

Only for Girls from the West? Transnational culture and Post Feminism

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A substantial corpus of literature exists on the subject of post-feminism, which predominantly focuses on the context of the "Western" world and delineates post-feminism within the framework of "Western culture." The present study posits that feminist cultural academics have not adequately addressed the potential implications of post-feminism in non-Western cultural contexts. This paper advocates for the adoption of a transnational analytic and methodological framework in the critical examination of postfeminism. It accomplishes this by offering a concise survey of the existing body of literature on postfeminism in non-Western contexts and by contextualizing it within the broader discourse of transnational feminist cultural studies. The argument posits that employing this strategy proves advantageous in comprehending postfeminism as a culturally pervasive phenomenon with global mobility, exerting influence beyond the confines of Western Europe and the United States, affecting individuals of both genders. The last section of this paper provides a definition of the term and explores the potential benefits of this novel conceptual framework for feminist cultural scholars in their examination of post feminism as a worldwide cultural phenomenon.

Introduction

The concept of "freedom" to participate in conventional gender roles, as discussed by scholars such as Gill (2007, 2008), Tasker and Negra (2007), McRobbie (2009), Gill and Scharff (2011), and Butler (2013), often involves a dismissal or rejection of feminism as superfluous or undesirable. Rosalind Gill (2007, 2008) posits that post-feminism is a paradoxical mindset that manifests through heightened focus on femininity as a corporeal characteristic, amplified expectations for women to engage in self-objectification within a (hetero)sexual context, disciplined consumption of fashion and beauty products, and the insistence on depicting women's behaviors as autonomous, intellectually informed, and personally fulfilling. Post-feminist discourse perpetuates the valorization of the feminine physique by employing the concept of "rhetoric of choice." This framework portrays a continuous series of ostensibly favorable and empowering commercial decisions, which are deemed independent, for women and girls, as articulated by Blue (2012). Post-feminism is widely recognized as a neoliberal sensibility due to its emphasis on individualizing logics that downplay and diminish the

persistent gendered inequality experienced by women. This is further compounded by its inherent association with consumerist ideals of "choice", as discussed by scholars such as Gill (2008), Gill and Scharff (2011), and Butler (2013).

The majority of contemporary feminist scholarship pertaining to postfeminism has been focused on the geographical regions commonly referred to as the "Western" globe. There is a prevailing tendency to perceive post-feminism as being predominantly Western, both in terms of its geographical location or origin, and in terms of its designation as "post-" the predominantly progressive outcomes of Western second-wave feminist action (Tasker and Negra, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). However, it is widely acknowledged in scholarly literature that postfeminism has implications beyond its impact on women in Western societies. In contrast, Tasker and Negra (2007) contend that this perspective is inherently characterized by whiteness and middle-class values, as it is primarily centered around consumption as a means of self-formation and leisure as a physical space. The demographic in question is extensively and evidently addressed by postfeminism, leading to the observation that the movement's idealized individual is typically young, heterosexual, physically healthy, slim, and conforms to traditional standards of attractiveness.

Dosekun, in its third iteration (April 2015) Butler (2013) and McRobbie (2009) are two notable authors in the field. On the contrary, if one were to query about the exclusivity of a certain item or activity to individuals of White ethnicity, posing the question, "Is this intended solely for White girls?" In her analysis, Jess Butler contends that contemporary scholars within the postfeminist framework often make assumptions on the societal exclusion or limited representation of women of color in Western contexts, as observed in both media and academic literature. The author advocates for a more comprehensive understanding of postfeminism that incorporates intersectionality, particularly in relation to its appreciation for racial variety. The author contends that the prevailing assumption regarding this matter is excessively simplistic and lacks empirical evidence (2013, p. 48). The author's approach involves a critical examination of post-feminist media representations of women of color in Western societies.

This scholarly paper posits that in order to comprehensively comprehend postfeminism, it is imperative to adopt a transnational lens, as it has exerted a far-reaching influence that extends beyond women in Western societies. The article mainly relies on the insights provided by

Butler (2013). The central thesis of this essay is the value in reimagining postfeminism as a global cultural phenomenon. In juxtaposition to the terms "West," "global North," "first," and "developed," I shall employ the expressions "non-West," "global South," and "third," correspondingly, in order to articulate my argument.

The aforementioned designations pertain to geographical areas that have been historically characterized by the presence of imperialist ideologies, fantasies, and socio-economic disparities (Grewal, 2005). According to Inderpal Grewal (2005, 25), the categorizations of "the West" and "the Non-West" were initially constructed through European colonization and have since been consistently reinterpreted to perpetuate the disparities between affluent nations and those deemed as "developing," as well as between different socioeconomic strata. Furthermore, I utilize the aforementioned concepts in a heuristic manner in order to question the prevailing notions of clear distinctions and binary systems that they both create and embody. The term "transnational" is employed in this context to encompass the analytical method that surpasses the aforementioned restrictions, as elucidated by Grewal and Kaplan in their works from 1994 and 2001. Further elaboration on this matter will be provided thereafter. The notion of transnationalism remains relatively uncommon in postfeminist literature. To offer more substantiation, the initial portion of the article, labeled "Simidele Dosekun Final Draft - April 2015 4", provides a concise overview of prior discourse around postfeminism and its rationales in relation to or in connection with the global South. I argue that the current body of literature on post-feminism has predominantly focused on its origins inside Western civilization, thereby neglecting comprehensive study, theoretical analysis, and investigation into its applicability beyond the borders of the United States.

In the subsequent sections of this dissertation, transnational feminist cultural studies will be employed as a theoretical framework to provide potential strategies for addressing and reducing the existing divide. In order to establish postfeminism as a distinct concept, this paper offers a theoretical analysis of transnational cultural phenomena in the subsequent part. The process of transnationalization is an inherent aspect of postfeminism due to its fundamental nature as a mediated and commercialised discourse, accompanied by a range of material behaviours. In essence, the distribution and transmission of it do not adhere to a rigid North-South axis when crossing international borders. In the final half of the article, an in-depth analysis is provided regarding the theoretical argument, focusing on the analytical implications and the importance

of understanding postfeminism as a worldwide cultural phenomenon. In order to elucidate my arguments, I shall present a concise overview of my research pertaining to noteworthy emergent forms of femininity within the context of Lagos, Nigeria. Feminist cultural academics possess the ability to discover, examine, and establish novel areas of study through their conceptualization of postfeminism as a worldwide cultural phenomenon. They possess a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate, contradictory, and politically sensitive cultural frameworks associated with globalisation.

Non-Western societies or cultures The intersection of postfeminism and globalisation has been a topic of academic interest and analysis. Scholars have examined the ways in which these two phenomena interact and influence one other numerous instances may be observed where Western actors have assumed the roles of "other" women who undertake acts of rescue, as exemplified in Mohanty Simidele Dosekun's *Final Draught* - April 2015. This phenomenon can be attributed to the longstanding portrayal of the Western world as a bastion of "progress" and "modernity" for women. T

here is a possibility that Western feminists are involved in perpetuating these discourses, as Chandra Mohanty (1988: 61) characterises them as considering the "Third World Woman" as a singular, homogeneous entity." Gonick et al. (2009), Sensoy and Marshall (2010), Wilson (2011), 2012, Koffman and Gill (2013), and Switzer (2013) represent a selection of scholarly works that delve into the examination of how conventional feminist themes and interpretations undergo transformation within the framework of postfeminism and neoliberalism. The authors of this study examine and analyse the interconnected, facilitating, and occasionally endorsing assertion that feminism has fulfilled its obligations in Western societies, while simultaneously seeing the discursive shift of its ongoing importance to non-Western contexts. According to Koffman and Gill (2013), the concept of "turning to girls" in policy and popular discourses serves to create and highlight the differences between girls in the Global North and South. These discourses portray girls as both empowered, postfeminist individuals and as victims of patriarchal norms. According to the arguments put out by Heather Switzer (2013) and Kalpana Wilson (2012), there appears to be a greater likelihood of the general public accepting feminism when it is specifically applied to or advocated for girls residing in the global South, in contrast to the perception of post-feminist Western females. According to Marshall and Sensoy (2010), this phenomenon is referred to as "missionary girl power."

The existing body of research indicates that post-feminist discourses surrounding "girl power," which have gained significant traction in the developed regions of the world, are undergoing a transformation into discourses emphasising the need for empowering girls, particularly in the less developed regions of the world. The repositioning of girls and women from the global South as the preferred recipients of development programming and intervention is being actively pursued by states, the neoliberal development industry, and global corporate agendas. This shift in rhetoric is being supported by various scholars and researchers, including Gonick et al. (2009), Sensoy and Marshall (2010), Wilson (2011, 2012), Koffman and Gill (2013), and Schweizer (2013). Switzer characterises it as a narrative that embodies "(post)feminist development fable" and explores the concept of "young female exceptionalism." The film effectively emphasises feminist ideals of gender equality and women's autonomy by presenting them as widely accepted principles. Dosekun Simidele hails from Nigeria, where she was both born and reared.

The data was last amended on April 6, 2015, indicating that there were 6 instances of reclaiming them for financial gain in 2013, with a total of 350 occurrences. Nevertheless, the representation of women from developing countries as "still requiring feminism," regardless of how contemporary or innovative it may be, persists in obscuring and diminishing their multifaceted nature. There have been suggestions made by Sensoy and Marshall (2010) as well as Wilson (2011) that women in the global South possess their own feminist agency or have a historical presence of feminism within their local contexts. However, these perspectives are currently being overlooked or dismissed. Within the existing dominant discursive paradigms, it is highly implausible to categorise these women as post-feminist. The concept in question has been largely overlooked by scholars employing a critical feminist cultural perspective to examine postfeminism.

McRobbie (2007, 2009) offers a limited number of theoretical justifications for the potential benefits of postfeminism for women residing in the global South. According to her, a novel kind of female physique, commonly referred to as the "global girl," has surfaced inside these regions. According to McRobbie (2007), the term "global girl" refers to non-Western women who are employed as industrial workers and are becoming increasingly integrated into the unequal networks of global capitalism. Similar to her Western counterpart, the global girl possesses the capability to sustain herself financially, demonstrates diligent work ethic, strives

for personal and societal improvement, and derives satisfaction from some luxuries provided by Western consumer society for women. According to the cited source (2007, 733-734), these characteristics eventually influence her identity and sense of belonging. According to McRobbie (2009, 88-89), it is suggested that individuals who do not possess the ability to adopt a detached and ironic approach towards femininity, as observed in their Western postfeminist counterparts, are likely to be included in both local and foreign editions of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. According to scholarly discourse, Western states and multinational corporations perceive the global girl as an exemplary labour force from developing nations. This perception is rooted in the belief that she will remain in her home country and aspire to acquire Western fashion and beauty products, which are associated with notions of femininity and sexuality prevalent in the West. Consequently, the global girl is expected to refrain from pursuing migration to Western countries in pursuit of improved economic prospects (Author, Year, p. 89).

In contrast, the preliminary draught authored by Dosekun was completed in April 2015. The number 7 is a numerical value. Based on McRobbie's (2007, 2009) theoretical proposition, it may be argued that non-Western nations perceive post-feminism as a diluted and derivative form of its original Western origins, primarily transmitted through consumer culture. The girls in that particular region have a tendency towards more naivety and a willingness to adorn themselves with few means, in contrast to the perception of Western women as strong, independent, attractive, and alluring. McRobbie presents a portrayal of the global female that is characterised by oversimplification and schematic representation, drawing heavily from hegemonic cultural depictions. While I find this portrayal intriguing, I also perceive it as a problematic representation that lacks nuance and fails to capture the diverse range of experiences and identities.

Mohanty's (1988) examination of prior Western feminist portrayals of non-Western women has aroused a sense of scepticism within me regarding certain aspects. Central to my present argument is the notion that the global girl typology fails to acknowledge the cultural distinctions among non-Western women. Insufficient consideration is given to the significant economic disparity that exists between the countries of the global North and South. Based on the 2010 World Bank figures, it is seen that the upper decile of Nigeria's populace possesses approximately 32.9% of the nation's total revenue, but the lower decile of the population

possesses a mere 2.2% of the same. This imbalance presents a significant challenge in attempting to draw any parallel, whether by heuristic or metaphorical means (as discussed by Ong, 2006 and Sun, 2011), between the visually appealing female depicted on a magazine cover originating from a developing nation and the circumstances of an exploited factory labourer or a translocal individual engaged in unpaid domestic work, commonly referred to as a "maid," in relation to their middle-class employer. McRobbie's analysis in 2007 and 2009 fails to adequately address the degree to which women from affluent backgrounds in the global South are exposed to post-feminist culture. Furthermore, it overlooks the various channels through which these women may acquire such exposure, which extend beyond mere dilution or a desire for Western influences.

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