

2017

## Scout Crowell Reflection 2

Scout Crowell  
*Kenyon College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.kenyon.edu/bordersinplayreflections>



Part of the Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons, and the Modern Languages Commons

---

### Recommended Citation

Crowell, Scout, "Scout Crowell Reflection 2" (2017). *Borders in Play Reflections*. Paper 2.  
<https://digital.kenyon.edu/bordersinplayreflections/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Borders in Play at Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Borders in Play Reflections by an authorized administrator of Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [noltj@kenyon.edu](mailto:noltj@kenyon.edu).

Scout Crowell

Professor Roman Odio

Spanish 380

2 November 2017

### Reflection #2: Columbia Through an Academic Lens

Throughout my experience teaching at Columbia Elementary through the Community Engaged Learning project, I found multiple facets of my academic knowledge of borders and border theories to be relevant. One of the most notable explorations of my academic knowledge was seen in the interaction and interdependence of nonphysical and physical borders which became clearly solidified in my time at Columbia Elementary. On the most basic level, the experience itself embodied the physical borders that separate communities via roads, land, train tracks, or geography, addressed in Tomas Nail's Theory of the Border. For the CEL project, we circulated the border that separates Kenyon College and the Mount Vernon community, two communities in close proximity that are separated by not only the physical space between them, but socioeconomic, and ideological borders as well. While Kenyon hosts primarily upper class students from urban areas with dominantly liberal ideologies, mount Vernon's population consists of a rural community with widespread socioeconomic struggles and dominantly conservative ideologies.

While these borders are not tangible forces that separate our two communities, I have come to see that they clearly act as factors that reinforce the often porous physical borders that divide people. It is through these borders that are not reducible to space that physical borders are solidified; though our communities are connected by roads and transportation, we often struggle to cross the borders of ideology and socioeconomic status and interact on a human level, thereby

reinforcing the physical borders that separate communities. However, in my experience at Columbia elementary, I felt that I was able to pass through not only the physical borders of location but also non-physical borders, allowing me to forge relationships with the members of Team Horizon.

Our weekly circulation of local borders also served as a concrete exemplification of the often cyclical nature of borders, both physical and non-physical, through which individual agents move in and out and the *nepantla* which this cyclicity produces. With every visit to Columbia Elementary, my group and I focused on a new poem or short story in which a character faces borders of many kinds. As we read each story, different members of Team Horizon seemed to identify with the borders that the characters faced, and in discussing these borders, revealed their own *nepantlas*. Of all of our students, Kassandra seemed to open up the most about her own identity and through that, her *nepantla*. Kassandra's *nepantla*, or in-between state, was characterized by her Mexican-American identity which she began to discuss as we read Tomás and the Library Lady as well as other stories and poems that utilized sudden changes from English to Spanish, otherwise known as codeswitching. With each switch from English to Spanish, she seemed excited, translating what she could for the rest of Team Horizon and enjoying an open recognition and celebration of her culture. However, in our discussions about borders and feeling different, Kassandra often expressed that she felt out of place and sad when she visited family members who spoke fluent Spanish while she could not.

Kassandra's experience seemed to embody a *nepantla* characterized by not feeling Mexican enough while simultaneously not feeling American enough in a classroom setting. From an academic perspective, Kassandra's *nepantla* seemed to partially embody the *nepantla* defined by Gloria Anzaldúa in which she is torn between the two sides of her cultural identity.

However, though her Mexican-American identity placed her in a sometimes emotional in-between space, Cassandra seemed proud to cross in and out of the borders of language and culture by using her American identity to share her Mexican culture with her classmates. This nepantla was not only characterized by difficulty and pain, but also joy and pride in the cultural fluidity that her multicultural identity seemed to provide, potentially illustrating the Mestiza consciousness.

As Cassandra and other members of team horizon began to open up, I was not only able to use the academic skills and concepts mentioned above, but also those from my experience in psychological academia. The most notable utilizations of this knowledge was through my use of verbal positive reinforcement in order to encourage students to share their feelings and borders in an emotionally positive space. This turned out to be very effective as students opened up quickly and shared personal experiences that I did not initially expect them to. By combining my academic knowledge of human psychology and Border theory, I was able to forge trusting relationships with students and make them feel encouraged in everything they did, allowing myself and my group to witness our academic knowledge at work in the real world.

Overall, my CEL experience allowed me to learn the truly realistic complexity of the border theories that my academic experiences have taught me. I was able to explore the intertwining nature and cyclicity of borders, how they play out in the real world, and how they affect agents of society. Through my CEL experience, I came to understand that borders and how they affect us are not concretely definable in the way that academia sometimes tries to present them. In reality, they are layered, fluid, and unique factors that play a role within every individual's experience.