

Student Webinar #5
May 6, 2020
2:00pm ET

Be prepared, not (too) scared! How sociology graduate students can slay the conference thing

As academics, presenting our work to our peers is amongst the most exciting and terrifying things that we do. It's exciting because we get an opportunity to share our research with smart people who are interested in what we're doing, who can offer focused feedback to help make our work better, and who help us to generate new ideas. It's terrifying because we fear the judgment of our peers, we dread difficult question(er)s, and because of that omnipresent devil on the academic's shoulder, imposter syndrome.

This webinar offers some thoughts on preparing for and participating in sociology conferences. We will demystify some of the mechanics of presenting, including some basic dos & don'ts, as well as strategies for dealing with difficult questions. We will also discuss some of the more informal elements of the conference experience.

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

1

Student Concerns Subcommittee

<http://www.csa-scs.ca/files/webapps/csapress/student/>



Awish Aslam
Western University
Chair and Central Canada Rep



Nicole Malette
University of British Columbia
Western Canada Rep



Emma Kay
Dalhousie University
Eastern Canada Rep

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

2

Dr. Mervyn Horgan

Associate Professor, University of Guelph



Dr. Horgan is currently the Communications Officer for the Canadian Sociology Association, and also active in the Social Theory Research Cluster where he co-founded the Symposium for Early Career Theorists (SECT). He serves on the Board of the Sociological Theory Research Committee of the International Sociological Association, and is Faculty Fellow at the Yale University Center for Cultural Sociology.

Despite having presented at dozens of them, Dr. Horgan notes that he still has a love/hate/indifferent relationship with conferences.

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

3

Interact with the Panelists

We invite you to communicate with the panelists during the webinar.

- Chat (only the panelists can view your comments)
- Raise your hand
- Q & A (click to like any questions you would like prioritized)
- Poll

Scroll your cursor towards the bottom of the screen to participate. The tool bar appears as below.



CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

4

Overview

- The Conference Puzzle
- Variety? Typology? Continuum? Genre?
- Core elements of the conference experience
 1. Attending presentations
 2. Presenting your work
 3. Other formal involvements
 4. Informal elements
- Other general pointers
- Questions?

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

5

Your Experience

- Have you ever presented at a Conference?
- How was your experience?

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

6

The Conference Puzzle

- Conferences are essential to our work as a community of sociologists *but* we are not obliged to attend
- Conferences can be completely terrifying *and* really fun at the same time

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

7

Variety. Typology.

Continuum. Genre.

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

8

Conferences *Vary* Widely and Wildly

- Disciplinary differences
- National/regional differences
- Association differences
- Demographic differences
- Differences by scale
- Style/Decorum

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

9

Conferences: an oversimplified *typology*

Identifying conferences by type helps in thinking through your involvement

- Generalist
- Specialist
- Hyperspecialized
- Interdisciplinary – tend to be topic focused

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

10

A Conference *Continuum*?

Highly professionalized



Semi formal/informal

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

11

Conference Presentations as a *Genre*

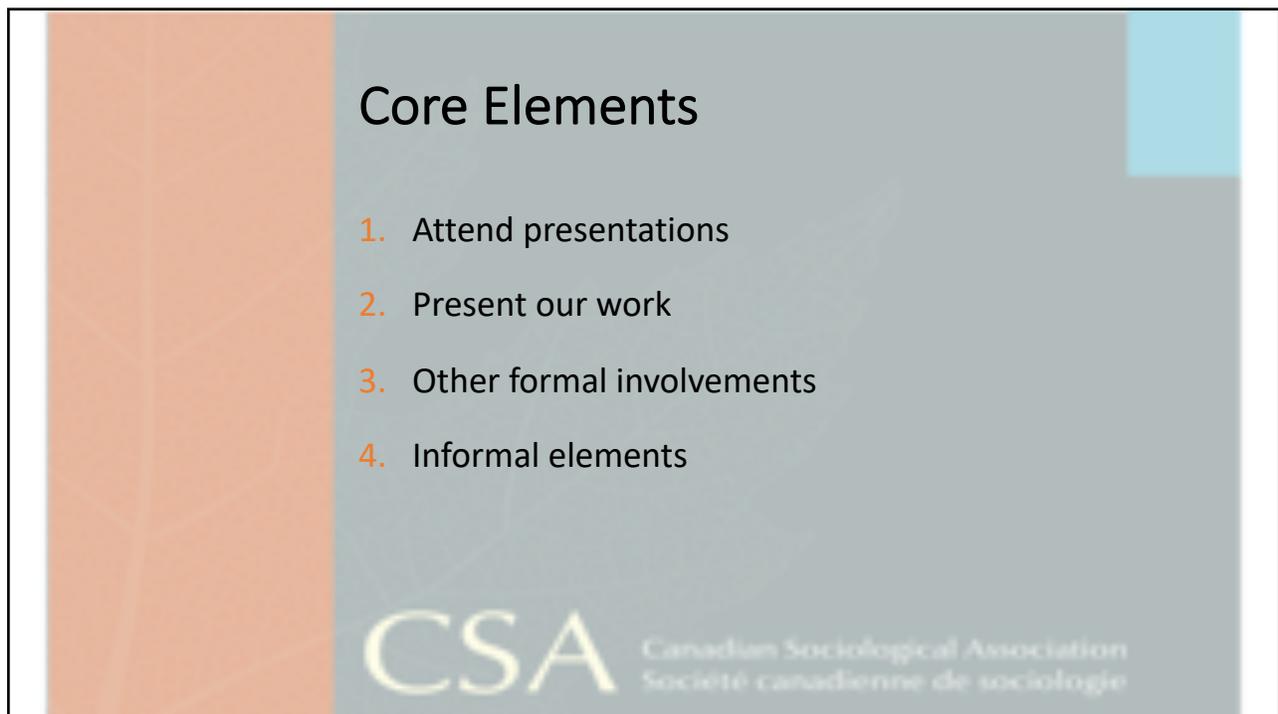
- Related genres?
- Similarities / differences
- Draw from good ones

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

12



13



14

1. Attending Presentations

- Hidden curriculum
- See what works & what doesn't
- Learn about varieties of styles & strategies
- Asking questions
 - Identify yourself
 - Be generous: ask as you would like to be asked
- Approaching presenters

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

15

2. Presenting our Work

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

16

2. Preparing & Presenting

- a) Presenting is drag
- b) To script or not to script?
- c) Time
- d) Slides & slippery slopes
- e) Basic structure (tentative)
- f) Openings & closings
- g) Question(er)s
- h) Other considerations

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

17

a. Presenting is Drag

- Butler is right, Goffman is right!
- Social life is performance
- Presenting is very *explicitly* performative
- Good presenters seem 'natural'
- The best presenters play at/ perform 'good presenter'

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

18

b. To Script or Not to Script?

- Scripts help with nerves
- Makes space for practice
- Act of writing it out forces good editing & aids memory
- By all means *lean* on your script

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

19

c. Time

- **Never, ever, ever go over**
- Prepare to cut to the chase if necessary
- Ask chair for time prompts (5, 2, 1, 0)
- **Never, ever, ever go over**

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

20

d. Slides & Slippery Slopes

- Less is more
- Big text/clear images
 - The person at the back of the room
- If your slides tell the whole story on their own then they may be too busy
- Slides in reserve?

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

21

e. A Basic Structure

- Opening puzzle/tension: <1minute
- Scene setting: overview, background & justification: 2-3 minutes
- Research Question(s): 1 minute
- Research design and methods: 2 minutes
- Findings: 5-7 minutes
- Implications/new directions: 1-2 minutes

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

22

f. Openings & Closings

- Openings set the tone
 - 'I'm sorry for.....'nope!
 - Puzzles / paradoxes
- Closings are the take home
 - Earth shattering? Meh...
 - Aim for clarity and precision

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

23

g. Question(er)s

- Gratitude
- Bullsh*t stinks
- If you don't know, just say so
- Sometimes it's not the *question asked* but the demeanor/tone of the *question asker* that throws us
- Chair and audience members as allies

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

24

h. Other Considerations as Presenter

- Day-of preparations
- *Who* to address?
- Pleasures and perils of humour
- Ultimately..... it's over just like that

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

25

3. Other formal involvements

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

26

3. Other Formal Involvements

- Session organizer
- Session chair
- Discussant
- Formal Meetings (e.g. research cluster office holders)

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

27

4. Informal Parts

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

28

4. Informal Parts

- 'Networking'
 - Semi/in/formal
- Senior colleagues / experienced peers
- Expanding circles
- Food/functions

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

29

Other General Pointers

- Cold calling is cool
- Assume everyone is faculty
- Competition? Collaboration? Collegiality?

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

30



31



32

Play Conference Bingo!

Friend ditched you to talk to someone important.	"Doesn't that count as performativity?"	Stuck talking to unknown person at section reception.	"Hybridly."	Spilled wine on someone at Dept party.
Discussant writing up comments during the presentations.	15 minute talk with more than 15 slides.	Compliment author meets bitter critic.	Middle-aged bald guy with ponytail.	Panelist apparently drunk or high as a kite.
"I'm telling you, I never said he was unelectable."	Awkward moment with famous person in elevator.	FREE	"Tuly Bayesian."	Editor fees from Prospectus-writer.
Attempted to attend session in wrong hotel.	One panelist gets no questions.	"That's a great question."	Recipient fails to show to collect section award.	Fabio Pigoia discussing Karen Barad over coffee.
"My Question is more of a comment..."	"My paper takes a sociological perspective."	Hobbesian nightmares at book giveaway.	Left behind as dinner group departs.	Attended Presidential Address.

Credit: Kieran Healy, Duke University
<https://kieranhealy.org/blog/archives/2014/08/13/an-asa-bingo-retrospective/>

CSA

Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

33

Questions?



Dr. Mervyn Horgan

Associate Professor, University of Guelph

mhorgan@uoguelph.ca

CSA

Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie

34

Student Webinar Series

Thank you for attending today's webinar. A recording will be made available to attendees and members of the Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) in the coming days.

Questions or comments?

Contact: students@csa-scs.ca

Visit: <https://www.csa-scs.ca/files/webapps/csapress/student/>

CSA Canadian Sociological Association
Société canadienne de sociologie