

The Psychologist's Guide to Professional Development

Greg Bohall • Mary-Jo Bautista

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Greg Bohall, Psy.D.
CHE Behavioral Health Services
Los Angeles, CA, USA

Mary-Jo Bautista, Psy.D., DBA
Bellflower, CA, USA

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We would like to dedicate this contribution in psychology to two different parties. First, we would like to dedicate this work to family members and friends who were instrumental in our upbringing that are now deceased. It is through their efforts that have helped shape our personal development and put us in the position to help others through this publication. Second, we would like to dedicate this contribution to you, the reader. It is your dedication to personal and professional development through your review of this publication that serves as a way to improve not only the self but also the quality of services in psychology as a whole. For the two different parties mentioned, we dedicate this contribution in psychology to you.

Foreword

I was delighted to be invited to write the foreword to this new and important book which is particularly aimed at psychology graduate students and early career psychologists. Having qualified as a clinical psychologist in the UK in 1991, my interest in, and commitment to, professional development has been career-long. This has been reflected in my job choices. While my clinical work in the UK National Health Service has been with adults with intellectual disabilities, I have also held a number of training and professional development roles. For the past decade or so, my primary job has been training clinical psychologists. This includes having responsibility for teaching on professional issues across the 3-year training program for the University of Liverpool's Doctorate in Clinical Psychology program. In the final year of the program, we cover many aspects of professional development in preparation for our students' transition to being qualified. Previously, I led an NHS-funded continuing professional development scheme for clinical psychologists in the North West of England. This included running a training scheme for early career (up to 3 years post-qualification) clinical psychologists as the need for a focus on early career professional development was recognized as being particularly important—as is also the case in this book.

Professional development is a career-long endeavor. What professional development we need and do will differ according to stage of career and the work we do, but it is needed for everyone. The opening chapter of a book that I co-edited (Golding & Gray (2006) *Continuing Professional Development for Clinical Psychologists: A Practical Handbook*. BPS Blackwell: Oxford) was called “What a Difference a Day Makes.” We wrote about how the day after we qualify as clinical psychologists, just when we thought we were done with formal learning, our lifelong learning begins. It is essential that, in whatever work we do as psychologists, we remain fit for purpose and are safe to practice throughout our careers. Regardless of career stage, professional development is a great leveler. No one is immune from having to maintain and improve their competence—it is an ethical and professional requirement wherever we are in our careers. That said, for this to be given additional focus in early career is particularly important.

A key theme running through this book is its emphasis on professional development as being about prevention—a means to maintaining competence and to avoiding legal or ethical practice difficulties/transgression. The book’s authors also rightly emphasize the need to be proactive, to seize opportunities, and to expose oneself to a range of experiences, with the important aim of being open-minded. So, professional development has different purposes.

Readers will find that this book is written accessibly and has a very helpful structure. The first third of the book focusses on the development of the self. This is followed by the middle third that is described by the book’s authors as being about “the mastery of the external” covering topics such as licensing/credentialing boards, the supervision process, and financial management. The final third focusses on professional development in relation to dissertation completion, the components of the curriculum vitae, the internship experience, and the benefits of being a graduate student or early career professional. Early on, the ways in which the personal and professional interweave are described. The obligation of self-care links professional development to psychologists’ safety to practice. Other highlights in this book include the focus on multicultural psychology and cultural competency, the development of awareness of our own belief systems and identity, as well as the knowledge and skills to work with diverse populations. The imperative of maintaining an “open mind” is emphasized, together with the need to ensure that we have good governance structures in place to enable our professional development and safe practice such as clinical supervision, mentoring, and spaces for reflective practice.

The authors’ passion for professional development is clear and includes sharing what they themselves have learned from their own professional experience as well as what they have learned from their teachers and mentors. The purpose is summed up by the book’s authors in the first chapter: “Essentially, the foundation of professional development is needed to not only secure gainful employment as a psychologist but to ensure professional and ethical stability throughout the career lifespan. By having a solid foundation in professional development, the early career professional is in a position to obtain these benefits of longevity and success in psychology.”

I am sure that readers will find this book an invaluable resource, a practical handbook, and a guide to their professional development covering a commendable wide range of important topics.

Dr. Laura Golding
Clinical Psychologist and Programme Director
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
University of Liverpool
Liverpool, UK

Preface

Professional development in psychology is heavily emphasized, but not standardized. It is this incongruence that has served as the catalyst to complete this text. In its infantile stages, this book began in 2010; during our graduate schooling, we regularly documented topics and areas that we would like to explore further. After years of collaboration, the “a-ha” moments and the “I would have liked to have known that earlier!” thoughts culminated into this writing with hopes of benefitting fellow early career professionals in psychology. Given the emphasis in psychology to standardize training, the goal of this text is to serve as a vehicle to standardize professional development.

This text is organized in 14 chapters. The primary focus of the earlier chapters is to develop a strong personal and professional foundation. The rationale for these components is to develop a solid core to build off of. In other words, you cannot build a house until you complete the “underground” work. After this foundation, the goal of the middle chapters is to serve as a platform for information gathering and action-oriented activities. For example, it is important to understand your licensing board (information gathering) as well as the dissertation process (action). The later chapters continue to focus on action but are much more specific; authors review specific components of the curriculum vitae, examine the future of 13 areas in psychology, and provide recommendations for the early career professional.

Lastly, and perhaps most exciting, is the list of professionals who volunteered their time to strengthen the quality of this text. In “The Future in Psychology” chapter, we consulted with experts in a variety of areas in psychology. Since we obviously cannot have current expertise in every area of psychology, we included expert practitioners, academics, and researchers in these areas to help us provide an accurate “state of the discipline.” Without these professionals, we would not be able to provide you, the reader, with the in-depth information that you are seeking.

Los Angeles, CA, USA

Greg Bohall, Psy.D.

List of Contributing Consultants

- Mitch Abrams, Psy.D., *Learned Excellence for Athletes: The Future in Psychology*
- Kathryn Barrs, Psy.D., *Sturm Specialty in Military Psychology at University of Denver: The Future in Psychology*
- Jennifer Birdsall, Ph.D., *CHE Behavioral Health Services: The Future in Psychology*
- Jen Carter, Ph.D., *The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center: The Future in Psychology*
- Y. Barry Chung, Ph.D., *Indiana University Bloomington: The Future in Psychology*
- Brad E. Conn, Ph.D., *El Camino College: The Process of the Doctoral Dissertation*
- Shadeiyah Edwards, Psy.D., *Edwards Consulting LLC: The Process of the Doctoral Dissertation*
- Timothy Elliott, Ph.D., ABPP, *Texas A & M University: The Future in Psychology*
- Kirk Heilbrun, Ph.D., *Drexel University: The Future in Psychology*
- Jacob N. Hyde, Psy.D., *Sturm Specialty in Military Psychology at University of Denver: The Future in Psychology*
- Wayne Kao, Psy.D., *CHE Behavioral Health Services: Multicultural Psychology*
- Michelle Kelley, Ph.D., *Old Dominion University: The Future in Psychology*
- Richard Kinnier, Ph.D., *Arizona State University: The Future in Psychology*
- Richard Klimoski, Ph.D., *George Mason University: The Future in Psychology*
- Lisa Laajala, MBA, *Independent Business and Management Consultant: Personal Financial Management and Business*
- Jennifer E. Lansford, Ph.D., *Duke University, Center for Child and Family Policy: The Future in Psychology*
- Darren Lemon, M.S., BCBA, *Applied Behavioral Alternatives, Inc.: Personal Financial Management and Business*
- James Lichtenberg, Ph.D., ABPP, *University of Kansas: The Future in Psychology*
- Alice Medalia, Ph.D. *Columbia University Medical Center: The Future in Psychology*
- Jeffery S. Mio, Ph.D., *California State Polytechnic University, Pomona: Multicultural Psychology*
- Sabrina Musson, Ph.D., LMHC, CASAC, *Medaille College: The Process of the Doctoral Dissertation*

Phillip Resnick, MD, *Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine: The Future in Psychology*

Monica Sarmiento, B.A., *Independent Financial Consultant: Personal Financial Management and Business*

Robert Scianca, *R. Scianca Tax & Insurance Services: Personal Financial Management and Business*

Sari Fine Shepphird, Ph.D., *Sport and Perform: The Future in Psychology*

Dr. Joe Simon, *Private Practice Consultant: Personal Financial Management and Business*

Thomas Widiger, Ph.D., *University of Kentucky: The Future in Psychology*

Rick Williamson, Ph.D., *Emmada Psychology Center: The Curriculum Vitae and Professional Marketing & The Practicum, Predoctoral, and Postdoctoral Experience*

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Author Biographies

Greg Bohall, PsyD., CRC, MAC, ICADC, CADC-II earned a doctorate in psychology (PsyD) in clinical forensic psychology in 2014. He is currently a registered psychological assistant in the state of California and is pursuing his license as a psychologist. Dr. Bohall is internationally and nationally recognized as an international certified alcohol and drug counselor (ICADC), as a certified rehabilitation counselor (CRC), and as a master addiction counselor (MAC). As an early career professional in psychology, Dr. Bohall has accrued 5 publications from peer-reviewed works and has completed 21 international and national conference presentations. Dr. Bohall is also serving on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* and the *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, & Trauma*. His academic and research interests include forensic assessment and intervention, evaluation of interviewing and interrogation procedures, and crisis intervention and negotiation. His passion for professional development in psychology stems from his student and professional experience coupled with his desire to provide guidance for developing psychologists.

Mary-Jo Bautista, PsyD is an early career psychologist. She earned a doctorate in psychology (PsyD) in applied clinical psychology in 2013. She is a licensed clinical psychologist in the state of California and currently provides services for various state- and government-funded agencies. Dr. Bautista is an advocate for underprivileged populations and presents her work at national and international conferences promoting the need for mental health services for minorities. Her current projects include decreasing the stigma of mental health with Filipino Americans through the development of culturally specific interventions. Dr. Bautista is also dedicated to educating practitioners on promising and effective interventions for individuals diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disability. Academically, she has been published 3 times in peer-reviewed works and has completed 9 international and national conference presentations. Similar to her dedication to educating practitioners, Dr. Bautista strives to help students and fellow early career professionals reach their personal and academic goals through this publication.