

C. Maguth Nezu, A. J. Finch, & N. P. Simon (Eds.) (2009). *Becoming Board Certified by the American Board of Professional Psychology*. New York, Oxford, pp. 174. ISBN 978-0-19-537243-4. \$35.00 (Paperback).

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The American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP), has been certifying specialists in psychology since 1947. Throughout the United States and Canada, ABPP has become the gold standard for certification in the field and remains a symbol of competence among psychologists, as well as the public at large. Surprisingly, however, only a small percentage of psychologists are actually board certified, as opposed to the field of medicine in which the vast majority of physicians maintain one or more board certifications. This is primarily due to psychologists' view that board certification is unnecessary (Dattilio, 2002). There is also the fact that many psychologists resent having to endure the challenge and acquisition of yet an additional credential beyond doctoral level education and basic licensing. Board certification is designed to provide credentialing over and above requisite entry level education and training designated by individual state and licensing boards, and to issue a certificate of proficiency that would distinguish between basic training and more advanced levels of competence (Dattilio, Sadoff, & Gutheil, 2003).

However, it has become more evident in the past decade that board certification in psychology has become an important and necessary credential, particularly for individuals who work in clinical and hospital settings, as well as expert witnesses in a variety of domains. It is for this reason that the authors of this book have compiled a wonderful text that dispels some of the myths about becoming board certified, as well as the daunting task of pursuing the certification process. The book's primary intention is to educate readers and encourage all qualified psychologists who offer professional services to consider board certification. This unique work is divided into 12 chapters, which kicks off with a brief overview of the inception of the American Board of Professional Psychology from its roots in 1947 to its present status.

The introductory chapter, which was authored by the late Russell J. Bent, along with two well-noted colleagues, Ralph Packard and Robert Goldberg, provides a thorough overview and update of the history of the board, as well as its intent and the benefit of board certification. The chapter also lists the 13 specialty areas of certification that ABPP has to offer, as well as the notion of certification serving as an important professional developmental milestone for psychologists.

The subsequent chapters, all of which are written by well-known and well-respected figures in the field, go on to address the many reasons for seeking board certification and the value that certification adds to one's profession. One particular chapter by Christine

Maguth Nezu, the current president of ABPP, addresses many of the personal fears and concerns that psychologists may have with regard to pursuing board certification and helps prospective candidates to consider strategies for dealing with hurdles, as well as reasons for both emerging and seasoned professionals to seek board certification.

This chapter is followed by an excellent contribution authored by Nadine Kaslow and Victoria M. Ingram on board certification and competency-based perspectives. The contents focus on the foundational and functional competency of each specialty board as it pertains to interpersonal interactions, individual and cultural diversity, ethical and legal foundations, professional identification, aspects of intervention consultation, science-based applications, as well as supervision, teaching, and management. Additional areas address assessment of competence and the process of competency-based examinations, all of which provide the reader with a solid understanding of a competency-based perspective.

David R. Cox follows with a very appropriate chapter addressing the issue of when to start the process of pursuing credentialing with ABPP. It compares ABPP to other credentials, as well as the licensing process, and discusses the options for early career psychologists, as well as the options that are available to senior clinicians and practitioners and mid-career psychologists who desire board certification. A recommendation made in this chapter is that one should consider the ABPP application process as soon as possible, with the offer that any questions by prospective applicants may be directed to the central office of ABPP.

Oftentimes, finding the right specialty board for which to apply can also be a difficult chore. This issue is addressed in an excellent chapter by Thomas J. Boll, which outlines the various board specialties and why one might decide to seek multiple board certifications at all. All of this is underscored by the notion that board certifications benefit the consumer, informs our colleagues, and reflects well on those individuals who obtain certification. Additional chapters outline the details on how to prepare for oral examinations, as well as specific preparation for the written examinations that are offered in the specialties of clinical neuropsychology and forensic psychology.

In addition, there are chapters that cover preparation for the practice sample, with a detailed outline in terms of how candidates may structure their written practice samples and prepare for reviewers' evaluation of the practice sample. Additional chapters also address working with a board-certified mentor in a particular specialty area, complete with mentoring guidelines and suggestions. An elaborate section highlights the preparation for the oral examination and offers advice on dealing with an examining committee and preparing for the ethics portion of the oral examination, as well as how to handle difficult questions. The notion of preparing for oral examinations typically produces a high level of anxiety for most candidates. A specific chapter is dedicated to the various challenges that candidates are likely to encounter. The book even includes an entire chapter on what to do when one fails an examination and decides to submit an appeal. An entire outline discusses the steps involved in the appeals process, as well as how to avoid unsuccessful appeals.

Three final chapters address the issue of giving back to ABPP by proudly displaying the credential, as well as serving as a role model and mentor to future candidates, and joining specialty board academies. An additional chapter addresses professional development and life-long learning through further continued education and training, as well as pitfalls to avoid, which condenses topics on preparing for the initial application process, practice samples, and written documents, and taking the oral examination.

In summary, this is a well-crafted guidebook for anyone considering the process of becoming board certified. This resource is something that could have been used by thousands of applicants over the past 50 years who might have benefited from the excellent knowledge about the process of becoming board certified. I, for one, wish that this book had been available years ago when I was preparing for my boards.

In my opinion, this comprehensive guidebook is a must-read for anyone considering the pursuit of certification with ABPP. It is sure to answer all of the questions of even the most reluctant and inquisitive applicants. This brief, 174 page text is well-written in a concise and enjoyable fashion. The editors and authors are to be thoroughly commended for doing an outstanding job.

### **References**

Dattilio, F. M. (2002). Board certification in professional psychology: Is it really necessary? *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 33(1), 54-57.

Dattilio, F. M., Sadoff, R. L., and Gutheil, T. G. (2003). Board Certification in forensic psychology and psychiatry: Separating the chaff from the wheat. *Journal of Psychiatry and Law*, Vol. 31 (spring), 5-19.