# *Is the Idea of a Community of Scholars Lost?*
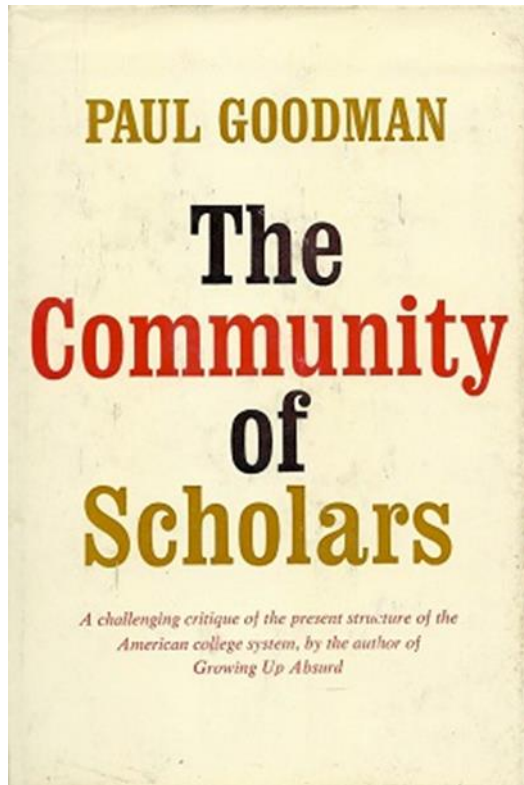
Raphi Sassower, Professor

Department of Philosophy, UCCS

TLC Conference

1/9/24

# Abstract

Having considered last year in this forum the boundary conditions that differentiate the practical from the theoretical, however their points of imbrication, and having argued that pedagogical theories, however diverse, find themselves implicitly in the classroom, that is, they inform, influence, and drive classroom interactions, I plan to discuss the special environment of the classroom as a sanctuary we should cherish. Thinking of students as scholars in training, no matter how far they choose to continue their studies, and seeing their cooperation with their instructors, no matter their academic rank, as forming a special relationship that defies, temporarily, a hierarchy. This is neither to say that instructors have no expertise nor to say that all students are always fully engaged, but instead to invite a commitment to think critically about the topics being taught, and encouraging everyone to ask difficult and awkward questions and offer tentative answers, playfully and seriously, thoughtfully and respectfully. Finally, in an age of an ongoing difficult mental health crisis, the classroom may offer comfort and solidarity, collegiality and mutual recognition.

# Community of Scholars:



PAUL GOODMAN

# The Community of Scholars

*A challenging critique of the present structure of the American college system, by the author of Growing Up Absurd*



C. P. Snow
The Two Cultures

- **MODELS:**

- Ancient Greek: Agora, Academy
  Schools, Rivalry

- Medieval: Cohabitation
  Unified text/Ideal

- Oxbridge: Cohabitation
  "High-Table"

- American/modern: Expertise
  Marketplace of Ideas
  Competition/Silos

"responsibility for the community's intellectual conscience"
Louis Arnaud Reid (1964), "The Community
of Scholars," Institute of Education, University of London
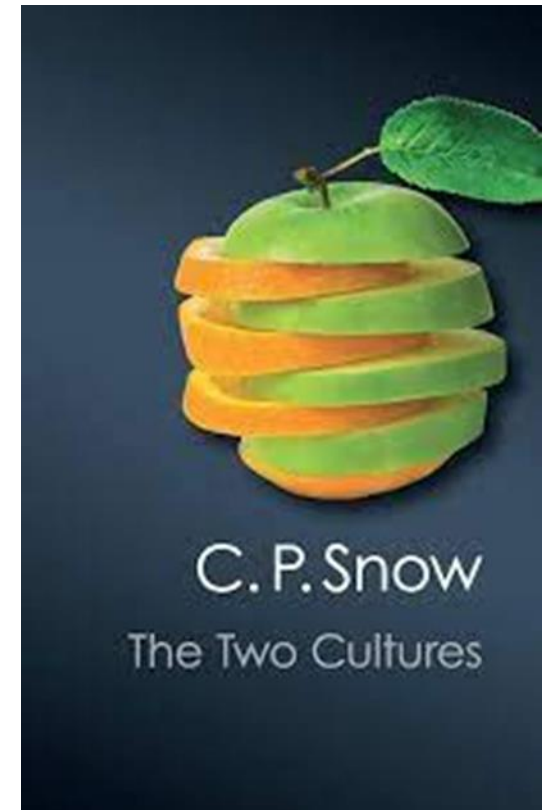
# CONTRADICTIONS IN A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS: THE COHESION-ACCURACY TRADEOFF

## Karl E. Weick

The phrase "community of scholars" contains a contradiction. Actions that strengthen the community weaken the scholarship. And actions that strengthen the scholarship weaken the community. Continuing tradeoffs between community and scholarship produce many of the unique organizational properties that universities exhibit.

The basic thesis of this essay is that social ties limit and bias the portrait of the world that groups develop. These limits and biases are especially threatening to universities because valid knowledge is central to their identity and existence. The production of valid knowledge is the comparative advantage of a university and that holds true whether the knowledge is disseminated to students, academics, or practitioners.
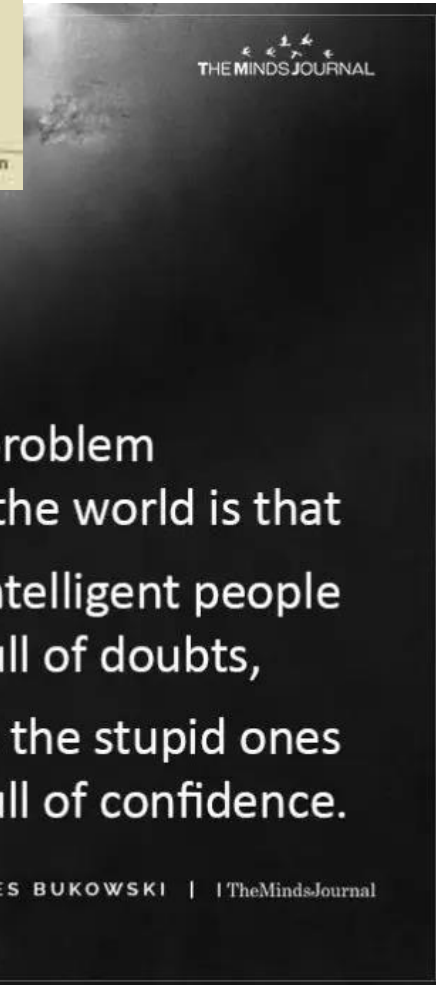
Both threats to validity and threats to cohesion can undermine the

# Conditions for Fostering "Community of Scholars," namely, a community of faculty and students within the university setting:

First: physical environments

• Second: Intellectual Vulnerability




Intellectual Insecurity: Feeling Like You're Not Smart Enough
www.Believeinmind.com


9 TYPES OF INTELLIGENCE

VISUAL (picture smart)
LINGUISTIC (word smart)
INTRA-PERSONAL (self-smart)
INTERPERSONAL (people smart)
LOGICAL (number/reasoning smart)
EXISTENTIAL (life smart)
KINAESTHETIC (body smart)
MUSICAL (sound smart)
NATURALIST (nature smart)

MIND JOURNAL


THE MINDS JOURNAL

The problem with the world is that the intelligent people are full of doubts, while the stupid ones are full of confidence.

- CHARLES BUKOWSKI | TheMindsJournal

- Third: Emotional Openness and Resilience



Emotional Insecurity: Constant Need for Validation and Approval

www.Believenimind.com



Optimism

Emotional Awareness

Control ( of self )

Ability to Solve Problem

Resilience

Self - belief

Social Support

Sense of Humor

- Fourth: Exposure, Disclosure, and Complementarity

- Fifth: Amorphous *Telos*
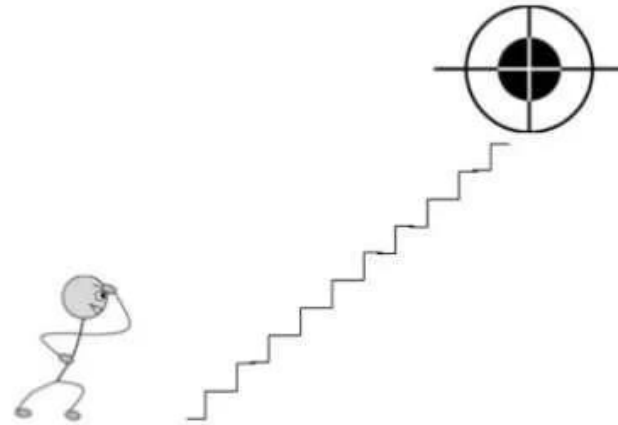
**BEFORE**
- Cloudy, ambiguous goal
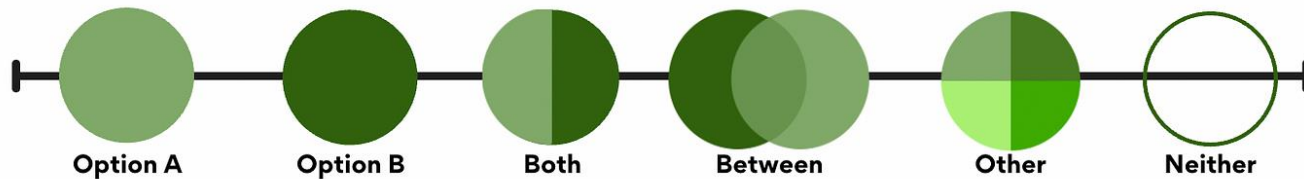- Unclear path
- Low motivation

**AFTER**
- Clearly defined goal
- Small steps, big changes
- High motivation and sense of importance and self-efficacy

- Sixth: Redefining Success and Failure

**Spectrum Thinking**

Option A   Option B   Both   Between   Other   Neither
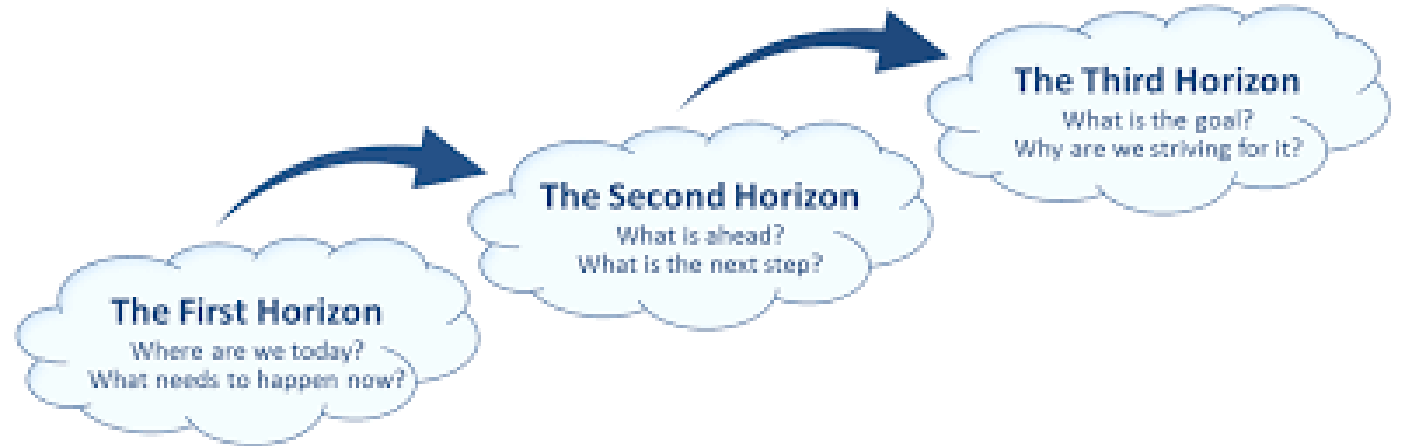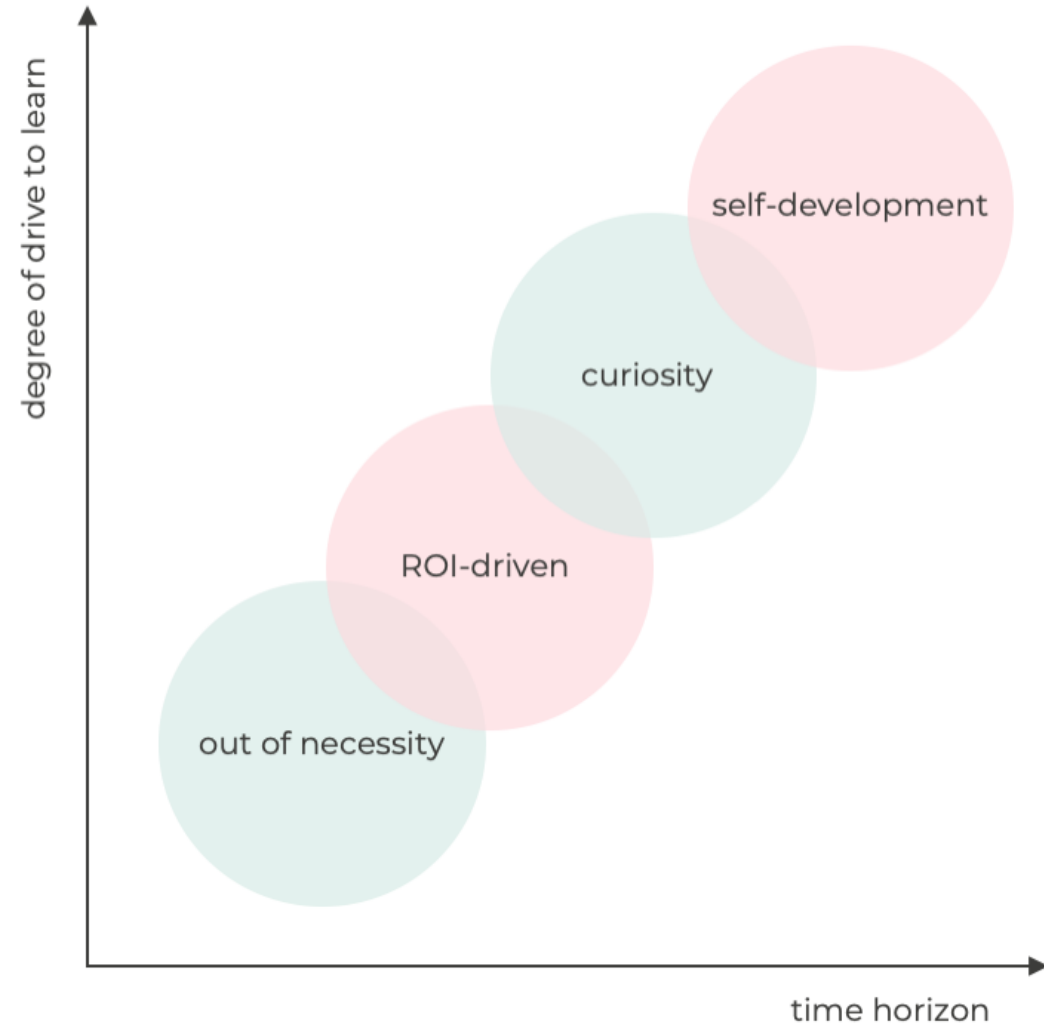
emma-read.medium.com

Success

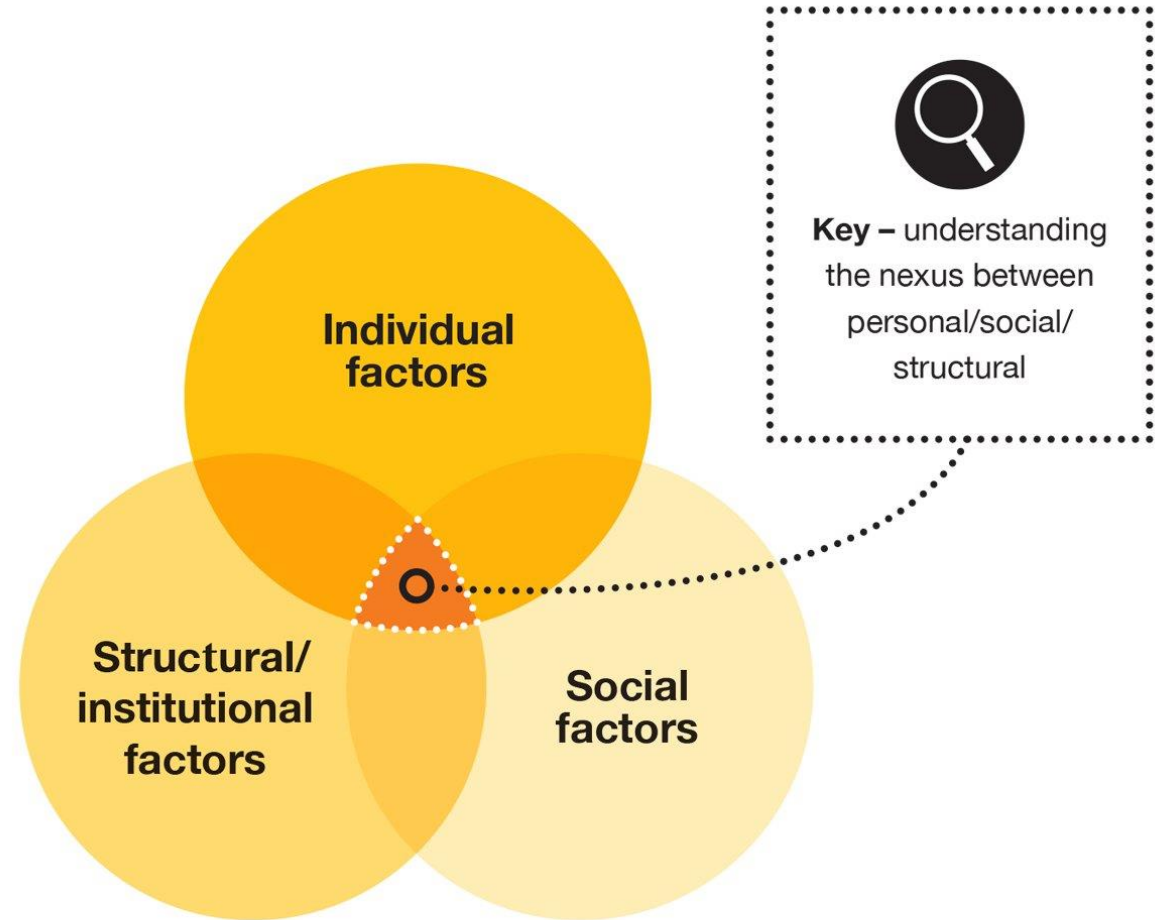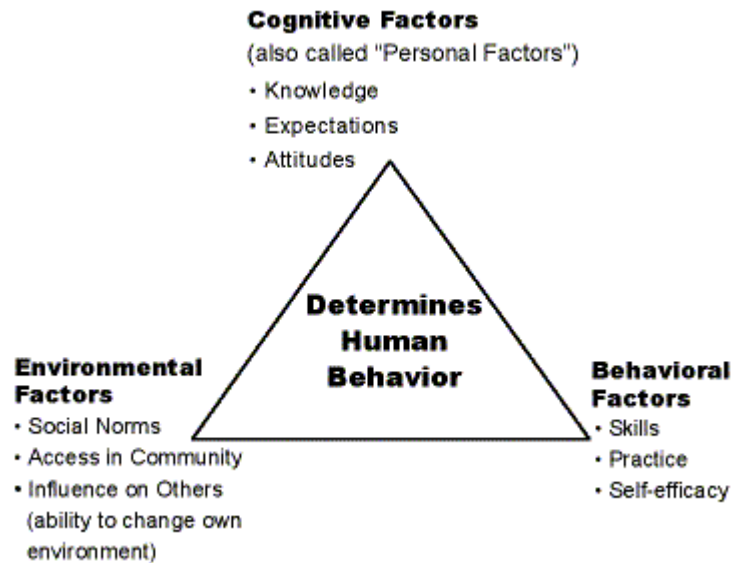what people think it looks like

Success

what it really looks like

- Seventh: Expanding the Applicable Horizon of Relevance

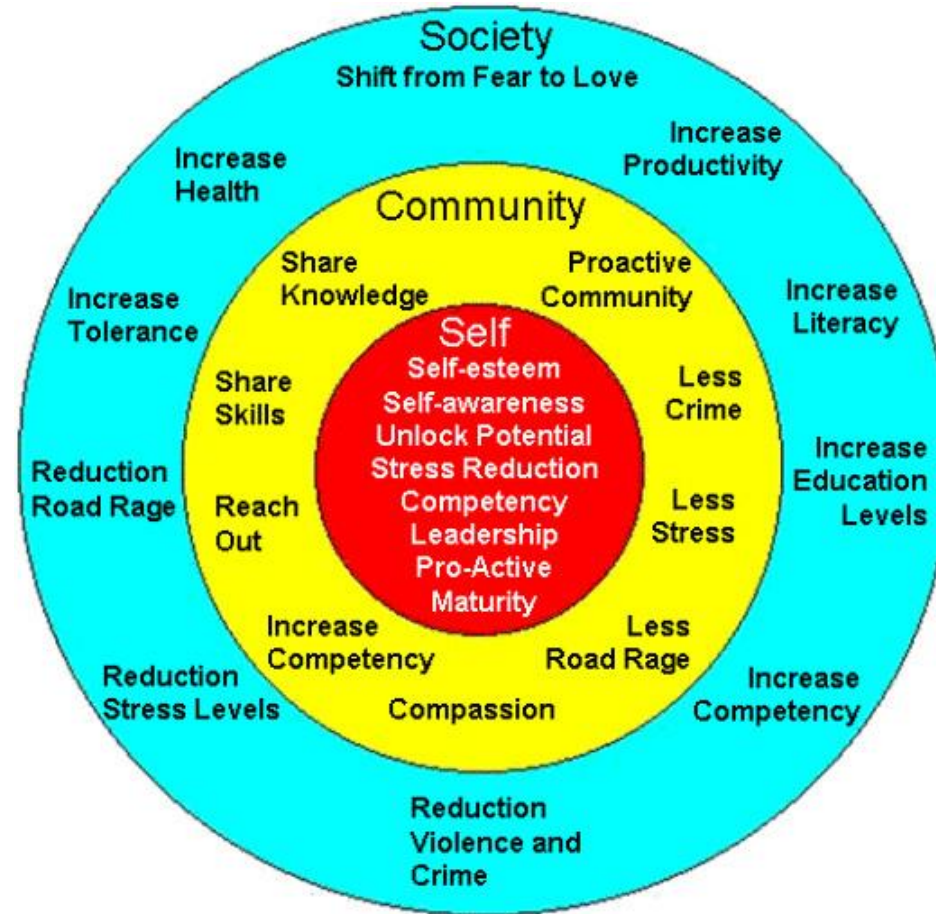- Eighth: Navigating/Defying Institutional Constraints

**Understanding the links between violent extremism factors**



**Cognitive Factors**
(also called "Personal Factors")
- Knowledge
- Expectations
- Attitudes

**Determines Human Behavior**

**Environmental Factors**
- Social Norms
- Access in Community
- Influence on Others (ability to change own environment)

**Behavioral Factors**
- Skills
- Practice
- Self-efficacy

Individual factors

Structural/ institutional factors

Social factors
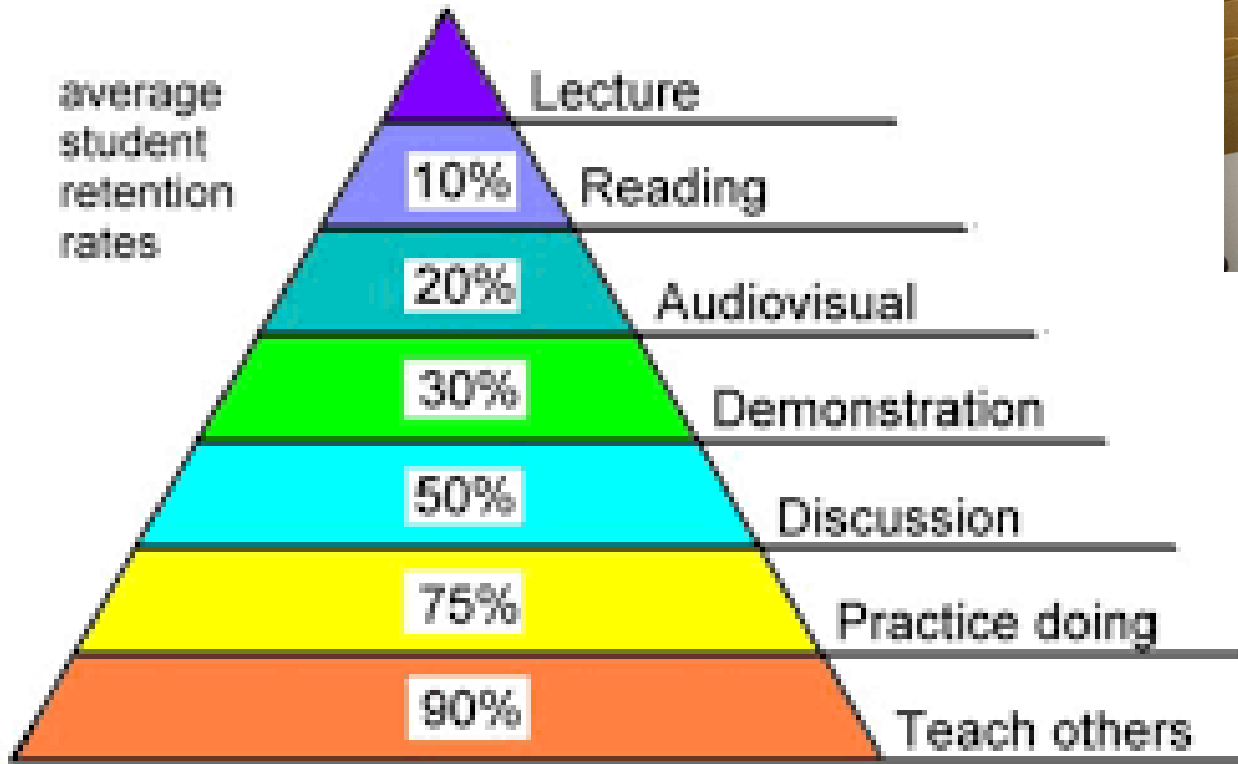
**Key** – understanding the nexus between personal/social/ structural

- Ninth: Integration, Assimilation, and Critical/Self-Critical Mindset

- Tenth: Serious Playfulness



Learning Pyramid

average student retention rates

- Lecture
- 10% Reading
- 20% Audiovisual
- 30% Demonstration
- 50% Discussion
- 75% Practice doing
- 90% Teach others

Source: National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine

# *By Way of Conclusion*

- What would it take to consider solidarity between professors and students?

- Is intellectual collaboration possible?

- What can be accomplished without set goals/objectives?

- If equality is structurally impossible, what alternative sense of being together can be experienced?

- Can demanding, expecting, and showing respect overcome the hierarchy of expertise?

- Can the university overcome K-12 socialization?