

**MARY PARKER FOLLETT**  
**LOST AND FOUND – AGAIN, AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN**

Mary Ann Feldheim\*

**ABSTRACT.** Coming from a long tradition of Quaker beliefs, Mary Parker Follett advocated for an integrative unity in the organization or state where members work together, consensus is built, and power is shared. She applied her process of integration to management practices in both business and government. Parker Follett's communitarian ideas and philosophy of smaller more participative government have often run counter to administration and managements' focus on regulation and centralized power. This has contributed to the benign neglect of Parker Follett's work in the administrative and management literature. Parker Follett's work has been lost and found repeatedly over the past half century. In the rapidly changing and uncertain times of the new millennium we need once again to rediscover her holistic and healing approach to administration and management.

**INTRODUCTION**

Mary Parker Follett has been called the prophet of management by Peter Drucker (1995) and has been identified as a pioneer in public administration, in organizational studies, in conflict resolution, and in adult education. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Follett's work received international recognition, and she has been identified as one of the first management consultants and a scholar of democracy. Yet, after Follett's death, the popularity of her ideas faded, and her work has been lost and found again and again, only to find popularity once more as we enter the 21st century.

This article will first provide a biographical sketch of Follett followed by a discussion of her philosophy. Then the reasons for the

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*\* Mary Ann Feldheim, Ph.D., is Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, University of Central Florida. Her research utilizes a normative focus in the area of public and nonprofit management.*

changing popularity of Follett's ideas will be explored, and the relevance of Follett's philosophy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be discussed. In the following section, the specifics of Follett's life are examined.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mary Parker Follett was born in Quincy, Massachusetts in 1868 into a prominent Quaker family. Her early education was at the Thayer Academy, where she studied philosophy and the scientific method nurtured her idealistic, philosophic thinking. During her teen years Follett's father died, which with another inheritance gave her an independent income but also required her to assume responsibility for the care of her mother and brother. In 1888 Follett entered Radcliffe College, which was called Harvard's Annex for Women at the time. There she studied economics, government, and philosophy and was influenced by Albert Bushnell Hart who specialized in historical fact and political analysis (Crawford, 1971; Parker, 1984; Persons, 2002; Smith, 2002).

While at Radcliffe, Follett spent a year in England attending Newnham College in Cambridge, forming a lifelong fascination with English life. Her thesis *The Speaker of the House of Representatives* was published in 1896 and quickly gained recognition as the first thorough study of this office and as a valuable contribution to the study of constitutional law. Follett's education was interrupted by the necessity of caring for her mother who was an invalid, but in 1898 she graduated from Radcliffe *summa cum laude* (Crawford, 1971; Parker, 1984; Persons, 2002; Smith, 2002).

After graduation, Follett spent a year in Paris in postgraduate study, and upon returning to Boston began her initial public activity in the field of social work. Working among the poor and disadvantaged of Roxbury, Follett created social, athletic, and educational clubs for men, one of which was housed in a public school building. This initiative was the first of its kind in demonstrating the value of using school buildings after hours for community activities. In 1908 the Women's Municipal League supported the creation of "school community centers" and made Follett the chairman of the committee to accomplish this. Based on her work in creating community centers, Follett was appointed to the first Placement Bureau Committee for vocational guidance and identification of job opportunities, appointed a member of the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board, and was elected vice president of the National Community Center

Association. These commitments involved working with industry and served to broaden Follett's interest from political and social to industrial relations (Parker, 1984; Persons, 2002; Smith, 2002).

As a result of her community work experience, Follett changed her view of democracy, promoting governance through local neighborhood networks, which she advocated in her book *The New State* published in 1918. This work brought her international recognition as a leading political scientist and authority on business administration. In 1924 Follett published the *Creative Experience* reflecting her expanding interest in industrial relations and management. In this book Follett advocated the creative encounter of individuals from different classes and occupations coming together in small groups to solve social problems through the integration of experiences. According to Follett, integration rather than conflict was the answer to industrial relations (Crawford, 1971; Parker, 1984; Persons, 2002; Smith, 2002).

As her reputation grew, Follett gave lectures at Metcalf's Bureau of Personnel Administration in New York and at the Rowntree Lecture Conferences in Oxford, England living intermittently in both England and the United States. Follett was also actively involved with the League of Nations and was a member of the Taylor Society. During this time many of Follett's lectures were published along with several shorter articles, and she contributed to edited works by Henry Metcalf on management -- *Scientific Foundations of Business Administration*, 1926; *Business Management as a Profession*, 1927; and *The Psychological Foundations of Management*, 1927. These lectures and her writings helped to maintain Follett's position in the late 1920s as a popular lecturer on adult education, industrial relations, business management, and public administration. In 1933 Follett returned to the United States from England to attend to personal matters, where she died following an operation on December 8, 1933 at the age of sixty-five (Parker, 1984; Persons, 2002; Smith, 2002).

As a person, Mary Parker Follett has been described as energetic, childlike in her views, dogmatic, sometimes arrogant, provocative and stimulating. However, her most endearing quality was her ability to give each person she interacted with the feeling that she was genuinely interested in him or her allowing her to develop and maintain deep, lifelong friendships with both men and women (Crawford, 1971). Follett's friendship with philanthropist Pauline Agassiz Shaw provided backing and support for many of the initial community center programs

she established. Her collaboration with Eduard Lindeman, a social scientist, resulted in the publication of Follett's *Creative Experience*. Follett actively worked on behalf of women's suffrage, civil education, vocational guidance, and the development of neighborhood centers by cultivating neighborhood support, political support, negotiating conflicts of interest, and advocating for enabling legislation (Tonn, 1999).

Follett devoted her life to studying the psychological foundations of human activity, and her philosophy is broad and eclectic with foundations in the fields of political science, public administration, industrial and scientific management, and psychology (Crawford, 1971). In the following section, Follett's philosophy is discussed in detail, providing the foundation for her continuing influence in contemporary administrative thought.

#### **FOLLETT'S PHILOSOPHY**

"The Follett philosophy is that any enduring society, any continuously productive industrial organization, must be grounded upon a recognition of the motivating desires of the individual and the group. Consistently, Miss Follett sought to force home a realization of the fact that the democratic way of life, implemented by intelligent organization and administration of government and of industry, is to work toward an honest integration of all points of view, to the end that every individuality may be mobilized and made to count both as a person and as an effective part of his group and of society as a whole" (Metcalf & Urwick, 1940, p. 9).

The aim of Follett's work was to create a better society, and her approach to the problems of governance began with the psychological analysis of the nature of the consent of the governed and the conditions under which it could be made spontaneous (Metcalf & Urwick, 1940). In *The New State* (1918) Follett explored the psychological nature of groups and the relationship of the individual to the group (Konopka, 1958). She proposed deepening people's capacity for and commitment to citizenship through the use of local neighborhood networks, which could provide the conditions under which citizens would learn democracy (Smith, 2002).

#### **Law of the Situation and the Giving of Orders**

For Follett the law of the situation is based on the concept of complex, reciprocally related interactions that are constantly changing

and evolving, providing repeated opportunities to achieve a healthy process or new synthesis, which is integration. One interpretation of integration is that it is a harmonious marriage of differences that produce a new entity, and the real leader is the person who can understand the law of the situation and get the most out of it (Fox, 1968).

The giving of orders is based on the law of the situation, rather than positional authority. Orders are given because they are demanded by the logic of the situation incorporating input from those with expertise in the area, which Follett contends decreases employee resentment (Nohria, 1995).

Follett's key idea in the giving of orders is that each individual takes a conscious, responsible, and experimental attitude toward the experience, noting the results and analyzing the successes and failures by uniting all in a study of the situation. The goal is to discover the law of the situation, and once that happens, the situation-- not the employer or employee-- dictates the necessary orders. Finally, the situation is always evolving, and the orders should change with the situation, thereby creating circular behavior that is adaptive to the situation (Metcalf & Urwick, 1940). Linked with the law of the situation and the giving of orders, Follett developed a dynamic view of the organization that supported her management philosophy.

### **Principles of Organization**

Follett advocated an integrative unity of the organization or the state, where members work together to get the facts and consider the situation and in which there is collective responsibility for decisions. The holistic approach taken by Follett can be seen in her application of the concept of integrative unity to both business and government.

The process of integration, which is called coordination here, is applied by Follett to management within a given organization focusing on the full, willing, and honest contributions of all parties involved. The principles are that there must be coordination by the direct contact of the people involved from the very beginning, and that there must be a reciprocal relating of the factors in the situation on a continuous basis (Fox, 1968; Metcalf & Urwick, 1940).

One of Follett's basic philosophies emphasized the importance of understanding of the similarities and differences among people. This was to be realized by bringing together people from different walks of life

and occupations to create a shared experience. This has been called a “psychological interpenetration” of the experience of another and was detailed in her work *Creative Experience* (Persons, 2002).

According to Follett (1919) community is a creative process of integration, where people decide some course of action that is a result of the interweaving of ideas, personalities, and the situation. Community in this sense creates personality, power, freedom, and purpose, and the greatest contribution a citizen can make to the state is to learn creative thinking.

An integral part of integration is the development of the individual, which Follett based on her work in the community centers and with adult education. Adult learning for Follett is the process of engagement and encounter, where the individual thinks through his or her experience, questions its meaning and truth, relates the experience to his- or herself and learns from the experience (Smith, 2002). Follett’s holistic approach incorporated creative thinking into the development of all social organizations whether public or private.

Within the setting of community, creative thinking integrates the thoughts of many individuals to an issue with the goal of being productive. Through interpenetration, this unifying activity changes its quality moment to moment, and it is the process to which, according to Follett, we give our loyalty and activity (Metcalf & Urwick, 1940).

Democracy, then, is productive interrelatings that have power. “We build the real state, the vital and moral state, by reinforcing actual power with actual power” (Metcalf and Urwick, 1940, p. 587). By viewing community as the process of unifying of our differences and by giving these communities power, we can achieve democracy and freedom. Follett, in developing her concept of integrative unity, then needed to address the concept of power.

### **Power**

Follett begins by defining power as the ability to make things happen and to initiate change, while viewing the urge to feel powerful as the satisfaction of being alive. In this context there would be varying degrees of power and intensity. Control then is defined as power exercised as a means toward a specific end, while authority is vested control either through strength or weakness. Using Follett’s definition of power, it is neither good or bad, but a condition of being human. However, Follett

indicates that power is usually seen as “power-over” another person or group, which is coercive. In her model of integration using the law of the situation in making the social organization a functional unity, power is jointly developed, coactive, and is termed “power-with” reflecting the participative process. For Follett power cannot be delegated, as genuine power is capacity, based upon the ability of individuals to grow capacity for themselves and focusing again on the development of the individual (Metcalf & Urwick, 1940). For Follett, the creative experience was the key to individual growth and constructive conflict was at the heart of interpersonal relations.

### **Constructive Conflict**

Follett begins her discussion of constructive conflict by asking her readers to consider conflict as merely a difference of opinions and of interests without making a value judgment. The three main ways of dealing with conflict are domination, compromise, and integration. In both domination and compromise someone wins and someone loses, while with integration both parties desires are met and nothing is given up. Integration requires new ways of viewing the situation, and the creation of something new (Metcalf & Urwick, 1940).

To achieve integration, the differences and conflicting values are first brought into the open, thereby uncovering the conflict. Discussion of the values allows both sides to reorder or re-value their desires and seek ways to help each other achieve these values. The use of the circular response, where behavior precipitates behavior, helps the participants respond to the situation and the existing relationship. The process of conflict resolution requires open and honest communications, intelligence, perception, and inventiveness along with the necessity to move to action. Follett advocates teaching people the art of cooperative thinking and the reciprocal adjustment of the situation (Metcalf & Urwick, 1940).

In the following section the legacy of Follett will be discussed historically and then in relationship to the areas of conflict management, adult education, organizational management, and public administration. Each of these areas has utilized Follett’s work, and each of these disciplines have lost and found her ideas repeatedly.

## LOST AND FOUND

### Obscurity of Ideas

Follett has been identified as a founder of organizational studies and one of the first management consultants (Murphy, 1996), a pioneer in conflict resolution (Davis, 1991), an early leader in adult education (Smith, 2002), and her work has been identified as a precursor to modern theories of public administration by Morton and Lindquist (1997). Yet, following Follett's death her work lost favor with theorists in management and public administration.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Taylor's Scientific Management dominated what is now seen as the first administrative management period. During this time, the call for professionalism based on the attributes of knowledge and social responsibility was primarily advocated in the writings of Follett. In the second administrative period, there was a move toward democracy in the workplace with authority and responsibility coming from function, and Follett's work gained popularity, reflecting the optimism regarding managerial practices that dominated the 1920s. With the Depression, the third administrative period began, as administrative theorists faced a changed political culture. Follett's focus on democratic administration was linked with the failed economic system. The writings of Barnard became popular in the 1930s and 1940s in which he advocated a strong hierarchy and the value of efficiency to fight first the Depression and then World War II. This shift further diminished support for the work of Follett (Miller & O'Leary, 1989).

In public administration, the Progressive Era played a key developmental role with its focus on creating a less corrupt and more responsive government. Two forms of Progressivism developed with one school seeking to increase federal regulations and power, while the other was grounded in communal action. Follett represented the latter, emphasizing democracy as a continuous process of interaction between individuals in an ever-changing society, reminiscent of the Anti-Federalist sentiments of earlier times. The Progressivism that embraced scientific management took a Federalist perspective and came to dominate mainstream public administration thinking. Follett's call for a revival of communitarianism, or increased democratic participation at the local level, was considered an out-of-date concept after her death, a perspective that held until the 1960s (Raadschelders, 2000).



According to Drucker (1995) public administration established itself as a separate discipline during the 1930s and 1940s as America focused on making government more controlling, bigger, and more powerful to meet the economic challenges of the Depression and the growing threat of war. Because of the country's focus on expanding government and conquering other nations, Follett's philosophy of smaller more participative government and a system of conflict resolution that integrated the interests of the involved parties were rejected and even seen as subversive. This assessment of the situation is echoed by Waldo (1984) who states that Follett's work was neglected due to her communitarian ideas, which ran counter to the field's focus on regulation and power.

Lawrence (1995) offers several other reasons for the neglect of Follett's work following her death in 1933. One reason for neglect is that ideas need to be sold by a person, which Follett did when she was alive, which could explain her initial popularity and its posthumous decline. Another reason for neglect is that the review criterion for scholarly journals at the time, which focused on quantitative research, did not favor the qualitative nature of Follett's work. Finally, it is possible that the American love of new ideas limited the reading of works of early scholars in management, such as Follett, whose managerial examples may have decreased her potential future popularity because they were specific only to the time in which she lived.

### **Revival of Ideas**

The first major recognition of Follett's work following her death came when Metcalf and Urwick (1940) published her collected papers in *Dynamic Administration*. In the introduction Metcalf and Urwick pay tribute to Follett as a first rank political and business philosopher, who possess tackled the fundamental problems of the community, the state, and the industrial organization. Follett's work in *Dynamic Administration* received a much more favorable reception in England than in America, where her work remained unknown by most new scholars in the area of administration.

In 1952 Waldo (1952) explored the development of a theory of democratic administration that utilized work outside of the field of public administration. The focus of the essay was to discern the frontier of democratic administration and move toward it. Follett's work helped establish that new frontier with its focus on the law of the situation,

conflict resolution, integrative unity, decentralized responsibility, and “power with” not “power over.” Waldo, in his theory of democratic administration, envisioned a society where all would participate, both as leaders and as followers, a state achieved through education that taught civic participation and conflict resolution. Waldo was concerned with trying to reconcile public administration with democracy, and questioned the politics/administration dichotomy (Snider, 2000a) by using many of Follett’s philosophies.

In the years that followed her ideas were frequently cited in the literature of management and administration. Fox (1968) acknowledges the enduring contribution of Follett to public administration and management theory by reviewing the key concepts that marked her philosophy. Follett’s idealism, which focused on healthy social processes, is acknowledged as both a weakness and a strength, and her theories of human integration and conflict resolution are identified as tools to help administrators deal with change. Fox (1968) saw the benefits of Follett’s theories in dealing with a tumultuous time in American history.

Follett’s work continued to influence theorists in public administration, organizational management, conflict resolution, and education in the years that followed, but by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a ground swell of interest in Follett’s work occurred in all disciplines. Raadschelders (2000) indicates that this renewed interest in Follett is due to an increased focus on the historical aspects of administrative theory attributed to postmodern thinking. With this historical focus there has been increased attention given to the call for the type of communal government advocated by Follett.

### **Pragmatism**

One area of renewed interest has been in pragmatism, which has attained new relevance for post-modernist theorists in public administration who are rethinking the public interest. According to Box (2001) pragmatism is the basis for the discourse theory of O.C. McSwite (1996), which draws its inspiration from the group process work of Follett. Pragmatic discourse seeks to enhance governmental legitimacy by shifting the focus of administration from directing to the creation of community through collaboration with citizens (Box, 2001), which is the message Follett so eloquently put forth in the Progressive era.

The focus on pragmatism has generated a renewed interest in the work of Follett, who was one of the few early thinkers, who seriously considered the merits of pragmatism. However, the early, more pragmatic works of Follett were ignored by the efficiency oriented public administration orthodoxy of her day. Part of the reason for Follett's work being ignored was the constrained, operational outlook of Beard, who dominated the field of public administration at the time (Snider, 1998; 2000b). During her lifetime, only Follett's more practitioner-oriented works were emphasized in public administration, such as "The Giving of Orders" (Snider, 1998).

According to McSwite (1995) the postmodern interest in the work of Follett and pragmatism provides a way of the understanding organizations through a pragmatic human subject created through the process of social relationships. This revitalized pragmatism is backed by Follett's practical orientation and the extensive writings on systems theory focusing on the process of social relationships.

Snider (2000a; 2000b) advocates the increased study of pragmatism in public administration through further exploration of Follett's thought. The intent of this study would be to insure that public administration does not miss the promise of pragmatism or of Follett's work again.

### **Democratic Processes**

In public sector literature, there are three areas in which greater democracy is proposed. One area focuses on citizen participation, advocating participation by citizens, clients, politicians, and representatives of other agencies in public organization decision-making. Another area is participatory policy analysis giving citizens a voice in the early steps of policy making. The third area focuses on the enhancement of democratic administration of public organizations (deLeon & deLeon, 2002).

Internationally, citizens are being involved in policy making through innovative processes such as citizen's forums. These processes seek to include a broad cross section of lay citizens, who are randomly selected to deliberate a policy issue. After consulting with numerous experts, these groups develop a set of written recommendations that are widely disseminated. Citizen's forums emphasize diversity and group deliberation, which was advocated by Follett and other early pluralists (Hendricks, 2002).

At the end of the century there have been calls to strengthen American political and administrative institutions (Frederickson, 1997). According to Musso (1999), one way to enrich the local political community is to utilize the work of Follett, paying greater attention to local communities and focusing on engaging people in debate to develop social and political understanding and participation. The work of Follett on honest communication and conflict resolution can help administrators play a facilitative role rather than just an advisory one.

Ventriss (1998) argues that radical democratic thought advocated by Follett and others has an important role in public administration theory today by reconceptualizing democratic citizenship. The concept of democratic citizenship emphasizes the involvement of citizens in governing, focuses on the use of public spaces for deliberation, and utilizes education to build knowledge and confidence in civil involvement which were the tenets of Follett's work.

Another aspect of increasing democratic participation revolves around increasing the responsiveness by public administrators, which is advocated by Stivers (1994). Responsive administrators demonstrating the ability to listen skillfully can reduce the tension between administrative effectiveness and democratic accountability. For Stivers the experience of listening requires a respect for differences, an attitude of openness, and reflexivity, which are key elements that Follett advocated so eloquently in *Creative Experience*.

While many modern scholars' work in public administration theory may not explicitly rely on Follett's ideas, they are often consistent with them, as seen in calls for a new more participatory paradigm in public administration, or in the movement to promote a legitimate role for bureaucracy through group process, and also in the cry for the reinvention of government which advocates participation over hierarchy (Morton & Lindquist, 2001).

According to Tonn (1996) Follett has had many admirers in the United States, but the important aspects of her work have only been partially implemented. One reason for her limited acceptance in the United States is that her ideas run counter to American individualism. Follett advocated a genuine union of individuals through true group process, where there is continual acting and reacting bringing out differences and integrating ideas into new group concepts. The challenge

is to move beyond our individualism and to engage in a group process that respects differences and builds a strong democracy.

Follett was a strong advocate of using an interdisciplinary or holistic focus. In the following section Follett's legacy will be discussed beyond public administration in the areas of organizational studies and conflict management.

### FOLLETT'S INTERDISCIPLINARY LEGACY

Follett's writings are humanistic and holistic based on her readings, social experiences and observations with a deliberate normative approach. She was one of the earliest management thinkers to deviate from the classical management school contributing to the founding of the behavioral and holistic schools of thought. Interestingly many of her theories have been confirmed by empirical studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s (Parker, 1984).

In 1995 Graham reintroduced the work of Follett in her edited book, *Mary Parker Follett Prophet of Management*, attempting to identify her legacy to the study of organizations and management. In this book Peter Drucker (1995) calls Follett the prophet of management for presaging the major, management movements that followed and helping to establish the foundation for total quality management. Rosabeth Kanter (1995) indicates that Follett's mutual problem solving and the use of cross-functional committees in flatter, less hierarchical organizations foreshadows all forms of employee involvement, participative management, quality circles, and team-based approaches to management. More importantly Follett provided a philosophical basis for corporate ethics by stating that morality is social and comes from being a member of a group in relation to others. In Follett's view the integrated life is found when a person's work becomes community-oriented and service-based building on her principal message that relationships matter and that people are innately good and imbued with a cooperative spirit.

Lawrence (1995) states that Follett uses systematic analysis or systems thinking throughout her writings as indicated by terms such as the "total situation or total environment." Follett was a true pioneer in her application of systems thinking in management processes and made a remarkable contribution to the emergence of the human relations perspective on organizations. Follett was also the first to conceptualize styles of handling interpersonal conflict examining power and conflict,

two of the major areas of study in organizational behavior and management (Rahim, Antonioni & Psenicka, 2001).

Others have used the work of Follett as a springboard for new ideas. In the area of occupational behavior, Mumford (1983) in 1983 developed a participative methodology using many of Follett's ideas to involve users at all levels in the design of computer systems arguing that the impact of democratic ideas on the philosophy of systems can be considerable.

In 1989 Hurst, Rush, and White (1989) proposed a creative management model that moved beyond strategic management, based on the assumption of a dynamic environment that requires integration by a diverse group of managers to adapt to the changing environment. Follett's authority of the situation is used as the basis of shifting power coming from the person(s) with the most knowledge of the situation. This creative management model repackages many of Follett's ideas on the importance of adaptation and integration.

Dalrymple and Drew (2000) state that the traditional paradigm in organizational management based on Taylor's Scientific Management is giving way to a new quality paradigm. The beginning of the quality paradigm can be traced to Follett's call to treat workers with dignity, which is put into practice as total quality management. The quality paradigm gained a substantial following in post-war Japan, where the total quality management movement resurrected the work of Follett, who has become a revered management figure in that nation. The ascendance of the quality paradigm is one reason for the resurgence of appreciation for the work of Follett.

Another area where the work of Mary Parker Follett is seeing resurgence in popularity is in the field of conflict management, where Follett is considered a pioneer in integrative negotiations. In the *Creative Experience* (1924) she discusses the limitations of facts in decision making, indicating that facts do not remain stationary; do not overcome diversity of opinion; are selected by individuals and experts; often defy measurement; and are interpreted by individuals based on their needs. Follett's detailed and pragmatic analysis of facts contains lessons for today's students of conflict resolution, by emphasizing that the more we improve our fact-finding and fact-handling skills the closer we come to the democratic ideal (Davis, 1991).

McKersic and Walton (1992) utilized Follett's work in their development of a behavioral theory of labor negotiations. Using the idea of integrative bargaining, Follett advocated, to turn disputes in a positive direction along with distributive processes they seek a balance in labor negotiations processes. Distributive bargaining is seen as more effective in one-shot transactions, while integrative bargaining is more beneficial when the parties have ongoing relationships.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Follett's work in negotiation and dispute resolution experienced a revival, which can be traced to societal changes regarding the value of negotiation in dealing with organizational differences. Follett's influence is credited in two of the most influential books on negotiation and dispute resolution – *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations* by Walton and McKersic in 1965 and *Getting to Yes* by Fisher, et al in 1991. However, the underlying premise of most theory on negotiation is based on enlightened self-interest, which is at odds with the communal context of Follett's integration to foster creative agreement making. The discipline needs to move more toward Follett's integrative negotiation where parties identify respective interests and revalue them in light of the other's response, ultimately seeking a way to find a place in the final solutions (Kolb, Jensen & Shannon, 1996).

Another area linked to conflict resolution is international relations, where Follett is seen as a prominent early innovator incorporating the study of women and gender into her work. Follett's major contribution to international relations was to identify patterns of conflict that could not be resolved by dividing limited resources between parties, but which could be resolved when treated as exercises aimed at creating new structures based on cooperation. Recent work of peace researchers, such as Kelman, Curle, and Rappoport reflect the foundations established by Follett in international relations. However, Follett never established a secure base in international studies despite her extensive work with the League of Nations (Murphy, 1996).

Recognition of the interdisciplinary work of Follett has been lost and found again and again. Today we are seeing a resurgence of interest in her work, and part of that new acceptance is stemming from the issue of gender.

### **The Issue of Gender**

Limited recognition has been paid to Follett in organizational management according to Parker (1984) because her work did not fit into

any one school of thought. Follett's work has been classified as part of the scientific management school, as part of the human relations school, and as a forerunner to systems theory. Another explanation of Follett's limited popularity is that some writers ignored her work because of her gender, evidenced by the fact that women did not receive recognition in management until the late twentieth century.

Stivers (1996) would suggest that Follett's work has had a problematic history, not because she was woman, but because her ideas do not fit well with mainstream organizational and management theory. However, Follett's gender may be considered an issue because her ideas were culturally 'feminine' based on a caring approach that did not sit well with the masculine management world.

Follett did not consider herself a feminist, but Morton and Lindquist (2001) make a case for categorizing her work as feminist based on a formal philosophical analysis. First, ontologically Follett's organization and democratic theory is based on human relationships, which is a primary emphasis of feminist theory. Second, epistemologically the law of the situation developed by Follett sees knowledge being developed through observation and experience, a stance taken in feminist literature. Lastly, Follett's ethical vision is that of integration through embracing diversity and open honest communications in conflict resolution, which reflects many feminists' approach to conflict resolution. Because Follett's work offers a coherent approach to management and democratic processes, Morton and Lindquist advocate using her work and feminist theory as the field of public administration seeks to build theory to improve public management, and enhance the legitimacy and responsiveness of governmental organizations.

For Murphy (1996) gender biases specific to international relations limited the acceptability of Follett's work in this area. The masculine culture of diplomacy predominant at the League of Nations deterred acceptance of Follett's work and forced her to turn her attention to other areas where she could find acceptance, such as the business community.

Kanter (1995) is convinced that Follett's gender played a role in her neglect and because she was not an academic or a chief executive officer, denying her two means of ensuring lasting importance. In addition, Follett was a utopian with communitarian ideas that run counter to American individualism. Kanter also believes another reason Follett was so popular in England and in Japan, and not American, may have been



that geographic distance makes the ideas of women more acceptable. Lastly, Follett asked managers to use their judgment, recognize interdependence, and use conflict constructively to find integrative solutions to problems, but she did not provide techniques, strategies, and plans at a time when management science was to provide blueprints to managers.

The challenge for the new century is to find ways to transform fragmented and conflicted relationships between nations and peoples into relationships capable of building peaceful societies. This challenge can be met using tools developed by Follett focusing on relational power and conflict resolution to create non-disciplinary spaces for dialogue (Saunders, 2002). This focus on Follett encompasses all of the disciplines – conflict resolution, organizational management, education, and public administration --that have repeatedly lost her ideas and rediscovered them utilizing her own broad perspective on human relationships.

Follett's relevance to society today is based on what Parker (1995) calls her five senses. The first is Follett's sense of organic unity, with all organizations being inherently social constructs providing a broad basis for understanding. This sense of unity is further enhanced with Follett's interdisciplinary, holistic approach to relationships within organizations. Follett's third sense is her humanity and belief in the importance of human relationships within a society. Another area where Follett has relevance is her sense of culture, with a focus on matching the culture and values of a country with the organizational strategies. The last sense needed in an interconnected world is Follett's concept of reciprocal service, which stresses the ethical necessity for social and economic responsibility to the greater society by all individuals and organizations. Today we recognize what Follett tried to tell us so long ago, that our society is made up of social organizations where restoring citizenship based on a functioning civil society is the crucial challenge (Drucker, 1995).

Moreover, Follett's fundamental ideas are of individual commitment through direct and responsible participation, and her most important psychological contribution is to our understanding of behavior pointing out that we react not only to the other party, but to the relationship that exists between us, which creates part of our response. Follett's legacy is based on her insights that were designed to help each unique person become a better person, a more effective manager, and a more responsible citizen.

## CONCLUSION

Mary Parker Follett is remarkable for numerous reasons. First, Follett was woman in a man's world at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who received international recognition for her philosophy and management ideas. Second, Follett's concepts of the law of the situation and integration have laid the foundations for organizational studies, for the discipline of conflict resolution, for behavioral management, for systems theory, for Total Quality Management, and for adult education. Third, in public administration Follett's work was originally limited to the "giving of orders", but by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the concepts of democratic citizenship and pragmatism have seen a renewed interest and acceptance.

During her life, Follett gained popularity and acceptance primarily as a management consultant, but following her death her work fell into obscurity. One reason was that much of Follett's popularity came from lectures given in New York and London, and her ideas no longer had this venue for expression. Another reason is that with the Depression and World War II the focus in administration turned to hierarchy and efficiency, and Follett's communitarianism was seen as subversive. However, in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement, Follett's work gained new followers, who resonated with her ideas of inclusion, shared power, and the intrinsic value of each individual.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Follett's work experienced a revival in the disciplines of management, conflict resolution, and public administration. This renewed interest has been attributed to postmodern thinking with its historical focus and interest in pragmatism. Also, there has been a movement world-wide to increase citizen participation with a focus on local communities, and Follett's work on creating public spaces for resolution of creative conflict have found renewed favor. The renewed interest can also be attributed to the holistic nature of Follett's work and its timelessness.

Follett's work has been lost and found repeatedly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we may see the same changing fortunes. On a very basic level Follett's work represents the human side of enterprise identified by McGregor (1985) as Theory's Y with Taylor's Scientific Management as Theory X. In public administration and private management Theory X, focusing on hierarchy and position power, has

predominated particularly in times of national security. In the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the challenges of terrorism and religious separatism in the United States have resulted in increased hierarchy with the Department of Homeland Security and increased presidential control. Now more than ever, Follett's holistic philosophy of integrating all points of view while valuing the individual is needed in international relations as well as in public administration.

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