Surviving the Comprehensive Candidacy Exam

For Your Doctorate

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Doctoral Milestones

• Admission to the Program
• Coursework
• **Candidacy Exam**
• Dissertation Proposal
• IRB Approval
• Data Collection
• Writing up your Findings
• Pre-defense
• Defense
• Final Editing of your Dissertation
• Graduation
Prior to Taking the Exam...

• Know and understand your university’s rules
• Have some idea of what you want to study
  • Passion for the topic
  • Scholarly base of literature
  • Theoretical or practical significance
• Choose your candidacy exam director and committee
UNDERSTAND THE EXAM
What is the format?

- Qualifying exam
- Traditional exam
  - Pre-scheduled written exam
  - Student-scheduled written exam
- Oral-written exam
What is the time frame?

• It depends....
  • Two days
  • Two weeks
  • Eight weeks
  • Twelve weeks
How will the exam be assessed?

• Pass/Fail

1. Fail
2. Insufficient/Revise
3. Pass
4. High Pass
How to read a Professor's door

Closed: "I may or may not be on this continent."
Half-open: "I'm probably in a meeting."
Wide Open: "I just walked in to get a few things before I have to run to my next meeting."
Slightly ajar: "Proceed with caution."

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KNOW YOUR EXAMINERS
Know Your Committee

• Have confidence in your chair

• What are their academic credentials?
• What are their research interests?
• Where do they publish?

• Find some common ground with each of them
I remember when summer was not a "good time to get research done," wasted sitting in front of a computer all day...

When the highlight of my week was not running simulations but running to the store to see if new comics had come in...

...when my tormentor was not a member of my committee, but the rantings of my little sister...

Back then, summers were well-spent...um...sitting in front of the TV all day...

I'm gonna tell mom!!
Have access to materials

• Keep a copy of your APA Handbook handy
• Know how to use your available databases
• Use Google Scholar
• Put together a quality library of helpful texts
Once you have your questions

- Understand what the questions are asking
- Break down the questions into manageable units
- Decide on a plan of attack
- Stick to your schedule
REDUCE YOUR STRESS

IF YOU'RE STUCK WRITING, CECILIA, JUST REMEMBER WHAT THEY SAY: WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW.

YES, BUT WHAT IF I DON'T KNOW WHAT I KNOW?

OR WHAT IF I KNOW WHAT I DON'T KNOW, BUT DON'T KNOW HOW TO KNOW WHAT I NEED TO KNOW TO KNOW WHAT I DO KNOW?

KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

NO.

I KNOW!

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You need all the help you can get!

• Your family

• Support and receive support from classmates
Take care of yourself

- Eat well
- Keep up your exercise routine
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Give yourself little rewards
- Take a relaxation break when you feel stressed
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Breath focus
  - Guided imagery
Keep your eye on the prize
Questions?

Thank you for attending.

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