

Diplomate in police psychology:
Expert enhancement or dubious distinction?

JAMES S. HERNDON, PH.D., ED.D.

Society for Police and Criminal Psychology

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Diplomate in Police Psychology

- Since 1989, The Society for Police and Criminal Psychology (SPCP) has offered the Diplomate in Police Psychology to qualified members.
- The Diplomate is recognition that the member has met board certification; a numbered diploma is issued.
- Currently, there are only a few Diplomates.

Diplomate Criteria

- To be eligible for Diplomate status, an applicant must:
 - Be an SPCP member for five consecutive years.
 - Hold a Ph.D. (Ed.D. or Psy.D.) in psychology.
 - Have at least five years professional experience in the practice of police psychology.
 - Be licensed to practice in their respective state or work in an exempt setting.

Reasons for Applying

- Psychologists seek the Diplomate status:
 - To enhance their professional credentials.
 - To gain recognition among their peers.
 - To add distinction to their reputation.
 - To set themselves apart from lesser qualified practitioners in the field.
- The Diplomate can contribute to the goal of a rewarding career in police psychology.

Professional Advantages

- Consider these numbers;
 - There are nearly 80,000 psychologists in the United States, according to APA records.
 - Only about 120 psychologists can be considered police psychologists; most serving as external consultants to law enforcement agencies.
 - SPCP currently recognizes 54 Diplomates.
- A uniqueness is clearly established.

Expert Enhancement

- The Diplomate in Police Psychology from SPCP requires:
 - A rigorous credentials review (Curriculum Vita) by a panel of active SPCP Diplomates.
 - Passing a written examination, tailored to the candidates area of expertise within police psychology.
 - Passing an oral examination given by a panel of 3-5 current SPCP diplomates.
- All who apply are not accepted; all accepted do not pass.

Common Criticisms

- The SPCP Diplomate in Police Psychology is not part of the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) class of diplomates.
- The ABPP diplomates, especially the Diplomate in Forensic Psychology, have more prestige.

Dubious Distinctions

- More and more, Diplomates are being offered to professionals of all kinds.
- Some organizations are selling diplomas based only upon self-assessment criteria.
- It is possible to obtain diplomas from these organizations so easy that there is a glut of Diplomates being claimed by thousands.
- What, then, is a Diplomate worth?

What's It Worth?

- Worth is, of course, a relative term.
- To those who seek and achieve the status of Diplomate in Police Psychology, the worth comes from the accomplishment and pride in earning the credential from SPCP.
- To those who don't value the Diplomate, it has no worth; thus, criticism is easy.
- Then, there are always sour grapes.

Conclusion

- SPCP has been an organization for more than 30 years.
- SPCP led the way with the Diplomate in Police Psychology.
- The Diplomate is earned, not given away.
- Others may criticize; but, criticism reflects more about the critic than the object of criticism.