

Individual TAU Project Report: *The limits of neoliberalism and postfeminism: reflecting on the teaching challenges of challenging hierarchies in hierarchical spaces*

My research project, *The limits of neoliberalism and postfeminism: reflecting on the teaching challenges of challenging hierarchies in hierarchical spaces* aims to deepen my understanding of how neoliberal discourses shape and frame the possibilities for students to make sense/meaning of the materials concepts, theory they confront in the introduction to gender studies course offered in 2016. The motivation underpinning the project is the marked *absence* of movement towards gender equity over the last 20 years despite a legislative framework that makes gender equity a constitutional requirement. Women continue, for example, to dominate the ranks of the poor and the unemployed, and continue to be marginalised in boardrooms and other decision making fora (Posel and Rogan, 2010). Women also continue to take on the primary responsibility for child rearing, household maintenance and often for providing financially for dependents. Access to reproductive health care and rights over one's fertility remain marginal (Stevens, 2008). Women also remain vulnerable, for example, to enormously high levels of domestic and gender based violence with little evidence of any decreases in such violence (Watson, 2014). Indeed, Lisa Vetten (2014: 55) warns that recent policy changes prioritising particular kinds of families and that frame male violence as a 'symptom of moral failure rather than gender inequality' run the risk of facilitating rather than reducing violence. And as the recent contestation around the Traditional Courts Bill shows, the limited material gains of the first two decades of democracy are further threatened by dominant discourses privileging the gender regime associated with the heteronormative patriarchal family (Gouws, 2014; Hassim, 2014.)

Against this widespread resistance to gender equity the project aims to explore firstly, the extent to which and ways in which post-feminist, masculinist, patriarchal and neoliberal logics permeate the understandings students bring to this course, thus shaping what it is possible to know or not know. The second part of the project aims to explore whether and how the teaching and learning undertaken in the course offers possibilities for challenging dominant understandings. The course in question is a second year introduction to gender studies to which 59 students signed up in February 2016. The course uses formative methods of assessment and employs a blended learning approach. Students are able to demonstrate their engagement with course materials through a range a tasks, and are able to mix and match different kinds of tasks in accordance with their particular circumstances and preferences.

At the beginning of the year I recruited Susan Gredley and Rudo Chikara to assist with data collection. Ms Gredley is a doctoral student supervised by Profs Tammy Shefer and Viv Bozalek whose PhD aims to explore how innovative methods of teaching and assessment promote participatory parity and epistemological access in contexts of multiple and competing inequalities. She was recruited precisely because her research interests overlap with this project. Ms Chikara is a masters student, supervised by myself, whose research explores Zimbabwean women's experiences of migrancy and who was familiar with the course having tutored it in 2015. Ms Chikara was reappointed as a tutor in 2016 and was recruited into this project because of her familiarity with the course and to assist Ms Gredley in organising and facilitating the focus groups.

As one of the key tasks was to ensure that all appropriate ethical obligations were met, Ms Gredley distributed information sheets in the first few lectures where we addressed queries about the project raised by students. Over the next few weeks Ms Gredley then went on to obtain informed consents from those who agreed to participate in the study. In consultation with my TAU group an interview schedule for focus groups was drawn up and three focus groups facilitated by Ms Gredley and Rudo Chikara were held during February and subsequently transcribed by Ms Chikara. These transcriptions were only completed in the last week of May, and so I have not had time to consider them in any detail.

<i>Budget TAU Fellowship research project 2016</i>		<i>Activities</i>
<i>1 hons or masters student</i>	<i>R10,000</i>	<i>Recruit research participants (Feb 2016) Obtain informed consents (Feb 2016) Gather qualitative data (Feb- May 2016)</i>
<i>Actual Expenditure</i>		
<i>Susan Gredley</i>	<i>R5,000</i>	<i>Ethics, participants, organize & facilitate focus groups, assist with data gathering via on line quizzes</i>
<i>Rudo Chikara</i>	<i>R3000</i>	<i>Co facilitate focus groups, transcribe focus group interviews</i>
<i>Sundry expenses</i>	<i>R2000</i>	<i>Light snacks/drinks for focus group discussions</i>

As illustrated in the Appendix data was also gathered through weekly on line questionnaires aimed at exploring the prior knowledges students brought to the course, with these knowledges used as launching points for discussing the reading set for subsequent classes. The first on line questionnaire asked “What three words come into your head when you hear the word ‘gender’?” A subsequent class centred on a discussion of the word cloud (linking the incidence of the words offered by students to the size of the font) in relation to the set reading on the concept of gender.

The following week the online quiz asked students whose lives had changed the most in the last few hundred years, and how these lives had changed, while the week after the quiz asked students what they thought feminists might want and whether they might describe themselves as feminists. Other questions, and responses are contained in the Appendix. A key thing to note is that in previous years I have used the first few minutes of class, as students settle down, to ask similar questions. Using the first few minutes of class saw far more responses gathered than using on line surveys, at least in the first couple of classes. Relatively few of the 59 students registered for the class participated in these online quizzes early on in the course. This slowly changed as students found themselves interested in the answers of their peers and as they saw that *all* responses were valued, that a diversity of answers offered more opportunities for insight than answers that all agreed about something. It also became clearer over time, just how central students answers were to the discussion of the set reading that replaced the monologue of the traditional lecture.

As noted earlier I have foregrounded formative methods of assessment in this course and as a corollary to this I have abandoned the traditional formal exam at the end of the course. Instead students are required to write an evidence based essay (as an introduction to a portfolio of evidence collected over the semester) reflecting on their learnings, the extent to which their expectations of the course were met or not, with a particular focus on what has been 'unlearned'. These essays are due on 14th July and I'm hoping that they will offer rich insights into the dominant discourses students brought to the course as well as the extent to which and ways in which these have been challenged.

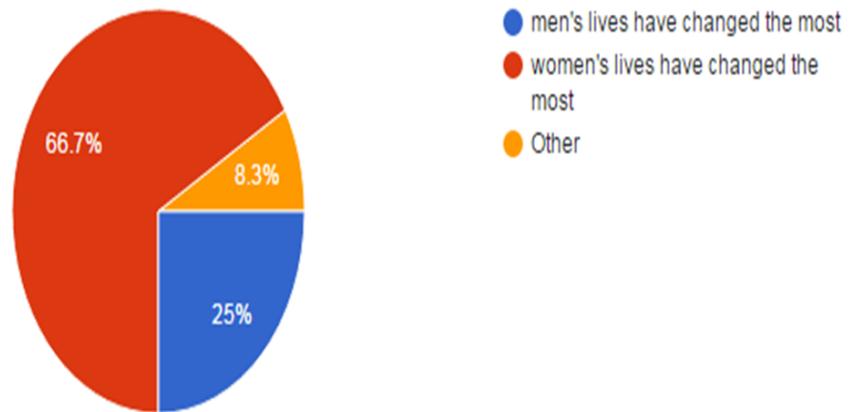


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Reference list

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- Stevens, M. 2008. 'Towards Treatment Guidelines for women of reproductive age: recognizing their right to choose'. *Agenda*, 75: 67-77.
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Whose lives have changed the most in the last few centuries? (12 responses)



2016 Women's lives have changed the most - 8 students	Men's lives have changed most – 3	Both men & women's lives have changed – 1
<p>women have started to rise about their perceptions and standards, and how their patriarchal society, is slowly but surely being torn down a</p> <p>Most women in the last few centuries depended on men and they were house wives... what is currently happening is the opposite. Women own properties and have good paying jobs.</p> <p>women have in the recent past been elected as a President of a country, eg Angela Merkel head of state in Germany...Christine Legrad President of the International Monetary Fund, and one Dlamini Zuma who is the head of the African Union .</p> <p>WOMEN HAVE GOTTEN MORE EQUAL RIGHTS SUCH AS THE RIGHT TO VOTE ETC</p> <p>Women can vote now. They are also sexually liberated</p> <p>1 women are given opportunities that were earlier allocated to man's; 2 more women are on the leadership roles or positions; 3 womens are the heads of the households and breadwinners to their families; women are more powerful when it comes to voice out their views, they are no longer afraid.</p> <p>Over the years, women have become more empowered, especially in the workfield. More female entrepreneurs are arising as well as female leaders</p> <p>women are more liberated in all aspects of life. Women economically are free to compete for any career in the job market. Also mentally liberated to challenge gender roles, the expected norm that a woman should be submissive to the male. Now women lead households on their own. Sexually women have found their liberation and are now comfortable to explore their preferences without fear of being judged by society.</p>	<p>Men have changed history in a sense that they have invented and created technologies that our forefathers could only imagine, yes i use the term men because through out history women who are inventors are not credited.</p> <p>men's lives have changed over the last few centuries, is because men are slowly becoming the less dominant gender in society.</p>	<p>Both gender's ways of living have changed drastically. Responsibilities are now shared amongst the two. Opportunities are balanced, realistic are trying to be balanced amongst them; Men are no longer the dominators of power as women have the advantages of legal policies formations on their side. Women can now seek the same power as men, as their voices are increasingly being heard around the world.</p> <p>SLIDE 4</p>

2016: What do feminists want? 12 responses

FULL EQUALITY FOR ALL GENDERS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS

I think that feminist want to be recognized as an important part of society and not just women who make a lot of noise about equality. Feminist are merely fighting for the right to be heard and recognized, in society.

Feminists want the same opportunities that men are granted. They want a balance. they do not necessarily want to be treated like men. They want equality. They do not want the gap that is between men and they, that men are supposed to do things that women are unable to.

I wouldn't say to be equally treated as men percent but to be not seen as the male's subservient or inferior to the male species but to acknowledged as a powerful force in the world. To be worthy of being treated as such too. By other women and the opposite sex

Feminists want equal treatment and opportunities amongst males and females. They want the world to acknowledge the fact that being female should not be considered a disadvantage.

feminist is someone that look at both genders and understand each gender. this can be based on looking at equal opportunities and rights for both genders.

feminist want equality

Equality. In area aspect, and sphere of life.

Equality;

Not to be overlooked

They want women to be seen as equals among men, and this I refer to the power positions in the world globally, Most notably in the financial sector, or I would ask myself why has the ruling Party in South-Africa not encourage there followers to back a black women to stand for President? Is it the culture barrier, or are women in certain cultures only seen as cooks child care workers and slaves to their husbands.

Equality in all genders in terms of soico-economic stand, religion and basic human needs and not being second citizens to men.

I think feminists need things to change, women voices are to be heard just as how men are. Equality needs to be implemented not just stated. Grounds need to be set for a balance of opportunities in both workplace and households.

Would you describe yourself as a feminist?

8 said yes, 3 said no, 1 said she's a womanist, 1 turned the question around

I have never considered myself as a feminist gives me the courage and awareness to say that I am a feminist [now].

no. because i believe in a society that have hierarchy. the must be someone that is bigger than the other. to sustain order and respect.

I prefer calling myself a Womanist mainly because womanism was started by black women and it includes people of colour, the lgbt community and people with disabilities

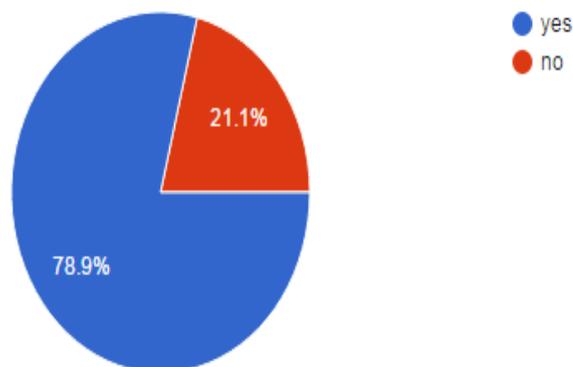
I don't know What does it mean to be a feminist?

Yes i am because I am pro women, as a 21st century man i acknowledge women as my equals, and most times i tend to not conform to society regarding gender roles, For example i prefer my girlfriend to take the lead in everything because she has a strong personality and that does not make me a weak man.

Think back to your primary school

Were there differences between how boys were expected to behave and how girls were expected to behave? (Think about games, sports, chores, clothes, lessons, duties etc.)

(19 responses)



4 said there were no differences:

"I do not remember there being a difference in tasks based on gender. Our names were chosen randomly to complete tasks such as cleaning the boards off, picking up/organizing toys, watering plants and being the line leaders".

"Maybe I never noticed anything but as far as I can remember, the boys and girls were handled equally".

15 said there were differences:

Girls should help clean the classrooms while boys helped with gardening and it wasn't allowed for it to be the other way round.

I saw the difference mostly at home with chores, most of the chores were only done by us girls and boys would be sent to go play. This also happened on sports and games, certain games and sports would be for boys or girls, and this would be specifically be told to us children which sport you must play

I remember my parents and teachers wanting me to play netball instead of soccer because soccer was too "boyish" for me. I was never allowed to play wrestling with my cousins because the expectation was that because I was a girl I had to sit and be pretty.

The boys were exposed and expected to participate in sporting events like soccer and rugby whereas the girls participated in activities that required less effort such as skipping rope or playing with dolls

Girls were always given more responsibility. We had to play netball. Not soccer. We got skipping ropes during PT. Boys got crickets bats and balls. If there was a special event girl would get pink party packets and boys would get blue party packets. And then the obvious, girls wore skirts and boys wore pants.

Our school uniform was different, girls wore dresses and boys wore pants the girls were not allowed to wear pants. Also, when it came to sports there were sport for girls and boys, for instance, we as girls were not allowed to play rugby and boys were not allowed to play netball. This happened because it was classified as a 'girl sport' or 'boy sport'

With regards to extra mural activities, girls and boys were segregated. Girls were only allowed to participate in calm sports such as ballet, and boys played sports that involved a lot of physical contact, such as karate.

Boys were allowed to be more rowdy in class, more disruptive. I remember girls getting reprimanded quicker for speaking out of turn whereas boys had more free reign

Girls were expected to do the washing of dishes and cleaning of the house and learning how to cook. Boys helped with the yard work

Boys could speak out of turn, but girls were scolded when they would speak without being called on. A girl and boy who played together too much were thought to like each other and caught cooties if they touched each other. Girls were expected to play hopscotch, jump rope, hand games, monkey bars, and foursquare whereas boys were expected to play soccer, football, tag, etc. Girls were expected to sit with their legs closed, but boys did not have to sit a certain way.

Girls had to sit a certain way and we couldn't talk loudly like boys could. Girls were not allowed to argue because it was not "ladylike"

Boys were allowed to dress the way they wanted whereas girls were still expected to dress in a 'respectful way.

Clothing, sitting even hairstyles

The main differences i can remember are when it was "play time", there would be distinct clusters of gendered games. The girls were expected to play with dolls and boys were expected to play with cars and if you were seen outside these clusters, you were either scolded at or teased.

boys were always given freedom to play and roam around as they pleased, whereas with girls there was perception that our play had to be gentle and civil like having a tea party for example

Were there things boys were allowed and girls were not in primary school?

Yes. With sport, I grew up knowing that soccer was a boy sport coz only boys were allowed to play it in Primary school

They could stay out later. they never had to worry about the what others might assume about them via the clothing that they wore. boys never had the probability of rape happening to them constantly running through their minds.

Boys could climb trees and girls were not allowed because we were told we would get hurt

Certain sports. E.g rugby

Again boys could wear pants and girls were not allowed to.

boys were not allowed to wear earrings.

They not wear very short skirts. Where the boys could wear very short shorts.

It was not frowned upon when boys got into a physical altercation

Boys had more options for sports. Setting up for athletics and play time generally boys would do.

Rough play was allowed for boys and girls had to play with dolls

Boys could speak out of turn, play aggressively at recess and in sports, sit with their legs wide open, and play with other boys on the playground. Boys could play more loudly and talk at a louder volume. Boys would play dad when playing house.

Boys were allowed to play whatever they want. They could be loud and no one would stop them.

Guys could wear pants to school . We're as girls had to wear a dress .

boys are allowed to explore during their teenage years for example going out at night or to clubs at a much younger age compared to girls

Yes, boys were allowed to sit with their legs open

Yes, definitely. Boys were allowed to sit with their legs wide open and girls weren't.

What could girls do that boys couldn't?

Girls wore uniform dresses but boys could not.

I can't really remember, I went to a sport driven school so boys and girls took part. I think the only thing that does come to mind is the idea that we (girls) could only play touch rugby and not contact rugby like the boys because we'd get more hurt

I was always allowed to bathe with my cousins. women had this sense of nakedness that was allowed amongst each other in comparison to boys. also, outward display of affection is much more "acceptable" with female to female, than male to male

Chores, because it was believed it was the girl's job to clean. On the other side boys are not allowed to cry because they are seen as weak if they get emotional

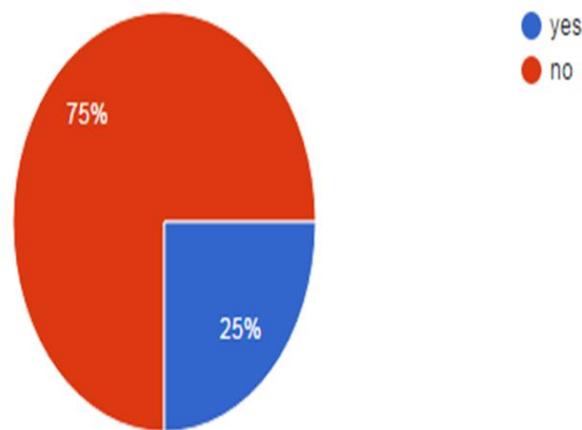
Play netball

Yes girls weren't allowed to sit the way boys were allowed to sit

Girls were allowed to cry and boys were not.

Did you ever get into trouble in school for doing something that the opposite gender was supposed to do?

(20 responses)



I played soccer with guys in grade 7 and I remember having a feud with one of the guys in the team, we physically fought and then he broke my arm so I felt from then that I did not belong and so I stopped playing

this boy called me a midget and I threw him with a bin and I clearly remember my teacher saying "this is not what young ladies are suppose to act like" they gave me detention for a whole week.

I wore a pants to school during summer. I got detention for it.

I always sat with my legs wide open, and I would engage in rough play with the boys at recess. Teachers would tell me to close my legs and sit like a lady, which just did not feel comfortable to me. Teachers would tell me that if I played with the boys and got hurt that it would be my own fault for choosing to play with the boys when a girl should not be playing so rough.

I CLIMBED EVERYTHING AND I WAS NOT GENTLE. And because of this I was in "quiet time" a lot.

What stopped you from doing something the opposite gender does?

The fear of getting reprimanded or a hiding from the authority figure which was the teacher
It never even crossed my mind to question things at that stage of my life. That's just how things were.
The thought of getting in trouble and getting detention.

When I was young, I was very submissive and obeyed authority because I was afraid of being in trouble.

The rules of the school.

I was too afraid because I knew what the repercussions would be, I didn't want to be in trouble

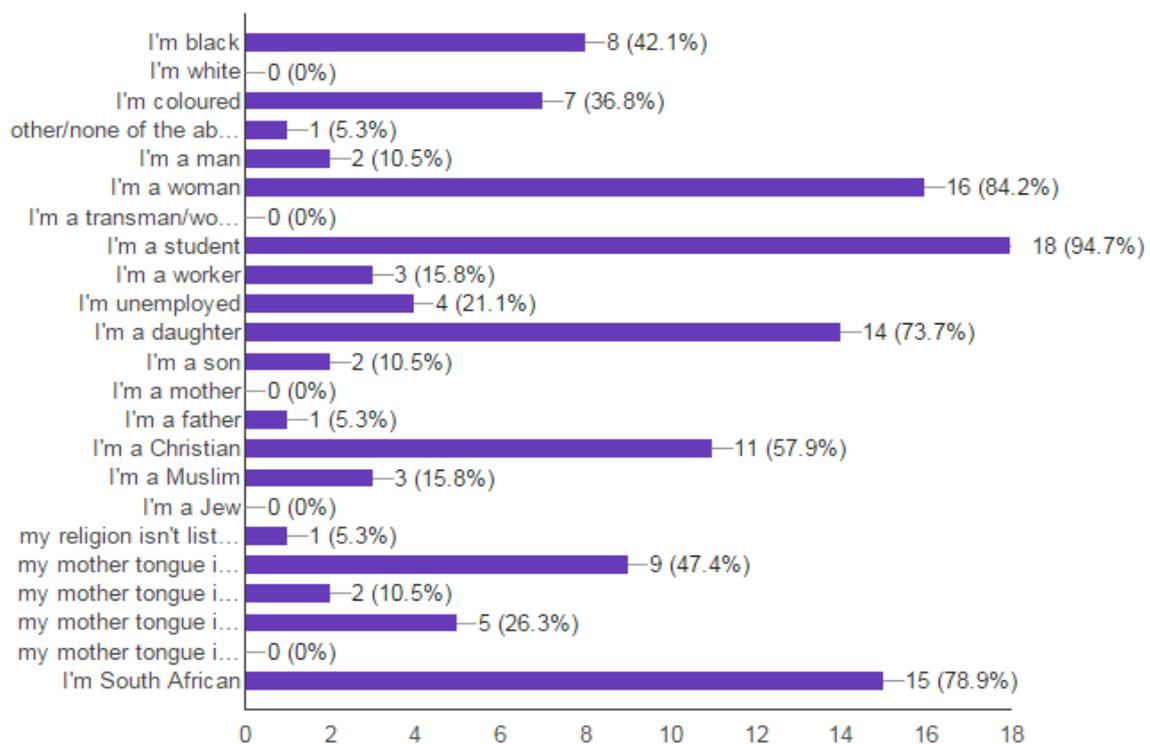
Rules that were told to us about what to do and not to do

I always avoided doing things that would bring me unnecessary attention.

5 words you'd use to describe yourself to a total stranger

Friendly	4	unconventional loyal responsible bookaholic indie
Shy	4	emotional Open-minded Passionate Creative Strong
Fun/funny	6	energetic (sometimes though) ambitious impatient social
competent	3	spiritual, strong-willed, resilient, Human Intellect
unique	3	Sapiosexual African weirdo talkative Curious
female	3	depth humour young love Sarcastic Overly-Loving
student	2	Spontaneous equalizer Brave Revolutionary Strong
Black	2	Beautiful Kind impatient serious
Feminist	2	
honest	2	
Human	2	
Loving	2	
intelligent	2	

Self Identification



What are the dominant messages about masculinity/femininity in our society?

Intelligent Responsible Good-Looking Smart
 Successful Strong Determined Attractive Male
 Strong Confident Dominant Handsome
 Intelligent
 Masculine Strong Tough Courageous Brave
 Intelligent Womanizer Prayer Independent
 Powerful Gentleman
 Strong Dependable Confident Funny
 Handsome
 Strong Responsible Hard-Working Reliable
 Fun
 Powerful Strong Handsome Masculine
 Influential
 Gentleman Honest Funny Smart Cool
 Masculine Strong, Good-Looking Smart
 Important
 Hot Masculine Strong Confident Protective
 Strong Charming Powerful Athletic Handsome
 Strong Fresh Huge Gentleman Smart
 Strong

Beautiful Successful Loving Friendly Caring
 Beautiful Confident Intelligent Wise Respectable
 Feminine Lady Kind Gentle Loving
 Beautiful Intelligent Courageous Independent
 Important Different
 Beautiful Smart Strong Independent Caring
 Matured Reliable Strong Humble Beautiful
 Beautiful Attractive Sexy Smart Funny
 Smart Intelligent Powerful Leading Control
 Gentle Caring Ambitious Funny Smart
 Intelligent Confident Bold Strong Believer
 Beautiful Intelligent Nurturing Sensitive Educative
 Beautiful Sexy Intelligent Independent Loved
 Beautiful



A man should:
 Provider, Head of the house Gentleman,
 Employee
 Work hard and protect your family in terms of
 finances and make sure you are a real man by
 not being easily pursued
 to provide for your family

A woman should:
 take care of those that love you and those that are
 family and close to your family love your neighbor
 To be soft and caring
 Always be ladylike and demand respect instead of
 attention.
 To be independent and always take pride in my
 appearance.
 Independent Decent Courageous Intelligent Loving
 Knows how to cook
 nurturing and caring , playing a role of the backbone
 of the family
 Treat yourself in such a way that anybody would feel
 the need to treat you with respect and also look up to
 you, but also always treat everyone the way you
 would like to be treated. Morality is very important.
 To be a real woman means to be able to be
 independent, intelligent and self-sufficient

	<p>Ensure that you are the smartest person in the room regardless of gender. Ensure that you have strived and worked for be that person</p> <p>1) My mum told me a real African woman must learn how to cook.... 2) to be a real woman you had to be clean 3) to be a real woman you had to toughen up, because the playing field out there is not leveled</p> <p>A real woman, is somebody who knows her moral, values, beliefs and standards and boldly proclaims but also embodies everything she stands for</p> <p>as a women you need to be independent, be comfortable with your body and who you are but most of all you need to be able to take care of home first before impressing the streets.</p> <p>how to be a good wife</p> <p>INDEPENDANCE</p>
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