

January 2018

Marxist Feminism Meets Postcolonial Feminism in Organizational Theorizing: Issues, Implications and Responses

Prajna Seneviratne

Follow this and additional works at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Seneviratne, Prajna (2018). Marxist Feminism Meets Postcolonial Feminism in Organizational Theorizing: Issues, Implications and Responses. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 19(2), 186-196.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol19/iss2/12>

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

This journal and its contents may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Authors share joint copyright with the JIWS. ©2022 Journal of International Women's Studies.

Marxist Feminism Meets Postcolonial Feminism in Organizational Theorizing: Issues, Implications and Responses

By Prajna Seneviratne¹

Abstract

In this paper I discuss the issues and implications of simultaneously drawing upon Marxist and Postcolonial feminist approaches to organizational theorizing in developing a theoretical/analytical framework for exploring the multiple interactions of productive and reproductive labour roles of female plantation and apparel workers of Sri Lanka. The paper aims firstly to look at different feminist perspectives to organizational theorizing—laying special empathies on Marxist and Postcolonial approaches—their origins, epistemological and methodological positions, contributions and shortcomings. Secondly it aims to compare and contrast the feminist theoretical approaches of Marxism and Post colonialism along each of these aspects with a view to identifying commonalties and or contradictions. Its third aim is to look for a plausible basis for integrating these two distinct theoretical approaches thereby identifying a meeting place where Marxist feminism and Postcolonial feminism intersect with and complement each other. The paper concludes by saying that such an integrative theoretical framework is indeed pertinent for exploring the multiple demands placed on women's body and her labour within this specific context.

Keywords: Marxist feminism, postcolonial feminism, feminist theory, organizational theorizing

Introduction

Organization theory is made-up of a multiplicity of largely incommensurable theoretical frameworks and schools of thoughts that help analyze, understand and explain the way organizations work and how people work and live and within them. Organizational theories—once they are presented as knowledge—guide organizational participants in their efforts to control organizations. (Calás & Smircich, 1992, 223). Organizations are the central social and economic institutions, with which most people are in daily contact in one form or the other. Thus, organizations are decisive factors for the well-being of their subjects (Alvesson & Billing, 1997), who are not gender neutral categories, but rather women and men.

Over the last two decades feminist researchers have voiced concerns about the role of gender in organization theory. They have raised questions such as: 'How do organizational theorists create knowledge?' 'What do they theorize about?' 'Who theorizes?' 'What do the theories look like?' 'Whose interest does the theory serve?', and 'Who benefits from it?' These issues still remain at the center of ongoing debates on gendered aspects of organization theory.

It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to explore the issues and implications of bringing together Marxist feminism and postcolonial feminism in developing a theoretical framework to understand the daily work and life struggles of female plantation and apparel workers of a third world /postcolonial country—Sri Lanka. Indeed these workers are marginalized

¹ Prajna Seneviratne, Department of Management Studies, The Open University of Sri Lanka.

women in the third world working within the organizational contexts of plantations and factories. Understanding the lived realities of their work/family lives requires a theorization reflective of their gender, class and specific historical locations—a theorization that would allow the silenced voices lying at the margins of organizational theory to be heard.

Postcolonial feminist theorists (i.e. Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 2003) argue that Western feminist models are inappropriate for thinking of research with women in postcolonial sites and raise questions on whether Third World women or indeed all women could be conceptualized as unified subjectivists easily located in the category of women (Mohanty, 1991c; Minh-ha, 1989). Such arguments stem from a legacy where “black, white and other Third World women have very different histories with respect to the particular inheritance of post-fifteenth-century Euro American hegemony: the inheritance of slavery, enforced migration, plantation and indentured labour, colonialism, imperial conquest, and genocide” (Mohanty, 1991b:10). Thus, Postcolonial feminists argue for ‘the rewriting of history based on the specific locations and histories of struggle of people of colour and post-colonial peoples, and on the day- to-day strategies of survival utilized by such peoples’ (Mohanty, 1991). The urgency of rewriting and rethinking these histories and struggles of Third World peoples is reinforced by Sivanandan, Sri Lankan novelist and black political thinker, who accentuate both the significance and the difficulty of rewriting counter hegemonic histories saying “.... they must be grounded in and informed by the material politics of everyday life, especially the daily life struggles for survival of poor people—those written out of history” (cited in Mohanty, 1991b: 10-11). But how do we, in the Third World attempt such a history based on our restricted knowledge of daily life struggles of poor people? This brings us to the significance of producing knowledge for ourselves.

It is with this vision in mind that I scan the contemporary feminist literature which speak of issues in globalization such as exploitative working conditions in offshore manufacturing where multinational capital has re-discovered Third World women as the cheapest, most docile and most easily manipulative workers (Mies, 1998), employment of immigrant women from the Third World as domestics in the industrialized and oil rich Middle East countries, and the massification of sex-industry and sex-tourism in the Third World which bring back forms of slavery that we have imagined extinct with the demise of the colonial empires (Federici, 1999) as areas for feminist research. Questions pertaining to the situation of these Third World women, who are often the most exploited populations, constitute some of the most urgent theoretical challenges facing the social and political analysis of gender in postindustrial contexts (Mohanty, 1991b).

In this context, I position my research, which is primarily a study of female workers in colonial plantation estates and neo-colonial apparel manufacturing factories in Sri Lanka as a Third World (postcolonial) feminist research, the aim of which is to ‘produce knowledge for ourselves’ in order to write and rewrite the histories of marginalized communities in the Third World through studying their daily struggles for survival. The methodological stance I adopt in this study is primarily a qualitative approach to social research. The prime methodological approach is ethnography from a feminist perspective. The study draws from an integrative theoretical framework of Marxist feminism and postcolonial feminism. The present paper is woven around the issues and implications of using such an integrative theoretical framework.

Organizational Theorization: Silences and Exclusions

The concept of organizational theorization is based on the view that both the process and the product of theorizing should be seen as a doing and a making by persons caught up in some

specific historical era (Reed, 1996). Further, ‘the theoretically informed analysis of and debate about organizations and organizing are outcomes of a precarious combination of individual vision and technical production located within a dynamic social-historical context, (Reed, 1996: 33). We may identify theory making as a historically located intellectual practice directed at mobilizing different types of resources—i.e. ideational, material and institutional—to legitimate knowledge claims and political projects that flow from them (Toulmin, 1972, Willmott, 1993 cited in Reed, 1996:33). Drawing on the above arguments, Reed claims that organizational theorization is a historically contested terrain.

Yet, what I find most intriguing in this argument, are the naming of ‘*points of exclusions*’ or ‘*silences*’ that Reed identifies as emerging from within the set of conflicting and competing parameters for interpreting organizations. As Reed (1996: 48) affirms, “the analytical structured narratives which constitute the historically contested terrain of organizational theory are stories that selectively filter and mediate an extremely diverse and complex social-organizational reality”. The result of this filtering is to omit or to marginalize aspects of organizational life that are of strategic importance when viewed from a different perspective. Our awareness of these aspects of organizational life, which for over a long period of time have been silenced, omitted, downplayed or simply ignored in organization theory, have gained recognition in the recent past. For example, as Alvesson and Billing (1997: 5) points out, “organization theory has traditionally and up to the 1980s neglected gender aspects”. It is only recently that gender has moved into focus in organization theories, and it is not until the 1990s that researchers realized that organizations are not just composed of gender-neutral components, but are characterized by gender-related practices, values, goals, logics, languages and so on (Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Mills and Tancred, 1992).

In keeping with these new found insights into organizational theory and practice, new themes have emerged that qualify our understanding of the way organizations work and how people live and act within them. These themes have been arranged in terms of gender and its implications for the way we conceptualize, analyze and practice organizations; ethnicity and race; the subject of techno science; and finally the global difference in development and underdevelopment (Reed, 1996). As this study reveals, both gender and differences between the First and the Third Worlds share the common denominator of being the ‘*silenced*’ or marginalized aspects of organizational theory until recently. This shared silencing marks the starting point of my search for a common ground between Marxist and Postcolonial feminist theories in building up an integrated theoretical framework of organizational analysis.

‘Feminizing’ Organizational Theory

As Flax (1987) asserts, “the single most important advance in feminist theory is that the existence of gender relations has been problematized. Gender can no longer be treated as a simple natural fact” (cited in Calas and Smirchich, 1992). Calas and Smirchich identify two distinct issues that they argue are at the root of feminist theorizing: “a particular form of gender relations (patriarchy/male dominance) is fully assumed” and “changes from this form of domination are sought” (Calas and Smirchich, 1992: 228). Thus even though we identify feminist approaches to organizational theorizing from diverse perspectives as liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, Marxist, socialist, poststructuralist, and Third World (postcolonial) there is a common thread that runs along all of them directing these otherwise different viewpoints towards one ultimate objective: the recognition of male dominance in social arrangements and a desire for changes from this domination.

As such, it could be argued that all feminist theoretical perspectives are critical discourses in that feminist theory is a critique of the status quo, and therefore always political, it is only the degree of the critique and the nature of the politics that vary (Calas and Smirchich, 1992). Each of these feminist theoretical concepts highlights particular organizational issues while ignoring others. The issues they address and the questions they raise vary from concerns about women (their access to and performance in organizations), to concerns about gender and organization (the notion of gendered organizational practices), to concerns about the very stability of categories such as gender, masculinity, femininity, and organization. Each line of thinking gives alternative accounts for gender inequality, places the problem of gender inequality differently, and offers alternative solutions.

Re-writing Gender

Feminist theorists (e.g. Vogel, 1983; Barret, 1980; Beechey, 1987; Walby, 1990) reject thinking of gender as just another variable in organizational analysis and offer powerful insights into understanding gender dynamics in organizations. A major new direction that feminist theorizing offers to organizational analysis is to raise the problem of the “genderness” of knowledge. It asks “is organizational theorizing (male) gendered, and with what consequences?” (Calas and Smirchich, 1992).

In an attempt to look for answers to these questions, Calas and Smirchich (1992) suggest three epistemological activities from the history of feminist knowing: re-*vising*, reflecting, and re-writing. When taken together they provide a very strong basis for re-examining the traditional body of knowledge for its gender biases. These three activities thus help us raise some issues that re-conceptualize organizational theorizing.

An example for the activity of re-*vising* is in the discipline of historical knowledge: historical research inspired by the black civil rights movement and the women’s liberation movement offered redefinitions of the American past and pointed out that what has been written as history over the past several hundred years is the history of white men (Degler, 1981 cited in Calas and Smirchich, 1992). For instance, historians researching women’s experience in the settlement of the American frontier by examining documents previously ignored by historians (diaries and letters written by women) found the women’s side of the story was quite different. Rather than a heroic adventure for some women, western movement represented tremendous loss and suffering (Faragher and Stansell, 1975 cited in Calas and Smirchich, 1992). Further, stories of women and slavery, woman and the industrial revolution, women and the US reform movements tell us that women were also active agents rather than merely victims carried along by the forces of history/men.

Women’s history thus aims to re-write *history* as *herstory*, offering a narrative of women’s experiences, and in doing so offering a more complex, complete and accurate picture of history. At the same time, the idea of what history is, with its focus on military, political and legal activity, comes to be questioned. New topics such as child bearing, child rearing, and female labour comes in to focus as legitimate areas of investigation in the creation of knowledge (Calas and Smirchich, 1992).

Thus we may argue that feminist theories have contributed strong interdisciplinary theories that lend multiple theoretical lenses and methodological approaches to the study of organizations in general and to the analysis of “women’s oppression” within organizations in particular. The example for re-*vising* American history to narrate the women’s side of the story previously ignored

or simply taken to be the same as that of men, gives a theoretical insight as to how I could narrate the untold story of female workers in the colonial tea plantations in Sri Lanka.

On Marxist Feminism

Marxist theory was a reaction to, and a critique of, capitalism and the liberal political theory that served to justify it (Vogel, 1983; Barret, 1980; Calas and Smirchich, 1992). In Marx's famous phrase: "It is not the consciousness of men that determine their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Tong, 1989; cited in Calas and Smirchich, 1992: 231). Thus the organization of economic life conditions social political and intellectual life; for that reason, the capitalist mode of production, a class struggle between labour and capital, moves to the center of analysis in this perspective (Calas and Smirchich, 1992:231).

Consistence with their views on human nature, feminist perspectives inspired by Marxist thinking conceptualize gender and gender identity as structural, historical and material. Thus from this particular perspective "gender is similar to class, a social category, characterized by relations of dominations and oppression". Marxist feminism is thus "critical of traditional Marxism for its 'gender blindness'". Marxist feminism adds gender to the analytical concerns of the Marxist perspective and argues that even though a hierarchy exists among men through a system of class, men as a group dominate and control women as a group through a system of gender. Marxist feminism is thus concerned with women's double oppression of both class and sex (Calas and Smirchich, 1996: 232). As I identify, this assertion reflects a major reason for drawing upon Marxist Feminism as the major analytical framework for my study. I argue that female workers in my chosen research site of a plantations and a factory are subjects of a compounded exploitation resulting from their class and their gender.

To further develop this argument, Marxist feminism considers gender inequality to derive from capitalism, and not to be constituted as an independent system of patriarchy. As Sylvia Walby (1990) argues, "men's domination over women is a byproduct of capital's domination over labour. Class relations and the economic exploitation of one class by another are the central features of social structures, and these determine the nature of gender relations" (Walby, 1990: 4). Viewing the family as the critical site of women's oppression—"where the family benefits capital by providing a cheap way of maintaining day-to-day care of workers, such as food and clean clothes, and for producing the next generation of workers" (Walby, 1990; Beechey, 1987) is another strong feature of Marxist feminist analysis that makes it especially suitable to analyzing the lives and working conditions of female workers at my research sites. Plantation workers, who as I argue, are forced to perform the dual roles of productive labour in the field and unproductive labour domestic worker and reproducer of the future work force, so as to ensure the continuity of the capitalist enterprise.

To Marxist feminists the capitalist economy is not best described through concepts of market forces, exchange patterns, and supply and demand. Rather capitalist economy should be analyzed by focusing on relations of inequality and power. Thus Marxist feminism analyses the on-going productive and reproductive gender dynamics of patriarchal, capitalist organization of economy and society, pointing out that gender inequalities persist and will not change without major structural changes (Vogel, 1983; Barret, 1980).

It is within the context of these arguments that I intend to use the theoretical framework of Marxist feminism as described by Nancy Hartsock (1998) where she paraphrases Marx as "...we follow the worker home from the factor. He who before followed behind as the worker, timid and

holding back, with nothing to expect but a hiding, now strides in front while a third person, not specifically present in Marx's account of the transaction between capitalist and worker (both of whom are male) follows timidly behind, carrying groceries, baby and diapers" (Hartsock, 1998: 113). The marginalized, silenced woman becomes central for my study.

Third World (Postcolonial) Feminist Theorization

The intellectual roots of postcolonial theorization emerge from intersections of gendered critiques of Western feminisms and postcolonial critiques of Western epistemologies. Postcolonial theorists analyze human nature as a Western construct that emerged by marking its 'other' invisible or almost inhuman. Further, postcolonial feminism holds a fundamental suspicion of "gender" as a stable and sufficient analytical lens that can be applied without problem across cultures and histories, and advocates the epistemological position that "knowledge is a system of power relations developed by the West and imposed on the rest of the world" (Calas and Smirchich, 1992).

Theorizing the Third World

Third World refers to the "colonized, neocolonized or decolonized countries (of Asia, Africa, and Latin America) whose economic and political structures have been deformed within the colonial process, and to black, Asian, Latina, and indigenous peoples in North America, Europe, and Australia." (Mohanty et al, 1991: ix).

Mohanty speaks of the dilemma of defining Third World feminism as "just as it is difficult to speak of a singular entity called 'Western feminism', it is difficult to generalize about 'Third World' feminisms" She wants to recognize and analytically explore the links among the histories and struggles of Third World women against racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism, and monopoly capital (Mohanty, 1991: 4). In the face of this challenge Mohanty suggests an "'imagined community' of Third World oppositional struggles. 'Imagined' not because it is not 'real' but because it suggests potential alliances and collaborations across decisive boundaries and 'community' because in spite of internal hierarchies within Third World contexts, it nevertheless suggests a significant, deep commitment to what Benedict Anderson calls 'horizontal comradeship'" (Mohanty, 1991: 4).

The idea of imagined community is useful because it leads us away from the essentialist notions of Third World feminist struggles, suggesting political rather than biological or cultural bases of alliance. Thus, it is not colour or sex which constructs the grounds for these struggles. Rather, it is the way we think about race, class, and gender and the political links we choose to make among and between struggles. Thus, potentially, women of all colours (including white women) can align themselves with and participate in these imagined communities. However, clearly our relation to and centrality in particular struggles depend on our different, often conflictual, locations and histories. This diversity then is what provisionally holds Third World feminism together: "imagined communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the *political* thread of opposition to forms of dominations that are not only pervasive but also systematic" (Mohanty, 1991).

In the context of the above discussion, I position my research, which is primarily a study of women and their labour in colonial tea plantations and neo-colonial apparel manufacturing factories in Sri Lanka, as a Third World (postcolonial) feminist research. Further, I align my study along the concept of the "Third World feminism" as defined by Mohanty (1991) as imagined

communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the *political* tread of opposition to forms of dominations.

And at this point I identify a common meeting ground for Marxist feminism which speaks of women's double oppression due to class and sex, and postcolonial feminism, which while acknowledging the above, adds a third dimension—namely specific “locations and histories” of women to analyzing women's oppression in the contemporary capitalist organization. Thus as I argue, both these approaches to feminist theorization are bound together by the *common political thread* of opposition to pervasive and systematic forms of domination.

The development of an integrative theoretical framework drawing from both Marxist and Postcolonial feminist theorization is the most appropriate approach to my specific research study. To illustrate this argument further, in my study of female labour situated within the context of colonial plantations and neo-colonial manufacturing industry, women's struggles derive from the fundamental tension or the struggle between capital and labour. The oppressive conditions under which the “tea plukers” and “sewing machine operators” of my study live and work is the result of both class and gender. These women are oppressed both because they are poor and because they are women. Thus, I propose to use Marxist –feminism, which places the struggle between labour and capital at the center of analysis, as the analytical framework of my study.

However, I perceive there is a third dimension that needs to be included in this analysis: the specific “histories and locations” of these female workers. These are Third World women who work in colonial plantations and neo-colonial garment factories. And their historical location is a major determinant of the oppressive conditions under which they live and work. Simply, they are oppressed because they are poor, because they are women and also because they live in the Third World. Furthermore, I perceive failure to recognize this third dimension would limit the validity of the analysis. To avoid this limitation I integrated the postcolonial perspective of theorizing into a Marxist feminist approach for my research study.

Thus in my final analysis I paraphrase Harstock (1998: 113) to read:

“... I follow the worker home from the plantation/factory along a rugged path of a Third World (postcolonial) country” ... The male worker who before followed behind, wary and cautious, expecting a beating, now walks in front while a third person, not specifically present in Marx's account of the transaction between capitalist and worker (both of whom are male) follows behind, carrying her child (italic insertions mine).

While appreciating the possibilities of the theoretical approaches I have chosen, I am mindful of both their strengths and weaknesses. In the following section of this paper I focus on the merits and limitations of each of these theoretical approaches.

Marxist/Postcolonial Feminism(s) and Organizational Theorizing

Marxist feminism focuses on gender relations as dynamic power relations that produce gendered social inequality. Further it addresses the private/public divide as a false dichotomy historically produced by interactions of patriarchy and capitalism. In this approach strong theoretical and epistemological concerns are articulated through analytical concepts such as standpoints, and analysis are expanded beyond gender relations to address other social formations emerging from interactions of gender, race and class. Most importantly, the focus on the

intersection of production/reproduction under patriarchy and capitalism has helped develop several significant theoretical frames for organizational analysis which are particularly insightful in identifying the perpetuation of oppression through conventional organizational practices and social interactions (Calas and Smirchich, 1992). These strengths or merits of the Marxist feminist approach makes it the most suitable theoretical model for identifying the perpetuation of oppression of female workers in the postcolonial organizational sites that I propose to study.

However, in spite of its strengths, Marxist feminist approach comes under criticism for being too focused on ideological differences and academic arguments, to the detriment of its practical application. Also, its proposed remedies to social inequalities are thought to be naïve and utopic, unless they are accompanied by major revolutionary social changes which are unlikely to take place at this present moment in history (Calas and Smirchich, 1992).

Marxist feminism is further criticized for being too narrowly focused on capitalism, being unable to focus on gender inequality in pre-and post-capitalist societies, and for incorrectly substituting gender inequality to capitalism, rather than recognizing the independence of gender dynamics (Wably, 1990).

The Postcolonial feminist approach in contrast, problematizes the concept of “gender” as advocated in the West and suggests the possibility of other gendered configurations in the context of multiple oppressions produced by global capitalism. Further it produces positive images of “Third World subjects” capable of agency and representation, strongly located in specific cultures and histories, and allows for gender/race/class/ethnicity intersections. Finally postcolonial feminist theorization demonstrates the possibility of political action and pluralism within the confines of everyday organizational life (Calas and Smirchich, 1992).

Postcolonial feminism also has limits however. It is sometimes subject to the critique of elitism and a lack of accessibility, and there are concerns about accepting the existence of “other knowledge” outside the boundaries of “Western(ized) knowledge”.

Another major issue concerning this approach is the problem of the representational identity of the colonized. We face a dilemma in attempting to portray postcolonial subjectivities without depicting them as a romanticized ‘native other’.

Thus Calas and Smirchich (1992) poses two critical questions as:

1. How can writers articulate a Third World (postcolonial) subject without reclaiming a pristine original space from which to represent her agency either historically or experientially?
2. How can writers provide a space for representation outside the power engagements with the colonizer?

Postcolonial writers (i.e Spivak, 1988, Minh-ha, 1989, Ong 1988, Bhabha, 1990) have been able to counter these critiques through their own intellectual ingenuity. For example in Gayatri Spivak’s work we can identify a double move of deconstruction. “First, she considers the silence and muteness of the colonized (subaltern), who by intersecting his own patriarchal tradition with the interests of the colonizer, colluded in his own subjectification, and thus cannot speak for himself. The subaltern woman is even further silenced. Spivak’s second move requires that contemporary (post)colonial woman intellectual develop a specific strategy for reading the history of the colonized, plotting a story that gives the (female) subaltern a voice in history”.

In postcolonial analyses, the researcher may first consider the position of privilege already occupied by the Third World scholar, and thus recognize her responsibility to use that space on

behalf of others. Yet, she must also remember, that in giving voice, she is silencing many other voices. Thus a second representational question is the issue of silence. “What other voices are there that the scholarly voice cannot represent?” Calas and Smirchich (1999). Some experimental texts (e.g. Minh-ha, 1989) break this linear style of academic writing with images, prose, and poetry, producing “interstices of silence” in order to represent the absence of other voices.

Such work demonstrates that the first step toward (post)colonial theorizations is a deconstructive move that emphasizes the problems of Western representations. The next step belongs to (post)colonial writings, which face the challenge of representing ‘the other’ through unknown subjectivities. Ahiwa Ong’s (1988) ethnography of women workers in Japanese factories in Malaysia is an exemplary work in this case. Inspired by Michel Foucault’s work on resistance, Ong’s study focuses on the production of new subjects as peasant women become transformed into ‘docile’ bodies’ who can adapt to factory life. However, a form of resistance by women workers, such as becoming possessed by spirits and disrupting the work situation was also apparent. This resistance based on local traditions, was a way in which agency and representation intersected, fashioning very specific contemporary gender configurations outside First World understandings (Ong, 1988).

Latin American writings offer another possibility for unique third world representations of strong political force by portraying very different gender configurations. Women “from below” speak up, initiate action and fight in all kinds of struggles while resisting any easy classification within First World images of “feminism” (Calas and Smirchich, 1992).

Commenting relevance of these analyses and conceptualizations for organizational theorizing, Calas and Smirchich (1999: 662) assert that:

*The stories we have written in much organizational theory, our concepts and representations, no matter how global, represent the ways of thinking of certain people and not others. These theoretical representations have been profoundly implicated in blinding us to current global circumstances. Thus, if we are to really engage in global conversation, postcolonial theories are an excellent place for us to start learning how to write in **theoretical** voices that allow spaces for ‘the other’ to ‘speak back’.*

We may therefore assess that the critiques confronting postcolonial feminist theorizing have been adequately answered through academic forums, and the merits of this approach as a much needed discursive space for engaging with the new “colonialisms” of globalization and the market had been powerfully established. As I argue a postcolonial approach to organizational theorization provides a powerful and sophisticated theoretical framework within which “other knowledge” that lies beyond the lens of the “Western eyes” can be generated and assimilated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I reaffirm the appropriateness of using an integrative theoretical framework, drawing upon both Marxist feminist and Postcolonial feminist approaches to organizational theorizing to understand the role of the women body and her labour within the specific context of a plantation and a garment factory in Sri Lanka. I argue that bringing in the postcolonial consideration of “specific histories and locations of subjects” in addition to the analytical categories of “class” and “sex” as advocated by the Marxist feminist approach will contribute

towards a better and more insightful understanding of the causes of women's oppression in this specific postcolonial research site.

An analysis of these organizations and their people from the dual perspectives of Marxist feminism and Postcolonial feminism would enable me to ask: firstly, how are these organizations, as sites for human action and as material structures, central to the production of values and conceptions of gender/class, specific histories and locational relations. Secondly, how do the gender/class and histories and location related values people bring with them when entering organizations influence the way things are done within these organizations. For example how do First World male managers' pre-conceptions and attitudes about the Third World female worker influence the way these workers are seen and managed within organizations. Thirdly, do these values influence the way relationships are established within the organizations? And finally, how is power formed, distributed and exercised, and how are organizations viewed and developed?

It is my view moreover, that the use of this dual theoretical perspective to organizational analysis will lead to a higher degree of sensitivity and understanding of contradictions and ambiguities with regard to social constructions and reconstructions of gender, class, and histories and locational relations, contributing to what we consider to be discrimination and equal opportunities at the organizational level. This revised theory will lead us to realize that these specific relational aspects are not statically structured and determined for once and for all, but are emergent and changeable over time and space in the sphere of organizational theory and practice.

References

- Barrett, M. (1980). *Women's Oppression Today: the Marxist Feminist Encounter*. London: Verso.
- Beechey, V. (1987). *Unequal Work*. London: Verso.
- Calas, M.B. & Smircich, L. (1992). Re-writing Gender into Organizational Analysis: Directions from Feminist Perspectives in Reed M. & Hughes, M. (eds), *Rethinking Organization: New Directions in Organization Theory and Analysis*. London: SAGE.
- Calas, M.B. and Smircich, L. (1996). From the Women's Point of View: Feminist Approaches to Organization Studies in Clegg, S.R. , Hardy, C. & Walter, W.R. (eds), *Hand Book of Organization Studies*. Sage: London: SAGE.
- Calas, M.B. & Smircich, L. (1999) Past Postmodernism? Reflections and Tentative Directions, *The Academy of Management Review*, 24 (4): 649-671.
- Federici, S. (1999). Reproduction and Feminist Struggle in the New International Division of Labour in Dalla Costa, M.D. & Dalla Costa, G.F. (eds) *Women, Development and Labour of Reproduction : Struggles and Movements*. NJ: Africa World Press Inc.
- Hartsock, N.C.M. (1998). *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited and Other Essays*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Marx, K. (1982). Capital in *The Marxist Reader*, Emile Burns (ed.). New York: Avenel Books.
- Mies, M. (1998). *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. London: Zed Books.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T. (1989). *Woman, Native, Other: writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mohanty at el (1991a). Preface in Mohanty, C.T., Russo, A & Torres, L. (eds) *The Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1991b). Cartographies of Struggle: The Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism, in Mohanty, C.T., Russo, A. & Torres, L. (eds) *The Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1991c). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses in Mohanty, C.T., Russo, A. & Torres, L. (eds) *The Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mohanty, TC (2003). *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ong, A. (1988). The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia, *American Ethnologist* 15(1):28-42.
- Spivak, G.C. (1988). *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Vogel, L. (1983). *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory*. New Jersey: Rutgers.
- Wably, S. (1990). *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.