

Bonni: [00:00:00] Today on episode number 178 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast Remi Kalir talks about igniting our imagination in digital learning and pedagogy.

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Bonni: [00:00:22] 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 personal productivity so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:49] I am so excited about today's guest Remi Kalir. He is an Assistant Professor of Information and Learning Technologies at CU Denver's School of Education and Human Development. I've had a chance to read his blog for a while, follow him on Twitter and most recently been able to see him speak at the Digital Media and Learning Conference. And I'm just so excited to get today's chance to speak with him live for the show and introduce many of you to him.

Bonni: [00:01:21] Remi is a learning scientist who researches and designs educator learning associated with everyday digital media practices. He was a 2016 National Science Foundation Data Consortium Fellow and is currently an Open Educational Resource Research Fellow with the Open Education Group. Remi is currently researching how educators learn via open and collaborative web annotation. Remi, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Remi: [00:01:53] Thanks Bonni, it's lovely to be here.

Bonni: [00:01:55] It is lovely to be talking to you and this is actually try number two for us says a meltdown of one of our very important pieces of podcasting equipment and I just appreciate the second opportunity to actually talk to you as we record today.

Remi: [00:02:10] Again it's really lovely join you. I'm really excited about our conversations.

Bonni: [00:02:14] One of the things I've been thinking about a lot is just the words that we use to describe ourselves. My doctoral students are some of them blogging for the first time and they have them put together in about me page.

Bonni: [00:02:26] And then of course it makes me go look at my about me page and I go every time I look at it, it needs work. I don't think will ever be done with that project but I've been thinking about the words we use to describe ourselves. And you use one very early in your bio and that is you refer to yourself as a learning scientist. And I'm curious when did you first discover that that's what you do.

Remi: [00:02:49] You know I went to graduate school and did my doctorate at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. And while I was there dabbled across multiple disciplinary boundaries I did work in digital media and learning. I was formally at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I was working as a teacher educator and some of our Creese service teacher programs. And I was also involved in various research groups some of which concerned the games and learning focus on learning analytics notions of play all of which were saturated with digital practices digital identities and the kind of everyday digital literacy that many of us now take for granted. And I mention all of that boundary crossing and all of that work because certain academic fields of study like the field of Learning Sciences honors and responds to these types of changes in both formal and informal learning environments and so we've had now for more than a few decades a field of the learning sciences sciences that cares deeply about how people learn or whether it's in a classroom or in a park how their bodies how their everyday practices how their cultural traditions inform their learning and form their social relationships.

Remi: [00:04:09] And I've been steeped in that work and I've been trained from a methodological perspective as a researcher and I work as a designer with various communities. As somebody who cares about the study of learning and in my case particularly the study of how educators learn and so as you noted I tend to describe myself particular to some people as a learning scientist.

Bonni: [00:04:31] One of the things that I've observed about you is that you seem to me to approach it in a more playful way than some of the other researchers that I have had the honor of being able to talk to on this show is that an

accurate perception do you consider yourself in some sort of play mode while you're exploring these ideas and possibilities.

Remi: [00:04:52] Bonni, I appreciate you picking up on that and I would agree. I have spent some time in my career formally studying both games and play. I've written a little bit about that and whether that's game based learning in classrooms or notions of playfulness and educator pedagogy. So that is of interest to me but of course I love what I do and I love the people I work with and I find that a sense of open-ended inquiry a notion of inherent motivation and creative approaches to the kind of work that I produce and the kind of work that motivates me to be in higher education. Yeah it's it can be quite playful and creative and if it wasn't I don't know if I'd be doing the work I do.

Bonni: [00:05:34] One of the things that I discovered that we both have in common. I mean we have actually a lot more than this in common I've already discovered but we are both fans of a podcast called On Being and one of the recent episodes was a woman whose research is in mindfulness and also mindlessness and she contrasted those things but one of the things I really picked up on which I think has made me already a better teacher and it's only been four days since I listened to the episode... Well, some of these things you know you discover that you had done just intuitively but then you realize there's some research to back it up and I've been really working at making my doctoral students have a better experience as they're... I teach a class on leadership and technology for educators and they're just many times so stressed out when they meet me.

Bonni: [00:06:20] And this has caused some difficulty for me in the past and then I listened to her describe a study which it seems so intuitive but I just found it a bit profound that if we tell people in a research environment that what you're doing right now is work and then we ask you how much would you need to pay you as research subjects in order to do this again in the future.

Bonni: [00:06:42] You're going to price yourself much higher and also perceive that you worked a lot harder than if we describe what you're doing as play. Even if we have do the exact same thing in her case they were doing something with comics or drawings or something that would naturally just seem playful for most of us. But how they described it made a profound difference in how people perceived how much they should be paid to be research subjects and also how much they should enjoy whatever it is they're doing.

Bonni: [00:07:09] And that was one of the things I was encouraging my students in an e-mail after I listened that I had been encouraging them. "I know this is really hard and I know that it feels like this is so insurmountable what I'm asking to do in eight weeks - but could you kind of seem like you're playing in a little bit and just try... What happens if I click here and try to take on that?" And then I realize there's actually a body of research to back up this idea of the benefits of playfulness.

Remi: [00:07:34] Of course. It reminds me that play is not a synonym for fun. And that for folks who've studied play and folks who I think who consider the kind of critical dimensions of playfulness play can be very transgressive play can be a form of critique. You mentioned this podcast On Being. There's a quote from from it that I know you she shared with me that concerns imagination play as a way of perhaps envisioning alternative futures - some of which might be quite different than some of the conditions that people might live under now.

Remi: [00:08:11] And so [when] we think of play we can think of you know everything from you know the theatre of the oppressed and the work of Augusto Boal to you know play as a means of social cohesion to play as a means of Critical Resistance and so it's not all so-called fun and games. One of my favorite philosophers who has written about play and games talked about playfulness as being perhaps the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles. And so we need to think about the obstacles that we can put in front of ourselves and overcome in voluntary ways even if we're choosing to do that entirely from a voluntary stance.

Bonni: [00:08:54] One of your recent keynotes - and I have to say it cracked me up because I thought if I was given the topic to talk about all three of these things my head might explode. But you you gave a talk on leadership, equity, and creativity and just to really throw a softball at you will just get rid of one of those for the time being and just talk about equity and creativity. I wonder if you could spend a few minutes sharing some of the ways in which you have observed equity and creativity intersecting.

Remi: [00:09:23] Sure well I'll give a first bit of context. The keynote I gave was a regional conference here in the Denver metro area put out by Metropolitan State University and their technology teaching and learning with technology symposium and the role I played as the keynote was not to just say some inspiring things or throw some spaghetti at the wall and see what would stick. But to set up a day of design work. And so the hundred odd people that came to this conference were there to really get their hands dirty as higher education

faculty and administrators staff and others who are thinking and working at the intersections of these three core themes.

Remi: [00:10:04] And so attendees came to this conference knowing they were going to spend a day together working around ideas of creativity or working to analyze discuss and tackle notions of equity in higher education. And you also mentioned the third theme today which is leadership and so my role in giving this keynote was to provide some examples and some provocative means of thinking about these themes and then bringing folks into a day of hands on design work.

Remi: [00:10:35] So that was context, but to your question, Bonni, where do themes like creativity and equity intersect? One of the communities that's been inspiring me for the last number of years that I think brings together this work in a nice way is the broad digital pedagogy community and I know you've had quite a few guests on this podcast over the years who have been affiliated in various ways with the digital pedagogy community and I think when thinking about it when I think of those folks and how they think of instructional design of pedagogy of engaging in the online spaces they often do so first from a stance of creativity.

Remi: [00:11:11] How can we move around the constraints of a particular learning management system? How can we bring discussions to life? How do we think more fluidly about student teacher relationships or inherently some of the power dynamics that exist within any teaching and learning setting? Whether it's online or off. So there's a lot of creativity there of blurring boundaries of pushing boundaries.

Remi: [00:11:35] And of course that often dovetails with notions of equity of critiquing particular power arrangements dynamics or inequities that might pervade some of the tools that we choose to use some of the types of interactions that become patterns or habits in our teaching over time. And I think that many of the folks who are who are working and writing and sharing at the intersection of that community are thinking really critically about that intersection of creativity and equity and in this keynote I gave I mentioned some of the work that that #digped community has done both nationally and now also the work that I'm helping to support on my campus. And briefly I'll mention that we have an initiative for our faculty at the University of Colorado in Denver called Thing Studio and Thing Studio is an incubator of critical digital pedagogy on our campus. It's really trying to bring to light these intersections that you mentioned the intersection between creative and critical pedagogy more

equitable approaches to the design of facilitation of courses both online and face to face and the type of leadership faculty leadership that is necessary to grow that work at our institution.

Bonni: [00:12:48] You talked about this quote that you and I had shared before starting and it's from Daniel Kahneman and he wrote the book *Thinking Fast and Slow* which is a wonderful book for anyone that's not read it and he's a Nobel Prize winner. He won a Nobel prize for being one of the people to develop and I don't know if create is the right word but came up with behavioral economics and the context for this quote is he's talking about his love of changing his mind. And I've just been intrigued with this whole idea of people that I consider to be brilliant who really foster changing their mind.

Bonni: [00:13:30] I still will never forget the seventy fifth episode of one of my podcasts that I love to listen to called *very bad wizards* and they have talked about this before on the show but it's been so long that if you haven't been listening for eons you probably won't know what I'm talking about, listeners, but their seventy fifth episode - they had these amazing thinkers and researchers I mean just at every kind of amazing school you could possibly think of come on and talk about within the last five years. What is something that they have changed their mind about.

Bonni: [00:14:01] And I just I thought oh my gosh that it's it's I need to remember that very smart people are highly capable of also changing their minds about kids that can help me be a better activist in the areas that I want to be in my life and that kind of change that I hope to be some small part of creating in this world so that Daniel. Daniel Kahneman quote just really struck me because he talks about imagination but he's also taking that context of imagination and applying it to this idea of changing our minds about things and thinking critically. So here's the quote and then I'll of course give you some time to respond and reflect on what he said.

Bonni: [00:14:39] His quote is: "Overconfidence is really associated with a failure of imagination. When you cannot imagine an alternative to your belief, you are convinced that your belief is true." And one of the ways in which I thought that might apply to some of the work that you've done is in this area writing our civic futures. You want to share a little bit about that and maybe you're sort of helping people fight against overconfidence?

Remi: [00:15:07] Well you know the first... So, again, a lovely quote on notions of truth and belief. Reminds me of Stuart Firestein's book, *Ignorance*, which I know

we will talk about recommendations later on in our conversation today although now I found myself recommending and highly highly encouraging folks to read Firestone's book of ignorance. She writes about the need to develop high quality ignorance and I have. Whether by design or by stumbling into certain situations often find myself in circumstances where I need to develop high quality ignorance I need to think very carefully about what it is that I don't know - whether it's how to design a research study, how to work on a team, how to ask a particular type of question, how to mentor a doctoral student, how to write a research paper, and this idea of cultivating high quality ignorance is particularly necessary in an age when we're of course saturated with knowledge much of which can be contested.

Remi: [00:16:10] But of course our ability to change our minds about what kind of counts what's true and what works in particular circumstances is very important. So again I really appreciate this quote. So yeah you mentioned briefly that that the idea of imagining alternative ways of perhaps reading a text or seeing how other people think or having conversations about particular ideas is something that I'm very interested in these days.

Remi: [00:16:38] I've always been quite interested in how people come together, have conversations, and begin to engage with one another in critical ways. It has led me to get interested in the idea of web annotation and distributed tools that are open that are public that are interoperable that can bring communities of people together to have critical conversations about things that they care about and in short we had the honor of co-founding and now working on a project called the marginal syllabus with folks from the National Writing Project by university local K12 educators that brings together educators preservers teachers school administrators learning scientists and others who are having conversations about educational equity and are doing so using web annotation I can talk more about what that means and what that looks like. But it is a way in which people's ideas can be challenged.

Remi: [00:17:41] People can ask questions of themselves or of authors people can bring texts into their professional context and make it relevant to perhaps the questions that they're asking about in their day to day work.

Bonni: [00:17:54] I think it probably would be helpful to remind listeners - we have talked about it before - but I'm not sure I have been very good about calling it web annotation so people might remember me calling it social reading or social annotations - of course there's lots of different ways we could describe this but

why don't you talk a little bit about what it would be like if you and I were both participating in web annotation together or even people listening, yeah...

Remi: [00:18:18] Well, I'll briefly mention that Mosaic, which was the very first web browser, had an annotation built in. The idea of marking up a text, of adding margin's to a book, or highlighting parts of a paragraph. Putting a sticky note into a text - whether that's a material book or something online. When you read a novel and you see expert footnotes that explain language in new ways. These are always an annotation has been used for millennia in some cases whether or not we're talking about the Internet. But again our very first web browser Mosaic had annotation baked into its source code and over the years there have been many many many annotation platforms that allow readers of the Internet to add their voice to layer their thinking atop a document atop a text. And I've become particularly entangled with in the best sense of very unique nonprofit organization called Hypothes.is that has developed an open source platform for web annotation and it could allow for as you mentioned bounty social reading or bringing multiple people together on top of a text to read something and then to have a conversation essentially to use annotation as a means of in our project like convening a geeky book club. Let's all gather atop a text and begin to talk about what matters to us.

Remi: [00:19:45] And so this project that I've mentioned- marginal syllabus - is an intentional technical and political double entendre. It's technical in the sense that you know margins are places now where we can have a conversation. Annotation happens in the margins of texts - but the text that we're choosing to read are not just anything about education like classroom management or grading policy.

Remi: [00:20:12] Rather, we're talking with authors and we're reading texts that are marginal or contrary to some of the dominant norms that pervade education and that of course really helps us to focus on notions of educational equity. And so the marginal syllabus is now in its second year. Last year during our first pilot year we convened nine conversations with 10 different partner authors. We brought together nearly 75 educators who participated in these open these public conversations using the hypothesis platform and we've now grown that effort into a more formal partnership with the National Writing Project an educator innovator and they've been a host and will continue to host the 2017 18 marginal syllabus all of which is organized around the theme of writing our civic futures. And we have a variety of author partnerships and also publisher partnerships. People are coming together reading texts about civic engagement and having conversations and using web annotation. The people

who are doing that are educators and those conversations are not only about civic engagement but the application of these ideas to everyday classroom practice.

Bonni: [00:21:30] We talked earlier about this notion of playfulness and I think that probably since I my first career out of college was teaching computer classes and a lot of my daily life was just discovering new things that technology could do and so my tendency is to just go wow that's really cool that you can do that and then and then think, but why would you want to do that? Because if I come across somebody else that they would be if I described if I described from a very elementary standpoint you know you can put this layer and then you could do this and then there's kind of this but why would you want to do that? That's not my first thought is to think like well why would ever want to do that is just more like wow look you could do this with. That's really neat. I didn't know you could do that. And so I'm wondering what have been some of the surprises that have come up for you because you really seem to have such a good imagination. I need people like you to help me imagine what I could possibly use these tools for. But you seem to just already have that really gift for yourself of just being able to imagine it. What about these projects was surprising to you that was different from how you initially had envisioned it?

Remi: [00:22:42] Sure that's a great question, Bonni, why and what educators for example jump into this type of opportunity? One I see this as an opportunity to design open, professional learning. We know that educators are learning because their peers their colleagues in their networks say hey here's a professionally relevant opportunity and I think we're seeing now and I'm speaking quite broadly the emergence of everything from Twitter chats to other opportunities that allow educators free public socially networked opportunities that are relevant to their professional learning.

Remi: [00:23:19] A lot of those instances though like Twitter chats seemed to be kind of bereft of context and in the case of web annotation we turn texts into contexts for professional learning. So that's one thing that I've found to be both surprising and very promising. The other thing particularly about our marginal syllabus project our author partnerships we partner with authors who are writing these texts whether those are classroom teachers higher education professors scholars researchers and so there's a way of having that book club extend almost into an ask the author or type of interaction. And we're seeing that now in our current November conversation which is about civic imagination and the two scholars Nicole Mirra and Antero Garcia, whom we're reading, are joining us in the margins and we can have an exchange and by talking with authors.

Remi: [00:24:13] By turning texts into contexts, we also begin to change notions of voice and authority. Just because something's been published on the web just because of a research article has been finished and put out there it's gone through peer review. That doesn't mean that the conversation is over. In fact maybe the conversation is just beginning.

Remi: [00:24:32] But of course who isn't invited into that conversation who is able to participate who's able to share their questions. That's where meditation allows for a more participatory - dare I say - a more democratic approach to interaction...

Bonni: [00:24:48] Are there any other particular surprises of how this whole thing has come about that for you you're thinking this is so much bigger than I imagined when we first got started?

Remi: [00:24:57] You know just yesterday I had a teacher educator at a university bring the online marginal syllabus conversation into her classroom teaching. And so she was organizing her preservice teachers into groups of students who were then collectively and collaboratively reading our online text and then participating in the conversation. I really curious about how online activity, the ways in which a web annotation mediates interaction in a digital space is complemented by face to face discussions classroom conversations. There's an interesting hybridity there and I think that there are interesting literacy practices that are crossing both classroom and online settings. Literacy practices that are professionally relevant very much drawing upon everyday media practices that are really of interest to me and I look forward to researching that in the future.

Bonni: [00:25:54] This is the point in the show where we each get to give recommendations and my recommendation is going to be that people go and read a post that Maha Bali had written for Prof. Hacker where she provides some ways that we might get started in participating in these collaborative annotations. This is one of those things that you would sort of have to know that it existed.

Bonni: [00:26:17] I mean you could create a hypothesis account you could install the extension in your browser that extension sort of opens up a window of a view into whatever this layer is that exists on top of somebody's website. But if you were to go to to teachinginhighered.com and open up the window to look at the annotation layer to my knowledge it would be blank.

Bonni: [00:26:38] Although we should probably fill this episode with some annotations just to get some practice doing it so I hope to be wrong about this. You know a couple of weeks after this episode airs.

Bonni: [00:26:47] So since it might be hard for you to have this sense of imagination like Remi is talking about Maha's post would give you the ability to say oh I'm really interested in going and checking out that one.

Bonni: [00:26:59] Check out that one and then you can see this layer of the Web that otherwise without a hypothesis account would otherwise be invisible to you. Yes that's my recommendation that people go check out her post and try when of course I'll have in the show notes for this episode which will be at teachinginhighered.com/178. All of the other ones that Remi mentioned as well so there'll be lots of places for you if you decide to get a hypothesis account and want to try some of this out. Lots of places to go explore.

Remi: [00:27:28] That's great. I'm going to recommend a few folks who I know have been playing around with annotation in some very interesting ways. One is that Alan Levine his Twitter handle is @CogDog and he of course is famous in various communities for really brokering the deal. One of six community launching that promoting that. Leading that in so many ways.

Remi: [00:27:52] But as regards annotation he's been incorporating Web annotation into some of his more recent endeavors including the network narrative's or net. Now our community along with his colleague me as a more.

Remi: [00:28:04] And I would also recommend another scholar and annotation researcher Juan Pablo Alperin. His Twitter handle is @juancommander and he's been researching annotation in terms of his own classroom teaching as well as faculty adoption of annotation practices in their own teaching and is a big open access advocate and so both.

Remi: [00:28:27] Both those folks have been really pushing annotation in some interesting directions from teaching and learning perspectives and from design perspective as well.

Bonni: [00:28:35] You mentioned Alan Levine. And just because we had shared about playfulness earlier in the episode I've been talking about him in a couple of key notes that I've done recently because one of the things I love about his

net narrative's site which I linked to in the show notes is that he has the upper right hand corner.

Bonni: [00:28:52] He has what's called the hamburger menu which you've seen these but you probably don't realize that's what they're called but it's a little icon that shows up sometimes on mobile devices. But now more and more just even when you're on your computer on the web it's the three lines horizontal lines a button that would indicate oh there's a menu under here to click on.

Bonni: [00:29:09] So again those of you listening if you're not familiar with the term hamburger menu you've seen this before. So he has a hamburger menu in the upper right hand corner of his sight and right next to it are the words Do not click. And this is just so indicative of his playfulness and how he just invites learners to just engage in such fun and creative ways. So of course what do we do. We click because it says don't click.

Bonni: [00:29:39] But you know he wants to click and so it opens up an entire back door view of his site to all these other things that you can go and explore and I just love his inspiration that he's been for me with that whole idea of playfulness as well and I just keep thinking about that as far as my own course design and wanting to be better at what I do.

Bonni: [00:29:56] So he's great really good reference and one Pablo I'm not familiar with so I'm so excited to have someone new to connect with and start to learn more about too.

Remi: [00:30:04] Absolutely. They're both just great resources and lovely people.

Bonni: [00:30:07] Well I am so glad that you invested the time to come on the show and in fact twice this time for real and it's been such a pleasure I got to hear you present in person at the Digital Media and Learning Conference and that was wonderful because you brought in so many other people that have ignited your imagination to actually link to that in this show. So people can go and see some of the people that you didn't mention who've inspired you as well and just thank you so much for your time today.

Remi: [00:30:34] Bonni. You're very welcome. Thank you. It's been a pleasure to connect and I hope we'll have future conversations.

Bonni: [00:30:40] I had such a great time talking today to Remi Kalir and just thanks so much to him for being willing to come on the show and thanks to all of you for listening.

Bonni: [00:30:50] If you have yet to give a rating or a review to the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast it's really easy to do from within whatever podcast player you used to listen. So if its iTunes the or the Apple podcasts app you just go look for teach in higher ed and there's a place to give ratings or reviews.

Bonni: [00:31:06] The reason I bring it up is I don't bring it up too often anymore but we're so close to having a nice good 100 reviews and I'd love to see it bump over a hundred and just be able to expose more people to the show.

Bonni: [00:31:20] So if you'd be willing to take just a quick minute it'll take you less than a minute to do it. A number of stars for the show or you could even write a few words about what you've been able to take away from listening. Thanks to all of you who take action on this and to those of you who already have really appreciate those reviews that come in they really just make my day and again help other people discover. Thanks so much for listening. I look forward to seeing you next time.

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Bonni: [00:00:49] I am so excited about today's guest Remi Kalir. He is an Assistant Professor of Information and Learning Technologies at CU Denver's School of Education and Human Development. I've had a chance to read his blog for a while, follow him on Twitter and most recently been able to see him speak at the Digital Media and Learning Conference. And I'm just so excited to get today's chance to speak with him live for the show and introduce many of you to him.

Bonni: [00:01:21] Remi is a learning scientist who researches and designs educator learning associated with everyday digital media practices. He was a 2016 National Science Foundation Data Consortium Fellow and is currently an Open Educational Resource Research Fellow with the Open Education Group. Remi is currently researching how educators learn via open and collaborative web annotation. Remi, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Remi: [00:01:53] Thanks Bonni, it's lovely to be here.

Bonni: [00:01:55] It is lovely to be talking to you and this is actually try number two for us says a meltdown of one of our very important pieces of podcasting equipment and I just appreciate the second opportunity to actually talk to you as we record today.

Remi: [00:02:10] Again it's really lovely join you. I'm really excited about our conversations.

Bonni: [00:02:14] One of the things I've been thinking about a lot is just the words that we use to describe ourselves. My doctoral students are some of them blogging for the first time and they have them put together in about me page.

Bonni: [00:02:26] And then of course it makes me go look at my about me page and I go every time I look at it, it needs work. I don't think will ever be done with that project but I've been thinking about the words we use to describe ourselves. And you use one very early in your bio and that is you refer to yourself as a learning scientist. And I'm curious when did you first discover that that's what you do.

Remi: [00:02:49] You know I went to graduate school and did my doctorate at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. And while I was there dabbled across multiple disciplinary boundaries I did work in digital media and learning. I was formally at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I was working as a teacher educator and some of our Creese service teacher programs. And I was also involved in various research groups some of which concerned the games and learning focus on learning analytics notions of play all of which were saturated with digital practices digital identities and the kind of everyday digital literacy that many of us now take for granted. And I mention all of that boundary crossing and all of that work because certain academic fields of study like the field of Learning Sciences honors and responds to these types of changes in both formal and informal learning environments and so we've had

now for more than a few decades a field of the learning sciences sciences that cares deeply about how people learn or whether it's in a classroom or in a park how their bodies how their everyday practices how their cultural traditions inform their learning and form their social relationships.

Remi: [00:04:09] And I've been steeped in that work and I've been trained from a methodological perspective as a researcher and I work as a designer with various communities. As somebody who cares about the study of learning and in my case particularly the study of how educators learn and so as you noted I tend to describe myself particular to some people as a learning scientist.

Bonni: [00:04:31] One of the things that I've observed about you is that you seem to me to approach it in a more playful way than some of the other researchers that I have had the honor of being able to talk to on this show is that an accurate perception do you consider yourself in some sort of play mode while you're exploring these ideas and possibilities.

Remi: [00:04:52] Bonni, I appreciate you picking up on that and I would agree. I have spent some time in my career formally studying both games and play. I've written a little bit about that and whether that's game based learning in classrooms or notions of playfulness and educator pedagogy. So that is of interest to me but of course I love what I do and I love the people I work with and I find that a sense of open-ended inquiry a notion of inherent motivation and creative approaches to the kind of work that I produce and the kind of work that motivates me to be in higher education. Yeah it's it can be quite playful and creative and if it wasn't I don't know if I'd be doing the work I do.

Bonni: [00:05:34] One of the things that I discovered that we both have in common. I mean we have actually a lot more than this in common I've already discovered but we are both fans of a podcast called On Being and one of the recent episodes was a woman whose research is in mindfulness and also mindlessness and she contrasted those things but one of the things I really picked up on which I think has made me already a better teacher and it's only been four days since I listened to the episode... Well, some of these things you know you discover that you had done just intuitively but then you realize there's some research to back it up and I've been really working at making my doctoral students have a better experience as they're... I teach a class on leadership and technology for educators and they're just many times so stressed out when they meet me.

Bonni: [00:06:20] And this has caused some difficulty for me in the past and then I listened to her describe a study which it seems so intuitive but I just found it a bit profound that if we tell people in a research environment that what you're doing right now is work and then we ask you how much would you need to pay you as research subjects in order to do this again in the future.

Bonni: [00:06:42] You're going to price yourself much higher and also perceive that you worked a lot harder than if we describe what you're doing as play. Even if we have do the exact same thing in her case they were doing something with comics or drawings or something that would naturally just seem playful for most of us. But how they described it made a profound difference in how people perceived how much they should be paid to be research subjects and also how much they should enjoy whatever it is they're doing.

Bonni: [00:07:09] And that was one of the things I was encouraging my students in an e-mail after I listened that I had been encouraging them. "I know this is really hard and I know that it feels like this is so insurmountable what I'm asking to do in eight weeks - but could you kind of seem like you're playing in a little bit and just try... What happens if I click here and try to take on that?" And then I realize there's actually a body of research to back up this idea of the benefits of playfulness.

Remi: [00:07:34] Of course. It reminds me that play is not a synonym for fun. And that for folks who've studied play and folks who I think who consider the kind of critical dimensions of playfulness play can be very transgressive play can be a form of critique. You mentioned this podcast On Being. There's a quote from from it that I know you she shared with me that concerns imagination play as a way of perhaps envisioning alternative futures - some of which might be quite different than some of the conditions that people might live under now.

Remi: [00:08:11] And so [when] we think of play we can think of you know everything from you know the theatre of the oppressed and the work of Augusto Boal to you know play as a means of social cohesion to play as a means of Critical Resistance and so it's not all so-called fun and games. One of my favorite philosophers who has written about play and games talked about playfulness as being perhaps the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles. And so we need to think about the obstacles that we can put in front of ourselves and overcome in voluntary ways even if we're choosing to do that entirely from a voluntary stance.

Bonni: [00:08:54] One of your recent keynotes - and I have to say it cracked me up because I thought if I was given the topic to talk about all three of these things my head might explode. But you you gave a talk on leadership, equity, and creativity and just to really throw a softball at you will just get rid of one of those for the time being and just talk about equity and creativity. I wonder if you could spend a few minutes sharing some of the ways in which you have observed equity and creativity intersecting.

Remi: [00:09:23] Sure well I'll give a first bit of context. The keynote I gave was a regional conference here in the Denver metro area put out by Metropolitan State University and their technology teaching and learning with technology symposium and the role I played as the keynote was not to just say some inspiring things or throw some spaghetti at the wall and see what would stick. But to set up a day of design work. And so the hundred odd people that came to this conference were there to really get their hands dirty as higher education faculty and administrators staff and others who are thinking and working at the intersections of these three core themes.

Remi: [00:10:04] And so attendees came to this conference knowing they were going to spend a day together working around ideas of creativity or working to analyze discuss and tackle notions of equity in higher education. And you also mentioned the third theme today which is leadership and so my role in giving this keynote was to provide some examples and some provocative means of thinking about these themes and then bringing folks into a day of hands on design work.

Remi: [00:10:35] So that was context, but to your question, Bonni, where do themes like creativity and equity intersect? One of the communities that's been inspiring me for the last number of years that I think brings together this work in a nice way is the broad digital pedagogy community and I know you've had quite a few guests on this podcast over the years who have been affiliated in various ways with the digital pedagogy community and I think when thinking about it when I think of those folks and how they think of instructional design of pedagogy of engaging in the online spaces they often do so first from a stance of creativity.

Remi: [00:11:11] How can we move around the constraints of a particular learning management system? How can we bring discussions to life? How do we think more fluidly about student teacher relationships or inherently some of the power dynamics that exist within any teaching and learning setting?

Whether it's online or off. So there's a lot of creativity there of blurring boundaries of pushing boundaries.

Remi: [00:11:35] And of course that often dovetails with notions of equity of critiquing particular power arrangements dynamics or inequities that might pervade some of the tools that we choose to use some of the types of interactions that become patterns or habits in our teaching over time. And I think that many of the folks who are who are working and writing and sharing at the intersection of that community are thinking really critically about that intersection of creativity and equity and in this keynote I gave I mentioned some of the work that that #digped community has done both nationally and now also the work that I'm helping to support on my campus. And briefly I'll mention that we have an initiative for our faculty at the University of Colorado in Denver called Thing Studio and Thing Studio is an incubator of critical digital pedagogy on our campus. It's really trying to bring to light these intersections that you mentioned the intersection between creative and critical pedagogy more equitable approaches to the design of facilitation of courses both online and face to face and the type of leadership faculty leadership that is necessary to grow that work at our institution.

Bonni: [00:12:48] You talked about this quote that you and I had shared before starting and it's from Daniel Kahneman and he wrote the book Thinking Fast and Slow which is a wonderful book for anyone that's not read it and he's a Nobel Prize winner. He won a Nobel prize for being one of the people to develop and I don't know if create is the right word but came up with behavioral economics and the context for this quote is he's talking about his love of changing his mind. And I've just been intrigued with this whole idea of people that I consider to be brilliant who really foster changing their mind.

Bonni: [00:13:30] I still will never forget the seventy fifth episode of one of my podcasts that I love to listen to called very bad wizards and they have talked about this before on the show but it's been so long that if you haven't been listening for eons you probably won't know what I'm talking about, listeners, but their seventy fifth episode - they had these amazing thinkers and researchers I mean just at every kind of amazing school you could possibly think of come on and talk about within the last five years. What is something that they have changed their mind about.

Bonni: [00:14:01] And I just I thought oh my gosh that it's it's I need to remember that very smart people are highly capable of also changing their minds about kids that can help me be a better activist in the areas that I want to be in my life

and that kind of change that I hope to be some small part of creating in this world so that Daniel. Daniel Kahneman quote just really struck me because he talks about imagination but he's also taking that context of imagination and applying it to this idea of changing our minds about things and thinking critically. So here's the quote and then I'll of course give you some time to respond and reflect on what he said.

Bonni: [00:14:39] His quote is: "Overconfidence is really associated with a failure of imagination. When you cannot imagine an alternative to your belief, you are convinced that your belief is true." And one of the ways in which I thought that might apply to some of the work that you've done is in this area writing our civic futures. You want to share a little bit about that and maybe you're sort of helping people fight against overconfidence?

Remi: [00:15:07] Well you know the first... So, again, a lovely quote on notions of truth and belief. Reminds me of Stuart Firestein's book, Ignorance, which I know we will talk about recommendations later on in our conversation today although now I found myself recommending and highly highly encouraging folks to read Firestone's book of ignorance. She writes about the need to develop high quality ignorance and I have. Whether by design or by stumbling into certain situations often find myself in circumstances where I need to develop high quality ignorance I need to think very carefully about what it is that I don't know - whether it's how to design a research study, how to work on a team, how to ask a particular type of question, how to mentor a doctoral student, how to write a research paper, and this idea of cultivating high quality ignorance is particularly necessary in an age when we're of course saturated with knowledge much of which can be contested.

Remi: [00:16:10] But of course our ability to change our minds about what kind of counts what's true and what works in particular circumstances is very important. So again I really appreciate this quote. So yeah you mentioned briefly that that the idea of imagining alternative ways of perhaps reading a text or seeing how other people think or having conversations about particular ideas is something that I'm very interested in these days.

Remi: [00:16:38] I've always been quite interested in how people come together, have conversations, and begin to engage with one another in critical ways. It has led me to get interested in the idea of web annotation and distributed tools that are open that are public that are interoperable that can bring communities of people together to have critical conversations about things that they care about and in short we had the honor of co-founding and now working on a

project called the marginal syllabus with folks from the National Writing Project by university local K12 educators that brings together educators preservers teachers school administrators learning scientists and others who are having conversations about educational equity and are doing so using web annotation I can talk more about what that means and what that looks like. But it is a way in which people's ideas can be challenged.

Remi: [00:17:41] People can ask questions of themselves or of authors people can bring texts into their professional context and make it relevant to perhaps the questions that they're asking about in their day to day work.

Bonni: [00:17:54] I think it probably would be helpful to remind listeners - we have talked about it before - but I'm not sure I have been very good about calling it web annotation so people might remember me calling it social reading or social annotations - of course there's lots of different ways we could describe this but why don't you talk a little bit about what it would be like if you and I were both participating in web annotation together or even people listening, yeah...

Remi: [00:18:18] Well, I'll briefly mention that Mosaic, which was the very first web browser, had an annotation built in. The idea of marking up a text, of adding margin's to a book, or highlighting parts of a paragraph. Putting a sticky note into a text - whether that's a material book or something online. When you read a novel and you see expert footnotes that explain language in new ways. These are always an annotation has been used for millennia in some cases whether or not we're talking about the Internet. But again our very first web browser Mosaic had annotation baked into its source code and over the years there have been many many many annotation platforms that allow readers of the Internet to add their voice to layer their thinking atop a document atop a text. And I've become particularly entangled with in the best sense of very unique nonprofit organization called Hypothes.is that has developed an open source platform for web annotation and it could allow for as you mentioned bounty social reading or bringing multiple people together on top of a text to read something and then to have a conversation essentially to use annotation as a means of in our project like convening a geeky book club. Let's all gather atop a text and begin to talk about what matters to us.

Remi: [00:19:45] And so this project that I've mentioned- marginal syllabus - is an intentional technical and political double entendre. It's technical in the sense that you know margins are places now where we can have a conversation. Annotation happens in the margins of texts - but the text that we're choosing to

read are not just anything about education like classroom management or grading policy.

Remi: [00:20:12] Rather, we're talking with authors and we're reading texts that are marginal or contrary to some of the dominant norms that pervade education and that of course really helps us to focus on notions of educational equity. And so the marginal syllabus is now in its second year. Last year during our first pilot year we convened nine conversations with 10 different partner authors. We brought together nearly 75 educators who participated in these open these public conversations using the hypothesis platform and we've now grown that effort into a more formal partnership with the National Writing Project an educator innovator and they've been a host and will continue to host the 2017 18 marginal syllabus all of which is organized around the theme of writing our civic futures. And we have a variety of author partnerships and also publisher partnerships. People are coming together reading texts about civic engagement and having conversations and using web annotation. The people who are doing that are educators and those conversations are not only about civic engagement but the application of these ideas to everyday classroom practice.

Bonni: [00:21:30] We talked earlier about this notion of playfulness and I think that probably since I my first career out of college was teaching computer classes and a lot of my daily life was just discovering new things that technology could do and so my tendency is to just go wow that's really cool that you can do that and then and then think, but why would you want to do that? Because if I come across somebody else that they would be if I described if I described from a very elementary standpoint you know you can put this layer and then you could do this and then there's kind of this but why would you want to do that? That's not my first thought is to think like well why would ever want to do that is just more like wow look you could do this with. That's really neat. I didn't know you could do that. And so I'm wondering what have been some of the surprises that have come up for you because you really seem to have such a good imagination. I need people like you to help me imagine what I could possibly use these tools for. But you seem to just already have that really gift for yourself of just being able to imagine it. What about these projects was surprising to you that was different from how you initially had envisioned it?

Remi: [00:22:42] Sure that's a great question, Bonni, why and what educators for example jump into this type of opportunity? One I see this as an opportunity to design open, professional learning. We know that educators are learning because their peers their colleagues in their networks say hey here's a

professionally relevant opportunity and I think we're seeing now and I'm speaking quite broadly the emergence of everything from Twitter chats to other opportunities that allow educators free public socially networked opportunities that are relevant to their professional learning.

Remi: [00:23:19] A lot of those instances though like Twitter chats seemed to be kind of bereft of context and in the case of web annotation we turn texts into contexts for professional learning. So that's one thing that I've found to be both surprising and very promising. The other thing particularly about our marginal syllabus project our author partnerships we partner with authors who are writing these texts whether those are classroom teachers higher education professors scholars researchers and so there's a way of having that book club extend almost into an ask the author or type of interaction. And we're seeing that now in our current November conversation which is about civic imagination and the two scholars Nicole Mirra and Antero Garcia, whom we're reading, are joining us in the margins and we can have an exchange and by talking with authors.

Remi: [00:24:13] By turning texts into contexts, we also begin to change notions of voice and authority. Just because something's been published on the web just because of a research article has been finished and put out there it's gone through peer review. That doesn't mean that the conversation is over. In fact maybe the conversation is just beginning.

Remi: [00:24:32] But of course who isn't invited into that conversation who is able to participate who's able to share their questions. That's where meditation allows for a more participatory - dare I say - a more democratic approach to interaction...

Bonni: [00:24:48] Are there any other particular surprises of how this whole thing has come about that for you you're thinking this is so much bigger than I imagined when we first got started?

Remi: [00:24:57] You know just yesterday I had a teacher educator at a university bring the online marginal syllabus conversation into her classroom teaching. And so she was organizing her preservice teachers into groups of students who were then collectively and collaboratively reading our online text and then participating in the conversation. I really curious about how online activity, the ways in which a web annotation mediates interaction in a digital space is complemented by face to face discussions classroom conversations. There's an interesting hybridity there and I think that there are interesting literacy practices that are crossing both classroom and online settings. Literacy

practices that are professionally relevant very much drawing upon everyday media practices that are really of interest to me and I look forward to researching that in the future.

Bonni: [00:25:54] This is the point in the show where we each get to give recommendations and my recommendation is going to be that people go and read a post that Maha Bali had written for Prof. Hacker where she provides some ways that we might get started in participating in these collaborative annotations. This is one of those things that you would sort of have to know that it existed.

Bonni: [00:26:17] I mean you could create a hypothesis account you could install the extension in your browser that extension sort of opens up a window of a view into whatever this layer is that exists on top of somebody's website. But if you were to go to teachinginhighered.com and open up the window to look at the annotation layer to my knowledge it would be blank.

Bonni: [00:26:38] Although we should probably fill this episode with some annotations just to get some practice doing it so I hope to be wrong about this. You know a couple of weeks after this episode airs.

Bonni: [00:26:47] So since it might be hard for you to have this sense of imagination like Remi is talking about Maha's post would give you the ability to say oh I'm really interested in going and checking out that one.

Bonni: [00:26:59] Check out that one and then you can see this layer of the Web that otherwise without a hypothesis account would otherwise be invisible to you. Yes that's my recommendation that people go check out her post and try when of course I'll have in the show notes for this episode which will be at teachinginhighered.com/178. All of the other ones that Remi mentioned as well so there'll be lots of places for you if you decide to get a hypothesis account and want to try some of this out. Lots of places to go explore.

Remi: [00:27:28] That's great. I'm going to recommend a few folks who I know have been playing around with annotation in some very interesting ways. One is that Alan Levine his Twitter handle is @CogDog and he of course is famous in various communities for really brokering the deal. One of six community launching that promoting that. Leading that in so many ways.

Remi: [00:27:52] But as regards annotation he's been incorporating Web annotation into some of his more recent endeavors including the network narrative's or net. Now our community along with his colleague me as a more.

Remi: [00:28:04] And I would also recommend another scholar and annotation researcher Juan Pablo Alperin. His Twitter handle is @juancommander and he's been researching annotation in terms of his own classroom teaching as well as faculty adoption of annotation practices in their own teaching and is a big open access advocate and so both.

Remi: [00:28:27] Both those folks have been really pushing annotation in some interesting directions from teaching and learning perspectives and from design perspective as well.

Bonni: [00:28:35] You mentioned Alan Levine. And just because we had shared about playfulness earlier in the episode I've been talking about him in a couple of key notes that I've done recently because one of the things I love about his net narrative's site which I linked to in the show notes is that he has the upper right hand corner.

Bonni: [00:28:52] He has what's called the hamburger menu which you've seen these but you probably don't realize that's what they're called but it's a little icon that shows up sometimes on mobile devices. But now more and more just even when you're on your computer on the web it's the three lines horizontal lines a button that would indicate oh there's a menu under here to click on.

Bonni: [00:29:09] So again those of you listening if you're not familiar with the term hamburger menu you've seen this before. So he has a hamburger menu in the upper right hand corner of his sight and right next to it are the words Do not click. And this is just so indicative of his playfulness and how he just invites learners to just engage in such fun and creative ways. So of course what do we do. We click because it says don't click.

Bonni: [00:29:39] But you know he wants to click and so it opens up an entire back door view of his site to all these other things that you can go and explore and I just love his inspiration that he's been for me with that whole idea of playfulness as well and I just keep thinking about that as far as my own course design and wanting to be better at what I do.

Bonni: [00:29:56] So he's great really good reference and one Pablo I'm not familiar with so I'm so excited to have someone new to connect with and start to learn more about too.

Remi: [00:30:04] Absolutely. They're both just great resources and lovely people.

Bonni: [00:30:07] Well I am so glad that you invested the time to come on the show and in fact twice this time for real and it's been such a pleasure I got to hear you present in person at the Digital Media and Learning Conference and that was wonderful because you brought in so many other people that have ignited your imagination to actually link to that in this show. So people can go and see some of the people that you didn't mention who've inspired you as well and just thank you so much for your time today.

Remi: [00:30:34] Bonni. You're very welcome. Thank you. It's been a pleasure to connect and I hope we'll have future conversations.

Bonni: [00:30:40] I had such a great time talking today to Remi Kalir and just thanks so much to him for being willing to come on the show and thanks to all of you for listening.

Bonni: [00:30:50] If you have yet to give a rating or a review to the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast it's really easy to do from within whatever podcast player you used to listen. So if its iTunes the or the Apple podcasts app you just go look for teach in higher ed and there's a place to give ratings or reviews. The reason I bring it up is I don't bring it up too often anymore but we're so close to having a nice good 100 reviews and I'd love to see it bump over a hundred and just be able to expose more people to the show.

Bonni: [00:31:20] So if you'd be willing to take just a quick minute it'll take you less than a minute to do it. A number of stars for the show or you could even write a few words about what you've been able to take away from listening. Thanks to all of you who take action on this and to those of you who already have really appreciate those reviews that come in they really just make my day and again help other people discover. Thanks so much for listening. I look forward to seeing you next time.

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