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Risk Communication
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On Monday September 14th Dr. Dura asked us to think about the gap between theory and action. If we believed there was a gap between the two, then we were to discuss the ways in which we can bridge the gap, while also addressing what creates and causes that gap to exist. However, instead of writing out our answers, or discussing them with the class we were given markers and paper to draw out our answers. The difficulty of this task was finding a way to draw, create, and arrange images in a way that would convey our thoughts.

I do believe that a gap exists between theory and action. The gap is the result of several factors. My drawing consisted of a wall that represents all the obstacles that we face when trying to move from theory to action. To put it simply, I think that theories are the ideas, and action is what we want to do with them. The importance of this activity is not in drawing images that convey my thoughts on what creates the gap between theory and activity, but in learning how to approach a situation and communicate in a way I’m not accustomed. Communicating risk as we’ve discussed in class is not easy. There are many factors that limit our ability to effectively communicate risk. We can’t approach a situation as though we can easily communicate our point, and to an audience that will understand us. That is to say, we can’t approach these types of situations assuming that our audience, those we want to discuss a risk with, will understand us. We can’t take for granted what we know, and that any/all communication practice will be universal. Interestingly enough, we probably should not think that our audience would be unable to understand us.

It was not all that surprising that all in the class believe there is a gap between theory and action. Over and over again I saw that the class viewed theory as “high” and action as “low.” The top/down model and/or approach was not surprising. We are part of an institution that, despite its rankings in social mobility, still favors those with access. Of course, in classes such as this one, and others in RWS, we are able to critically think about our position. What does it mean? What can we do with it? Are we supposed to do something? Or educate and help others do?

I found myself thinking a lot about the gap between theory and action, but not just what creates it, and keeps it wide. Rather, I thought a lot about my own role in the gap. What side of that picture do I situate myself on? I’d like to think that what I’m doing, by taking this class and engaging myself with the concepts of risk and risk communication, but what if I don’t move myself over to the action side of the spectrum? Personally, I think about this often, and how to approach these issues when it’s a high possibility that my work will place me on the theory side more than it will the action side.