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Daniel De Andrade Reflection 3

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Professor Roman-Odio
Cultural Productions of the Borderlands
14 November 2017

Reflection #3 Articulate

From this experience I have learned that the education of the young is extremely important. The tools that it gives them have the potential to empower them to transcend toxic elements of their personal environment, traverse social environments to one's benefit, and enrich them with a curiosity of the world that will grow, when they are older, into a quest for truth. I learned this from many of my students after I saw how much of a personal impact the stories could have on their understanding of the world.

Bullying is extremely personal to a lot of these kids. By teaching these 5th graders I have reflected a lot on my own past as a bully and as a person who was bullied. I now am concerned with the distance the education system takes from the personal lives of the students. Although it easy for a teacher to say that bullying is bad, who is to say that the kid who got bullied won't become a bully themselves. I feel like this complication was completely forgotten in our teaching. I fear that in the future when bullying becomes a fact of middle-school and high-school these students won't know how to stick up for their dignity without reciprocating aggression or growing in shame.

One example of this was today when my group was taking a photo, one of my students pushed another kid out of the photo for not being in the group. The kid who was pushed then mocked the student for doing a skit on why bullying was bad, but in a matter of seconds had turned into a bully herself. Without teaching students to reflect on the way they have caused harm, or how harm has been done to them, they will remain blind their own involvement in hurtful behavior.

Another thing I have learned is that at this age the kids are learning how to make friends. Because they have grown smarter, they realize that friendship is not only a matter of laughter or games, but also based on knowledge. Their constant dialogue with us concerning their personal lives shows me that they want me to know who they are. In this sense, the 5th graders are building their understanding of themselves through other people. Hannah and I have shown interest into their personal lives, and they have been inspired by our interest and invited us into their understanding of themselves. Exclusion and inclusion were personally significant topics for them and because of that we were able to talk to them about things they find extremely significant. In this respect, exclusion and inclusion is very important to them because it is a method to understand themselves.

I have also learned that not all of the students' self esteem is dependent on being included. Arianna, for example, is a very self-aware individual who is so engaged with the learning that it captivates her and allows her to forget about the people around her. She is constantly thinking of what the material means, not just in a conceptual sense, but also what it means to her. As the weeks continued, I realized that she had a talent for quickly understanding what the stories were saying about her life. Consequently, her relationship with the material is personal and profound, and I think in the future she will prioritize it as a means to self-understanding, even if that means not being understood by the people around her.

Simultaneously, it seemed Arianna was very concerned with getting the right answer by the teacher's standards. Although the teacher-student relationship is a traditional aspect of teaching, it never allows the students to come into dialogue with the

truthfulness or the use of the material. Teaching these kids in the past couple of weeks has taught me that our education system, even in college, is founded on an evaluation of performance on the part of the teacher. In this way, the teacher wields the absolute authority to tell you whether you understand the material or if you don't. Whatever assumptions the material rests on concerning justice, or the truth, will have to be accepted by the student and utilized in order to get an A.

This structure of the class, that I witnessed within their elementary school, can be detrimental to many kids' learning. Aidan and Elise, for example, were always very scared to read in front of people. I fear that as time goes on and they continue into Middle School, the grading structure of the class will prioritize their performance without giving more time to whatever skills they still need to work on.

Overall I have learned that school has a tremendous impact on a person's education of themselves. The most important thing I think education needs to include is how to teach these kids to understand themselves. Teachers and educative material have so much power and influence on these students. If the material continues to ignore the realities of bullying and violence, and fails to empower kids to question authorities of knowledge with their own knowledge, I fear we will continue to live in an impersonal education system that is more focused on agreement and production, rather than original thought.