***Indoor Voices*: Interview with Jill Grose-Fifer**, June 25, 2019

[Note: This transcript was automatically generated, and while it has been lightly edited, some errors remain.]

KC: Hello and welcome to indoor voices. This is Kathleen Collins from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Dr Jill Grose- Fifer is an associate professor in the psychology department here at John Jay. She thinks deeply about her teaching and works hard to keep it interesting, effective and relevant. She and two co authors have a book out this year called Teaching Psychology: An evidence Based Approach. It's a practical and scholarly guide for teachers, whether new to the job or looking for new ideas to help keep their teaching interesting, effective and relevant. And believe me, it's useful for really any discipline or subject. So if you teach any subject at all, you'll take away something valuable to put into action. I've had the good fortune to work with Jill on a couple of presentations for faculty, where we preach the gospel of information literacy. But I was glad for the opportunity to sit down with her and talk about the book her students in her career in a relatively quiet moment in between semesters. To learn more about Jill's work and her new book, Visit Indoor voices podcast dot com and enjoy my conversation with her now.

KC: Now I would like to hear the origins of this book, and I think that begins with the teaching of psychology Task Force.

JGF: So it really started when Maureen O'Connor was the executive officer of the doctoral program in psychology at the Graduate Center CUNY, and she's, you know, was charged with overseeing the graduate students, and many of them were coming to her saying, I'm teaching for the first time. I really don't know what to do. And so we started to teach a course called Teaching Psychology, and at the same time we put together this task force, which was a group of really dedicated students myself, Maureen and Patty Brooks. And so our idea was that we would have an annual pedagogy Day at the GC. And we would, you know, try and have students support each other as well. So we started to teach this course, teaching psychology, and we wanted it to be evidence based, and so we would put together compilations of readings for every class. But it was really difficult to get a very broad, comprehensive overview of the literature you know. So if you wanted to talk about writing in psychology classes, there's just so much written on it, and there are very few reviews. It became very clear to us that there was a need for a textbook to support new instructors, but also to support people who had been been teaching in a very traditional way and want to move to using a more students entered approach.

KC: And the three of you, the three co authors, have different sub disciplines, right? You're a neuroscientist, right?

JGF: Maureen is a psychology and the law person and Patty is a developmental psychologist and with a specialization in language.

KC: I'm sure for you to think of the resources and the literature in different places, the places you're used to digging for information.

JGF: I think it's also helpful in terms of how we approach a subject. Well, so I think we just

comet it from different angles. Sometimes, though, we do often teach some of the same classes. So even those are our specialties. We you know, Patty and I both teach introduction to psychology. I mean, it's helpful to have those different perspectives, and then Patty will often bring out developmental studies.

KC: How did you three work together and put your contributions together? How did you work?

JGF: So the initial planning was very collaborative. We laid out what we thought should be covered, and then we sent it to the reviewers, and the reviewers had some suggestions. So we revised it after that. And I think our initial plan changed a little bit. Oh, I think we thought we would each work on different chapters and then edit each other's work. In the end, it ended up that I wrote most of the book was though probably 95% of the book, and Patty was doing very regular editing and making suggestions, which was really helpful. And then at the end, Maureen gave… global kinds of ideas about, and it was really helpful to have, because sometimes when you were working on it and for a very long time, it's like you're in the weeds too close to it to sometimes see the big picture. So it was really helpful for Maureeb to read through it at the end and give us more global kinds of comments about perhaps just the feel of the book of as much as anything. And was it really conveying the vision that we really wanted it to convey so that some of the final edits I think we're really insightful, Um, in terms of it being the book. But we wanted

KC: It was successful. It comes out very well, smoothly. Looks like one voice, you know, one unified. So did the three of you choose those roles? Did that happen organically, or did you have to sort of put yourself… happened to look at it and claim it? Sounds like you have a good working relationship with these two already.

JGF: Yeah, ….many times collaborated on putting the Pedagogy Day together. The students have really taken over that, and Patty is now the sort of the lead person at the Graduate Center for Pedagogy. So she's been leading the Graduate Student Teaching Association.

KC: …and is that for psychology. Yeah, well, I want to talk about that in a minute. But in terms of the evidence based thrust that you were looking for, I'm sure you already had done a lot of research on this for doing the class. But did you come up with anything new? Did you learn new things and find new research?

JGF: Yeah, I found a ton of new research. And I think that was part of the problem is that when we started to try and collate readings, there was so much. And so, you know, it's difficult to decide all these of the seminal ones. Oh, this is a fairly good review because it doesn't really do it justice. I think a lot about the chapters on work, for instance, are so many different pedagogical takes on them. And on while cooperative learning is the number one a paradigm to use? There are many different forms of cooperative learning and cooperative learning. There's a lot written about it from a theoretical point of view as well as white as to why it works. But also the more practical, pragmatic. How does it work in the classroom How would you do it? What would it look like? And I think one of the things for me is that when I first started teaching, I would go to talks, pedagogy talks, and I wouldn't always see how to what make it work in my class. So what we've tried to do in the book is to give specific examples of how this might work in a psychology.

KC: That's what makes it such a user friendly book. I mean, I think people would rather see the immediate applicability. Although it's good to have sources if they want to dig further into whatever material you're referring to.

JGF: Yeah, well, I mean, I think the thing is to demonstrate that it works. So that's the evidence that we tried to lay out in the book. But also, how do you actually use it.

KC: One of the strengths, I think, is that you talk about some of these practices like group work. What are some of the other one's just student centered approach that a lot of people are very resistant to? And the way you address it is almost like, Look, I know what you're going to say. You hate group work, you don't want to deal with student-centered. And then you say, Here's why, to put it very simply, It's like, here's why you should give it a try and why it's good and why it works. And I think that's really understanding your audience.

JGF: Yeah, I mean, we've found students to be resistant to it. In our teaching of psychology doctoral class.

KC: I was thinking more faculty being resistant. But students?

JGF: I think despite the fact that we come from a discipline that has a huge literature on how people learn, people revert to what the ways they were taught as undergraduates. And so, despite knowing best, psychologists still often lecture. So various surveys have shown that lecturing is the most popular method of teaching among in psychology classes at the undergraduate level, despite the fact that we really should know that it doesn't work very well.

KC: So they're just doing what they're comfortable with, what how they were raised.

JGF: I think also because the doctoral students there, in the very highest echelon of students and, you know, they probably could learn in any way. And so I think they think, Well, I learned very effectively like that. So why can’t others, without thinking maybe other people are different to me.

KC: Which brings up universal design. Right? Um, can you give a little snapshot of what that's about?

JGF: Yes. So universal design for learning really came out of the idea of universal design in general, which was originally, I think, brought up in architecture. But people were designing buildings that had to be friendly for people that have physical disabilities. And so, you know, the way that buildings had gone up to that point would be they would be adults think they would put a ramp in or an elevator or something like that. Yeah, retrofitting rather than thinking about it as part of the design. And what universal design says is that you have to put these features in, but they're actually beneficial for everybody. So having a ramp could be really helpful if you've got a bicycle or you've got a cart that you need to pull up. It doesn't have to be specific for somebody with disability.

KC: So it's like the rising tide lifts all boats.

JGF: Exactly. So universal design for learning is a similar kind of principle, but it's in the classroom. So many students have accommodations, and the most common accommodation, I would say, is having extra time on exams. But you could just design your claws so that you are that the accommodations have built in because they benefit everybody. So, for instance, just having less questions on exam means that students feel less time pressured and they don't need to rush, which, when you think about what is an exam testing, we wanted to test student's knowledge rather than their ability to write really, really fast. And so I think that's just one example of something that you could build into the design of the curriculum that supports everybody. I mean, I think the other thing is just making sure that you have a variety of assignments, um, and assessments. So everybody has strengths and weaknesses. If you think of your learners as being very diverse, you need to have diverse kinds of methods of teaching assignments, diverse assessments in order to better support everybody.

KC: Your book is infused with information literacy and digital literacy ideas, which of course is near and dear to my heart and where our work crosses over. You know, in working with you on various things over the last few years, I've noticed that the idea of incorporating information literacy in your teaching seems very second nature to you and you sort of have this attitude like, How can you teach without this? But so many people don't and don't see the value of it. And I'm wondering if there was a point in your teaching where you were confronted with the need, the gap or whatever, or has it always been part of your way of teaching?

JGF: No, I was a very teacher-centered teacher when I first started because I was modeling on other people's recommendation. So I would, you know, I would look at the way other people were teaching and think that I had to do it in the same way. And I had a ton of PowerPoint slides. Talk about death by PowerPoint, because when I first started teaching more formal classes, those PowerPoint Banks were very prevalent, and they came with a textbook. And so, you know, it was as a naive teacher. I sort of thought, Oh, This is what I have to do rather than thinking about how it's the best way to teach students, I think I've always looked at a slide and thought, How am I going to help students understand this? And so I thought about explanations. But I really didn't think about a lot about skills. I didn't think about writing skills. I didn't think about group work skills. I didn't think about information literacy skills. Very, very minimal. I gave my students very minimal instruction on that, and I would use data, would ask them to use databases. But I would give them a quick demonstration in class, and I would assume that I that they already knew how to do it or it was so straightforward that they would, you know, pick it up just like that. And I certainly didn't spend time talking about what primary sources were. I guess when I first started teaching, we would say things like you can only use primary sources and I was teaching perhaps upper level classes. Whereas when I came to John Jay and started to teach more introductory level classes as well. And I think that's where the light bulb went off was when I would get work back and realize that students didn't know what a primary source was. And so then I had to build that instruction in and I think just working with other people like Kim Helmer, who was in the English department here. She helped me to really understand a much better pedagogical approach in terms of how to help students to gain those skills. I remember hearing her once talk about APA style and she really focused on, Well, what does what does it tell us and why? Why is the date near the beginning and why is that important? And so, you

know, as she was explaining it, all these light bulbs were going off in my mind because I think I hadn't … about it like that before either.

KC: Maybe deconstructed it. And realizing that the students just see this maybe jumble of letters come matters and it's like, What does this mean?

JGF: Yeah, So I think once I started to teach in first year seminar learning communities, I really began to change the way that I was asking students to, um to learn in my classes and with a much heavier emphasis on skill development.

KC: So two questions then related to that. One is, Did you notice an improvement in their output?

JGF: Huge improvement. It's interesting because I think students don't necessarily know what they're missing, so my evaluations were often really good. But they're very different now in terms of what students say about what they've learned. So I think before…Jill gives clear explanations, but now it's she takes the trouble to use lots of different ways of learning in her class and some of the skills that I've learned I'll use in my other classes, so they appreciate it. There's always kind of the surprise that - I'm surprised we did it like this.

KC: The other question related to that is, did you feel like, as I hear a lot of people worry about. You had to sacrifice content.

JGF: I did at first, and every time I teach a course, I take something else out. It means that I'm spending more time talking rather than having my students talk. And sometimes when students are talking or actively doing something, in some of my classes, I have many labs. Sometimes it's hard to get the balance right of how much time it's going to take, you have a discussion or to do a mini experiment. So even though I could do it in 10 minutes that it will take an entire lesson.

KC: I'm curious for being unfamiliar with your classroom, but what's an example of a mini experiment that you might be doing?

JGF: Yes, I teach a class, which is sensation perception, and it's really about how our senses work. So we look at that from a biological standpoint where we don't really do very many experiments in that sort of field, but also from a psychophysical standpoint, which means that you change a physical aspect of a stimulus and you ask somebody about their perception of it. There are lots of sort of reaction time experiments. I think of one as being a pretty straightforward example of it called the face inversion effect. So if you turn a chair upside down, you can recognize it pretty well as well as when it's upright, so there is no difference in performance. But if you turn a face upside down, it's much more difficult to recognize the face than when it's upright. So it's called the face inversion effect. So we demonstrate that by having students bring in laptops and, um, I've kind of collated a lot of web experiments and and I actually discovered this very easy program to use where I can present, simulate and collect reaction time. So I'm next time I'm gonna be working on that. But most of them are just available with a bit of searching on the Web, and this particular experiment you present faces upright and upside down, and they compared the reaction times for … is upside down and see that they're in

fact slower and less accurate. Or the face is upside down there when it's upright. So it's just, you know, like proof of the pudding is really what it is. Students really like it a lot. It helps their quantitative reasoning too. They'll often have to plot data. We'll put it into a table and calculate means. And so they're just getting more facile with using numbers and interpreting data, which, of course, is an important skill in psychology. It's harder than to connect it to the theory. So what does this show us, right? Did I show evidence of the face inversion effect? That's a relatively simple one… some that are more complicated.

KC: But overall, obviously, the inclusion of skills in your teaching far outweighs any sacrifice of taking something out.

JGF: Yeah, I mean, in our department, we've adopted the APA undergraduate guidelines, and there are five overarching goals. Only one of those is content. So I think I think of it more like that. That's a really important piece. But the content changes. You know, sometimes when I'm in particular teaching biological psychology. It's so different from when I was an undergraduate,

KC: just because of the advancement of research.

JGF: Yeah, exactly. And I think you know, a lot of our psychology textbooks now are written from a very Westernized standpoint, and I think that's changing the field of psychology is changing to be more inclusive of other cultures. And so I think you know what happened. The results that you get in a social psychology experiment in the Western world is very different from you'd get if you were looking at a more collectivistic culture. And I think that's kind of the fun thing about doing these many experiments is that our John Jay undergraduate population are mostly from collectivistic cultures. So in my psych 101 might not be replicating many experiments and that gives us an interesting talking point.

KC: Yeah, it strikes me that our jobs are similar in a way because the content is of lesser importance in relation to the skills. So, like a librarian, we're sort of showing you how to get to the thing, right? How to understand the thing. What gonna be in that bucket may be different, but the skills are what you need to learn. And that actually makes me think about this book in terms of multidisciplinary usage. I mean, I don't know if you thought about that when you were putting it together. But I feel like this book could be useful to people outside of psychology.

JGF: Yeah, actually, in the introduction we do say although it's called teaching psychology. So there's nothing about teaching that is specific to psychology. It's the examples that we give within the psychology discipline. But again, psychology is a huge field, so lots of different sub fields within that. Sure, and we try to sort of go through the sub feels There's probably quite a lot of biological psych examples in there because they're the ones that come to mind. Not all of the evidence comes from psychological studies. It was a lot comes from STEM because I think that's area where students have really struggled and they've made the biggest shift in teaching styles, to really shifting from teacher based to student based providing a lot of evidence

KC: I was gonna say the evidence is like, Look, here's what the research shows, and maybe a particular research article that you used wasn't even necessarily talking about Psychology is about the benefits of doing group work for, and one of the things that you say which I found

interesting was focusing on process, as opposed to focusing on performance. Or, as we've been saying, Content gives us the message that anyone can learn to teach better. So in that way, it's a very optimistic, helpful guide to new teachers as well as veteran teachers who are willing to shake things up a little bit. You can get better if you are so motivated.

JGF: So yeah, I think you know, as I say, it's really easy to be complacent if your peers are telling you you're doing a good job and your students are telling you you're doing a good job. But unless you really look for ways to change things up, you don't know if it's gonna get better.

KC: And it might be risky. To think about changing risky.

JGF: I think sometimes it feels risky and I think it was interesting this semester in particular, in the teaching of psychology doctoral course we have. I had a lot of students who said they felt anxious about teaching in a student centered way, that they would feel more in control if they were the only one talking in the room. Basically, which is interesting, because I think that there's a personality part there, too, because in other years we've had students saying, Thank goodness, I don't have to be the one at the front talking or other times this student centered approach made them feel much more comfortable in their role as guides rather than the person that was like the fountain of all knowledge.

KC: Well, you're right. It comes down to what someone's natural personality is. And, as you said earlier, what they're used to in their own educational journey and what seems comfortable is what they're gonna gravitate towards. But then, you know, you never know until you try the new thing.

JGF: How you understand it is now much looser. It feels a much looser classroom, and so I think if you're a new instructor, you might be a little anxious that it feels out of control in some way. But it's really not. I mean I think the noise in the classroom is from students learning from each other. And as long as you were checking in with people at a regular basis, right, and it's…When they're doing these many experiments, I'm going around the class and never see students not…

KC: I would think having a sense of ownership over their learning. It makes them more motivated and engaged in the process from the beginning to the final project.

JGF: Yeah. I mean, it definitely is much more interesting to be doing than to be just sitting passively listening.

KC: Yeah, you do a lot of mentoring. Do you find that the mentoring informs your classroom practices or vice versa? Or what is the relationship between those two parts of your teaching life?

JGF: Yeah, that's really interesting. I haven't really, I feel like I'm obviously the same person in both spaces, um I think I'm more available to my mentees than I am to my class with the students in my class. Because there are they working on your expectations of who I am and so I typically have doctoral students. Masters students, undergraduate students who are working on either honest theses. McNair theses. We have two research courses in our major. So maybe students in

those courses and where in those courses were trying to have them develop a research project, an independent research project. So the idea is forming in the 300 level and then in the 400 level, they're actually carrying out experiments. [Scaffolding?] Yeah, yes, But then I also have a whole host of other undergraduates and sometimes most of students who are just working in my lab because they want to get research experience. It's a sort of a hierarchy of mentoring, so I trained some students and then they train other students. It's difficult. I mean, I would love to have very regular lab meetings with all the students together, but just John Jay student schedules don't work like that. We've tried and some labs do it more successfully than I have. But I do try and check in with all my students on a regular basis, and often it's just they're kind of getting their feet wet. And those students who come in at an early stage of their academic journey will often stay with me on then, as they get more senior than they'll say, Oh, by the way, I'd like to take this course with you and then they we work more closely.

KC: That's a nice feeling on a project when you sort of form a long term relationship.

JGF: Yeah, it's really great. [And then I imagine many of them go on to graduate school?] Yeah, I have had many students go on to graduate school. Yeah, I mean, it's not for everybody. Um, it's a neuroscience lab. The recording procedures a kind of little bit tedious to learn. Putting an EEG cap with 64 electrodes on somebody's head takes a little bit of time, and some students just love it.

KC: I could imagine somebody really liking that, doing that kind of work. And some people don't, so it's good to learn a little bit about yourself.

JGF: it's not the only kind of research, But, you know, research isn't always really exciting. Sometimes it's mundane, and sometimes it's monotonous and repetitive. But it gets students a taste of what it could be like.

KC: And even if they don't go on to further education in that field, they seem like very good skills just as professional development and just, you know, patience and accuracy and all of those things.

JGF: And conscientiousness, and people skills as well. Yeah. You know, It's not we're working with rats. We're working with people. Do you want to reassure people that you know it's all gonna be good, right? We're doing strange things to your head. Actually, we're not doing anything to your head, but it feels like we're doing strange things to your head. But all we're doing is measuring. It's really helpful because often the students who have worked in my lab are asking for letters of recommendation, and I can really speak to what their strengths are. And it was not necessarily to go to grad school, but it could be for a job, but I feel like I know them really well.

KC: That sounds very satisfying. So I'm very curious about your career trajectory because you have a background in science and optometry, right? You were working in a totally, or I want to ask you that. Is it totally different? But what were you doing before you were teaching here?

JGF: So it's a long story. So my undergraduate is an optometry, and that's in the UK most

degrees are undergraduate degrees. So medicine or any of the ones that you would normally go to graduate school for in the U. S.

KC: And by the way, when I said science, I know you're in science now I think I meant to say medicine, But I don't know if that's actually medicine.

JGF:. No, I wouldn't say I mean health related, right? So I did my three years undergraduate in optometry and then a year, what's called a pre registration in a hospital in London. Then I took my registration exams and I qualified as an optometrist. … Maybe two years. So working in both private practice and in the eye hospital where I had done my training, and I decided it was really very boring although I loved the course. I loved my undergraduate course. It was really interesting. There was a lot of experiments and hands on learning as well as lectures. And I learned about EEG recording. So that was my undergraduate thesis. …I could never decide anything when I was an undergraduate…. And then I also learned to make these molded scleral contact lenses that actually cover the whole eye. And it's you have to take impressions and it's quite a skill. So I did that, and I did this. This … EEG recording in response to visual stimuli. And every year my university would write to me and say, Would you like to come back and do a PhD? I don't know. I don't know what I'd do with the PhD, I'm sure. And then eventually I said, Well I'll come and find out a little bit more about it. And so I did. I went back as what they call a clinical demonstrator. So I was actually on the faculty because I was on optometrist, so it meant that I had duties of advising or supervising students in their final year clinics. And I was a PhD student at the same time. I kind of got the best of both worlds.

KC: Yeah, I mean, it sounds like you had the lab part of your brain excited early on. And then when? How did you make your transition?

JGF: Yes. So after I finished my PhD, I came to do a post doc at Brooklyn College. And there was a lab there that was focused on infant vision. So my Phd was on visual development in preterm babies using electrophysiological technique. So I used EEG recording and electroretinogram recording, which is putting electrode actually on the corner of the eye, we're actually recording from the retina. And then I went from there to the post Doc at this infant vision lab where I set up the EEG recording and did some other studies there. And I worked there for about three years, and then I had a baby and I thought, Well, I'll just spend a maybe six months at home with the baby and I'll go back to work, but it didn't quite work out like that. So I fell in love with the baby and couldn't leave him. It wasn't really until, I did a little bit of consulting work during that time. So but Columbia, they were doing … recordings with preemie babies. I wrote up a paper there, Did some analysis… You know, when he was napping and then I had another baby. I did similar things there as well, and I started to do more consulting work. And then, by the time he was ready for preschool, I started to work part time at City College in a cognitive neuroscience lab. So here I had already always really being looking at the early end of cognition. So sensory stimulation and early visual pathways. But this was really more about language processing and semantic memory. So I went there part time for about three years which was really helpful because I learned a lot about new types of brain waves that I hadn't studied before on a whole different kind of paradigm…I was looking at adults. No, babies anymore. You use very different tools with adults … at least sit still. [Yeah, that sounds like a whole new learning curve.] It was very different. Yeah, so that was great. And then I thought maybe I

should think about a full time faculty position. And I never actually like teaching very much as a graduate student, so I thought maybe I'll try this again and see if it goes any better. So I took a few adjunct positions, … Barnard College. And I discovered that I really like teaching. [What changed?] I don't know whether it was just a maturation of me as a person or being a mother. I have a lot more patience. I think also, I better understood the U. S system and admired it. So I think when I first came to Brooklyn College, it was a bit of a culture shock to me because these students that were in the lab that I was working in. Some of them really didn't have very much background knowledge or very many skills. And so I was kind of surprised that here was an undergraduate, and they didn't know how to use some basic Excel program or how to make graphs or didn't understand some basic concepts in psychology or neuroscience. But that was the field that they were in. It didn't kind of fit to me. And then I realized it's a different system, right? So many more people go to college in US than in the UK and back then it was even fewer in the UK, and so people don't always come prepared for college, and that's part of the learning process that you have. And somehow that appealed to me and doing that more.

KC: I'm hesitant to use the word, but it's along the lines of a remedial, because if there's a gap in what they what they should have?

JGF: Yeah, maybe I don't like to use that word. I just think it's bringing people up to speed. So … just had a lot of challenges in the high school education and they haven't had the opportunities. So it's giving people the opportunities to learn.

KC: Our jobs are crossing here because it's very similar to what we see in the library and what maybe is unique to a place like CUNY, as opposed to another, you know, maybe private liberal arts college, not necessarily across the board true. But there is often a surprise I see, I saw in myself, I see it another new faculty about what the students don't know when they come here. And this comes into our conversations about information literacy all the time. There's so much assumption about what students are already capable of doing. And we're so often wrong.

JGF: Yeah, I think. But sometimes we're wrong in a good way. So the students can actually do a lot of… experience. That really helps them when they come to college.

KC: Let's thank Kim Helmer again because I am now remembering that that is something that I learned from her in working with her one time with her efforts to, you know, give the students credit for the things that they do know. Maybe they talk about it differently than we do.

JGF: Yeah, and I think sometimes it's just like some of the skills that we think of as academic skills. They're the ones that they haven't had so much practice with. But they pick up things so quickly. You know, you mentioned Kim Helmer. We did a lot of podcasting. We had our students create podcasts and the final products were amazing. Yeah, they were vodcasts, actually, so they had little visual images, but they were modeled after This American Life and they were just gorgeous. They were really so amazing. And I think whenever I see students present, I'm always blown away. Their presentation skills are really amazing. They definitely have strengths on …. Sometimes because of the barriers that they've faced before coming to college. Sometimes they do need help with some of the academic skills. Yes, get a lot more scaffolding. Those saying that you know there are probably some schools where students have

done some of this in high school. But I think if we look at the student undergraduate body in general across the country, what used to be the traditional college student is no longer in the majority. So many more people are coming back after having time off or they're you know, first generation. I think 50% of undergraduates are first generation college student and they haven't all come from good high schools. You know, where they're well resourced and having a lot of opportunities to learn in diverse ways.

KC: What are you working on now?

JGF: So this semester I have a presidential fellowship from John Jay. The goal of that is to try and implement some curricula driven change. So that's meant to be some kind of intervention assessment of that, and to see with …. So what I've been working on is an analysis of…introductory psychology because it has a very high rate of DFWI grades, especially among first year students. … So grades of a D or an F or withdraw… so basically doing poorly in a course so not getting a C or above so I've analyzed some of those was data and found that there is this huge variation in how the courses … and the grading structures. So I'm making recommendations for grading structures. I'm also making recommendations for content, for how it should be taught in an active learning way and we're going to try and add some social supports. A to Z Well, because one of the things that was really evident when I looked at these data were that when I taught this course in a learning community, the DFWI rates were very low. When I teach it in a standard large class format, DFWI rates are much higher. I think sometimes when we teach in a large classroom setting, even though I'm trying to be very personal and reaching out to students who are not doing well in the course, maybe they're not attending or they're not doing their assignments. I think it's easier to do it in a small classroom setting.

KC: How do we define small and large?

JGF: Large for us, it could be 250 students. So when I looked at those DFWI rates for me they were around the 25% rate, whereas they'd been as low as zero in a learning community. [And a learning community is capped at 25.] But it's a different learning…and as well. And there are other supports. So I'm working with our chair to try and see if we can make sure that we have teaching assistants who are actually in the classroom so that students can form bonds with them as well. And we're also investigating it in its very early stages, having peer success coaches who are more senior psychology students coming into our classrooms again to support active learning in the class. And I think, you know, we have those in learning communities, too. And they just helped to form a bridge between the student and the faculty member.

KC: And would they work with the students when people are doing group work, for example?

JGF: Yeah, we haven't figured it out yet, … trying to figure out it it's to be a course, how students will get compensated. [Well, it sounds really interesting.]Yeah, I'm hopeful. I I just think that students need to be supported in all different ways. So you know you can't just support somebody academically and not psycho socially, right? I think we have always have to think about why on our students, coming to classes is not usually because they can't be bothered to get out of bed. And it's usually because they have a lot of other responsibilities too. So helping them to balance those responsibilities but also helping them to understand that maybe strategies that

they used in high school aren't gonna work in college, right? You know, you can't just pass the exams right. You have to do the assignments.

KC: Well, it sounds really valuable. Let's end on returning to your teaching psychology and evidence based approach, which also has a companion website with resources for teachers.

JGF: Yes, so it has like two parts to the website. One part is for somebody like me who teaches doctoral students about teaching. So it's, you know, has a syllabus and suggestions for lesson plans, and some of that is duplicated in the student part. So the student companion website, even though we call it the student, that would be for a student teaching psychology. Doctoral course. But it could also be really helpful just for somebody who's teaching and wants a lesson plan.

KC: Right. So, consumables, as we call them.

JGF: Yeah, consumables. So you would find lesson plans …. We have many lessons, which are active learning activities that last about 10 to 15 minutes. … So things like that rubrics. Many of those were just the hands on very practical stuff they might need to get. People love it.

KC: Thank you so much for your time.

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