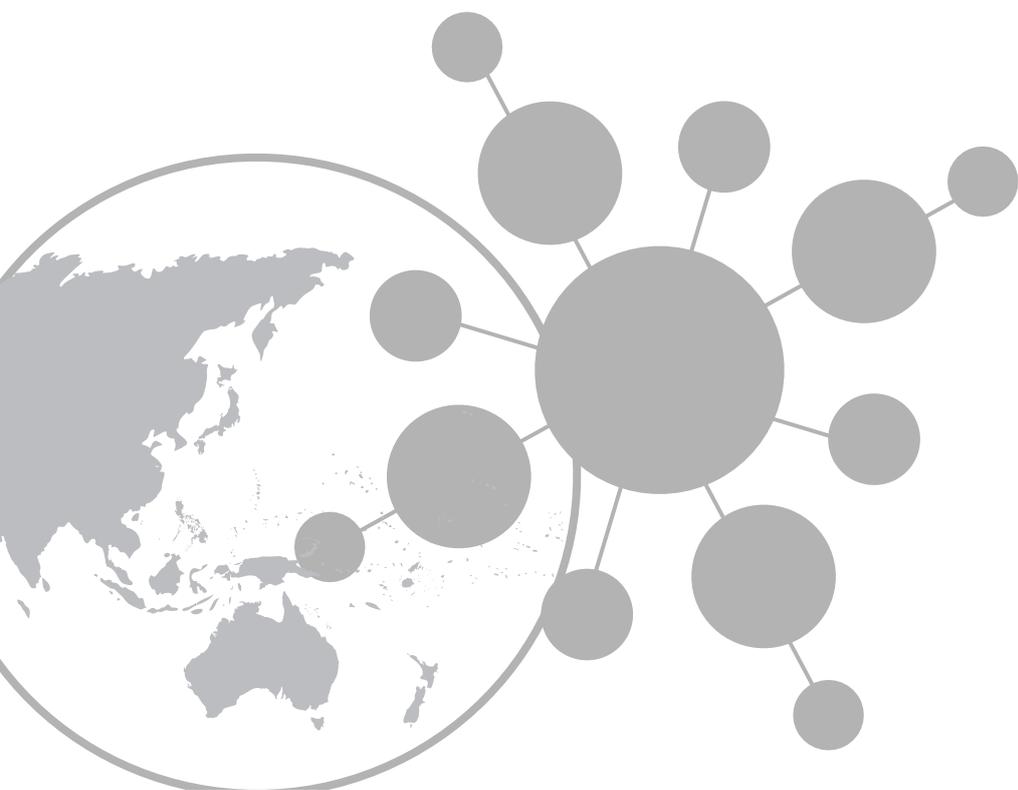




# Advances in Organisational Psychology

Editors

**A. Ian Glendon  
Briony M. Thompson  
Brett Myers**



● ————— **Advances in  
Organisational Psychology**

● **Editors**

**A. Ian Glendon  
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Brett Myors**

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## Foreword

It is a pleasure to write the foreword for this book. Early in the 1990s, a number of organisational psychologists in Australia developed the idea of a regular conference that would service the interests of the organisational psychology community, not just in Australia, but also across the wider Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Under the auspices of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), the first outcome of this venture was the inaugural APS Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference held in Sydney in 1995. I was privileged to be the chair and main organiser of this conference, assisted by Brett Myers and Elizabeth Allworth who were completing the doctoral program with me. Since then, this biennial conference has gone from strength to strength and has been held in venues in Melbourne and Brisbane, as well as Sydney and the Gold Coast.

As the sixth in the series, the Gold Coast Conference marked the 10-year anniversary of this successful event. For the first time, a small group from the 2005 APS Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference organising committee has taken the initiative of going beyond merely reproducing conference abstracts to edit a volume of readings based upon selected papers, including a number of the keynote addresses. The conference was highly successful, and the chapters in this book demonstrate the quality of the contributions.

The contents of this book speak well both to the strength of organisational psychology within Australia and New Zealand, and also to the growing regional contributions to this conference made by organisational psychologists based in Hong Kong, Singapore and elsewhere. It is exciting to relate that this Asia-Pacific theme is to be continued at the 7th APS

Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference to be held in Adelaide in 2007 in conjunction with the 1st Asia-Pacific Congress on Work and Organisational Psychology. The quality and variety of the contributions in this book are testimony to the innovation, health and breadth of organisational psychology within Australia and across the region. I am sure that, like me, you will find many topics of interest within this fine collection.

*Beryl Hesketh*

Sydney

January 2007





## Preface

Like any science-based discipline, organisational psychology is international, while retaining distinct flavours to represent specific concerns and orientations of particular regions. Our view is that an Asia-Pacific perspective on organisational psychology has so far been absent from the literature and one of the aims of this book is to begin to fill that gap. This book includes reports studies carried out in China (Lau, Au, & Ho, section IV), Singapore (Arnold, section III), the Philippines (Restubog & Bordia, section IV) and New Zealand (Inkson et al., O'Driscoll, sections III & IV) as well as in North America and Australia. Whatever their country of origin, there is likely to be near worldwide application for most, if not all, the topics represented in this collection.

All the substantive chapters in this book were sourced from original presentations to the Sixth Australian Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference, held at Queensland's Gold Coast in 2005. While a majority of presentations at this conference came from Australia and New Zealand, we consider that an Asia-Pacific identification presages a forthcoming regional enrichment of the field of organisational psychology to augment the high quality and quantity of research from these two countries. As members of the conference scientific and organising committee, we were especially involved in reviewing papers, which provided us with the opportunity to read the host of submissions very closely. Impressed with their quality, we lamented that there might be no enduring record of this important material. We therefore developed the idea of sourcing a book from the conference — hence this book.

This collection represents current conceptualisation and research in the Asia-Pacific region, and serves as a guide to contemporary themes and issues within organisational psychology. It was generated from the highest rated conference papers, and represents a prime selection of the topics presented in that arena. We do not claim that this collection is either representative or comprehensive; rather our aim is to showcase the best current research, practice and thinking presented at this conference. Within such a broad field it would be presumptuous to claim a definitive overview.

We are most grateful to our authors for their contributions. Given the high quality of the papers in this collection, we look forward to the next (2007) conference to extend this work.

*A. Ian Glendon*  
*Briony M. Thompson*  
*Brett Myors*  
Queensland, Australia  
January 2007





## Acknowledgments

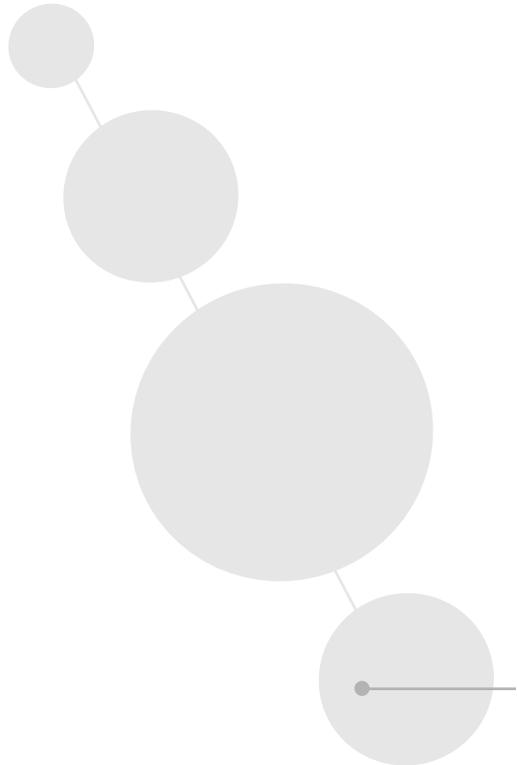
The editors wish to thank their respective families and colleagues for their support throughout the process of preparing this volume for publication. We very much appreciate the help and patience shown by our publisher. We acknowledge that without the considerable amount of work required by all our authors to produce such outstanding chapters, there would be no book to produce. Our hope is that this volume does justice to their high quality contributions.



**SECTION**

**I**

# Overview







## A Perspective on the Current State of Organisational Psychology

*A. Ian Glendon, Brett Myers, and Briony M. Thompson*

*'I/O psychology is about understanding behaviour at work'*  
(Tharenou, 2001, p. 201).

The aim of this book is to present a collection of contemporary topics in industrial and organisational (I/O) psychology, mainly from an Asia-Pacific perspective. One of us recalls a few years ago overhearing an enlightening exchange between two students before the start of one of our organisational psychology lectures. It went something like this: 'I can't see the relevance of this stuff; why would anyone want to study organisational psychology?' Her friend replied:

Well, it depends on whether you want to work in a place that employs people or not. If you want to work somewhere that doesn't employ anyone, then this stuff is completely useless; but if you want to work somewhere where there are lots of people, then organisational psychology is totally relevant

It is interesting to note that both these students passed the course, went on to enrol in a Master of Organisational Psychology program and have never looked back. They now work for organisations that do indeed employ lots of people and have since told us that they draw on their psychological skills every day. In many ways, this book represents the long answer to the question of relevance raised by the first student.

### The Scientist–Practitioner Perspective

Tracing the history of the scientist–practitioner model to a meeting in the United States in 1949, O’Gorman (2001) reviewed some of the debates that have helped to form this model. Noting that, ‘even the most effective scientist–practitioners probably rarely, if ever, apply research findings directly to their practice’ (p. 167), O’Gorman concluded that, ‘it is not the content of psychological science that is immediately applicable but rather the construct system that it gives rise to’ (p. 168). A debate about the future direction of organisational psychology has been engaged in the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (JOOP)*. Its focus is whether the academic and practitioner arms of the discipline will drift further apart, or whether the strength of the scientist–practitioner concept will be sufficient to maintain the coherence of this body of knowledge and practice that we call organisational psychology (see subheading below for a comment on nomenclature). While by no means the first publication to enter this discussion, the paper by Anderson, Herriott and Hodgkinson (2001) was instrumental in kick-starting the contemporary, and arguably the most intense version of this intradisciplinary debate.

After developing a quadrant model with dimensions of methodological rigour and practical relevance Anderson et al. (2001) described the pressures that tend to move research from the high rigour/high relevance quadrant, which they term ‘pragmatic science’, to either high rigour/low relevance (‘pedantic science’) on the one hand, or to low rigour/high relevance (‘populist science’) on the other. The two possible future scenarios that they described involve either continuing fragmentation of the discipline, or a greater convergence of work in the three critical quadrants. Their conclusion was that appropriate political activity by the profession, particularly in respect of engagement with stakeholders, is the prime way in which the profession can retain sufficient unity to maintain the scientist–practitioner as a reality, rather than a past myth. This argument is revisited in the final chapter of this book.

As newly appointed editor of *JOOP*, Arnold (2004) entered the debate, adding to the two offered by Anderson et al. (2001), a third dimension of theoretical/conceptual content, with contributions scoring highly on all three dimensions being dubbed ‘potent’. His stated aim as editor was to require all submissions to score highly on at least two of the three critical dimensions in order to be published in *JOOP*. Arnold’s position is that demonstrated practical relevance is a requirement for many papers published in *JOOP*.

The debate has been continued in a series of papers in *JOOP*, in which Gelade (2006) noted that tending to be problem-oriented and seeking material that can help them to find solutions and to improve the way in which they work, practitioners rarely read academic journals, such as *JOOP*. It is interesting to note that of Gelade's list of topics that he claimed were most likely to be of interest to practitioners (reward, recruitment, retention, assessment, teams, performance management, morale, productivity, health and safety, leadership, training and development, stress, bullying, diversity, work–life balance, employee engagement, and the ageing workforce, as well as intervention studies), nearly all appear in one or more chapters in this book, along with practical implications. Perhaps practitioners are more likely to read books than academic journals? In any event, this book is directed at practitioners every bit as much as researchers.

Continuing the debate, Wall (2006) considered it useful to distinguish between substance (or content) and presentation, and that both are important to practitioners. Symon (2006) questioned whether the 'academic–practitioner divide' is as deep or as important as is often made out, considering that it can be 'talked up'. In the final commentary in this stage of the debate, Hodgkinson (2006) reminded us of the central importance of the scientist–practitioner model — essentially the need for scientific rigour *and* practical relevance. Hodgkinson considered that organisational psychology's unique and vital 'selling point' is that scientific rigour, including methodology, is essential. Without this, he observes, there can be little or no confidence in the measures and instruments used by practitioners to address problems.

As editors, we align ourselves completely and unambiguously with the scientist–practitioner model for organisational psychology. As active researchers, we always seek to address issues that combine conceptual depth, methodological rigour and that have practical implications in some domain (although we have deliberately eschewed presenting examples of our own research in this book). Our consulting work has involved extensive use of scientifically validated instruments and well-established methodologies (qualitative as well as quantitative), and has led to published work. Our teaching and administrative responsibilities over a lengthy period have witnessed us all committed to actively assisting the learning of postgraduate organisational psychology students whose professional ambition is the practice of organisational psychology — including practicum supervision as well as practically oriented class teaching and research engagement. Our approach to presenting the material in this

book is entirely consistent with this orientation — we view the link between sound research and good practice as a *sine qua non*.

Whatever methodology is adopted, all the contributions in this book are characterised by their rigour of approach, with most highlighting the relevance of their particular contribution for the scientist–practitioner organisational psychologist. The ever-changing role of the organisational psychologist, *inter alia*, is likely to involve increasing complexity and variety of issues to confront — for example, including greater cross-cultural awareness, a broader appreciation of theoretical and conceptual positions and an ability to employ a wide variety of methods and forms of analysis. Future organisational psychologists are also bound to require wider knowledge across different areas of the discipline, as well as greater depth in their selected areas of study and practice.

### **Organisation and Content of the Book**

To help guide the reader through this collection, we have arranged the chapters under broad section headings. A brief introductory chapter prefaces each section — the current chapter also serves as the introduction to Section I. The introductory paragraphs about each individual chapter are written, first, to provide an overview of key aspects of the chapter — aimed more particularly at the researcher end of the scientist–practitioner continuum. We have selected all the contributions to this volume as being well-grounded within the conceptual strata of relevant prior research, while the empirical papers all exhibit robust methodology. Second, following Wall's (2006) excellent suggestion of providing a commentary of practical relevance to research papers, the introductions to every section also identify those elements of each contribution that are likely to be of most significance to those who identify themselves at the practitioner end of the scientist–practitioner spectrum. These paragraphs also clearly demonstrate that all the organisational psychology contributions in this volume have practical implications — in most cases direct workplace (or occasionally, wider) applications. These sections highlight the fact that this is very much a book for practitioners, not just those who are organisational psychologists, but also human resources (HR) specialists and management consultants, as well as for researchers and students of organisational psychology and cognate disciplines. Thus, the volume has the ambitious aim of straddling research, professional and learning domains within organisational psychology.

The contributions comprising this book represent something of the great variety of conceptual, methodological and analytical approaches to the broad vista of organisational psychology. The breadth of

contemporary organisational psychology is represented here by conceptual approaches that range from macro (e.g., national cultural migrations and the Diaspora, bureaucracy) through meso (e.g., leadership and teams in organisations) to the micro (e.g., office environments, individual differences). The considerable variety in the range and scope of topics is reflected in the broad section themes and individual chapter headings. Presenting a balanced combination of review and empirical contributions, this book offers a state-of-the-art perspective on organisational psychology. With almost 1300 references (averaging 57 per substantive chapter), the book also serves as a source of reference material on the topics it addresses. While research approaches represented here are predominantly quantitative, showcasing a variety of methodologies and types of multivariate statistical analyses, qualitative approaches are also represented. We have sought to render the final product acceptable to the broad church of organisational psychology, as well as being highly relevant to organisational practitioners and comprehensible to researchers from cognate disciplines, such as management, human resources, and organisational behaviour.

Several of the contributions reflect both the history and the projected future of their particular aspect of the disciplinary field. While a variety of organisational settings is represented in the empirical chapters, reflecting contemporary employment patterns, there is a bias towards organisations and samples drawn from public service sectors, for example education and government workers. Together the chapters of this book represent a mosaic of interlinked themes, concepts, methodologies, topics and forms of statistical and qualitative analysis. Like a series of courses at a Chinese banquet, we invite you to sample from all of them and to return and read more about your favourites.

### **A Brief Note on Nomenclature**

As noted by O'Driscoll (section V), the field of industrial/organisational psychology goes by various names across different regions. The term 'I/O psychology' is used extensively in North America, although in Australia and New Zealand (despite the title of our conference) the name has become 'organisational psychology'. In Europe, additional reference to 'occupational' or 'work' psychology predominates. To all intents these terms are interchangeable and indicate the same discipline, that is, application and research of psychological principles to the world of work. For consistency within this volume, we use organisational psychology as the reference in most instances, although in some cases we have opted to allow individual authors' preferences to stand.