

The Campus Visit  
and  
The Job Talk

# Elements of the Campus Visit

- The job talk
- Office visits with faculty (1-on-1 or 2-on-1)
- Lunches
- Dinners
- The meeting with the graduate students
- Presentation of self

# The Job Talk

- What should I present?
- How should I prepare for the talk?
- What are the common pitfalls that undermine talks?

# The Job Talk: What to Present

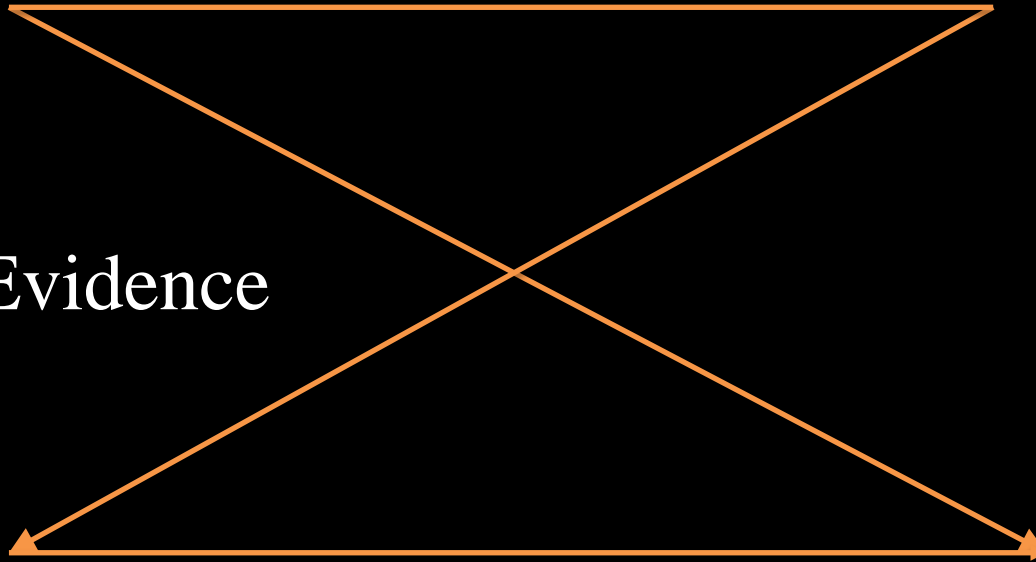
- A paper (it may be part of your dissertation) that is under submission to a major journal (or will be under submission soon)
- Alternative: an empirical chapter from your dissertation that is polished.
- Do not try to present your entire dissertation.
  - You will fail if you try this.

# The Structure of the Job Talk

Broad Introduction

Specific Evidence

Broad Conclusion



# Outline of the Job Talk

- 1) Research question: the theoretical issue or empirical puzzle you are studying (5 minutes)
- 2) Justification: why the research question is important, theoretically or substantively (10 minutes)
  - Why would anyone outside your area care about what you are studying?
  - How have others answered this research question?
  - Why is there debate?
- 3) Research design: your analytic strategy for answering the question (5-10 minutes)
- 4) Evidence: what you found out (10-15 minutes)
- 5) Conclusions: the take-home point, what people will remember in the shower the next morning (5 minutes)

# Practicing the Job Talk

- Write the talk out and memorize it.
  - Do not improvise.
- Practice the talk everyday for a couple of weeks prior to giving it.
  - Practice in front of a variety of audiences.
- Write down the questions you get; revise the talk to anticipate or obviate them.
  - For the most important questions, prepare slides as part of your response.

# The Job Talk: Pitfalls

- To paraphrase Tolstoy, all good talks are alike; all bad talks are bad in their own way.
- There are nevertheless 3 main errors:
  - 1) The structure is incomplete or doesn't work.
  - 2) The person didn't practice the talk.
  - 3) The person cannot answer the questions.



# Typical Questions

- What does your evidence have to do with the question you are asking?
- Why did you use that method?
- So what?
- What does this have to do with my favorite topic?
- Why didn't you use x theory?

# Haveman's Top 10 List: Most Common Job-Talk Mistakes

- 1) Being overly technical & complex
- 2) Presenting too many graphs & tables
- 3) Talking too fast
- 4) Assuming the audience cares as much about your project as you do
- 5) Not giving enough background

# Haveman's Top 10 List: Most Common Job-Talk Mistakes

- 6) Giving too much background
- 7) Talking too long
- 8) Reading a paper rather than presenting it
- 9) Trying to “wing it”
- 10) Needless & repetitive “name dropping”
- 11) Too much material (talking too long)

# How to Avoid these Mistakes

- ✓ Design the talk as if you were presenting your material to smart people **outside** your field.
- ✓ Choose **1 or 2 points** that are really important and hit them again & again.
- ✓ Start & end by telling the audience what your research is all about.

# How to Avoid Mistakes (cont'd)

- ✓ Keep it short: **40 minutes** for a 1.5-hour time slot.
  - ✓ You may get 45 minutes, but departmental screw-ups (e.g., projector not working initially, people arriving late) may cut into your time.
- ✓ Keep telling yourself that your technical competence is not on the line – just your ability to **explain**.
- ✓ Remember how performers get to Carnegie Hall – it's the same for how PhDs get an academic job: practice, practice, **practice**.

# Office Hours and other Conversations with Faculty

- The trick here is to not say anything that could undermine your case.
- You need to be prepared to talk intelligently about anything on your c.v.
- This is the time to talk about your future research plans. Think about your conversation *prospectively*, not retrospectively.
- You also need be prepared to talk about teaching.
- If you can read some of the person's work before meeting them, you can impress them by engaging them intellectually – and buy yourself a breather from talking.

# Questions you Might Ask

- Is your university going bankrupt?
- Do you have research funding?
- How do you pay research assistants?
- What is the typical teaching load?
- What is it like to live in the area?

# Pitfalls

- Being a jerk. Even if you think the person with whom you are talking is a zero who should have no say in your future, do not express this in any way. Always be pleasant and respectful.
- Not being prepared to talk enthusiastically and intelligently about any work in the file.
- Be prepared to say why you would like to work at the institution. “I need a job you idiot” is not really a good answer.



# Meals

- The rules of interaction here are basically the same as in the office hours. Here there are many opportunities to hang yourself as well. Try to avoid pronouncing on sociology in general, and steer away from politics.
- Have one or two drinks, but don't have more than that.

# Graduate Students

- Show genuine interest and curiosity in what people are working on.
- Be prepared to talk about what you would like to teach.

# Presentation of Self

- Think about your attire. Wear professional-looking clothing: something relatively formal, not “business casual.”
  - Women: dress & jacket or pants & jacket
  - Men: jacket & tie, not just jacket & shirt
- Start a regular exercise routine in the months before you hit the market.
  - Not to look better – to feel better & have more energy.

One Last Thing...

Have fun!