

## Featured Publication & Special Members Only Downloadable Chapter

ILA Members publish on the topic of leadership from a variety of perspectives. We are pleased to feature a selection of these publications in this newsletter and our website.

In the *Member Connector*, authors take you behind the scenes, sharing their perspectives on the work, how the work informs contemporary issues, and highlighting points of interest to ILA members.

Thanks to ILA member Nathan Harter for contributing to this issue. Visit the member area of the ILA Web site to find additional information on *Clearings In The Forest: Methods For Studying Leadership* and download Chapter 3 "Leadership as Experience - Theory Symbol" -- available only to ILA members.

If you have a recent publication and are interested in being featured in this column, please contact ILA membership services, at [ila@ila-net.org](mailto:ila@ila-net.org) or 301.405.5218.

# Featured Publication

## *Clearings In The Forest: Methods For Studying Leadership*

by Nathan Harter

5.



*Nathan Harter was practicing law when Purdue University hired him to teach for the Department of Organizational Leadership at Versailles in 1989.*

*Since that time, he has been tenured in 1995 and twice has earned the Outstanding Departmental Faculty Award (1995 and 2001). Presently, he works out of Greensburg, Indiana, where he also lives with his wife, Karin, and three children: Nathan (IV), Elijah, and Kalyani.*

*ILA Staff, Ramsey Jabaji:*

**What drove or inspired you to write *Clearings in the Forest* and how did you come up with the title?**

*Nathan Harter:* I came to leadership studies late. There was for me no preexisting school of thought to make the learning easier. In that sense, I am self-taught. This book is one way to describe the way I have come to think about leadership.

The reason I offer the book to the leadership community is that it might add something to a conversation that frequently breaks down, as paradigms clash. Leadership studies is fragmented and often contentious, a situation which in turn impedes our attempts to justify leadership studies as a credible area of interest. New ways of thinking might lead to new ways of talking.

Leadership studies finds itself in an immense forest, tangled, where one is easily lost and tempted to cut a clearing at right angles as a habitation. I invite colleagues to abide within the forest instead and learn its ways. I use the imagery of exploring a forest to explain what I am doing as the book progresses.

**What do you want your readers to take away from your book?**

The book offers a loose framework for organizing leadership studies. As more and more programs around the world solidify, my framework might help them order

their efforts. At the same time, my hope is that everyone in leadership studies share the experience I have had realizing just how rich and confusing the topic can be. After learning to tolerate the uncertainty, which I consider inherent, they will be the ones to discern what we can know.

It is less likely that my book will seem useful to practitioners, who say that they need concise and direct advice right now. I disagree, as it happens, but they know their situation best.

**After reading your book, what do you think readers will walk away questioning the most?**

I suspect folks will wonder how leadership studies can coalesce in a coherent fashion, without creating dogma or insisting on uniformity. There should be a way to embrace a diversity of approaches without simply throwing up our hands and saying it's all good. Because a lot of it isn't. We will want to steer between rigidity and looseness,

without becoming completely paralyzed with indecision and walking away.

**After conducting the research for your book and introducing various theories, what do you believe are the biggest challenges that leadership studies will face in the future?**

To a large extent, university politics dictate what gets studied, taught, and cited, so that, for example psychologists feel herded toward their own kind, away from the interdisciplinary work that needs to be done on leadership. They get rewarded for looking like a psychologist. This is not a bad thing, since there is plenty for psychologists to contribute from within their discipline, so long as somebody tries to bring coherence to all of the work being done out there – as Bernard Bass tried to do for so many years.

6.

By the same token, it can be a challenge to prevent that effort toward coherence from becoming exclusive and limiting.

We do not share common methods or a common vocabulary. We cite wildly different authors. The ILA listserv gets downright testy over trying to define terms. A certain amount of that diversity of thinking is a strength, but right now it just might be our greatest weakness. The rifts are becoming pernicious. I guess you could say that I'm trying to pitch a big tent without being indiscriminate.

**There are many different perspectives of leadership**

**studies that you introduce and you discuss the importance of collaboration. How do we go about accomplishing fruitful collaboration on this issue?**

Wiser folks than I have made significant contributions toward answering this question. I could mention Meg Wheatley, for example, or Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey. They make wonderful suggestions. My own thought is this: by developing the virtues of a scholar, we equip ourselves for the conversation. Among the virtues I treasure would be openness, humility, and patience. But for collaboration especially, I personally need courage. It's not easy. That means taking risks, making oneself vulnerable, capable of being wounded. Ron Heifetz does a much better job saying this, by the way.

**What tools do you anticipate we need to join you in the dense forest?**

Critical thinking and humility. Come with that, and you will thrive. I can say this because I have to struggle with both of them. It is often the case, as psychologist James Hillman reminds us, that the very thing we struggle to understand becomes the lesson we are in the best position to teach. We know what the student is going through.

I heard a senior executive at the Boeing Company recently plead with college professors to teach critical thinking. The brain is meant to be nimble.

As for humility, I don't mean humiliation. I mean a deep respect both for the puzzling behaviors we are being asked to study and for the life of the mind. The historical

record is long and complicated. The range of experiences can seem overwhelming. It is good to appreciate that you can't reduce leadership to three easy steps. By the same token, we have to appreciate the incredible power of the human mind – especially when it works with other minds on important questions. This is important stuff. But we have already made incredible strides.

**If you were to write a follow-up to this book, what topic do you wish to explore further?**

A couple of readers have already said that I do not offer my own theory of leadership in this book, and in one sense that is true. I was not trying to offer an alternative to existing theories. Instead, it was my purpose to take a sack full of existing theories to see whether there is any way to organize them.

Frankly, people often become so enthralled with a single theory they forget that the real world defies them. It doesn't fit any one theory or model. Nevertheless, they often persist and insist, because people form emotional bonds to cherished models. Then, as they say, to a man with a hammer, everything is a nail. They go about seeing it everywhere and defending it against all criticism. I hope I don't do that.

I did wonder if perhaps there might be room for a book on the suffering of leaders – the suffering they experience, as well as the suffering followers expect them to experience. After all, at the root of leadership is anxiety. What do people think they are doing about that anxiety when they engage in leadership? I also wonder if there might be a textbook hidden in the pages of this one, straining to be free. In my manic moods, I like to

# JOB Listings

think that I've created little spaces for all sorts of new work, whether I am the one to do it or not. I think there is space for examining the ending of leadership, to name one example, as well as the idea of phantom leadership, in which followers follow a leader who doesn't really exist.

To a great extent, the reaction to this book might tell me what I need to say next. I've never been one to plan. Many of the best things I've ever done professionally were accidental. Not sure what that signifies, but there you have it. I try to stay open to the next happy accident. So like the billboard says, watch this space.

## Nominate Leadership Books

  
Scheltema

The ILA is pleased to announce that Scheltema Publishing is sponsoring the book fair during the annual ILA conference, *Emergent Models of Global Leadership*, to take place November 2-6, 2005 in Amsterdam.

Both Scheltema and the ILA are soliciting your help in nominating books to be present at this year's book fair. It is of significant importance that we attempt to include a diverse and wide list of publications that can be available for conference attendees.

Please visit the convenient online form to make book suggestions at <http://www.ila-net.org/Conferences/bookfair.htm>. Your help in this process is needed and greatly appreciated.

### **Assistant Professor Center for Organizational Leadership University of Cincinnati Cincinnati, OH USA Closing Date: 12/31/2005 Salary: Competitive**

Description : The Center for Organizational Leadership invites applications for a tenure-track position in Organizational Leadership at the assistant professor level starting in September 1, 2006, subject to budgetary approval. We are searching for an individual with a strong program of teaching and research that is commensurate with topics in the field of organizational leadership. It is expected that the individual will have teaching interests in at least some of the following areas: applied research methods, diversity and globalization, and leading groups. However, the search committee is willing to consider other areas in the field of organizational leadership. Ability and willingness to teach one or two graduate level courses in Human Resources is highly desirable. The normal teaching load is two courses per quarter. This position requires that the individual has the ability and is willing to successfully teach adult learners, many of whom are part-time, and pursuing their education at night. Required: a Ph.D in Organizational Leadership or in an appropriate field and demonstrated abilities in teaching and research. Applicants should submit a cover

letter describing how they meet the criteria for the position, updated vitae, and 3 letters of recommendations. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Members of the search committee plan to interview at the Academy of Management meetings to be held in Hawaii. An equal opportunity-affirmative action employer.

Contact Information: Professor Joseph C. Gallo, Chair of Search Committee, Center for Organizational Leadership, University of Cincinnati, P.O. Box 210094, Suite 6428 French Hall West, Cincinnati, Ohio 45221-0094  
Web: <http://www.artsci.uc.edu/orgLeadership/>

**For Complete Description & Application Procedure visit the ILA Web site at: [http://www.ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View\\_Job.asp?DBID=53](http://www.ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View_Job.asp?DBID=53)**

**To place an announcement in the *Member Connector*, please contact us at [ila@ila-net.org](mailto:ila@ila-net.org)**

**Check the ILA conference web site for more details about hotels, registration, sponsorship, keynotes and the agenda.**

<http://www.ila-net.org/Conferences/>