

Julian Barling. **The Science of Leadership: Lessons from Research for Organizational Leaders.** New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014, 328 pages, \$49.95 hardcover.

Reviewed by *Clive Fullagar*, Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS.

I was once attending a conference of national union leadership at the AFL-CIO George Meany Center in Washington, DC. During one of the recesses a prominent union leader informed me that academic research could be categorized into two types: 90% was totally irrelevant and of little use to organizations of any kind, and then there was the 10% that was immediately applicable and helpful in developing an understanding of the real life issues that confront leaders. Julian Barling's book, *The Science of Leadership: Lessons from Research for Organizational Leaders*, falls firmly into the latter category. As Barling points out in the preface, the literature on leadership can be broadly described as consisting of two kinds of book; those that are directed at an academic audience and focus on leadership theory and research, and those that are aimed at practitioners that are nonresearch based but provide guidelines for the practice of leadership. *The Science of Leadership* adopts the middle ground by outlining practical guidelines to leaders that are "evidenced based."

Typically there is a large schism between what scientists research and what practitioners want to be researched. Barling cuts to the core and addresses those issues that are foremost in both domains. Each chapter is organized around a pressing question confronting both leaders and leadership researchers. For example, "What Is Leadership?" "Do Leaders Matter?" "Are Leaders Born or Made?" The book proceeds to answer these questions by drawing upon evidence gleaned from a wide range of studies and to apply the findings of research to a variety of current issues and events. Barling has done a great service to the field by addressing some of the most important topics confronting the study of leadership, not least of which is where we go after we have done the research. There is enough evidence now to suggest that leadership can be taught. This being so, what should leadership interventions look like? Should they be theory driven? Should they be tailored to specific organizations or does one size fit all? How cost-effective are interventions? These are all questions that are eloquently and concisely answered in *The Science of Leadership*. Refreshingly, the book is not "Pollyannaish" about leadership. Barling also directs us to the dark side of leadership and the costs to organizations that are associated with poor leadership.

What makes the book so interesting to read is that the author offers an in-depth exploration of topics that are often neglected in books on

leadership. For example, he does not restrict his focus to traditional business organizations but expands his application to include political, military, union, and educational contexts. By doing so he highlights both the robustness of leadership theories as well as the situational contingencies that impact the practice of leadership. The book also looks at the way in which our knowledge of leadership is determined by how we study it. One chapter concentrates on how research design has both enriched and limited our understanding of leadership. This is an important topic for both practitioners who wish to become critical consumers of the literature and for students who wish to make a contribution to the evolving field.

Most books on leadership focus on the grand gestures of larger-than-life leaders. Early on in *The Science of Leadership*, Barling makes the point that leadership is not confined to people of stature, that it is dispersed throughout all levels of the organizations, and that “the best of leadership can be expressed through small but meaningful behaviors enacted at the right time” (p. 24). The book is liberally illustrated with atypical anecdotes of such small gestures made by famous and not-so-famous leaders. Many readers, who like myself probably characterize themselves as leaders of little stature, will find this refreshing, interesting, and accessible.

I also found this book to be anomalous in that it did not spend a lot of space outlining the historical evolution of leadership theories. Rather it converged on new-genre organizational leadership theories that have begun to emerge and gain prevalence in the academic literature within the last 50 years (for example, transformational leadership, leader-member-exchange, authentic leadership, and servant leadership). The result of this emphasis on current trends in leadership research is that the evidence that Barling draws upon resonates with the current events and issues that are exemplified throughout the book.

Having convinced us that leaders do indeed matter in that they positively impact a wide variety of employee, organizational, social, and environmental outcomes, Barling goes on to address the issue of how leadership works. One of my criticisms of much of the leadership literature is its “Field of Dreams” philosophy that, if you build effective leaders, organizations will succeed. Drawing on a wide range of research, Barling shows that there are few direct links between leadership and organizational success. Current research indicates a complicated anatomy to leadership whereby high-quality leadership and its outcomes are mediated and moderated by a growing list of constructs, such as follower perceptions of their own effectiveness, the meaningfulness of the work being performed, the quality of the leader–follower relationship, and so forth. This balanced approach of uncovering these complicated relationships pervades the book.

Industrial-organizational psychology is a field at the intersection of science and practice. The growth of the discipline has always been rooted to its ability to merge theory with practical utility. Unfortunately, we have not always been able to do this successfully. Julian Barling's book *The Science of Leadership: Lessons from Research for Organizational Leaders* succeeds.

Ann Hergatt Huffman and Stephanie R. Klein (Eds.). **Green Organizations: Driving Change with I-O Psychology**. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013, 440 pages, \$54.95 paperback.

Reviewed by *Steven Toaddy*, Department of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA.

Go read this book. Even if you aren't interested in the topic, you should be, so go. What follows is a description of what you'll experience *when* you read the book.

Of Hourglasses and Modern Art Galleries (and Also Edited Volumes)

I want to convey succinctly the particular arrangement, tone, and so forth of this title, and I find myself resorting to metaphor. Some readers are likely less favoring of this approach, so I'll provide several avenues from which you may choose. The title is, then, an hourglass; it is a modern-art gallery; it is a collection of statements from experts in diverse fields (or subfields) about a common theme and serves to inform and galvanize people of diverse backgrounds. That last one may not have been a metaphor. Those three bits are important for the reader of this volume, though—the initial diversity, the core theme, the diverse outcomes (now we're understanding the hourglass, eh? Would that the art gallery becomes clear to some in time). Let's explore each of those bits together.

Broad, Various, Diverse

More than most of the edited volumes that I have reviewed and that I gather are read by the *Personnel Psychology* readership, this one draws on perspectives from a broad array of backgrounds. The holders of those backgrounds choose to express their thoughts in varied forms—the various media of modern art, perhaps, from photograph to live installation to olfactory-only experiences (full disclosure: I know nothing of modern art). In this case, some chapters are variously narrative reports on the actions of a single noteworthy organization, speculation at specific approaches that may yield success in a field in the future, critiques of current business practices and suggestions for improvements, and philosophical (but accessible) discussions of the ethical underpinnings of green behavior. On

the one hand, this means that, across the volume, there is an inconsistent tone—but on the other, this very fact I embrace as a way of pulling together diverse perspectives, all of which contribute something meaningful to the larger objective of the volume without shoehorning authors' thoughts into a single narrative style. Interestingly, this is associated with perhaps my only critique of the title, that is to say, that dozens of pages throughout are used by various authors to define and repeat the same terms and anecdotes that are used by other authors within the very same volume. The silver lining of this, however, is that, notwithstanding the numerous cross-references, each chapter could very well stand on its own as a meaningful discussion of the topic(s) it sought to cover. In addition, these repeated references are not verbatim repetitions; the editors, I suspect, would have prevented this. Rather they are each stated from the unique perspective of the author(s) and in support of a specific and novel point that is being made.

To summarize this bit, then: Diverse backgrounds, various methods, first broad part of the hourglass. Downward (in one of those metaphors) we go.

Narrow; Curated; Central

If all of that purported variability and diversity gives you cold sweats, fret not (though do perhaps seek medical care). There is clearly a core topic that ties these chapters together—and (cross-references inclusive) tied together well they are. The editors/curators took from many perspectives chapters that support the central objective of informing and calling to action—many types of action, as we'll see below—the reader with regard to green organizations. Even when a peculiar chapter (e.g., 13; 4) falls between two more-conventional ones, the reader appreciates why (a) the peculiar chapter was included (viz., that it furthers one's understanding of the topography of green organizations) and (b) why the chapter appeared where it did. This makes for a title that feels well-organized despite its eclectic nature (though see the part about each chapter potentially standing on its own as well).

Summary? The curators of the modern art gallery that is (apparently) this volume know what they are doing. They solicited and arranged the materials well in support of the title's objectives (and not to devalue the individual contributors' work—certainly this was done well without exception). Let's now talk about who should read this and what readers will obtain from doing so.

Broad Again, Interpreted, Diverse Again

I'm unapologetically gushing about this title so let me use that to our mutual advantage. Readers who can profit from doing so may fall anywhere on all of the following continua: