
Article

Living Spaces for Talk with/in the Academy

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Abstract

Exploring to find the question is always already exploring to find the method. What's (really) happening when we talk in academic spaces? What talk(s) belong in the Academy? Where does the 'talk' happen and how is it (in)visible? Based on 'talk' of reflective practice shared between two colleagues, this article examines issues of ethics, methodology and usefulness as they pertain to the terra (in)cognito of idea talk with/in the Academy. Through a dialogue about methods and method in which we emphasize permission to dwell, we hope to further inquiry into the role of talk with/in the Academy.

Keywords: method, talk, ethics, reflective practice

Beginnings

This article talks about our talk. It examines talking about the how and the what of our talk, possibly about the why of our talk. This is talking about method without necessarily talking to method, because how we talk about our talk is itself method (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

We're inviting the reader to re-value academic talk. We offer our talk as a way of exploring, of coming to know, a space where finding what one is looking for is less important than the something else that seems to emerge. In this chancy juxtaposition, we look less at what is hidden than at the way we make ourselves search for things. We see our talk as a search for unforeseen and personally unclaimed insights, for unexpected bargains and treasures.

Borrowing from Buber (1965, 1970), we recognize our talk as marked by real responding in which there can be no unilateral proclamation about what is reasonable (or allowed) and what is not. There can be no setting of the agenda except mutually. This responsiveness, this openness to one another, grows surprise. It is in our talk rather than in advance of it that we discover, never alone but always together, the many

ways our talk can be. Neither of us can say what will happen, and more importantly, neither of us can say what should happen.

In our talk together, we privilege Gaita (2002) for we often learn when we are moved by what the other says or does. What we share in this article is marked by the particularities of each of us. We have intentionally tried not to edit out our moments of eccentricity and apologize in advance to the reader for any unintended difficulties that may arise. Most importantly, we struggle here to share with the reader our sense of responsibility as well as our sense of delight and excitement. We share these seeds of possibility for renewal, both academic and personal.

We are attempting not only to capture the excitement, but also some of what is occurring in our talk as we navigate this new space of opening up something private into the public. In shifting the location of our talk, we address our desire to suggest some of the possibilities this type of talk, engaged, risky, challenging, safe, may hold for life in the academy. Restated, our question might be what is it about our exchange that marks it as different and what does that difference say about life with/in the academy? We describe and share so that what is not, or at least does not seem at first brush to be part of the public map of academic life, can become so.

Lace's version

Donna stopped by yesterday. We were talking about the performative nature of narrative representation and forays into linguistic postmodernism. She quoted a book she read over the holidays (I'm always forgetting the names of the books how does she manage to read so much anyway?) it ended with "a grand statement" in her words about lives being more than just stories. I can't even remember the exact phrasing of the grand statement. I guess it really doesn't matter though, because the relevant "grand statement" is about taking time to question what we do. Donna seems to me to be what the Academy ought to seek to be... pensive, persistent, invested, dedicated, quirky, quotable, patient and impatient, arrogant and humble, engaged.

There were a number of ideas, personally meaningful but of potentially limited scope, for the title of this paper: Donnaisms, after the file of the same name I keep on my work computer where I compile sticky notes written fervently during our many meetings; Conversations with Donna, my personal favourite, after the file of the same name on my home computer to which I toggle late at night when working away on some research leads while my babies sleep my place for a study break where I type a few words or a few sentences to remind me of the day's conversation or where I want to spend time thinking next; Friendship and other Faux Pas in the Academy, a title for our edgy days, when as Wordsworth wrote, "the world is too much with us late and soon" (Wordsworth & Curtis, 1983, p. 150); The Whatabout Papers, all our partial ideas, research leads, books we've read, books we haven't, Donna said, Lace said... All of these and endless others are partial renditions of what our talk looks like, partial pieces brought together in an effort to give a feel for what occurs.

She said, she said

We want to alert the reader to the alternating voices that make up this representation and analysis of our talk. When we talk, there is a reciprocity, a give and take, a fluidity. This organic breath of our talk is not meant to imply that we make our talk simply, nor that we always share the same opinions, beliefs or points of view within the talk. The character of this back and forth often takes up a rhythm of Lace said, Donna said, or vice versa, but not in an argumentative sense of contrasting opinions. Rather, the ebb and flow of the talk is not unlike the tidal dance, giving and taking, listening and speaking in a natural and dynamic balance. This is not to say one she never has more or less to say, only that the give and take is rhythmized without ever requiring orchestration.

Donna's version

Suspect Lace's reference is to a chapter by Jerome Bruner (2001) in Bathurst & Shanker's book. Was in the throws of trying to understand and work through his elegant examination of the nexus between the individual and culture and his culminating remark that "all the approaches...considered[,] commit the sin of reification: they treat both culture and mind as though they were independent or autonomous things." (p. 205) Reading his commentary threw me back to the current commitment to language as the primary way of being in the world and how constricting this stance is in acknowledging what it is to be human and how challenging it is to recognize and know ourselves in our wholeness.

It would be easy to see what's going on in our talk as a kind of mentorship. Mentorship is often a way to cast relationships where it appears at first glance one colleague is beginning (or at an early stage in their career) and another is somehow more established. It is an easy way to cast relationships where there is an evident or a seemingly apparent difference in experience.

As an image, mentorship does not match the experience of our talk. It is too narrow, too instrumental, too pragmatic, too mindful and too unidirectional. Having said this, our talk is not without purpose and, of course, echoing Margaret Wheatley (1992), its confusions. There is often careful listening, careful probing and questioning, careful reframing. Often there are examples, reminders and connections among and between conversations. Our meetings are full of explorations, confusions, exhaustions, exhilarations and silent thoughtfulness. Moments experienced as digression that later are remembered as points of clarity and points of clarity that dissolve into bigger puzzles than we had when we started. Each of us listens and speaks without really sensing where we are going or what drives us to meet time and again yet we find ourselves seeking each other out to sit across from each other in an intense dialogue, not as one who knows and/or one who does not but in a struggle to understand self and other and the place of respect in our understandings, in our interactions with each other, with our students and with other colleagues.

That thing we do

During most semesters of the past three years, we have met five or six times to talk for an hour or two. As time has gone by, the conversations have become more probing, more particular and more honest as well as more perplexing. Something is occurring that does not occur when teaching undergraduate classes, nor when working with graduate students, nor when involved in faculty work. This talk is both exciting and demanding. As suggested by Shotter (2001), "we not only create unique meanings between us, but also co-author new selves for ourselves." (p. 169)

Talking about what we do is also talking about the space we create. Is this an already occupied space? Is it a neutral space? Perhaps naïvely, one might call it safe. There is structure to this space which both reveals and keeps hidden. In this space we suspend the structure of the political common, we come together for the talk. Said another way, our talking is purposeful without having to be precise.

LMB: For me, there is a period of time, a moment in a day, three days running, on a Tuesday morning, when I find myself preparing to talk without preparing the talk.

Preparing should not be confused in this instance with needing to do some specific or prescribed type of mental positioning to talk. Rather, we sense here a coming to a point of wanting to make the talk, feeling that desire to question ourselves, question ideas, take a position, see how it feels and try feeling it a different way. When we find our way to talking we are gifting ourselves moments of opening into the not yet.

In these moments, our talk ranges over yesterday, lingers in today and even occasionally finds its way into the future. We spend moments in haunted spaces, spaces full of tears and fears and not infrequently we laugh at ourselves, at each other and at the craziness, the childlike mischievousness of this coming together to talk yet again.

*I could tell you this is a poem about the moments
that turn and return
that never leave
that never stay
that haunt the oddest times of the everyday
that come again and still in time
shadows, fleeting, black
But you might think I'm lying
~LMB*

Ebb and flow and paper jams

dp: Have long stopped worrying about losing ideas, my experience is they re-emerge, changed into new shapes but carrying with them reminiscences of what they were. Is this re-emergence what takes place not just with ideas but in talking and in the relationships that sponsor that talk?

LMB: I am constantly worried about "losing" an idea. Silly in a sense, if I need it, wouldn't it most likely occur to me again? In my experience, not always. The result of this fretting is that the horizontal surfaces in my office look like they are sponsored by 3M sticky notes everywhere - and when the space is full, I file them electronically so as not to lose a single thought, a single idea, a single moment in time; something brilliant Donna said that I might not even understand yet but somehow know I need or will need in the future, somehow sensing a temporality that might cloud the idea, fold it into and out of time lest I trust not my mind nor my heart, but rather my pen, tacky paper, my keyboard and some bit of silicon.

When Donna comes to visit, I always reach for my security blanket of sticky notes. She is so patient as I interrupt her idea, or mine, to write, as I break the intensity of seeing her ideas so that I can selfishly record some little moments of connectivity.

There is a flavour of partiality to our talk. Like the recursive moments that go and stay or the scribbles on paper collaged together, our talk is about pieces of our selves, of our ways of approaching our research and our practice, of time. These fragments of talk fuse together becoming our talk/text. From another perspective, "to do research in a postmodern way is to take a critical stance towards the practice of sense-making and sense-taking which we call research. What it focuses on however is not the world which is constructed and investigated by research but the way in which that world is written, inscribed or textualised [sic] in the research text." (R. Usher, 1996, p. 31)

Building on R. Usher's (1996) theorizing that "language is both the carrier and creator of a culture's epistemological codes, the way we as researchers know and the way we are located within culture" (p. 27), we are paying attention to the words we talk, watching our words, their ebb and flow, our knowing and not knowing. The paradox in which we converse lies between believing and not knowing. Alfred (1999) notes that "today we recognize the significance and symbolic value of terminology" and that attention to terminology "helps us all to avoid insult and injury" (p. xxv). While we struggle with thoughts and feelings, with each other, and with bringing our talk to this public forum, we also struggle to employ careful language, recognizing our sometimes inability to do so, our not knowing how as well as

our not knowing what and both of these are sometimes part of the excitement. Our words, however mindful we try to make them, are located in discursive sites, caught in the “to and fro flow of language and discourse” (Aoki, 2003, p. 1). In the place where we make our talk, discourse is everywhere. We are voices, willing voices.

How does academic talk produce is a question that pushes us to move from private to common space. What types of talk are valued in the academy and what types of talk “count”? What types of talk are deemed meaningful? These questions about the place of talk in the academy surround our analysis of our own talk, and its place in our lives in academic spaces. In grappling with these questions, we are reassured that “instead of assuming that people speak the truth, we should ask about the discursive conditions in which they have constructed their meanings” (P. Usher, 1996, p. 140). We recognize the influence of the multiplicity of academic values on our private talk and the resulting contexts within which we take up our talk. Our talk vacillates in these in-between spaces, wandering from rebellious to conforming and back, shaping itself as both producer and produced.

terra (in)cognito

The fluid character of our talk reflects our moving. Je rôde autour d’elle, as Richard Séguin (1985) would say, moving around (in) the textual space, sometimes hiding, sometimes darting through with stealth, and sometimes trampling the text(s). These fractured and partial, yet rich and compelling makings of talk feed our desires to remain isolated and to forge connections. Whether in the close quarters of an office or in a public forum, we recognize that our “talk does not occur in a vacuum; rather it is part of a larger system of sanctioned talk” (Warren, 2003, p. 7).

In holding on and letting go of the spaces of our talk, we are both believing and not knowing. In the space of this and that (Aoki, 2003), we recognize again our partiality. We dwell in the ambiguity of our knowing about our talk. This partiality, as Ellsworth (1992) observes, requires “a recognition contrary to all Western ways of knowing and speaking, that all knowings are partial, that there are fundamental things that each of us cannot know—a situation alleviated only in part by the pooling of partial, socially constructed knowledges in classrooms [and] demands a fundamental retheorizing of ‘education’ and ‘pedagogy’” (p. 101). Connections between partial knowings, ambiguity and educational practice are important ones. When we talk, we are working toward a pooling of our partially constructed knowledges, working toward ways of moving ever closer to the heart of our teaching and research experiences.

Looking forward and the in-between

dp: Often leave wishing more time were available just to what? What exactly is it that happens? Am never sure where we will begin or where we will go or how to begin or how to end. Often have a sense of stealing this time, knowing even before beginning that will come back for more. There is a mysterious, unfolding, organic feeling about our talk—a carefully prepared wrinkling of time.

Just came away now thinking about the next time we sit across from each other which will be on this Thursday afternoon. Promised to write in the in-between. Often in the moments between, there are stray thoughts or quotes or readings that seem to find their way into my hands that pepper the next time. Most of the time, I hardly sense their connectedness before the talk begins. Think these coming together are but opportunities to listen and speak, to encounter Lace, who is not me, to create shared understandings. Often see us offering each other tokens gathered as a crow gathers shining things. In the right context, these things become instances of tangible loveliness or awkward struggle but whatever they are or however they sound they are always

welcomed. That welcome has a breathless quality quite unlike the counselling acceptance am so used to and know well from practice.

Lace is inclined to move my filched pieces into new arrangements of meaning, or to the side, or just turn them over.

Whatever the pieces of our talk, there are always new possibilities. On the table, the next time some of those pieces will be returned, new ones will turn up and in unexpected places, some from two or three talks ago reappear. And one never knows which pieces will turn up, where or when, if at all. So enticing and intriguing and mysterious, and so ordinary.

This lack of agenda speaks to method and to the paradox of writing of what we do in the space of this page, recognizing in the fluidity of our talk its irreproducibility. We don't see how our talk can be reproduced, and yet we advocate giving voice to such talk in academic spaces. So, rather than suggesting a method of talk, we are valorizing the method creation of talk, the creation of spaces of certain uncertainty, of change and of risk, ethical spaces of reflection and praxis, and of the challenges inherent in the creation and maintenance of such spaces.

Ethical risk-taking

We think of our talk as a lived tension between inclusiveness and exclusion. We are clear that our talks are intimate, taking place behind closed doors. At the same time, we are aware that in writing this article we are taking a step towards opening those doors to others. So in one sense, our talk is exclusive, just for us, but in quite another it is inclusive, for our talk includes children, books for middle-years students, movies, poems dragged from memory, chocolate, half-remembered dreams, family history, books, images, experiences long forgotten, all these and many other pieces of our lives.

The risk-taking in our talk exists in every moment of our talk. Sometimes risk is at the heart of our practice, of our research, of our teaching, sometimes it is just at the heart. But whatever risk we take is a risk shaped by ethical choices.

dp: We had been talking for quite some time when last fall Lace asked me to read a paper she was writing, actually had worked on for some time. Am not sure how to explain what occurred. In reading her paper, became aware of her desire to push her boundaries in describing her experience, to be more (w)holistic in her thinking and writing.

LMB: I am Ebenezer, I am coyote. I squirrel away my morsels of words. I dart through dark pages so as not to be seen. After lengthy periods of dwelling without, after hiding in corners and words on the page, I find spaces of rest where the world grows. And in these spaces, I lay down my penny words and rest my weary head.

dp: Finding ways to be (w)holistic has been a central focus for me, a focus that expresses itself in a strong commitment to moving my thinking ever closer to experience, to moving my thinking closer to my actions, to moving my understanding and construction of theory closer to praxis. Stealing from Rogers (1961), I am committed to pursuing congruence. Thinking this desire to think and write more inclusively, more (w)holistically, shared, pushed hard to build a shared space, a shared understanding of the task and its complexity. Pushed hard until finally Lace said she didn't get it. My response was not to pull back so much as let the possibility of this shared space go. It seems to me in looking back that might have been frustrated and sad but was not and that was surprising. Usually when trying to communicate at length and failure is evident, end up tied in knots and exhausted from trying every way I can think of to share. Even more than not

being disappointed, my memory is of some kind of shift from enjoying our talk, to working on and in our talk, to enjoying working on and in our talk. A qualitative shift, an aha occurred and things have not been the same since. Speaking as honestly and precisely as able, still could not share what wanted to share and yet felt safer, more committed than before all this effort.

There would be those who would only see power as marking our talk. Others would only see the safety underlying all we say, and our support for one another. What neither might see is the ethical nest that catches and holds us allowing us to take more risks and accept more challenges. They might miss the power we find in helping each other stretch, carving more space not only to breathe and grow, but to risk again.

Public risk

Taking it public changes the talk, at least for the period in time when our talk, for pragmatic reasons, takes on a fixed agenda (preparing a presentation, editing a paper). There is a risk in taking it public and to complicate that risk, what we think we might be risking and what could actually be at risk may not be the same things. We could be risking the talk itself, the safety of it, the uniqueness of it, the personal and professional investment in it, its complexity. We could be risking personally and professionally, the sanctity of it, the private, the unknown to others, the known or unknown to self.

LMB: Today we talked about ontology and epistemology. I can't explain either, not really. How would that look on my comprehensive exams? How does my ambiguity, or at the very least my insecurity, reflect on my past work? Or my future work? How does my ambiguity reflect on the words I share in this public space of making the talk known?

We could be risking, and this would be the biggest risk of all in my opinion, the death of the talk. If it changes on a fixed schedule, based on this presentation or that publication deadline, rather than following its own mutations, what might be the talk or might the talk cease to be?

Moving to risk

In the reaching out, in the speaking into space between us, there is always the risk that something important will be affected. There is always the chance that we will injure ourselves or each other or something as yet unborn by talking too soon, too quickly, too heatedly, too coldly, too late, or by assuming. So it is with any talk too studied and it dies, too impetuous and in too much of a rush it slows the speaker and the listener. Still we talk not to convince or influence, but to use the space to work together in our exploring.

Clearly, more important than what or how things are said is the connection, is the relationship between us, the space we create for and with each other. In saying this, we acknowledge how vital it is that we protect our talk. Even so, we risk it all by bringing our talk to new, public spaces. It would be so easy to see ourselves as foolhardy in this endeavor and yet we both recognize that if we didn't try to share our experience here in this space, here in this time, we would seek another edge. This quality of edginess is as much a part of our talk as the safety we find in each other's company. This edginess and safety are in relation and in the relationship that grows and changes as we meet.

dp: Find it interesting that in some encounters in other relationships the same talk happens repeatedly but not here, not with Lace. Oh, there is recursiveness and doubling back and we are not directed or focused or going some place but guided by a deep concern to listen closely and carefully to one another, to speak honestly and directly, to treasure moments of silence, ones of laughter, to stumble and mumble in each other's presence, sometimes even catching each other,

even interrupting with a question, but carefully never speaking for the other. Our ethics focus less on how we talk than on being together.

As Lace's comment about risk suggests, we could lose this space by bringing it here, but as Lorna Crozier (2003) writes in her latest collection of poems, "the pond's a hexagram whose lesson is repeated: everything you lose comes around" (p. 28) and from somewhere I believe this.

One thing revealed in making our talk is that the reflection, the probing, the questions, are not designed to search the way to do or to be, but rather, in the words of Foucault (1978), we "search instead for instances of discursive production (which also administer silences, to be sure)" (p. 12). In this context, we are producing and produced by the space we create, which is itself produced by the larger setting in which our talk occurs. By taking our talk into the public, we are calling up this discursive production, making it overt. The vignettes of our talk are included to illustrate how our talk produces us, and how, in going public, in sharing this space, we are producing both the talk and ourselves, recognizing also the larger context that produces both the talk and us.

Private risk

LMB: Donna speaks of a qualitative shift, of the talk moving to a different space. And I think of my willingness/ability to share. I can't help but recall the last "safe" space of sustained professional talk I had, and how rewarding it was, and how rich the talk, and how the talk fizzled once the private became public in a pragmatic, published sense: "Lurking in the background was the awareness that our journal entries and our personal writing would become data, and possibly read by total strangers." (Brogden, Froc, Hudyma, Lawson, Mantei & Sabo, 2002, p. 29)

What is the difference between a risk and a challenge? In the context of our talk, a risk has an inherent edginess, it can be avoided, it involves trying things and as long as no one's hurt, there is no failing. It's like eating at a new restaurant where the unusual or unfamiliar may end up being delicious. In contrast, there is something deliberate and in need of persistence in taking on a challenge. These are often known black holes seen ahead of time, consciously taken on, not stumbled upon absently nor absentmindedly. One can prepare for a challenge, it is always in one's face until one finds a way to deal with it, it demands dealing with, demands attention. Risks can sneak up on one but the outcome matters less. In both risks and challenges, meeting them honestly and together is everything.

Method talk

In questioning our talk, we find that exploring to find the question is always already exploring to find method. This recursive pattern of knowing and not knowing brings us to methodological uncertainty where limiting our talk and the making of our talk to some specific definition seems reductionist. Rather than force ourselves into a box, we find ourselves and our talk working at the "lived borders" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997) of qualitative method. Working on the edges, on the "lived border of reality and representation[,] yields diverse insights into the whats and hows of everyday life" (p. 105) and into our everyday talk.

Intrinsic to our method is our talk. Our talk is the tool that shapes how and what we know (Vygotsky, 1986). We are allowing the talk itself to do the shaping, allowing our method to grow out of what is happening. From this position within and through our tool/talk, we are stepping back to see and try to make meaning. We are allowing the recursive nature of the talk to surface and from the elements we make pattern. Like Gubrium and Holstein (1997), "we believe that accepting empirical complexity and analytic tension is crucial to sustaining qualitative method's special engagement with lived experience." (p. 110)

In methodological tensions, we define within and around our talk, we believe, as aptly described by Smith (1999), that “research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions.” (p. 5) In as much as bringing our talk into public spaces imposes an increased urgency for naming, we honour methodological elements of our talk as we simultaneously refuse the naming of our talk. While some might be frustrated by our espoused lack of clarity, we hold to the method of our talk, and to our instinct that excessive debate to name or categorize our talk runs the risk of stifling both talk and the potential of talk as tool and focus of our method.

Challenges

As in any interpersonal encounter in day to day life, a central challenge for each of us is balancing being too present or taking up and being in the space so much that there is no room for silence, for pausing, for distancing, for just walking alongside and its opposite, being too little present, distracted, avoiding, engaged elsewhere and only pretending presence. It would be easy to make our talk about performance, about control, upmanship, about dazzling, countering, being incisive and evasive, counting coup. Of course, if either of us indulged in such actions it is more than probable neither would nor could be back at the table with any enthusiasm (visiting a surgeon or a dentist is hardly a sought experience for many).

*“Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk
Can'tcha see? Can'tcha see?
It's me!” ~ Pitchford & Snow (1982)*

LMB: Why talk? Somehow the talk is compelling and somehow there is payoff. Not a CV type of payoff, but a payoff of reciprocity, of creativity and energy, of hope.

The more particular challenge is to live the edginess of our talk, to breathe in and with it and with ourselves. Our talk has demanded and demands still a willingness to spend time together without tangible outcomes or items to list on our annual information forms and going public changes that. The need for outcomes, if indulged, could kill the green fuse that is the signature of this space we construct and dwell in together, this space that nourishes and holds each of us in possibilities.

Embracing the neutral zone

In Lebanon, the ‘neutral’ zone running down the centre of Beirut has so long been devoid of human dwelling that a green line of vegetation has grown over the empty carnage of war. What becomes of the in-between spaces? Is our talk invisible? Was it invisible before now? The green line in Lebanon may seem politically empty, but it is not. Trees twenty years tall have grown and filled a silent space. Our academic halls may, some days, seem empty, but they are not. There may seem, some days, to be a void between closed doors behind which we plan and write and think. This neutral space need not be empty space. Our talk is but one talk that grows to fill this space.

*“There is a space that lies between the two kingdoms.”
~ Patrick Verriour (2003, p. 84)*

*The landscape of my father's country is hidden beneath layers of fresh-cut alfalfa.
Vistas of concentric swaths demarcate points of exit from the spaces
where hay makes better fences than barbed wire. In the lowlands of this country
when the summer rains fall in favour, neighbours who are not strangers
share crop yields, blood lines and labour.*

~LMB

If there exists an intertextual space between isolation and engagement, and we believe there does, then the structures that keep things hidden, like the green line of the Beirut neutral zone or the spaces between neighbours and strangers, bear closer examination. The seeming empty spaces in the academy call for occupancy.

In choosing in the first instance to make our talk, and choosing in the second to take our talk public, we recognize what we view as an imperative to bring the landscapes of academic talk into the common: an imperative to embrace and attempt to demystify the neutral zones of our professional lives. These spaces do not exist in a vacuum, nor do we talk in a vacuum of our own sheltered creation. In bringing our talk into common spaces, we grapple, as we have attempted to do here, with the larger system within which our talk and our theorizing resides. We call for academic contexts to uncover the camouflage of the seemingly neutral and cease to deny the larger systems of sanctioned academic talk (Warren, 2003).

Living the challenge

LMB: My little sister knows at 19, savvy or submissive, that a wide web can hold the keys to the (capitalist) world. She is building friendships that build her career. She goes where the money is, plays where the power is, talks where the players are.

If I were my sister, I would not be friends with Donna. Donna is not always/only the politically correct, cv building, ladder-climbing person with whom one would do well to affiliate. Donna dares to admit to not knowing. Donna is invested in thinking deeply.

If I were my sister, I would not be friends with me. I am not always/only righting. I get lost in space. I am stubborn. I am awkward. I am just starting to figure out the magnitude of all I don't know. I want to think.

We capture here much of what on a day-to-day basis makes our talk easily lost or overlooked, even silenced. Our talk is not without cost. It asks of each of us a certain courage, a certain willingness to go against the grain. It calls on each of us to value our talk and invest in it. It reflects a cost implicit in our talk, a cost that we might in our enthusiasm overlook, but needs nonetheless to be stated.

Afterwords

Arendt (2000) writes, "the mere fact of invisibility, that something can be without being manifest to the eye, must always have been striking." (p. 33) Paying attention to talk in invisible spaces is to call into explicit being and to encourage thought about what is and isn't being said. Calling on unheralded spaces marks our effort to make visible (parts of) our talk. We have tried to engage in meaning making around our talk. We illustrated our talk and reveal inherent risks. We grappled with some of the challenges we encounter in our talk and that we see for engaging in talk within the academy. What we have offered then, is our meta-talk. Our belief is that the risk of sharing will be worthwhile if it creates useful spaces for others to think about their talk, to engage in, and to value their talk as a part of their research rather than taking it for granted, leaving it unacknowledged or unexamined.

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