

Teacher Evaluations

Callie, a visiting professor, agreed to develop and teach a curriculum for a new one-month course in the summer. Mike, also a professor in the same department, agreed to teach another section using Callie's curriculum. Callie got Mike up to speed on the topic, which was her area of expertise. At various points during the course, Mike consulted Callie to ensure that he was correctly conveying the material. Mike used the presentations that Callie developed. Mike even stated in his syllabus and during lectures that Callie developed the course and course materials.

After the course concluded, Callie and Mike went out to lunch. Callie brought up student evaluations. She said, "I wish I could teach one course where a student did not make a comment about an outfit or my hair or about my voice being 'shrill.' Did you get any of those comments?" Mike shook his head no, feeling surprised. He'd never gotten a comment about his voice or appearance on students' evaluations.

Callie continued, "I'm not sure what else I could do to convey that I am an expert in this subject area. I've published two articles on this subject last year and I'm writing a second book about it, but my average for the 'Instructor understands course material' question was a 2.5."

Mike was shocked. "What? I think I got a 4.8 for that one! You wrote the course! And I told my students that this was new material for me!"

For Discussion:

- How might implicit bias play into students' evaluations?
- What cultural assumptions/biases do we hold about women in positions of authority?
- How might Mike, who seems surprised as Callie describes her experience of gender bias to him, become more knowledgeable about the issues women face?
- Student evaluations are often used to determine tenure. If students are consistently biased in their evaluations, what should an institution do?