

Language of Struggle: POOR Magazine and the Re-appropriation of “Poor” Language

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the re-appropriation of dominant oppressive language in American society by community media serving the interests of people struggling with poverty and discrimination. The organization studied, POOR Magazine, is located in San Francisco, CA and works to promote social change in favor of citizens whose lives are marked by their struggle with homelessness, poverty, racism, incarceration, and discrimination in general. In its media education courses, POOR uses radical language to address "revolutionary" ideologies in the classroom and through their media. Using a feminist theoretical lens and ethnographic data, this paper will examine how POOR re-appropriates language to express their struggle with poverty and discrimination in the dominant public sphere. This study concludes with the significance of this research for community media and feminist scholars.

Keywords: community media, media activism, civic media, language

INTRODUCTION

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption.

Paulo Freire, 2005, p. 54

When Freire published these words in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005) he set out to empower oppressed people and help them overcome oppression through dialogue. Freire saw the power of dialogue as necessary and as something that would help end oppression. For Freire (2005), the act of engaging in dialogue can be powerful as a way to reconstitute and name the world. Open dialogue built on the foundational values of “love, humility, and faith” (2005, p. 91) establishes the possibility for hope, according to Freire. Through dialogue, oppressed people can give voice to their experience and pave a path toward emancipation. However, can dialogue be emancipatory if it is constructed in a language of domination?

Scholars have analyzed the construction and effectiveness of language domination and its ability to perpetuate oppression (Chomsky, 2002; Gramsci, 1971;

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Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Marx, 1978). Language domination has been viewed as the ability to reinforce hierarchical structures through the domination of a primary language at the expense of foreign languages or languages viewed as extraneous to the primary language. For example, after the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire indigenous people were forbidden to speak their native tongue through an act of language domination. Through language domination hegemonic ideologies can be reinforced to ensure dominant people, languages and ideologies remain in power. However, in more recent years, feminist scholars have focused on how women can re-appropriate dominant languages and use them in emancipatory processes (Anzaldúa, 2002; Daly, 1990; Haraway, 2009; Hartmann, 2009; Irigaray, 1999; Irigaray, 2009; Rodríguez, 2001; Rodríguez, 2002; Tong, 2009). Feminist scholarship is helpful when examining how powerless groups can re-appropriate language for their own emancipation. When constructing dialogue of change it is necessary for vulnerable communities to be able to engage in communication in a form of language that is not domineering or oppressive (either different from the dominant language or through a re-appropriated form).

This paper will apply a feminist theoretical lens to examine how a community media initiative re-appropriates oppressive language for the emancipation of their community members. By looking at the writings of feminists across different waves and feminist perspectives, this paper hopes to explain how community media organizations can re-appropriate oppressive languages to contribute their experiences to the larger social dialogue. Various feminist scholars condone the use of language that reflects marginalized perspectives that are outside patriarchal hegemony. By taking language that is largely used to marginalize and through the process of engendering new values, subjugated people can restructure language domination and shift it towards emancipation.

Using ethnographic data, this paper will examine the community media organization POOR Magazine and how poor people can re-appropriate oppressive language and use it to counter-balance the discriminatory coverage of them through commercial media. Through their media production and education courses, POOR condone the use of language that accurately reflects struggles with poverty and discrimination. The language they construct in the process would probably be deemed unacceptable in most institutional settings but strives to accurately and honestly portray their struggle somewhere outside of the patriarchy binary. This paper argues that by re-appropriating dominating language and creating language engendered with favorable values towards their community, POOR makes progress towards emancipation and civic engagement.

The next section will provide an overview of POOR Magazine and the community education initiatives it provides. A brief summation of patriarchal binary construction will be explicated to unfold the contextual foundation of this study. The analysis for this study will examine ethnographic data through a feminist theoretical lens. Various feminist perspectives will be used as a theoretical toolkit with which to examine the data and inform insightful findings. The paper will then conclude with concluding thoughts and implications for future research.

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POOR Magazine as Community Media

POOR Magazine is a poor people/indigenous people led grassroots, non-profit arts organization dedicated to providing revolutionary media access, education, arts and advocacy to youth, adults and elders in poverty. The concept of revolution is at the root of what POOR aspires because the organization believes they are engaging discriminated people in new and dramatic ways. POOR is located in San Francisco, CA, and works to promote social change in favor of citizens whose lives are marked by their struggle with homelessness, poverty, racism, classism, disability, immigration, incarceration, and discrimination in general. The organization was created by Tiny, aka Lisa Gray-García, and her mother Dee in 1996. They launched a concept known as poverty scholarship and they were in fact, poverty scholars. Through poverty scholarship POOR builds power with the recognition of scholarship and knowledge already held by the students at POOR (Tiny, 2011). True to its namesake, POOR Magazine could initially only afford to print a few issues before its budget was exhausted. However, thanks to the accessibility of new media technologies, POOR has been able to continue its mission with online publishing.

POOR Magazine operates as a community media center that focuses on three core areas: art, education and media. As part of their arts concentration, POOR provides various projects for community members to include: Po' Poets Project, a poetry initiative; welfareQUEENS, an activist media initiative for mothers and women on Welfare; Hotel Voices, a theater project addressing important poverty issues; Los Viajes/The Journeys, a publication written by community members describing their personal struggles and journeys; the Al Robles Living Library Project, a community literary project that cultivates poetry, literacy and performing arts; and Poverty Hero Project, a literary and visual arts project honoring the lives of people struggling with poverty and discrimination (POOR Magazine, 2010).

In addition to their arts focus, POOR also concentrates on community education needs through several projects including: the Race, Poverty, & Media Justice Institute, which provides media education and scholarships for poverty scholars (scholars struggling with poverty who hold true knowledge about poverty through their experiences and struggles); PeopleSkool or Escuela de la Gente, which provides education for people struggling with poverty or homelessness; F.A.M.I.L.Y. Project, a child care service and youth art project; HEAL, education and emotional support for those dealing with substance abuse, violence and mental illness; and WeSearch, research projects revolving around poverty issues (POOR Magazine, 2010).

The third core area at POOR focuses on media. Although media plays a role in each of their core areas, in this area community members are able to take a hands-on approach to media production and publication through various projects to include: PoorNewsNetwork (PNN), where community members implement the media skills they learn through Escuela de la Gente; PNN TV, a video production and broadcasting project; PNN Radio, a radio production and broadcasting project; POOR Magazine, a revolutionary journalism project; POOR Press, book preparation and publication

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opportunities; Indigenous People's Media Project, a media initiative for indigenous people struggling with poverty and discrimination; Voces de Immigrantes, a media initiative for immigrant media education/publication; Youth in Media, media created and published/broadcasted by youth scholars locally and globally; and Community Newsroom, monthly journalism meetings to assign reporting staff news stories (POOR Magazine, 2010; Crump, 2010).

Apart from producing community media, POOR Magazine also provides both media education and media access to people struggling with poverty. Thanks to POOR Magazine, community members are able to voice their stories, ideas, and opinions in a variety of media including books, radio programs, blogs, online videos, and news articles on the POOR website and in local publications. POOR Magazine also offers courses on media production (radio, television, and publication) and investigative journalism ("digital resistance"), as well as courses on research methods, awareness of systematic oppression, and constructive ways to resist oppression through media and education. In an interview published through the San Francisco Bay Area Independent Media Center (Indybay) (Angola 3 News, 2010), Tiny states:

How do you ensure that the silenced voices of people in poverty are heard? By addressing the subtle and not so subtle ways in which our voices and research and scholarship is separated out and suppressed. We teach on our forms of media revolution and media justice at the Race, Poverty, & Media Justice Institute and PeopleSkool.

Community members are able to take advantage of these opportunities through the personal support POOR provides in addition to education and media production. This support includes transportation to and from the POOR office, assistance in transportation for children, on-site child-care, meals, on-site direct legal advocacy, and monetary stipends for time spent learning with POOR. Through these initiatives POOR Magazine works to create change models for long-term economic sustainability and attempts to facilitate agency for people in struggle from many different cultures, races and generations.

Patriarchy and the Construction of the Binary

The patriarchal binary construction dates as far back as classic Greece and Aristotle. In forming his syllogistic and enthymematic reasoning, Aristotle simultaneously established the patriarchal binary, separating and establishing values for some aspects of life over others, like rational thought over carnal desire, the self over the other, and men over women. In response to this, feminist theory and literature seek to determine how we can get away from this rationale. Some feminists believe we should keep the binary but re-appropriate the values while others feel we should destroy the binary in its entirety (Tong, 2009). The case study examined here will look at how one community media organization attempts to do both through "revolutionary" educational courses. Through empowerment and knowledge, students learn revolutionary ideologies that make them question the dominant ideological structure in society. Students then apply this knowledge in their media production in their attempt to create a language of struggle. The next section will address the methodology for this study and will be followed by the data analysis results and findings.

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METHODOLOGY

In its efforts to engage and build power with its demographic audience, comprised of underrepresented, misrepresented and silenced communities in the San Francisco Bay Area, POOR provides PeopleSkool/Escuela de la Gente, an educational initiative designed to teach community media production. This study used participant-observation ethnography for the case study of Escuela de la Gente at POOR Magazine. During this ethnography, the interactions of community media producers, organization staff members and individual participants in community media training and organization knowledge were observed. The participant-observation took place at the POOR Magazine office in San Francisco, CA. The site also included off-site activities at San Francisco City Hall and within the POOR Magazine neighborhood where protests, in-the-field reporting, and spoken word activities occurred as part of the Escuela de la Gente activities.

I conducted participant-observation ethnography with POOR Magazine over the course of two months, twice a week for eight weeks. I enrolled in Escuela de la Gente to observe the educational process first hand and watched and participated alongside local community members as they learned to use new media technologies and to respond to the mainstream media's misrepresentations and stereotyping of their communities. Participation in the courses facilitated my understanding of the role of participants engaging in the educational training program for community media production and community building. Interacting with participants from an instructor role also helped me understand the role of the organization staff members and their interaction with participants. In my ethnographic fieldwork I embraced a Freirean approach to shared knowledge and dialogue of equals (Freire, 2005). I feel this approach to ethnography best compliments a feminist theoretical lens in which my very actions in researching work to try and correct the historical oppression some researchers have placed on their research participants (Strier, 2006). In my interactions with POOR Magazine staff and community members, rather than assuming any superior knowledge, I attempted to create a dialogue of knowledges where the participants and I equally shared our own knowledge for the benefit of each other. I sought engaged conversation between my academic perspective and the experiential knowledge and understanding of POOR participants. Listening to POOR participants as legitimate producers of their own knowledge and perspectives allowed me to form a greater understanding of the organizational process and the participants' experiences as will be further explicated below.

In my participation and observation with POOR Magazine, I attended classes, observed protests, wrote articles, recorded press conferences, assisted with F.A.M.I.L.Y. Project and taught video production, among other activities. Escuela de la Gente provides education for people with limited access to formal education channels. The program runs for nine weeks and provides training in art and media production and courses in language domination, bi-lingual education, and class struggles from the poor perspective. Once students complete the initial program, they have the option to continue in an advanced program that includes book publishing and advanced media

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production. After completion of the advanced program they are also eligible to work as reporters for POOR Magazine. During my enrollment, the POOR Magazine office was filled with both first-time and advanced students.

I analyzed the ethnographic data using a feminist theoretical lens. The ethnographic field notes were analyzed through open coding, consisting of a close textual reading line by line to determine portions of text that could develop potential themes. Throughout this process a constant comparison of categories was conducted in which each new code was compared against former codes to ensure consistency of coding and reliability in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). At this point, codes transitioned from the previous descriptive form of coding to a more analytical/theoretical coding process by re-examining the data under a feminist theoretical lens (Singer, 2009). The following section details the results and findings of this analysis.

Articulating Struggle through Language Re-appropriation

Through Escuela de la Gente, students learn revolutionary concepts and ideologies that help shape and articulate their voice when describing their struggle with homelessness, poverty and/or discrimination. These concepts are conveyed through two classes: Language Domin-Action and Her-story & Resistance. The Language Domin-Action class is held every Tuesday and addresses language history and meaning, how language can be used as a form of oppression, and bilingual English/Spanish education. Within this course the instructor addresses the power of language and its ability to oppress or emancipate. According to the instructor, "Language, words and media are the first line of defense and the first line of attack. Education is a privilege of the wealthy; therefore, I am not here to educate, I am here to share knowledge." The class places emphasis on deconstructing language as a tool of oppression and reconstructing it as a tool of liberation.

The conception of deconstruction stems from Jacques Derrida (1980), in which to deconstruct language one must break down the text and eliminate its inherent dichotomous language. According to Derrida (1980), a gap is created between the signifier and signified, which creates a divergence between language and reality. In this sense, language eludes reality because there is an open-ended play between the presence of one signifier and the absence of others. Feminist scholar, Hélène Cixous (Cixous & Clément, 1986) expanded upon Derrida's concept of deconstruction by urging feminists to create their own style of writing and to break out of the binary. Cixous questioned the entire binary construction and saw writing as a way out of it. For Cixous, the experience of woman is unknowable and unthinkable because women are trapped in patriarchal language. This conception of unknown experience applies to the community members at POOR who use their writing and media as a way to share their experience in the larger public sphere. By identifying the patriarchal language that excludes their voice, the students are then able to construct language that allows them to articulate their struggles.

Also within the Language Domin-Action course, students are asked to reflect on the attitudes they were raised with towards education: If they have ever felt ashamed

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about their level of education and if they have ever made others feel that way for their lower level of education. In response to this several students share experiences of having felt ashamed for their lack of education or intelligence. For example, one student tells the class that due to her family struggles and migration to America she never attended school until she was 13-years-old. When she could finally afford the time to commit to her education the school she attended did not know where to place her because she was so far behind. The school decided to put her in a first grade class to learn English with six-year-olds, which humiliated her and made her self-conscious of her education. Another student, who has struggled with a learning disability his entire life, shares his experience of growing up where his father and other influences in his life told him he was stupid because of his learning disability. To this day he still believes this to be true despite the fact that he is a revolutionary journalist and community activist.

The sharing of experience is believed by some feminist scholars to be another way out of the patriarchal binary. According to Gloria Anzaldúa (2002), what we experience should teach us how to shift how we interact with our experiences. By giving validity to our experiences and valuing them we learn to fight against those who devalue them and oppress us. Anzaldúa (2002) not only encourages embracing experience but living within those moments of experience to avoid negating their value and living within the binary.

By writing about the always-in-progress, transformational processes and the constant, on-going reconstruction of the way you view your world, you name and ritualize the moments/processes of transition, inserting them into the collective fabric, bringing into play personal history and fashioning a story greater than yourself. (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 559)

Through the Language Domin-Action course, students are encouraged to share their experiences and relive the moments of those experiences (even if and *especially* if it is painful), in order to transvaluate their experiences and break out of the patriarchy binary.

In this class, the instructor also addresses forms of oppression through academic institutions and ways to fight oppression. According to the instructor:

No one can make you feel inferior without your permission. To fight against this, there are two ways to tear down the walls of oppression: Inside the fort and outside the fort, in order to do that we have figure out how to tear the walls down.

This conception is also reminiscent of Anzaldúa (2002) when she draws attention to the fact that “The new paradigm must come from outside as well as within the system” (p. 541). POOR sees their educational effort as an attempt to subvert institutional oppression from the outside. To address academic oppression, the instructor shows that historically, researchers would go to third world countries or poor areas in the U.S. and subject their perspective to the people they were attempting to help. In doing so, the researchers simultaneously continued the oppression of the people by marginalizing their experiences and silencing their voices and ideas. The instructor points out that the “subjects” eventually said, “If you are here to save me, thank you, but keep walking. But if you recognize that your liberation is tied with mine, then let’s hold hands and work

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together.” POOR’s acknowledgement of the benefit and embrace of knowledge outside of academic institutions is also reminiscent of Anzaldúa and her observation of a cultural shift towards a “feminization of knowledge” where alternative views are now being accepted as legitimate forms of knowledge. According to one class handout:

We have established a new kind of scholarship, The Scholarship of Poverty. This scholarship has a new canon with new designations for greatness. Survival itself, through extreme poverty and crisis, houselessness, racism, disability and welfare to name a few are what you need to qualify for poverty scholarship.

In POOR’s education courses they strive to teach their students that their alternative educational system is as valid as higher-education institutions and that their existence outside of the binary will help to emancipate their students.

In the Language Domin-Action course the instructor also addresses ways to fight oppression stemming from the mass media. For example, a discussion is led regarding the U.S. Social Forum and its history in trying to help marginalized people fight against corporate control. However, the social forum never incorporates the people it tries to help so it in turn continues the cycle of marginalization and oppression. This topic starts a discussion on the activists and protestors at the G8 Summit, which happened concurrently with the U.S. Social Forum, where many activists were portrayed in the media as violent anarchists wreaking havoc for a destructive goal. One student asks how constructive activists could avoid the negative media representation of being compared to anarchists, which he considers to be a negative term. The instructor responds by saying that the mass media intentionally create the negative connotations given to terms like anarchy, activist, poor people, and homelessness and in the battle to fight language domination, the people have to take back and re-appropriate the negative connotations placed upon them. Second wave feminists also observed the problem of negative societal representations and in response asserted ways for feminists to re-appropriate language to restructure the power of feminine values. Second wave feminist, Marilyn French (1985), believed as part of patriarchal domination over women, the dominant societal language condoned men’s values more than women’s. In response to this, she and other second wave feminists like Mary Daly (1990) encouraged women to reject all values of femininity as “man-made constructs” and instead condoned transvaluation to re-appropriate negative terms for females like “bitch” and “spinster.” By identifying the media’s negative misrepresentation of activists, POOR educates students to be media literate as well as critically conscious of dominant, oppressive language. Once awareness is raised, students can then learn to re-appropriate the negative connotations and fight against oppressive language.

At Escuela de la Gente, the Her-story & Resistance class is held every Thursday and addresses important issues that do not fit into the curriculum of the other classes. These issues consist of domestic violence, racism, disability rights, borders, systems violence, and the non-profit industrial complex among others. When addressing domestic violence, the topic is spread over two class sessions with different voices by student/instructors conveying their experience. When the first student/instructor teaches her session on domestic violence she begins by addressing who she believes to be the primary oppressors and perpetrators, which are mainly men but also the

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government system and society in general. She also believes the victims are mainly women and that domestic violence happens in all ethnic groups. In her discussion, the student/instructor addresses the systematic oppression of beaten women who she believes are viewed as jealous, incapable and unworthy in the court system. Based on her experience with domestic violence and the court system, she feels women struggle to have their rights upheld in the courts and are often the losers in court battles. By sharing her experience she allows others to see how domestic violence and systematic oppression have affected her life but she does not address how to create liberation from this oppression. To overcome this, some second wave feminists discourage a frame of mind that encourages binary thinking (oppressor/victim) and instead encourage women to “overthrow the categories that entrap women (and men) in rigid roles” (Tong, 2009, p. 91). Jean Bethke Elshtain asserts that to re-appropriate language and break from the patriarchal binary women must not fall into the trap of categorical roles. According to Elshtain, roles “are simplistic definitions that make every man an exploiter and oppressor and every woman a victim. The fact is, not every woman is a victim and not every man is an exploiter and oppressor” (Tong, 2009, p. 91). Although POOR helps to raise awareness of certain types of oppression and provides some ways of thinking that re-appropriate language, there are still areas where it can improve in order to break out of language domination.

When the second student/instructor teaches the next session on domestic violence, she begins with a skit featuring her and a male student/instructor depicting her story of rape, abuse and child abandonment in her home country. The skit concludes by describing how her baby was taken by a type of child protective service in her home country and how she was deceived into signing papers giving her child away. After the skit, the student/instructor reads a poem that is disseminated to all of the students:

When you are or feel pregnant,
fight for that life you carry in you [sp] womb!!!
This is a gift from [sp] God, even though you don't believe it.
We are Single Mothers,
Humble warriors.
We have committed some errors,
Very often we are threatened
With fear,
We do things we should not do,
Forgive us God.
Paining those who we most love in this life.

As the student/instructor concludes the poem she pauses frequently and cries intermittently with responses of gasps and comments from the class. Discussion is then raised to the class who share personal stories of domestic violence or experiences where they have witnessed domestic violence between family members, giving examples of fathers vs. mothers, husbands vs. wives, and aunts vs. uncles. The class is then asked to raise their hands if they have witnessed or have been affected by domestic violence to which a majority of the students raise their hands.

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In light of the heavy discussion and activity the class had unfolded one student suggests an activity to “lift” the student/instructor’s burdens of domestic violence and to lift her spirit by having everyone in the class lift her off the floor and hold her for a few minutes in a moment of silence. The enactment and embracement of the student/instructor’s experience recalls Anzaldúa’s emphasis on lived experience. In order for the students to move beyond their victimization from domestic violence and break out of patriarchal oppression they needed to relive their experience by sharing it with others and vicariously enacting it with the student/instructor. Due to the fact that so many people in the class had been affected by domestic violence it was brought up repeatedly in other classes when students worked on assignments in articulating their struggle. By embracing and recalling this experience, students were able to articulate voice from a domestic violence victim perspective.

Another topic addressed in the Her-story & Resistance classes is disability rights. A disabled instructor leads the discussion on disability rights and the lack of history of disabled people in public schools. He shares a story about his personal experience with racism and how most African Americans in his community bonded together to fight racism. However, he was excluded from this solidarity because he was not solely an African American but a disabled African American and had no one he could relate to. He then speaks about the history of the disabled rights movement and how, historically, disabled people were ostracized from communities and locked away from society but through the disabled rights movement are beginning to fight for their human rights. The importance of parents educating their disabled children about the history of disabled people and the disabled rights movement is emphasized because of its absence in public school curricula. The instructor also addresses the importance of everyone’s history being incorporated into formal and informal educational institutions, asserting that value judgments should not be placed on personal histories. The discussion is then opened to the class and addresses what is “normal” and what society dictates normal should be. By establishing standards for normality the binary is upheld and value is placed on what is deemed normal, therefore devaluing anything lying outside of normality. The instructor encourages students to think outside of this binary by embracing all people despite their placement in the binary value system.

In this course emphasis is placed on transvaluation and the importance of changing the value structure of social institutions for the inclusion of everyone. A poststructuralist feminist perspective is helpful in examining this example. Luce Irigaray (2009) argues that we only know women’s experience through a patriarchal lens. Due to this we can never know the true experience of the woman. However, to convey the feminine experience we must create a feminine-feminine (versus masculine-feminine) language in which women’s experience can be accurately communicated. This concept can also be applied to POOR in which the instructor argues for the sharing of knowledge of disabled people by disabled people. By allowing disabled people to have a voice in the educational systems and within society their history can be legitimized and their struggle can be communicated in their own language, not the dominant oppressive language.

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Another topic that was addressed in the Her-story & Resistance classes is the concept of borders. Because so many students had crossed a physical border in their journey to come to America many students are most familiar with this concept of border. However, the instructor reminds students that borders are comprised of many things to include physical, emotional, mental, sexual and spiritual borders. The instructor then asks the class to talk about moments in their lives where they have crossed borders. A student talks about her journey across heritage borders. When growing her dreads out naturally she received a negative reaction from her friends for embracing her ethnicity. The experience made her realize which friends were true friends and which were not. Another student shares her experience of crossing mental borders. After being clinically labeled insane, she struggled to make new friends while she was receiving medical treatment. One instructor addresses community borders and the struggle she endured when moving from Oakland to Berkeley and the racism/classism she faced from her new neighbors. Lastly, another student addresses physical borders when she had to cross two national borders to come to America while realizing she was pregnant. She says she would have never made the journey if she had known before because it was so dangerous. Overall, the issue of borders is very sensitive for some people, evoking tears and heart-breaking stories. At the end of the class the instructor asks everyone to keep in mind that borders not only exist physically but metaphorically as well and we all struggle with crossing our own borders.

The concept of borders is reminiscent of Anzaldúa's book *This Bridge We Call Home* (2002) and her identification of crossing mental borders and barriers of experience. In asking the students to share their experience of crossing borders, the instructor is helping them to not only identify what borders exist in their life but how to bridge those borders as well. This example is also relevant to Marxist feminist concepts of alienation. In identifying oneself on either side of the border, there is an element of alienation from those on the other side of the border. In Marxist feminist literature this alienation stems from women's alienation from others due to their subservience (Tong, 2009). In this course, however, the concept of alienation helps analyze how alienation is created through the existence of borders and how the students can traverse these borders and create emancipation.

Revolutionary ideologies are discussed at leisure throughout the office and consume a good portion of quotidian conversations that occur outside of formal classes as well. The understanding and penetration of these ideologies in the students' dialogue are shown towards the end of the Escuela de la Gente session. For example, on the last day the instructor addresses corporate media infiltration to which one student says, "People fear for themselves and don't realize they should fear corporations, the wealthy, etc. It's easier to fear people than corporations like immigrants, welfare mothers, etc." To which the instructor responds, "It's easier to fight united than as individual people." Another student states, "Poor people never get a voice so it's easier to target us," to which the instructor responds, "Poor people do have a voice but nobody wants to listen." Another example is seen when one student presents the draft version of her slam bio and addresses her struggle to fight oppression:

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Soy Lucia*, madre soltera. Luchando y viviendo por un mundo sin fronteras ni racismo o pobreza. LUCHA MUJER, SIGUE LUCHANDO!!! (*I am Lucia*, single mother. Fighting and living in a world without boundaries without racism or poverty. FIGHT WOMEN, KEEP FIGHTING!!!*)

After reading her slam bio, the student adds an explanation that she struggles to fight against the racism and oppression of her Caucasian, female employer. This dialogue shows how POOR helps students identify their place in the patriarchal binary but also how they can oppose the binary through language re-appropriation and defiance.

CONCLUSION

Towards the end of the summer session, I noticed a visible transformation in students and the language they used. Shy students that were reluctant to speak at the beginning of summer rose to the challenge and spoke at the front of protests and press conferences, speaking a revolutionary language. As critical, revolutionary scholarship was espoused through the program students learned to not only become media literate of the media they consume but also how to speak in a language that would no longer subject them to language domination and oppression by commercial media. Through each of the courses techniques for language re-appropriation like embracing experience and transvaluation, were taught to and enacted by the students. The instructors not only disseminated this knowledge but also embraced it through their actions with POOR Magazine.

Through the example of POOR we see how community media can facilitate revolutionary learning and knowledge sharing that help oppressed people break through the binary structure. Learning techniques of re-appropriation help students articulate their voice and create a language of struggle that accurately reflects their experience. By using feminist literature as a theoretical lens it widens its applicability in scholarly research to help examine the emancipation of other oppressed groups as well. Varying feminist perspectives provide an essential toolkit for analyzing how oppressed groups can break through barriers of oppression and make progress towards emancipation. Overall, through the re-appropriation and creation of language that subverts language domination; oppressed people can break out of the patriarchal binary and oppressive structures and build an empowering language of struggle.

* Name has been changed.

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