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Borders in Play

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Daniel De Andrade Reflection 1

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Professor Roman-Odio

Cultural Productions of the Borderlands; 380.00

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Describing and Understanding Colombia Elementary 5th Graders

Our process with the 5th graders is to begin as soon as possible. Engaging with them in a quick and energetic way establishes that our hour with them is going to be one of high-energy, focus, and conversation. Hannah and I have really tried to establish that we are personable and also like to have fun. Forming a connection with everyone of the students is important. Some of the students find this easier than others. Arianna, Elise, and Patrick are very focused on answering the questions and focusing on the stories. Collin, however, is the quietest of the group. Although he has an explosive and energetic personality, he hides it sometimes in silence and shyness. He has in the past talked about how mean his brothers are, and I wonder whether this has an effect on his confidence around other people.

Aidan's personality, on the other hand, is completely unrestrained by shyness. Although he is not loud, Aidan is constantly making jokes, laughing to himself, and talking about things that he likes to do. Elise is like this as well. Arianna, however, is the most focused, and academic of the group. Out of everyone, she most consistently and quickly answers the questions we pose to the group. It is evident that her relationship to stories is very personal and that she loves to understand what is beneath every narrative. The best way to get to know the kind of personalities that each student has to ask them about their interests. Their social skills and interests will tell you so much about who they are and what they love to do.

Being around 5th graders has also reminded me of a time in my life when I was unconstrained by social barriers, and honesty was the primary motivation for dialogue. When I am conversing and listening to these students talk I see that they still have not begun to think about what one should say and what one shouldn't say. This unawareness of the way one "should" talk allows them to have an honesty unparalleled to many older people I know today. Whether they are evaluating the stories, talking about their weekends, or talking to each other, these 5th graders show a beautiful ability to speak from the heart at all times. Witnessing people speak with this level of honesty is especially beautiful to me because of the way they engage with their emotions and trauma. Many of the students cultural quilts show me that they are willing to tell me about their grief, pain, joys, and all the other emotionally intimate moments in life that are difficult to tell other people. It is obvious to me that there is such a natural privilege to being a child, and seeing them speak the way they do is extremely inspiring.

One difference in gender behavior that Hannah Klubeck, my partner, and I have talked about is the habitual tendency for boys to play video games, and the girls to do different activities. Of the four boys in our group, each one has talked about playing video games over the weekend as their primary activity. The girls, on the other hand, talked about going to the zoo or playing softball. This distinction in behavior has me worried. Although I currently do not have the empirical proof that boys are more prone to video game usage, I know that as a young adolescent my group of friends and me would play a lot of video games. I worry that this might debilitate the boys' social development. If the girls in our group are going outside and enjoying the resources that the real world has to offer on a more consistent basis, it would make sense for them as adults to lead healthier lives. Overall, becoming a friend to these 5th graders has shown

me how important this time is for their education and development. I am so enriched by observing them learn, talk, and grow.