

A Study of the Yin and Yang Model of Leadership
for Individual and Collective Leadership Development

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A STUDY OF THE YIN AND YANG MODEL OF LEADERSHIP
FOR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Using the Yin and Yang Model of Leadership, this research engaged in embedded action research by studying feedback from 2,277 leaders in Canada and France who experienced the Yin and Yang Model in the context of leadership programs between 2008 and 2015. The Yin and Yang Model of Leadership builds on Mary Parker Follett's notion of leadership as a process of integrating both intrapersonally and interpersonally while proposing *intentionality* and *appreciation* as its two complementary and integrative factors. These two complementary factors summarize the long standing bidimensional factors found throughout the leadership literature; psychology; and ancient philosophies. Leadership theories have continued to abound since the early 20th century and leadership scholars have increasingly called for integrative strategies and multilevel models that can address leadership development from an individual level as well as from a relational level. Three complementary studies of 52 individual and collective leadership development interventions, using the multilevel Yin and Yang Model of Leadership, with appreciative (yin) and its intentional (yang) principles as the underlying framework, were conducted by the author. The results from all three studies strongly support: (a) the model's multilevel accessibility for leadership development at the individual, dyad, group and organization levels; (b) the use of appreciation and intentionality as two complementary and integrative leadership factors; and (c) the easy application and re-application of the model by participants from all walks of life. These results call for more research on each of the two principles as generative leadership attitudes, their interrelated

dynamic as a guiding model for self-mastery and self-leadership, the applications to groups and collective leadership development, and the model's general accessibility. The implications of this research are numerous, from the development of a new multilevel and integrative leadership model to introducing two new bidimensional and interdependent factors that speak to most contemporary theories of leadership (a) transformational leadership; (b) emotions and emotional intelligence; (c) authentic leadership; (d) shared leadership; (e) ethical leadership; (f) organizational justice; and (g) complexity and contextual approaches. Possible limitations of this research are (a) its embedded practitioner method and the possibility of positive-feedback bias, due to social conformity concerns from clients; (b) the possible reductive effect of using only two factors to describe a complex phenomenon such as leadership; and (c) the possibility of cultural specificity in terms of the proposed egalitarian perspective of leadership would also require further research internationally where hierarchy and power distance can be greater.

Keywords: leadership, leadership development, individual leadership, collective leadership, appreciative leadership, intentional leadership, integrative leadership, bidimensional leadership

ABSTRACT

Met gebruikmaking van het ‘Yin and Yang Model’ van leiderschap startte dit onderzoek, in een ‘embedded action research’ modus, met het bestuderen van feedback van 2.277 leiders in Canada en Frankrijk die leiderschap programma’s ondergingen tussen 2008 en 2015. Het onderliggende model bouwt voort op Mary Parker Follett’s begrip van leiderschap als een proces van zowel intra-persoonlijke en interpersoonlijke integratie van ‘intentionality’ (moedwilligheid) en ‘appreciation’ (waardering). Deze twee complementaire factoren vatten de vele langlopende bi-dimensionele factoren samen die door de literatuur over leiderschap werden gevonden. Vanaf het begin van de 20e eeuw zijn er veel theorieën over leiderschap ontstaan. Leiderschapsonderzoekers riepen op tot integratieve modellen die op meerdere niveaus toe te passen zijn zodat de ontwikkeling van leiderschapskennis zowel individueel als relationeel benaderd kan worden. Dit proefschrift rapporteert drie aanvullende studies van 52 individuele en collectieve interventies t.b.v. de ontwikkeling van effectief leiderschap. We maakten daartoe ook gebruik van het Yin en Yang leiderschapsmodel: met waardering (yin) en moedwilligheid (yang) als onderliggende principes. De resultaten van deze drie studies ondersteunen in sterke mate: (a) het gebruik van meerdere niveaus van het model t.b.v. het komen tot effectiever leiderschap op individueel, dyade, en groep- en organisatieniveau; (b) het gebruik van waardering en moedwilligheid als twee complementaire en integratieve leiderschapsfactoren; en (c) het gemak waarmee het model steeds opnieuw kan worden toegepast door uiteenlopende deelnemers. De resultaten geven aanleiding tot toekomstig onderzoek naar elk van de twee generatieve leiderschapsfactoren, inclusief hun inter-gerelateerde dynamiek: als conceptueel model

voor meesterschap over en leiderschap voor zichzelf en ook voor breed toegankelijke toepassingen in groepen t.b.v. de ontwikkeling van collectief leiderschap. De implicaties van dit proefschriftonderzoek zijn talloos. Ze betreffen de ontwikkeling van een nieuw integratief leiderschapsmodel, met meerdere niveaus, tot de introductie van twee nieuwe bi- dimensionale (en onderling afhankelijke) factoren die bestaande theorieën over leiderschap aanvullen, zoals (a) transformationeel leiderschap; (b) emotionele intelligentie; (c) authentiek leiderschap; (d) gedeeld leiderschap; (e) ethisch leiderschap; (f) organisatie-brede rechtvaardigheidstheorie; en (g) ‘complex adaptive systems’ benaderingswijzen. Beperkingen die kleven aan dit onderzoek zijn (a) de mogelijkheid van enigszins vertekend positieve deelnemersfeedback als gevolg van conformiteit bij cliënten; (b) het mogelijke beperkend effect van het gebruik van slechts twee factoren om een complex fenomeen als leiderschap te omvatten; en (c) de mogelijkheid van culturele specificiteit in de zin dat het voorgestelde egalitair leiderschapspectief verder internationaal onderzoek zal vergen waar hiërarchie en macht meer invloed zouden kunnen uitoefenen.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Mr. Jean-François Vézina, psychotherapist,
who in 2008 encouraged me to write and helped me believe in what I had to say.

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The leadership workshops I conduct in my work and have studied in this dissertation have been possible first and foremost because leaders in Canada and France

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A 25-Year Journey toward a New Leadership Model

This thesis can be described as the conclusion of a 25-year-old life inquiry I began as a Ph.D. student in organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland Ohio, from 1991 to 1993 (Figure 1), After two years in the Ph.D. program, filled with the abundance of learnings, I felt the need to interrupt my academic studies and pursue consulting experiences before producing an original Ph.D. dissertation.

After working in the fields of democracy development in Africa (1994-1996), mental health community services in Montreal, Canada (1997-2000), and further clinical training in both group and individual psychotherapy, I eventually returned to my original passion of leadership consulting in 2000. In 2002, I joined the global human resources group of Adecco, a staffing firm based in Zurich, Switzerland. I led the development of their new consulting endeavor, The House of Leaders, in Canada. And it's at that time that I introduced the Significant Leader Exercise, which I've been using ever since as the basic introductory exercise to all my leadership workshops. And, as you will discover, it has also become a central exercise to this dissertation.

The Significant Leader Exercise

When I designed my first leadership workshops for managers at Adecco Canada's *The House of Leaders* in 2002, I decided to build my opening presentation on leadership with a *grounded theory* exercise (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), in which I would build the leadership theory of the day based on the participants' own actual experiences of outstanding leadership. I called this exercise the *Significant Leader Exercise*. I would ask each participant to identify *the* person they had known throughout their life, thus far, who

stood out as their best example of leadership (e.g., a parent, a coach, a teacher, a friend, a former or present boss) and then to identify THE main characteristic that distinguished that person's outstanding leadership from everybody else they had known throughout their life. What made that person such an outstanding example of leadership?

Bidimensional Representations of Leadership in Management, Psychology and Philosophy

Workshop after workshop, I would collect these significant characteristics on a flip-chart and noticed every time how leadership characteristics given by each participant could fall in either of the traditional *task* and *relationship* groupings identified in behavioral and situational theories ever since Ohio State's seminal distinction of *initiating structure* and *consideration* as two primary factors in leader behavior (Stogdill & Coons, 1957). Recognizing a bidimensional representation of leadership was not such a surprise, since it had emerged as the dominant framework of leadership theory for the last 70 years (Behrendt, Matz, & Göritz, 2017; Yukl, 2012). What was more surprising was to recognize similar bidimensional representations in more contemporary and process oriented and learning theories, such as Kolb's (1988) and later, Boyatzis and Kolb's (1991) concept of *self-directed learning* as the integration of two learning orientations, (a) *prolearning* (intentions which anticipate the future) and (b) *retrolearning* (the re-examination and debriefing of past experiences) which has been foundational to Experiential Learning Theory and later Intentional Change Theory and Emotional Intelligence Theory and Leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). Similarly, Jim Collins' (2001) best-selling research also speaks of outstanding leadership as the paradoxical combination of deep personal humility, he associates to the yin factor

in Taoism, with its complementary yang factor of professional fierce resolve (Collins, 2001) And more recently, Theory U's (Scharmer, 2009) more process-oriented theory also defines leadership as an active and receptive process managing between *intention* and *attention* was another striking recurrence of this bidimensional and integrative perspective of leadership, for individuals and collectives. It was also during this period that I started to design my own strategy building/team-building sessions based on the yin and Yang principles I had noticed in the Appreciative Inquiry methodology, that is: the *Positive* and the *Anticipatory* principles, or start by appreciating first and then anticipate the future, as in Marvin Weisbord's (1992) *Search Conferences* methodology as well, where he also proposes two key complementary steps, in the collective leadership methodology, of (a) valuing the past and (b) envisioning the future.

While management literature offered a bountiful of bidimensional and integrative representations of leadership I also discovered, you will read in the literature review how similar integrative patterns also exist in psychology, communication studies and ancient philosophies as well.

The Rediscovery of Mary Parker Follett's Foundational Work

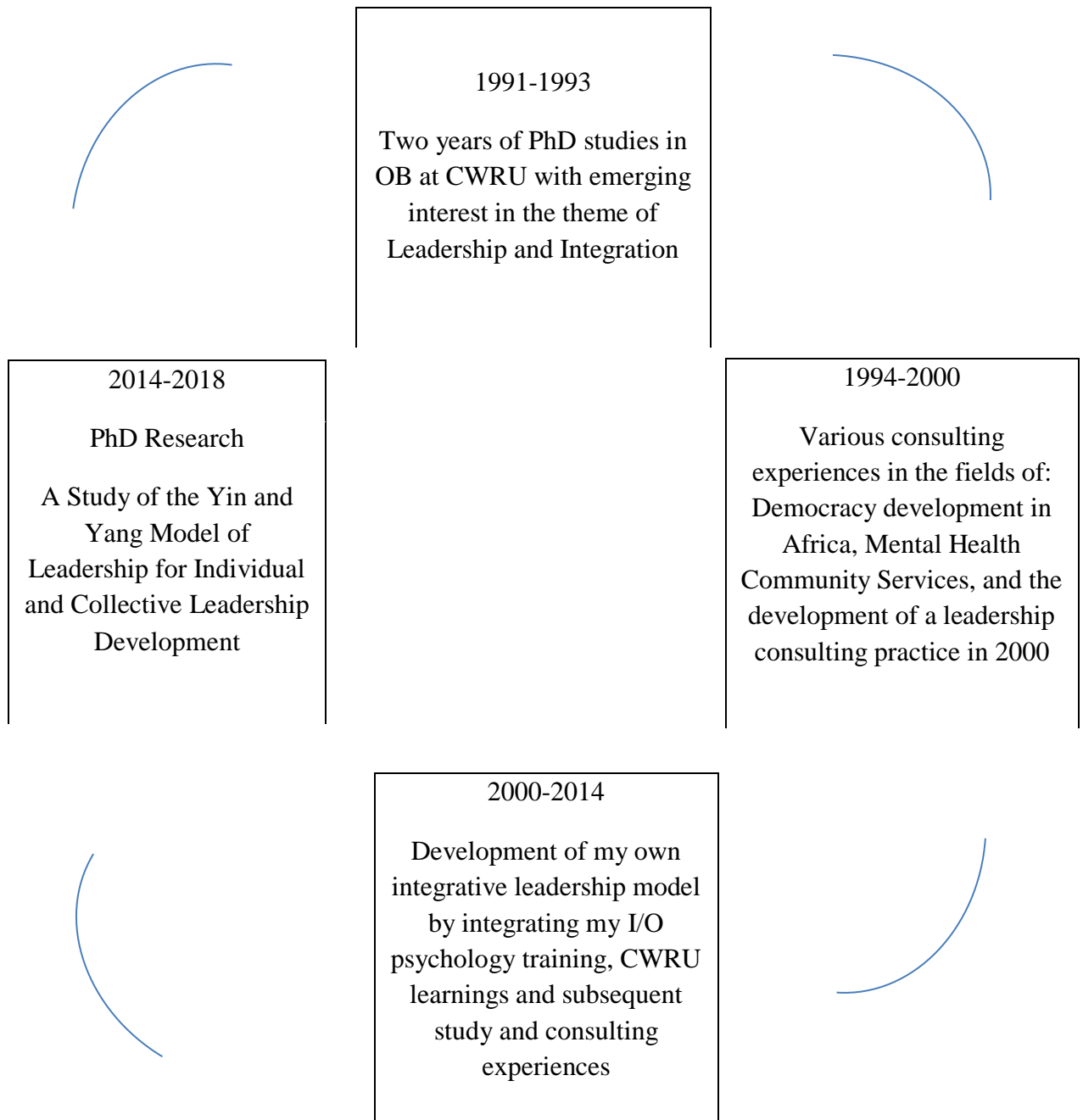
In the process of writing and researching this new integrative model, I re-discovered the writings of Mary Parker Follett on leadership and integration, and actually discovered the theoretical foundation upon which could rest the proposed Yin and Yang Leadership Model. Follett's processual philosophy (Stout & Love, 2015) expresses best the interdependent dynamic I was recognizing in leadership literature and in my consulting practice. Both the intentional and appreciative leadership principles I propose

as complementary leadership principles fit within Follett's "power-with" vision of leadership as a process of integrating and co-influencing (Follett, 1918).

I have since then developed a new model I have successfully used as the underlying framework to all my individual and group leadership trainings and organizational development interventions since 2008. I have called this leadership model the *Yin and Yang Model of Leadership*, and I propose to complete the Ph.D. journey by studying the accessibility of this new integrative leadership model for individuals and collectives by analyzing feedback from 2277 former participants and corporate sponsors to 52 distinct individual and collective leadership workshops conducted between 2008 and 2015 in Canada and France. Note: The use of the word "collectives" instead of "groups" is used to include the possibility that "a pair of individuals" as well as "a group of any size" can apply the Yin and Yang Model of Leadership in their respective situations.

Figure 1

Overall Inquiry Process Leading to this Dissertation:



A Leadership Model Built on Follett's View of Leadership as an Integrative Process

While different leadership theories and leadership models have continued to abound, leadership scholars lament the fragmentation of the leadership field (Batistič, Černe, & Vogel, 2017; Hunt & Dodge, 2000; Yammarino, Dionne, Chun, & Dansereau, 2005; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2002). No single contemporary model has managed to present the notion of leadership in a bidimensional and integrative way that is easily accessible and covers a diversity of individuals and collectives. Some present leadership models at an individual level, whether we speak of good leaders combining complementary traits (Gardner, 1989), behaviors (Behrendt, Matz, & Göritz, 2017; Stogdill & Coons, 1957), or attitudes (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991). Other models integrate two similar principles both at the individual and at the collective levels (Collins, 2001; Dansereau, Seitz, Chiu, Shaughnessy, & Yammarino, 2013; Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011; Scharmer, 2009). And others present complementary principles exclusively at the collective and organizational level (Capra & Flatau, 1996; de Geus, 1997). (See Table 4 for a complete review of bidimensional representations in management theory.) These different levels of interpretation of leadership between the individual and the group and between the bidimensional factors and the relational perspectives could appear confusing as some researchers have called for more multilevel approaches (Batistič, Černe, & Vogel, 2017) to clarify the construct of leadership, but they actually confirm Mary Parker Follett's prophetic writings on leadership a century ago, where she defined leadership as a dynamic integrative process found at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group levels. Follett (as cited in Metcalf & Urwick, 1941) wrote:

I have said that on the biological level, growth is by integration, by the continuous integration of simple, specific responses. I have said that we see the same law in operation on the personal level; diverse tendencies are united into new action patterns. I have said that in the case of two individuals, that is, on the social level, here, too, we get control through effective integration. Authority should arise within the unifying process. As every living process is subject to its own authority, that is, the authority evolved by or involved in the process itself, so social control is generated by the process itself or rather, the activity of self-creating coherence is the controlling activity. (p. 204)

Although Follett was proposing a vision of leadership as a dynamic and transformational process of integrating based on a “power-with” rather than “power over” orientation, she did not actually propose any model. It is in this context that we propose to study the Yin and Yang Model of Leadership as a model, based on Follett’s integrative vision, while proposing two new summary factors for individuals and collectives. The Yin and Yang Model of Leadership fulfills several purposes as

- an accessible multilevel (i.e. individual, dyad, group, organization) leadership model for individuals and collectives;
- a bidimensional model with factors that summarize well the recurring pattern of complementary leadership traits, behaviors, and attitudinal factors found in leadership literature;
- a process and relational model that develops adaptive capacities in times of change and complexity;

- a model that is simple and accessible enough so people, in general, and leaders and executives in diverse environments, specifically, can identify with and use it to develop their own individual and collective leadership; and
- a model that addresses core contemporary leadership areas and models, according to Batistič, Černe, and Vogel (2017), including
 - transformational leadership (Bass et al., 2003; Bono & Judge, 2003),
 - emotions and emotional intelligence (George, 2000; Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005; Wilderom, Hur, Wiersma, Berg, & Lee, 2015),
 - authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008),
 - shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2002),
 - ethical leadership (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005),
 - organizational justice (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001),
and
 - complexity, context, and leadership (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002).

Studying the Yin and Yang Model of Leadership through Three Complementary Studies

I have continued to open my individual and group leadership workshops with the Significant Leader Exercise and now title the two leadership groupings as *appreciative* and *intentional* leadership, or the yin and yang principles of leadership, respectively. And I have also reconceptualized these complementary principles into a new leadership model for individuals and groups. This study is an opportunity to investigate further if the

proposed Yin and Yang Model of Leadership is an accessible model to use for individual and collective leadership development and if the two chosen concepts of *intentionality* and *appreciation* confirm to be appropriate choices as two transformational attitudes of leadership.

This study, with its constructivist developmental lens, investigates a model that while integrating recurrent bidimensional factors of leadership focuses on the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that are seen to be linked to the development of new patterns of knowing and meaning making we associate with leadership at the individual and collective levels. Literature on professional development, executive and team coaching, up to today, lack any synthetic scientific framework of leadership development that can be easily applied by individuals and collectives in a variety of settings in order to develop the human capacity for self-direction.

The Goal and Research Questions

The goal of this research is to examine how accessible the Yin and Yang Model of Leadership can be as an integrative model for individual and collective leadership development. One main research question will guide our study:

Research question 1: Is the Yin and Yang Leadership Model an accessible model for individual and collective leadership development?

Plan of Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literature on the recurring bidimensional and integrative representations of leadership in management theory, psychology, communication studies, and ancient philosophies such as Taoism and Yogic philosophy.

This chapter ends with a summary of conclusions and the main research question and propositions resulting from the review. In Chapter 3, I describe in detail the samples, procedures, and methods used for the analysis of the qualitative data and quantitative data as well as the operational definitions chosen for the constructs. In Chapter 4, I report all findings of qualitative and quantitative analyses. In Chapter 5, I discuss the findings and contributions to the literature that are related to the study propositions. In Chapter 6, I expand the discussion on contributions from this study by offering implications for future research and practice on leadership development for individuals and collectives.