

Re-Reading the Impossibility of Identity: Modeling Gender Pluralism in Curriculum and Instruction

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Abstract : Identity doesn't exist in discrete categories as it is defined. Kevin Kumashiro reveals the phrase 'an impossibility of identity' in *Troubling Education* (2000), an investigation of the intersections of culture and gender and the impact of erasure for queer POC identity. This underscores the essentiality of an insider or an outsider identity and the appearance of 'contradiction' or impossibility of these identities. The contradictions between us as subject in our own stories and in the stories of others are often silenced. This silencing of complex, 'contradicting' identity has unmissable implications in the classroom; the developing student in question is done a serious disservice, from which they may never recover. There is no more important point of contact than the teacher, for willingness to encounter a developing person as they are, not as we already think they are, or 'know' them to be, or think they should be. To decide how to regard them based on our own unilateral identity and its associated exhortations and injunctions is, as Hannah Arendt writes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), to sell off our ability to rise, human-like, to the challenge of investigating things as they are. A re-reading of Kumashiro's impossibility of identity becomes possible through the investigation of pluralism. Identities become possible and un-paradoxical by the notion that contradictions are not problems that an individual is not unilateral, but plural. In this paper, we investigate how philosophies of pluralism can inform our understanding of impossibility of identity in classroom curriculum and pedagogy.

Keywords : identity, gender, culture, pluralism, education, philosophy of education, queer theory, philosophy of mind, adolescent development

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