobility of ICTs is very much limited due to a range of issues from high costs of access to a lack of electricity in most rural areas. It then follows that devices that have greatly improved distance learning in the West may not have the same success in LDC locations because of the lack of an enabling environment. Another challenge with women in this study was that they did not have the necessary skill level and confidence to use communication technologies except for the cellular phone.

One woman mentioned that she had a computer in her home but admitted that she had never used it but relied on her husband and children who maybe coincidentally happened to be boys to get her assignments typed. She explained that she did not have the patience to learn how to type. This may be a result of the hidden curriculum that used to prevail in schools when they were students when it was implied that boys had a superior aptitude for all things science and technology compared to girls. Breaking this stereotype is going to be a big challenge to get the women to a point where they are comfortable to learn and use technology with confidence. After they acquire the necessary skills they may be able to use technology to their benefit to reduce the time they spend doing manual library searches and conduct online searches instead. They also complained about the
amount of time they spent traveling to meet their tutors, usually when they are working on the terminal projects. Alternatively they could work with their tutors online thus reducing the unnecessary travel and creating time for other commitments or resting.

One woman said that she did not buy a computer because it was not a priority since she had to pay her children’s school fees and support her elderly mother. These narratives could reflect possible obstacles to the use of online learning because although the prices of computers in other countries like the United States are going down, in places such as Botswana the prices are still very high and out of reach for most people. Even in cases where women may own computers for example they may still experience challenges learning online because they don’t have any space that they can claim as their own to learn. In interviews with some of the women they mentioned that although they welcomed the opportunity to work from home through online learning they experienced numerous interruptions from their families. They found that whenever they tried to work from home it was considered as an indication that they were available to take on domestic responsibilities.

In creating a relevant online learning program it is important to avoid using technologies to confine women to the domestic sphere because although it may seem convenient it may reinforce the cultural gender stereotype that women belong in the home. The women in this study emphasized that although they worry about their children when attending tutorial sessions they found being amongst their peers refreshing. Another issue is that whereas in other cultures it may be acceptable to claim a private space to do one’s work, it is alien in Tswana culture to work in public places like buses or coffee shops.
As a result some people may be hesitant to work on their laptops or other mobile devices in public spaces or when traveling thus losing out on time that most distance learners find useful for catching up with their work.

I must acknowledge that this question was difficult to resolve as discussed earlier because the participants where not very well informed about online learning. I could not help but think that maybe the fact that these women who are in the teaching profession are so uninformed in the use of online learning is the answer that I am looking for. If women make up close to 79% of the primary school teachers and are so uninformed about online learning, it may be an indicator of the greater challenges that both the DDE and Botswana government must confront.

4. Can participants benefit from communities of practice?

The participants felt that online communities of practice would help boost their motivation but they were wary about these communities replacing face-to-face communication. They indicated that online COP should be used to supplement traditional communication platforms. Some participants stated that they enjoyed the support they get in face-to-face meetings and felt that online communities would not have the same warmth. However, they were optimistic that COPs could serve as a learner support system and allow them to share expertise with others in different subject areas better than they are currently able to do. For the most part they saw online forums as a way of saving time so that they could perform other role obligations that are negatively affected by the role demands of distance learning.
Implications for practice

Women’s lives are characterized by many roles that influence their performance both at teaching and in distance learning. It is imperative to recognize that these women belong to a myriad of social relations which form the sum total of their identities. It is rather short-sighted to only look at distance education as a solution for working adults while ignoring gender specific challenges from both cultural gender roles and technology. It is necessary that online educators focus on the totality of issues that form the distant learner’s lives and how they affect learning. In a program aimed at a population that is largely female writing out gender is not an alternative as it has a significant stake in their identities both at home and work. It will be critical for online educators to focus on women’s relationships with technology and find workable solutions. If these women are to take a leading role in the use of technology in their classrooms they will have to be equipped with the necessary skills to be creative and confident.

Time constraints and conflicts among the four shifts in the women’s lives were cited as a major source of frustration for the learners. Online platforms could be used to give a break or as an alternative form of attendance of some face-to-face tutorial sessions. It could also be used to provide makeup lessons for those who fail to attend scheduled tutorials owing to various issues.

The DPE as a Community of Practice

Botswana is a communal society therefore online COP could be a valuable addition to the DPE by creating a sense of community. Wenger (1998) argues that one of the advantages of COP is that, “it supports a communal memory that allows individuals
to do their work without needing to know everything” (p. 46). This argument means that every participant brings in different skills and knowledge and they collectively create meaning. This view of COP supports the expectations of the women in this study who valued the co-learning that group membership could offer them. It also implies that through communal effort members of a COP create a knowledge bank that they can draw from whenever the need arises.

Lave & Wenger (1996) define legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) as a process where less skilled participants and those with advanced skills engage in a skill-sharing relationship which ultimately leads to the former acquiring the same competence as the latter. The distance learners could use LPP to share knowledge in different subject areas depending on their respective competencies. For example, one or two members could be skilled in Math and they would function as the old-timers while the others would be primarily learning from them. Since each one of them is bound to be skilled in at least one subject area they would at one point or another occupy the position of either a new-comer or old-timer. This dual participation could be an advantage because COP can be a site for the domination of newcomers by old-timers. The dual positionality from these relationships could also create a space for a more equitable negotiation of power as within the COPs.

The women in this study commonly complained that they found the inadequate support from tutors demoralizing. They also expressed the hope that an online component would help change the situation. Hay (1998) explains the significant role of computer technology in COPs “It has the ability to connect a student to other students, a student to ‘near-peers,’ and students to a wide range of ‘old-timers’ (p. 97)”. The distance learners
can engage in online COP with their tutors to provide the support they find lacking from
the current structure of the DPE. Lave & Wenger (1996) put forth that, “communities of
practice are engaged in the generative process of producing their own future” (p. 149). As
the distance learners graduate from the DPE and their identities change from those of
learners to fully qualified teachers these COPs could potentially evolve into a forum for
professional networking.

Implications for global feminisms

Postcolonial feminists and Mohanty (1995) in particular criticize some Western
feminisms of “the production of the ‘Third World woman’ as a singular, monolithic
subject” (p. 17). This portrait fails to use the categories used in the analysis of women in
their own societies such as class, race, and socioeconomic status in their discussions of
experiences of non-Western women instead discussing them as “victims of their culture”
opposites of “Us” (Western) and “Other” (non-Western). According to this argument
when addressing situations affecting women in LDCs, some Western feminists tend to
lean towards prescribing solutions thus taking the role of big sister.

When exploring possibilities for global feminism it is crucial to explore uneven
power relations between the West and the LDCs. These power imbalances have become
even more pronounced under the technology enabled global economy. While
globalization for the West may mean unlimited access to world markets, for most women
in LDCs it means being subjected to exploitative labor in multinational factories. Another
consideration is the role of technology which has been portrayed as enabling the
unidirectional flow of information from the West to LDCs (Srebemy, 2006). This one-way flow of information means Western ideas and cultures flow to LDCs with little to no reciprocity. Against this backdrop, it is important for non-western feminists to consider the implications of global feminism. The danger is that local concerns may get overshadowed by issues that are deemed of global importance. As the experiences of the women in the study have indicated culturally ascribed gender roles play a significant role in shaping women’s identities. Given the apprehension expressed by postcolonial feminists towards attempts by Western feminists to “speak for” the LDC woman it is important for women to fight cultural subjugation from within before taking to the world stage.

There is a need to ask what it means within the current power relations between the West and LDCs to be in global feminist engagements. It is important to analyze how these power relations would manifest themselves on global feminist coalitions. Stories abound about the explosive atmosphere at international women’s conferences such as the Beijing Conference of 1995 organized under the auspices of the UN. The bone of contention usually is that Western feminists tend to take the position of the all-knowing authority on issues affecting LDCs women. This attitude needs to change and in its place an environment of mutual respect and recognition of difference not as a sign of inferiority but a constant remind of the multiplicity of issues women face. Under the current atmosphere global feminism may turn into a global nightmare for women in LDCs as they get colonized by dominant Western feminisms under the guise of global sisterhood.

I am not arguing that there are no similarities between experiences of women in LDCs and their Western counterparts but that issues of voice for the former should take a
central position in any discussion of global coalitions. It is important to consider the subject positions going-global entail for LDCs women and how to reconcile that with their everyday realities. My discomfort with global feminisms is that in the interest of finding common ground they may shift focus from pertinent issues that women face in their local contexts to all embracing generalities.

The experiences of women in this study with juggling family work, paid employment and studying part-time are not unique to LDCs women. Kramarae (2001) studied the lives of some women in the United States who were juggling the same responsibilities and found that they faced similar challenges. Even though solutions are bound to differ from one social context to another, women around the world could unite around such similarities. For example, childcare in both these studies was largely the responsibility of women. Women with similar experiences could mobilize world bodies like the United Nations to negotiate with their respective governments to come up with a workable system that would help provide childcare options for working mothers.

I think the question is not whether to support or reject global feminist coalitions but to question the ideologies that will dominate these global coalitions in light of the already stated disparities between the West and LDCs. The proliferation of ICTs (mainly in the West) has seen a redefinition of feminist advocacy from traditional protest marches to cyberspace in the form of online petitions, blogs and other virtual platforms. The impact of this relocation is significant as the experiences (or lack thereof) of the women in this study with technology reflected. They are not equipped to harness the power that ICTs give women in other locations and this may cripple their ability to efficiently participate in global conversations.
Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the UN actively mobilize countries around the world to sign accords pledging to make the empowerment of women a policy issue. These international forums have resulted in initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are “global standards” for member countries to use to improve the lives of their citizens especially women. One has to wonder about whose measure or scale are these standards created.

Another problem of global feminist discourses such as the United Nation’s MDGs is that even when governments such as Botswana embrace these global initiatives the home remains one closed space where unequal power relations remain largely unchecked. This may be a result of trying to implement “standards” created elsewhere without the consideration of local contexts. The experiences of the women in this study reflected there were contrasts between official discourses on the empowerment of women through education and their experiences as primary providers of labor in the home. As with any movements that are interested in representing the concerns of large masses of people in different locations the danger of focusing on commonalities and ignoring the differences is ever present in global feminisms. However, technology competence could help empower women in LDCs to add their voices to global feminism discourses instead of remaining a “project” for liberation by some Western feminists.

As stated earlier, there are points of convergence between women in the West and LDCs. They can work together to address them but leaving the solutions open-ended for women to apply them in a context specific manner. For example, for women in this study social participation is a significant part of their culture that they may not share with other women on a global scale. If in the name of global sisterhood women congregate around
the other three shifts and ignoring social participation this might pose a problem for implementation. This is because social participation is at the core of Tswana culture therefore the three shifts function in its context. I am aware of arguments for “thinking globally and acting locally” but my problem with this proposition is that it implies trying to fit general solutions (global) into specific situations (local). I would like to propose that it may benefit women in LDCs to think locally and negotiate global action through multinational coalitions.

Theorizing multiple roles

In my attempts to theorize the four shifts I use Goode’s (1960) version of the theory of role strain and discuss it in conjunction with the postcolonial concept of hybridity and identity modify it by looking at it through a postcolonial feminist lens. In his theory Goode (1960) outlined that social institutions are made up of role sets and that each individual has role obligations associated with these institutions. He further argues that often an individual may experience role conflicts if a number of role obligations require performance at the same time this he argues results in role strain. Goode argues that where there is role strain the individual negotiates their roles through a system that he calls “role bargain”. This is a way of trying to strike a balance between the respective role obligations and performing them depending on their urgency.

As discussed in Chapter 2, social participation is an important part of Tswana identities as one’s “personhood” is judged based on the frequency of their engagement in their communities. This practice used to be easier to accommodate at a time when women’s identities were primarily tied to the domestic domain. However, due to contact
with other cultures these identities have evolved to include paid employment and also studying part-time. It has been argued by some postcolonial scholars that contact with other cultures leads to both hybrid cultures and identities (Bhabha, 1994, Gandhi, 1998).

Hybridity is also characterized by its ability to challenge and destabilize cultural hegemonies by introducing elements from other cultures. The women’s hybrid identities are therefore a by-product of such cultural transformation. These identities related to the four shifts come with multiple and overlapping responsibilities that are likely to result in role conflict. The women in this study reported experiencing strain associated with their multiple identities. One source of conflict was between distance learning and social participation both of which required performance over the weekends. The women revealed they responded in different ways to these role conflicts. Some stated that they limited their participation or withdrew from social activities and devoted time to distance learning. Others tried to find a compromise which could allow them to fulfill both role obligations. This group negotiated with their communities to reduce participation in light of other pressing responsibilities.

This is where Goode’s role bargaining comes in where he states that an individual tries to resolve the conflict resulting from role strain by negotiating a system where the most urgent role is given priority. The women stated that they had to negotiate between their role obligations to perform both on the one hand and distance learning on the other. Goode’s definition of role strain and bargaining seems to suggest that there is always a plausible solution or parties willing to negotiate. However, as the experiences of some women indicated negotiating with a cultural institution can be difficult while total withdrawal from role performance can negatively affect the individual. For example,
Kabo related that she stopped social participation (Goode calls it role elimination) as a way of handling her distance learning obligations. She experienced backlash when some members of her community deliberately stayed away from her family activities. Under such circumstances, role bargaining may exert a price on the individual depending on how they choose to act.

Another site of role conflict was between domestic and teaching role obligations. Their gender stereotyped identities were intertwined with their teaching identities. Tashata who is a first grade teacher revealed this dual role, “…the Standard 1s are still young and require a lot of attention; mothering really when you consider some of the things I have to do”. The tendency to view primary school teaching as women’s domain results in the perception of mothering and teaching as synonymous. Since Goode does not address the question of gender in his theory I would like to add what I would call role bias whereby gender stereotyped roles are transferred from one role relationship to another. In this role bias women are expected to carry out role obligations from the domestic space to the work place. Women’s gender stereotyped identities from the home as care-givers are transferred to the school leading to role confusion. The role bias casts doubt on the women’s pursuit of professional status compared to men in the same profession.

Both role rejection and negotiation can be indicators of hybridity as some women reshape their roles to suit their multiple identities. In the process they deconstruct the cultural expectation of what social participation entails and negotiate new ways of performance.
These constant conflicts and confusion between the four shifts point to a need for role renegotiations to accommodate the women’s multiple identities and responsibilities.

Social participation as COP

When viewed as a community of practice, social participation requires continuous participation for a member to be considered an old-timer. The difference between a cultural institution as a community of practice and other institutions such as the DPE discussed above is that it has a longer life span. The continuous performance of botho guarantees one the status of an old-timer but when an individual withdraws from participation they revert to newcomers. Wenger (1998) explained that COP function through negotiation of meaning among members. Some women in this study chose to negotiate the meaning of social participation by explaining to their COP that they had other obligations that made it difficult to continue participating under the usual conditions. These women were able to maintain their old-timer status by showing up to social events as frequently as they could. Through negotiation with the membership of their COP they managed to create a hybrid form of practicing botho which took into account the women’s multiple identities and associated role obligations.

What sets apart social participation from other COP is its ability to reverse a member’s status from old-timer to new-comer if they withdraw from participation. Old-timer status is never permanent but can be lost and regained depending on a participant’s engagement with their COP. In my analysis of Tswana social participation as a COP I propose that legitimate peripheral practice may not always be an indicator of novice status. It can be a position that one occupies because other obligations have forced them
to scale back their participation in the community as old-timers thus becoming skilled peripheral participants. The practice of performing botho as a form of Tswana identity formation is never complete; it is a continuous state of becoming through out an individual’s life therefore old-timer status is dependent on continued participation. Comaroff & Comaroff (2001) observed that in Tswana culture social stasis means social death hence the need to continue to be active in social events to stay socially alive or be perceived as having botho.

Implications for practice in the DPE

There were a number of issues that came from this study that directly affected the provision of distance education. These issues ranged from resource sharing to the structure of the program. I found that these findings have a direct bearing on the integration of technology to distance education.

Resource sharing

During this study I found that the numerous institutions involved in the DPE such as the Teacher Training Colleges (both primary and secondary levels) were not willing to let distant learners use their facilities including libraries and computers. The barriers denied the distance learners an opportunity to acquire the same technology skills that their full time counterparts who go to these colleges have. If the DPE initiative is to successfully upgrade these teachers it is critical to stop considering them as less deserving than full time students. For the program to succeed it will be important for all the stakeholders to open their facilities and create a supportive network for the DPE.
learners. Since all these institutions are government funded and under the Department of Teacher Training and Development (TT&D) developing cost sharing initiatives could help break down the boundaries that currently exist. Given that the appeal of distance training is based on its cost effective nature it makes sense to take advantage of existent facilities for the benefit of the DPE program.

Decentralization of tutorial sessions

Another issue I found was that the use of the six colleges did not sufficiently decentralize the program. DPE learners who worked far from the colleges had to be separated from their families for the entire period of the tutorial sessions. Education Centers could be used to further spread out the tutorial sessions and bring them closer to the learners. These Centers could also be used to provide library services particularly for those who work in rural areas. The Education Centers could be upgraded to include fully equipped and networked multimedia facilities for the use and training of the DPE learners in technology production. Since the Centers are based in large villages and towns the TT&D could negotiate with the Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology (MS&T) to use its Kitsong Centers\textsuperscript{14} ICT facilities to also help serve as access centers for distance learners in rural areas.

\textsuperscript{14} Kitsong Centers are the Ministry of Science and Technology initiative to bring ICTs to Batswana in rural areas. The project is ongoing around the country and it includes either building new structures or using existing postal structures to install internet connected computers, printers and scanners. These facilities would be fully staffed and available for public use for a fee.
DPE flexibility and learner retention

If the program structure could be made more flexible it could motivate learners who experience social and familial problems to stick with the program. I found that those learners who experienced personal hardships and had to suspend learning found coming back a challenge because of fixed deadlines. A more staggered approach that allows learners to progress at their own pace would help those who fall behind or temporarily withdraw to resume studies seamlessly.

Learner support

Limited learner support appears to be a significant problem for distance education learners. The participants expressed the need for a supportive system for them to seek help tutorial help if the need arises. There was also concern about tutors who were unwilling to address the learners’ questions on the study materials during the tutorial sessions. The DDE could remedy the situation by having refresher courses on what teaching adults at a distance entails because the perception by some tutors that “the module is the teacher” seems to be compromising the learners. It could benefit the learners if the DDE could have a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the tutors to make sure that the learners get the support they need.

Although this was not one of the objectives of this study, it emerged during my research that there were some problems with the management of the DPE learners’ assignments. Some learners narrated experiences in which their assignments were lost by the either the tutors or the program coordinators. There seems to be not clear system of accountability in such situations and the learners expressed that they end up having to
redo the assignment or test even when they have proof of having done the initial assessment task. This is a serious issue for the learners as some expressed that even though the lost assessment work was not their fault it denied them the opportunity to graduate in a timely manner. These problems suggest a need for policies on assessment and record keeping to avoid disadvantaging the learners.

Suggestions and Implications for future research

Since the DDE is planning to integrate technology to the DPE it is important to equip the learners with the necessary skills to benefit from online learning. The women in this study had very little to no computer skills and expressed anxiety using computers in the presence of skilled learners. As discussed in earlier chapters, technology creators and implementers tend to exclude women’s experiences and needs in relation to technology. For the DPE’s technology integration plan to come to fruition, it is crucial that a technology skills training course is considered as part of the implementation plan. This will be a course that takes into account the already discussed anxieties and attitudes of women towards technology.

The current situation with the DPE learners’ non-existent technology skills suggest a necessity to carry out full scale needs assessment and analysis of technology as a gender issue. It would be important in the future to find out the kind of environment that could foster computer skill learning for this population. A researcher could achieve this by creating two small groups with distance learners with little or no computer skills. One group would comprise both male and female learners while the other would include women only.
The goal would be to carry out a comparative study between the two groups to establish if women learn computing skills better in mixed groups or in same-sex groups. It would be important to the study that participants in all the groups have relatively similar skill levels. Research on women and technology has found that women tend to hang back when learning with men while they were more confident in same-sex groups (Sanders, 2006). The findings of this research could help the DPE create a gender responsive online learning program.

The research would require prolonged engagement with the participants to find out if indeed women experience technology differently when they learn in all-female groups. Prolonged engagement would allow the researcher to observe how their skills and attitudes change over time. At the beginning of the research the participants would be given a survey to assess their skills and attitudes towards technology. Additionally observations and both individual and focus group interviews could be used as data collection methods. At the end of the study an exit interview would be necessary to assess if any changes in attitudes towards technology had occurred.

This study set out to solicit the women’s perceptions of what a female responsive online learning program would entail. However, I was unable to get their informed opinions due to their limited competence and knowledge about the possible uses of technology in teaching and learning. The participants were unable to share concrete views about online learning as they confessed that they had no technology skills. I anticipate that the suggested future study could help solicit the women’s perceptions and ultimately lay the foundation for a gender responsive online program.
Another area of future research would be to study the tutors in the DPE to find out their attitudes towards distance learning and how these affect their practice. As discussed elsewhere in this research there is a common perception of distance learning as second rate to traditional classroom based instruction. The study may help reveal if these perceptions indeed exist among the tutors and find out ways of changing attitudes to create a conducive environment for the DPE learners.

Prolonged engagement would be critical in both future studies because in my experience the time I spent in the field (three months) was to some extent a limitation. I felt I did not have enough time to develop rapport with the participants to establish trustworthy relationships. The result was that I had to take some of what I was told at face value because I could not form an informed opinion of their characters. Trustworthy relationships would be of significance when studying the tutors because they may be comfortable to reveal their true views on distance learning. Limited literature on women and technology in Botswana meant that most of the studies I ended up using were based on studies of Western women. This can be construed to some degree to be in direct contradiction to my postcolonial feminist theoretical framework which is against using a Western lens to assess the lives of non-Western women.

Notwithstanding these issues there were strengths to the study such as my decision to use a small sample. The use of a small sample helped me to spend more time with the study participants than it would have been possible with a larger number. The school principals that I encountered in this study were also an asset because they opened up their schools and allowed me to observe as many times as I could. Our informal chats also gave me an administrator’s view on having teachers who are also distance learners.
and the challenges they faced. Another strength of the study was allowing the participants to use Setswana and Ikalanga respectively where necessary. This helped the participants to discuss cultural issues without having to struggle with translation. The use of both interviews and observations was also an advantage particularly in classroom situated observations. I was able to see first hand how the participants’ narratives about their teaching experiences looked in reality. It was also a sobering experience for me since I had no concrete idea of what being a distance learner in a rural area without support systems like libraries entailed.

Final Thoughts

Distance education (DE) offers an opportunity for women in Botswana to improve their qualifications without losing their source of income. However, for (DE) to attract more women it could accommodate the multitasking lives of Batswana women. The DDE would have to create programs that are flexible enough for women to attend to other shifts in their lives without compromising their studies. For any adult learning program to retain the students it would have to consider the sociocultural context which has a significant stake in their success or failure. The performance of botho is a key concept in Tswana culture therefore it is essential that distance education providers in Botswana factor this practice into their program structures.

As different government organs prepare to make technology accessible to all Batswana it might be necessary to pay special attention to the well documented history of women and technology. It would be important to focus on gender as an issue in the creation and use of technology.
In importing technology from other locations it would be beneficial to assess the cultural artifacts embedded in the technology and assess how these would function under local cultural contexts.

Finally, it is important to recognize that globalization continues to change Batswana lives as the country continues to develop. This transformation is largely evident in the cities where people increasingly value individual success over communal good. The uncomfortable mix of Westernization and traditional practices is a constant reminder as people become more self-reliant and having to pay for services that were traditional free such as babysitting. There is also the constant awareness of the need to maintain relationships with one’s kinfolk and the larger community which puts additional pressure on people’s busy lives. As people increasingly become focused on individual success (usually financial) there is also a growing outcry to return to “traditional Tswana values”. It has become apparent that as globalization continues to make access to the world market attractive and information flow easier the call to go back to the way things used to be is more nostalgic than realistic. Postman (1993) sums up the situation; “new technologies alter the structure of our interests: the things we think about. They alter the character of our symbols: the things we think with. And they alter the nature of community: the arena in which the thoughts develop” (p.20).
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Appendix A

Consent Form

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: The four shifts: Family, work, online learning and social participation for female in-service teachers at the University of Botswana.

Researcher: Chandapiwa Butale

Sponsor: University of Botswana

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.
Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
The study is aimed at seeking information on the experiences of the female teachers studying at a distance at the University of Botswana. You are being asked to participate in this study because I am interested in narratives of your experiences with balancing work, family, distance learning and other social relations as an in-service teacher in the Diploma in Primary Education. Your participation will further assist in investigating how online learning can be used in a beneficial manner with the women in the program.

Procedures/Tasks:
The study will be carried out through audiotape recorded interviews with the participants. I will also observe which the participants at work, home and social occasion agreed upon by the researcher and the participants.
Duration:

The study will take place over a period of three months and the frequency of observations and interviews in this duration will be negotiated with the study participants. You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The University of Botswana.

Risks and Benefits:

Your participation in this study will not put you in any kind of risk or provide any financial benefits. However, your participation may help bring the needs of women studying online to those responsible for planning and designing your study materials.

Confidentiality:

Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research and your personal information will not be revealed to anyone. At the conclusion of this research project your personal data will be destroyed.

Incentives:

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation in this study will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Chandapiwa Butale at butale.1@osu.edu or by phone at (+267) 390-2529.
For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

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Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about your childhood: where did you grow up? What were your experiences growing up as a girl?
2. Where did you go to school?
3. What were your domestic responsibilities?
4. What or who influenced your career choice?
5. Do you have children? If yes, how old are they?
6. Do you have any help taking care of the children?
7. Who heads your household?
8. Who is responsible for domestic chores in your home?
9. How has studying at a distance and working full time affected your personal and professional lives?
10. How do you divide your time between learning and work? Can you describe a typical week in your life?
11. How do you think technology can be used in the program to make a difference on your learning?
12. Do you find learning on your own conducive? What are the advantages/disadvantages?
13. Do you think you would benefit from collaborative learning as part of an online learning program?
14. How many times do you get to travel to access your learning activities? How does that affect other parts of your life?

15. Has your teaching load changed since you enrolled in the program?
APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. What have been your experiences studying in the DPE program?

2. How do you divide your time between your family, work, schooling and social relations?

3. Do you think the use of technology will lighten your load in the program?

4. Vision 2016 cites botho as one of the pillars of Botswana which should be reflected in every sector of the society. How do you think the current program accommodates botho?
APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION GUIDE

1. What are the activities taking place at this location?
2. What role and responsibilities does the participant have in this setting?
3. How much time does the participant spend at this location?
4. What relationships does the participant have with people in this setting?
5. What significance does it have in the participant’s network of relations?
APPENDIX E

CODE BOOK

Program strenuous PROG STRS
Program lacks flexibility PROG FLEX
Time constraints TYM
Learner support LRN SUP
Performance of botho PERF BOT
Isolation and low motivation ISO/LW-MOT
Communication and botho COMM-BOT
Online learning and less travel OLYN-TRAV
Online learning and social participation OLYN/SOC PART
Collaborative learning COL LRN
Limited technology skills LTD TEC
Single parenting SING PAR
Child care C-K
Domestic work DOM WK
Division of labor DIV LBR
Family support FAM SUP
Gender stereotyping GEN STRP