

[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak: Today on episode number 319 of the *Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast, Marlo Goldstein Hode joins me to talk about Fostering Inclusion in Our Teaching.

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[00:00:23] Bonni: Hello, and welcome to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'm Bonni Stachowiak, and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Today's episode is a little bit different because it is featuring part of an ACUE class. That's the Association of College and University Educators. We partnered together, and I was able to speak to some of their experts. In this particular case, Dr. Marlo Goldstein Hode joined me to talk about fostering inclusion in our teaching, and I enjoyed the conversation so much that I asked if it was okay if I brought it over to *Teaching in Higher Ed*. You'll hear a little bit of a different setup. We don't spend much time talking about her, so I'd like to share a little bit about her now.

Marlo, provides professional development, facilitation, leadership, and guidance to help make the University of Missouri St. Louis, an even more welcoming, inclusive, and excellent institution. She facilitates in-person and online educational

opportunities for faculty and staff in topics such as unconscious bias, constructive communication, and cultural competence. She also helps develop and launch strategic initiatives and partnerships across campus to work collaboratively toward achieving UMSL's inclusive excellence goals. Marlo holds a courtesy and adjunct faculty position in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

As a scholar, she has several publications in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters on various topics, including sexual harassment, neurodiversity, racial issues on campus, and the effectiveness of online professional development courses. She also serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*.

Marlo received her BA in communication from North Carolina State University, and MA in intercultural communication from the University of Maryland Baltimore County, an LLM in dispute resolution from the University of Missouri School of Law, and a PhD in organizational communication, with a Minor in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri.

Marlo, some might think that diversity and inclusion are not as large of an issue in an online class because the instructors and the students in asynchronous courses, for example, rarely see one another. What are your thoughts about the importance of diversity issues and concerns in an online environment?

[00:03:26] Marlo Goldstein Hode: That's a great question, and actually, I would say that being mindful of diversity and inclusion in the online environment is equally as important as to the classroom. One thing, because online learning is so much more accessible to a wider variety of people, we know that students in online courses tend to be even more diverse than in the classroom, in terms of age, race, professional background, working status, parental status, access to the technology learning site, et cetera.

We know that the student bodies are incredibly diverse, and I think this requires even more intentional effort to be able to ensure that all students in the course can learn, are engaged and feel a sense of belonging. In that sense, it's equally as

important in the classroom, but some of the issues that come up such as implicit bias, I've heard people question whether that can be an issue if you're not actually face-to-face with someone. In fact, the opportunities for implicit or unconscious bias in the online environment are just as prevalent as face-to-face, because we know from research that just the person's name, seeing your student's name on a roster, will trigger implicit biases.

Also, many times in an online environment, people have a picture on their profile. You are actually getting those visual cues as well.

Some instructors also will look into the academic files of their students prior to a class, or at least get basic information such as their major, or what year they had their GPA, their academic standing. All of those cues are associated with implicit biases that can inform how we interact and engage with the students in an online environment.

[00:05:15] Bonni: Of course, the vast majority of us will have heard of implicit bias, but I know it's a term that can often be misunderstood. Would you give us your definition for it, and also comment on the importance of us being reflecting on our own experiences, and how that can shape our own perceptions and views of others that might be different than ourselves?

[00:05:38] Marlo: Sure. Well, I guess rather than a formal definition, I'll just talk about some of the basics of implicit or unconscious bias, which by the way, those terms are really synonymous. I've looked throughout the literature to find some differentiation, and a lot of people use the term implicit bias because of the Harvard Implicit Awareness Test. That's using a lot research, but really there's no difference that I've been able to find, and I use them interchangeably.

The first thing to know is that everybody has implicit biases. This does not mean that you are racist. It doesn't mean that you're a bad person. These biases are actually cognitive shortcuts that our brain uses to sort and categorize information really quickly. Anytime we encounter someone or something new or different, our brain has this automatic process of associating it with some information that we already

have previously stored in our brain so that we can make sense of what's happening and know how to respond.

The other thing I think it's important to recognize is that we have both positive biases and negative biases. An example of positive bias is called similarity bias. We have a tendency to lean towards feeling more comfortable, have a preference for those which are similar to us, and that simply because it does require less processing, we can relax. We know what to expect.

Another important aspect about unconscious bias, and this is the thing that's really tough for people, is that these biases are involuntary. We don't choose them, and they can in fact conflict with how we feel consciously. That's the hurdle for a lot of people, is that we have biases that conflict with our real values and how we feel.

Just the final point I want to make that I think is important, is that our unconscious biases can be overridden, but they can't be overwritten. These are neurological pathways that we have that we can choose to not act upon them, or we can choose to override them, but they don't necessarily go away. They are written into our neurological wiring, and so it's constant work that we always have to do, although they can be weakened over time.

[00:08:00] Bonni: I really appreciated a fairly recent article in *Harvard Business Review* that was saying the same thing that you're describing, the overridden versus overwritten, and they talked about some of the same research that you cited, about even just seeing someone's name on a resume and biases that can occur, not even seeing a person or hearing their voice, et cetera. They instead said that we want to be working on interrupting the opportunities for discrimination, was the examples they were giving. That was a helpful thing.

Also, what you talk about as far as these are natural things. One of the classes I've taught, it's been many years, but I used to teach consumer behavior, and you think about going into a grocery store. I can't believe I'm about to compare what you're describing to grocery shopping, but forgive me, Marlo, but just if you didn't have some heuristics, going into a store, you probably would never be able to make a

purchase because you'd have to compare all the ingredients and the price. You would just become unable to process a decision as a consumer.

Well, similarly, those same cognitive functions happen as we go about our day to day interacting with people.

[00:09:11] Marlo: Absolutely.

[00:09:12] Bonni: Marlo talk a little bit then, now that we've looked at implicit bias and you've helped us to think about it as a natural process, but also when we want to interrupt, could you share about how we can reflect on our own experiences, and especially considering others that are different from ourselves?

[00:09:31] Marlo: Yes. Past experiences are stored as memories in the brain, and these memories are pieces of information that our brain draws upon in our current experiences, as I was just talking about, these cognitive shortcuts. If in our past we have, for example, very little experience or interaction with groups of people who are different from us, then when we have a current day situation or interaction, our mind is still going to search for information, and that information is typically going to come from media exposure, stereotypes, other types of societal ideas about who groups of people are. Rather than having our own interpersonal experience, we rely on these other bits of information that are stored in our brain. That's one aspect.

The other thing that's really interesting is that, our brain remembers negative experiences more deeply, and can bring those to recall more quickly than positive experiences. One example I like to give of this, about 30 years ago, I was bitten by a neighbor's dog, a German Shepherd, and it came up from behind and bit me in the back of my leg and gave me the most tremendous bruise I've ever seen in my life. To this day, 30 years later, whenever I encounter a dog, particularly German Shepherds, my amygdala goes a little bit on high alert. Now, I have countered a lot of very nice sweet dogs since then, but that memory, that negative memory is so strong that it's still always present, and it's the same that will work with people's negative experiences with people. You can have one negative experience and it's not overwritten by all the positive experiences you might have after that.

[00:11:31] Bonni: We've looked at the interactions that we have as teachers and with students and colleagues, let's now look at the curriculum. How can we get better at working to have our curriculum incorporate diverse perspectives and experiences, especially in those disciplines where historically there hasn't been a lot of diversity?

[00:11:54] Marlo: There's a lot of different levels to this. First one way to incorporate diversity or multicultural perspectives, is just through the examples that you give in class, through the names that you use, through the context that you give examples, the visual aids that you have. Just in your own behavior as an instructor and the things that you call to mind, it's so easy to refer to just John and Susie as the first two names that come to mind, but thinking about other names that you can bring into your examples.

Also, it's really important to understand and utilize harness the diversity that's in your classroom. If you have a science class and you're organizing your labs, you can think really strategically about who's going into different lab groups and try to make diverse groups and consciously harness those perspectives.

The other thing I think is to develop paper topics or projects that encourage students to delve into other cultural backgrounds and perspectives. Then finally I think just looking at scholarly work from both scholars of different racial backgrounds and gender backgrounds, but also looking at international journals, going outside the mainstream journals of your discipline because in those other journals, you'll find questions that are different, you'll find researchers that are different. It's approaching diversity in a curriculum both from the classroom management side of it, as well as the curriculum itself.

[00:13:34] Bonni: I'm reminded again of that same consumer behavior class that I was sharing about earlier, because I let them do a project where they got to choose their topic, it had to be consumer behavior and then in some kind of a context, and I have so many fond memories of the things that they chose, but two young women in the class group did together and they shared about how, as Latina women, that they had people just assume that because they were from

South America, that that meant that all their foods were the same, all their culture was the same and all of that. Actually, I don't remember exactly which countries they were from, but they prepared food from the country, and we're trying to distinguish it, you can't just assume that we're exactly the same.

There were so many differences, but they'd sit together in classes and people would just put these blanket things about them as if they've grown up the same, they eat the same foods, they listen to the same music, celebrated the same cultural celebrations. I really treasure that moment and have some photos from it and just think so fondly. Because I would be ill equipped to ever think I could do something like that, but to open that up to our students and think about all the gifts that they can bring into our classrooms and really be able to celebrate their own cultural heritage, but also to educate, as long as that's their choice to do it, by the way, and we're not trying to have them educate us for our own lack of education.

[00:14:59] Marlo: I think that actually gets to a really important point because, on one hand we really want to harness the diversity, cultural, the rich backgrounds of our students in our class, and yet we never, of course, want to ask them to be a spokesperson for their culture because they can't. The thing is, we can never assume what a student's background is or what it means to them and when we take into account intersectionality and we have, we're not just a race or agenda, we're also a socioeconomic status, we're also an ability status, we're also a sexual orientation gender identity. We have all of these things. We have no idea. Then the question becomes, how do we invite or open the space to learn from all these diverse perspectives without really putting anybody on the spot or outing anybody in any way.

I don't have a magic pill answer for that, but I think the way that I have done it is to first stress the importance for all of our learning to have as many different ideas, perspectives as possible, because also we don't want to assume that the blonde hair, blue-eyed Susie in the front row doesn't have any diverse experience to offer as well. We have no idea. She could have grown up in Mozambique and been here. We opened that up to all students, not targeting students who might look culturally different than ourselves.

I also encourage students to research and present perspectives that are different from their own. Have them go out there, because the other thing is, we don't want to ask students who are in marginalized identities continually educate us, we can educate ourselves, and we can bring back information, and maybe be corrected, but we can have everyone participate in garnering those different perspectives.

[00:16:58] Bonni: Marlo, earlier we looked at implicit bias, and you shared with us that all of us, none of us get to be exempt on this, that all of us have them. What is a practice that we can put in place to check ourselves and do that reflective practice?

[00:17:15] Marlo: That's a great question, and I think particularly when it comes to prior to meeting the students, whether it's in a classroom or in an online environment, you tend to look at your roster to see who's in the classroom, and you look at the list of names. What I suggest that you do is have a real moment of honesty with yourself and ask what assumptions you might be making about some of those students, just based on their name. What assumptions might you make about students who have an Asian name? What assumptions might you make about their academic ability or their language ability? What about students who have a Latino name? What thoughts, ideas, images come to mind? Thinking about African American students in your class, what expectations might you have of them in terms of, are they prepared for class? Do you think they might be less qualified?

Again, these might not be things that you hold old in your heart to be true about people, but they might be some ideas that are floating around in your mind that may come in to play because, until you engage with the students and really know who they are and see what they can do, your mind is going to be making sense of who they may be based on their name and based on the information previously stored in your brain. Just having that moment of truth with yourself before even meeting the students will help perhaps guard against these unconscious or implicit biases coming into play, because you're aware that they're there, and they will pop up, and then you can check yourself and check your assumptions that you're making.

[00:18:45] Bonni: Closely related to implicit bias is another factor that comes into play here, and that is stereotype threat. Could you explain what stereotype threat is to us?

[00:18:56] Marlo: Yes, absolutely. Stereotype threat is a situation where someone feels at risk or ends up confirming a negative stereotype about their social group. This comes up a lot in research. It's hard to identify, I guess, an actually real life because you can't get in someone's head, but they have done some research, for example, with female students and male students taking a math exam, and they found that the female students, when they were in a small group of, I think it was total of three students, three female students, their scores on the math examples were much higher than in the next group where they introduce one male to the group. It was one male, two women, the scores went down, the female students' scores went down. Then in the third part of the experiment, it was one female student with two male students, and those female students scores were the lowest. Even just being with a person who can trigger that idea that women are not as good at math, as males are, can impact performance. This is why it's a real concern an issue for instructors.

Some of the things that trigger stereotype threat are, one, like in the example I just gave, when you're a minority status in a group, so if you are the only African American student in the classroom, for example, you're going to be hyper aware of your race, you're also going to be hyper aware of the stereotypes that people hold of people of your race. Even if you are not consciously thinking about this, your brain sure is.

This brings into a second part of it, was the stereotype salient. For example, in the experiment with female students taking a math test, the fact that it's taking a math test brings that stereotype of females not being good at math, it brings that right up to the forefront. The biggest impact that we have to worry about in academic context really, is the impact of stereotypes on performance.

[00:21:10] Bonni: The good news is that just like we talked about with implicit bias, there are things that we can do to interrupt that. There also are ways that we can

make stereotype threat less of a threat for our students. What are some practices that we can do to help with this?

[00:21:27] Marlo: Well, one small thing, if on certain standardized tests, or some tests, for example, that students have to fill in any information about their race or gender, if that's moved to after the test is taken, because there's research that shows that even just filling in your race or gender can make that identity salient more prevalent and can trigger stereotype threat. That's one thing.

The other is to really encourage that growth mindset with your students. The stereotype may exist, but that's not who you are, that doesn't define your performance. What defines your performance is the effort that you put into it. Really, I think to just emphasizing how complex we all are as individuals, and again, helping students move away from the boxes that our society tries to put us into in terms of race, gender, age, et cetera, and helping students understand themselves as really complex human beings, I think can help mitigate that stereotype threat.

[00:22:36] Bonni: We've got one more term to do, and that is microaggressions. What are microaggressions, and how do they limit the potential of our students?

[00:22:46] Marlo: Microaggressions, there's nothing really micro about them, except for they can be quite small subtle things that people say or do, or things that environment that really serve to minimize and validate, and marginalize people in different identity groups. Because they often are so subtle, or because people are unsure about the intense, because we often talk about intent versus impact. Someone's intention might have been to give you a compliment, "Oh, your English is so good", but there's underlying assumptions below about who you are and what that means. The impact of that can be really hurtful.

The reason that microaggressions can be so damaging is that, when an individual experiences one, there's so much cognitive processing that goes on when they think about, okay, did they really just say that? What did they mean? How should I respond? Should I respond at all? I'm sure they didn't mean it. They have to go through this whole cognitive processing in the moment, and typically that if they do

nothing, they may still be thinking about it later. When your mind is processing a microaggression, you have less cognitive energy available to do critical thinking, to do creativity, to be productive. It actually can detract from the real work that you're meant to do.

Microaggressions also can cause stress, which many of us know that that can raise levels of cortisol in your body. Cortisol is linked to all sorts of health conditions. If you are subject to microaggressions on an ongoing daily basis, not only is your cognitive energy being put elsewhere, but there's also a physiological response in your body which can have long term health effects. Then, of course, just the microaggressions, if they're not addressed, if they become normalized, this creates a hostile and invalidating culture for all people, particularly from marginalized groups in that environment.

It's a really important issue to address. Let me just also say, just like we all have unconscious biases, we all have likely been the perpetrator of microaggressions, probably unintentionally. These implicit biases that we have, our ideas about people, little pieces of information. When we encounter someone that is new or different, we're associating it with things that we have previously stored, which are often stereotypes. It might cause us to say things that are micro aggressive.

I guess I'll just talk a little bit about some of the things that we can do. The first step is really just becoming aware of your own biases and assumptions that you have about groups of people identifying, I would say knowledge gaps, about different groups of people, and as you grow more aware of your own enactment of microaggressions, then you can also become an advocate to stand up and speak up when you hear someone else do a microaggression.

The last thing that we want to do is just be pointing our finger and shaming and blaming others. First you have to own your own stuff. Then you can reach out and try to call in the microaggression. You can say something like, "I can see how you might say that", or, "I used to say things similar to that." Or, "I know you didn't mean anything bad by that or your intent was to give a compliment, but there's an

impact to that that's really important you understand, because I'm sure it's important to you not to marginalize or hurt other people."

It's really important to practice speaking up, because if we don't, we're normalizing and reproducing these really destructive behaviors.

I guess the final thing we can do, if we're not in a situation where we can speak up in the moment, is to show support for target of microaggressions. If you witness something, and there's not a possibility to intervene, you at least can acknowledge to them that you saw that, that they're not crazy. You can help them process that through that cognitive process.

[00:27:05] Bonni: I really appreciate what you said about, just like all of these, there's a theme through all of this, Marlo, that is that we're all susceptible to these things. We don't stop there. That there are practical steps that we can take to continue to shape our own behavior, which of course, our behavior can lead also to those internal interruptions that we spoke about earlier. Then also to be an influence on others as well. Thank you so much for these ideas.

I mentioned at the top of this episode that today's episode was going to be a little bit different because I was able to bring over one of the short podcasts that I designed for the ACUE online course. I wanted to end, though, like I end many of the episodes, with my recommendation, but first allow me to thank Marlo for joining me for that conversation about inclusion and our teaching.

I'm thinking so much about the fall. I know so many of you are as well. We're getting all kinds of different information, things change so quickly. They change both at a public health expert level, they change within our very micro lives. I wanted to point toward something that I think is important for me to remember, perhaps for you as well. We have brought up a number of times on this podcast over the years the idea of love being central in our teaching. To me, when I think about the fall, I want it to be an act of love for me, love for my colleagues, love for all of those making difficult choices, love for our students, for people who are seeking to continue their learning in this way during a time such as this.

I was moved to tears by a song sung by Sara Bareilles. It's called *We Did Not Give Up on Love Today*. As I think about the fall, I think I need to keep playing the song perhaps on repeat and have those lyrics in my mind and in my heart. She sings, don't stop trying to find me here amidst the chaos. Though I know it's blinding, there's a way out. Say out loud, we will not give up on love now.

Here's a little bit of Sara Bareilles singing *We Did Not Give Up on Love Today*.

[00:29:37] Sarah Bareilles: Don't stop trying to find me here amidst the chaos.

Though I know it's blinding, there's a way out.

Say out loud

We will not give up on love now.

No fear, don't you turn like Orpheus

[00:30:13] Bonni: Don't stop trying to find me here amidst the chaos. Though I know it's blinding, there's a way out. Say out loud, we will not give up on love now.

Thanks for listening to today's episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'll see you next time.

[music]

[00:30:52] [END OF AUDIO]

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