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Borders in Play Reflections

Borders in Play

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## Daniel De Andrade Reflection 2

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Professor Roman-Odio

CEL Reflection: Examine

1 November 2017

### CEL Reflection #2: Examine

As I teach and learn about the lives and intellectual capacities of these kids I am consistently reminded of the term cultural healing. Within their lives, I am sure there is already a lot of negative emotions like fear, anxiety, and alienation. Their families, the institution that is most strongly affecting their identity, are already a point of contention for kids so young. Our stories offer some of them a method of healing from the pain that they feel in regard to being alienated at home, or in school. These families are working hard to make ends meet, and this has already become an opportunity to help culturally heal those affected by poverty and the experiences that stem from it. **School is, therefore, an in-between space for the students. Within this nepantla, they are able to break away from the identity they have formed within the home and explore themselves in a liberating way.** This in-between space, however, is also difficult for them because breaking apart from the identity they have formed at home is difficult. Our contribution as teachers, however, is to feed them with a curiosity and energy that shows them they are free to whoever they want to be. Although this is difficult because it is necessary to stay focused on the material, our unique position as young temporary teachers is to emphasize the explorative, liberating, and personal side of learning.

One notion that I feel is absent from the experience, however, is hybrid identities. Although these students are reading about this idea in stories, they have trouble

connecting with it from lack of exposure. In a certain sense, being of the same race and town eases any kind of trouble that a child with a bilingual or bicultural heritage would have. For this reason, the poem *Legal Alien* was difficult for them to comprehend, and they quickly forgot about its meaning. Terms like “hyphenated identity” or “biculturalism” are difficult for these kids to internalize. A part of this difficulty might stem from the children's exposure to racism and lack exposure to people of color.

Cullen, one of our more silent students, I perceive as being within a *coatlicue* state. The fearful relationship with his older brothers and his divorced parents have made him turn to silence for the sake of social safety. As teachers, how do you engage with an insecurity you perceive but do not fully understand? My education lacked this kind of engagement as a child and adolescent, and I am sure that if I had been supported in engaging in my insecurities as a younger person I would have acquired a knowledge that it took me a long time learn. On the other hand, this is a private side of this child's life. Although he wrote about it in his cultural quilt, I feel like there is no platform to individually talk to him and gain his trust. The most important lesson our theories and materials have taught me is that education is not just intellectual, but it is also personal.

One bias that I believe has affected our dealing with stories of bullying and exclusion, is that the students only want to create stories in which the victim triumphs. Although it is important for the kids to know that bullies do not have to monopolize their suffering, it is more important I believe to show the kids how a victim would triumph in this case. One method I think that would help is a focus on understanding what a person's actions say about them. At such a young age, however, it is difficult for these

children to understand why a bully does what they do. I wish we had had more time with them in order to engage with a pedagogical approach to understanding anger, fear, and violence. As time goes on and school becomes a more socially competitive environment, I believe learning these things can truly help a student navigate their social environment while building their confidence.