

Post-feminism, Games and Gender Binary: The Latest Research and Practical Resistance of Feminism

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Abstract. This paper mainly summarizes the research on Feminism from 2015 to 2020, including the development of new post-feminism, the study of games and feminism, and the study of gender binary. It includes the latest remarks of post-feminism and its limitations with the development of the times. In terms of game research, the stereotype in game design and the plight of female employees are the most frequently mentioned problems. How players obtain a sense of identity in the game, how to reduce gender discrimination and realize self transformation in reality are the directions worthy of research in the future. For gender binary, one of the most promising developments is to reduce discrimination against transgender people in policies and laws and safeguard their rights, which only a few countries have done this, so more attention needs to be paid to the reasons why people defend the gender binary and find a feasible direction for the future. As times evolve and feminist rhetoric changes, there is an urgent need to revisit the feminist phenomenon. This paper will propose new avenues and implications for future research.

Keywords: Feminism; Post-feminism; Gender binary.

1. Introduction

In the gradual globalization of today's world, feminist theory and research have made important contributions to our understanding of the status and definition of women [1]. In 1989, the significance of the feminist movement was only to end sexism and sexist oppression [2]. With the arrival of the fourth wave of movement, the speech of female had different branches. Despite its potential significance, there is a lack of discussion focusing on social reality. Hence, this study aims to review the development of different feminist theories during 2015-2022. By doing so, our study contributes to the rebalancing of feminist research by integrating the views of post-feminism, feminism in the game and gender binary.

Dosekun published a comment on post-feminism [3], mentioned that many scholars do not fully understand this theory, which will continue to be discussed in the future, and Gill continued his critical view on this view [4]. Before 2015, postmodern feminism was mostly controversial on the Internet, and over time, the limitations of the theory for future development have been raised in the transnational dissemination of the theory. Ian Bogost mainly focuses on the direction of game in feminist speech [5]. It was mentioned that the setting of game characters and game players will affect people's sense of gender identity. In recent years, the research direction of many scholars has shifted from the game world to real life, believing that the combination of game and feminism is interactive. Post-feminist rhetoric and game design are inseparable from a concept, the sex/gender binary. While many of the remarks hoped to break the binary of gender, confirming the existence of gender performances, they encounter resistance when they advance to real life, and Thekla Morgenroth also gave an analytical study of resistance to related speech in reality [6].

This review will cover feminist-related journals and books published in 2015 and 2022, focusing on the three directions of post-feminism, game design, and gender binary. It will include the development of feminism, but not the controversy and origin of feminism, which limits the time for reviewing papers.

During this period, the definition of feminism did not change significantly. The main developments are in terms of how feminism is moving towards real life and the possible future directions of feminism. For this reason, Holly, Hellen, and others have proposed the limitations of

real life. During this period, Chess and Charlotte and others have given the best summary of the future development of feminism.

2. Post-feminism

Post-feminism is an increasingly popular cultural form and emotion. In the early 20th century, it was a "relatively unknown field" [7], and was simply defined as "freedom of choice in work, family and parenting" and "physical, especially sexual empowerment" [8], and it focuses on the disappearance of words that talk about structural inequality and cultural impact [9]. McRobbie and others mainly put forward this kind of statement, suggesting that feminism has gone far enough, and post-feminism has participated in the destruction of feminism [10].

However, in recent years, some scholars have gradually realized that the dominant views of western academia on post feminist culture are deep-rooted [3], and scholars have not fully and deeply analyzed and studied them. In other words, some core views of these post-modern feminist cultures are also worthy of questioning [11]. There is no doubt that feminism has been characterized by a certain degree of internal differences and criticism that will help us gain a new understanding based on the basis of post-feminist theory.

As postmodern feminism shows strong opposition to feminism, some scholars in this research field: Hanna Retallack, Jessica Ringrose and Emilie Lawrence believe that feminism is still worth discussing and spreading on the Internet, and social media platform can become an important space for internal action, experiment and learning of feminism, which means post-feminism is redundant [11]. But in the same year, this view was refuted by Gill, who believed that post-feminism is still a powerful critical word, especially for feminists, they should be retained rather than abandoned, because these terms can explain the continuity and change of feminism [4].

Many scholars have further expanded Postmodern Feminism on the basis of Gill. River expressed his views in his 2017 book and believed that the differences and diversity among feminists provide an opportunity for debate to expand Feminism [12]. In her books, post-feminism has expanded to the direction of online celebrities and social and political patterns, and demonstrates her views through examples such as Trump's embrace of misogyny. Similarly, Toffoletti's book in 2018 also uses "Sporting Feminism" to show another perspective of post-feminism, and believes that "Sporting Femininities" can directly reflect the essentialism understanding of femininity in the sports environment and the wider society. The expanded research of these theories on the spiritual and physical aspects of women puts forward critical thinking on how the post-feminist era affects global phenomena [13]. Moreover, at the end of the book, Holly Thorpe, lyndsay M.C, Hayhurst et al. put forward their views on how feminist speech affects women in the Global North and its relationship with women in the Global South, they pointed out that the post feminist speech that gender equality has been achieved in the Global North is still worth discussing [13]. This view was supported by Yang, who discussed post-feminism in the context of China, arguing that post feminism is unlikely to exist in the global south because girls there have not yet acquired female's rights [14]. Moreover, most of the studies on post feminist culture are carried out in the western context. It is expected that in the future, if they are to be rationalized to spread across countries, the impact of transnational factors will need to be taken into account.

3. Games and feminism

Game is defined by many theories as a kind of self-expression, some people will feel uncomfortable, and some people can achieve self-transformation [15]. Ian Bogost proposed that game is how power works in a specific cultural context, which is a specific way of expression [5]. During 2017-2022, feminism in games was mainly divided into two research directions. Shaw and others focused more on the construction of social identities such as race, gender and mutant in games in this early stage, and critically studied the impact of stereotypes in games [16]. On the other hand, Chess

and others pay more attention to the setting of female roles in games and the disadvantages of female players in real life after 2019, and put forward that video games should be combined with feminism in the process of creation [17].

The setting of characters in the game is very important for the design of the game, and several scholars have studied these phenomena. Arcellus, Walter, Jones and others advocated that online interactions such as sexual orientation, behavior and role arrangement in the game will affect lesbian or transgender people [18]. They also tried to obtain relevant data on transgender people's mental diseases by investigating game players in a national transgender health service in the UK. The data show that, this population has a high rate of depressive symptoms and anxiety [19]. However, due to the limitations of the survey, it can only show that reducing race and gender issues in the game is conducive to the mental health and gender identity of transgender people.

Shaw et al. collected 500 cases about queer and LGBT groups to show how game designers integrate gender and sexual orientation into video games [16]. Compared with many ordinary games, these games will blur gender characteristics or change the description of gender, and build transgender or even asexual people, so as to make players have a sense of identity, which coincides with the view of Cyberfeminism [20].

In addition to the discussion on the construction of game identity, most scholars have criticized the unfair status of men and women in the game since 2017. Cote and Bonnie criticized in different articles that the game is often dominated by men's perspective and the design of female roles is always stereotyped. For example, almost all sex workers in the game are women. Although the design of games has changed with the increase of female players, Cote points out that even in the era of casual gaming, where female gamers make up half of all, the misogyny inherent in the gaming community persists, and not only that, women are often considered unusual or abnormal when exposed to technology [21]. This view is also corroborated by Kivijärvi and Sintonen, where women typically hold executive positions in the video game industry rather than game development or executive roles, and they compare the differences in the treatment of female laborers in the U.S. and Finland in the electronics industry in the article, as Finland is often considered a pioneer in gender equality [22], and also examine how contemporary feminist discourse maintains gender order in a variety of male-dominated industries. Furthermore, as Cote put forward: the war is still going on, and the gender discrimination in the game will still cause controversy [23]. Chess expressed hope that feminism and games will interact in the future: people play video games like feminists, they can find new perspectives on playing games, reduce oppression on the weak, and achieve gender equality, while games also provide an opportunity to practice to build a better feminism [17].

4. Gender binary

The gradual blurring of gender in the game is closely related to the changing views of people on sex and gender. Judith Butler, a postmodern feminist scholar, put forward the Gender Trouble theory, that is, gender is performed by the day after tomorrow, not determined by nature, and it is determined by social constructed [24]. Many papers are based on this theory, especially in recent years. Iskender Gelir analyzed the gender roles played by preschool children through experiments in nurseries, and confirmed that gender roles are affected by social structure [25]. In addition, Tate et al. proposed to abolish gender binary from the perspective of individuals and social psychology, pay attention to transgender people and advocate psychological liberation [26]. Moreover, Zachary Dubois, Heather Shattuck-Heidorn also challenged this view from the perspective of biology, they agreed that the interweaving of gender and gender is complex and advocated that human biologists can actively find various new methods to participate in and capture sex/ gender diversity in the future [27]. It can be seen that the theory of breaking the gender binary has been put forward and confirmed continuously, and the gender performance theory seems to have been well practiced in various disciplines.

However, these ideas have been strongly resisted, especially in real life. Because transgender people violate Essentialism and binary gender concepts, they are hated and discriminated against [28].

Although some countries have opened relevant national policies on third sex [29], many transgender people have not received due legal protection, as Nikoletta Pikramenou pointed out: only a few countries explicitly protect the rights of intersex people, because jurisdictions are still in an era of transition, and judges' decisions need to consider moral and human rights aspects [30]. Similar cases of challenging binary also occurred in Sweden: some gender-neutral third-person pronouns were refused to be written into the dictionary. Vergoossen et al. found that language strategies that seem to be gender fair often face resistance [31]. In 2021, Thekla Morgenroth published two articles to analyze this situation and found that some people still believe that breaking the gender binary will threaten family values or masculinity [32]. Therefore, there are still many debates on the understanding of gender, and the development of many theories lacks practical support. There are still many difficulties to be overcome in the way scholars treat sex/ gender in the research direction of theory and empirical work.

5. Conclusions

In the past ten years, through combing the literature, we found that the research on feminism is developing in more directions, and they has been more widely debated. Compared with the theoretical research 20 years ago, the practical activities of the current paper research are much higher than before. Many studies are gradually linked with the social reality from the theory. One explanation for this phenomenon may be that people have higher and higher acceptance of female's rights. One explanation for this phenomenon may be that people are becoming more and more receptive to feminism, and another reason is that feminist speech has begun to affect real life and has received some resistance, which has increased the interest of scholars to further explore the field.

However, there are several topics that should be paid attention to. Through a comprehensive analysis of the application of different theories in postmodern feminism, different scholars have questioned this theory, and they have a contradiction about whether feminism has gone too far. In these theories, the spread of feminist theories is often overlooked, and the race, nationality, and beliefs of women around the world will also affect the transmission process. Despite postmodern feminism has been extended to politics, sports and other directions in theory, more work needs to be considered to combine these theories with the cultural background of other countries and further expand the scope of research objects, so as to get a more complete conclusion.

For game companies, games are the expression of people's thoughts. In different periods, scholars have paid attention to transgenders, the stereotyped influence of female roles, and the treatment of female employees working in companies with a larger number of male employees. By comparing the application of these statements in the feminist field, it can be found that they provide people with more critical thinking skills and even informal scientific literacy in the context of the game world. In this case, cyberspace, while somewhat Utopian, can often achieve significant improvements in the expression of ideas by analyzing some elements.

From the perspective of gender binary, by inductively summarizing the application of different theories in this field, it can be found that the biggest problem is how to generalize and apply the theory to the real world, people's incomprehension and prejudice against transgender people is difficult to avoid, and the rights of intersex people are also difficult to be guaranteed by law. Judith Butler's theory has been continuously applied, but in the past few years, only a small number of countries still agree with this theory and put forward relevant policies. Hence, the psychological reasons for defending gender dualism deserve more research, and the inclusion of transgender people in the law and other information about the third sex may be a challenge for existing regulations.

This review found that the research status of feminism is not balanced enough. There are too many discussions on feminism in the context of western countries, and most of them are cliches of the same theory, and the study of combining the actual situation and legal direction is of little significance. In addition, feminist research does not have a correct estimate of the impact potential of the network, which may be due to the development of the times, the development law of the network has undergone

unpredictable changes in the early scholars, so the existing theoretical discoveries in this field can be appropriately adjusted in the future, and the loopholes can be checked and filled in, so as to achieve the balanced development of the research field, and a more perfect model theory that keeps pace with the times.

Now people's views on feminism are changing, and policies and practices are beginning to reflect these changes. At the same time, there is resistance against feminism. The important thing is to understand these changes, find out and fill in the gaps in theoretical research to protect the rights of those feminists. This paper will provide important references for scholars who seek new methods of feminism in the future.

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