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# A Pragmatist Reading of Mary Parker Follett's Integrative Process

Judy D. Whipps
*Grand Valley State University*, Whippsj@gvsu.edu

***Abstract***
For most of the 20th century Mary Parker Follett (1868–1933) was one of the "invisible women" in the history of American philosophy, although her work was taken seriously by philosophers of her time. While some have described Follett as an idealist, this essay develops the pragmatist and feminist elements of Follett's philosophy. In particular, Follett's concept of "integration" can be clarified by reading it through a pragmatist lens, connecting it with Dewey's writing on experience, and with Jamesian pluralism. Follett also shares with Jane Addams an understanding of the creative integrative power of diversity; Addams directly referenced Follett in 1930 when she describes how conflicts were resolved in the process of mutual action. The latter part of this essay discusses the contemporary relevance of Follett's integrative "power-with" methodology in feminist thought. Taking integrative work seriously requires preparation and training, and Follett's writing on education for integration has implications for contemporary pedagogical practice.

*Keywords: Mary Parker Follett, John Dewey, William James, Jane Addams, pragmatism, integration, experience, power-with, pedagogy, feminism, pluralism.*

# *A Pragmatist Reading of Mary Parker Follett's Integrative Process*

Judy Whipps

> "unceasing reciprocal adjustment . . .
> brings out and gives form to truth"
> Mary Parker Follett,
> *The New State,* 212

For most of the 20th century Mary Parker Follett (1868–1933) was one of the "invisible women" in the history of American philosophy, although her work was taken seriously by philosophers of her time.[1] In

the last decade Follett's writing has been recovered in several disciplines, as a resource for feminist pragmatist philosophy, in management theory and practice, as historically foundational mediation theory and practice,[2] and as a model for leadership education and practice.[3] While Follett has been described by some as an idealist (which is how her friend Richard Cabot identified her after her death),[4] more recent philosophers such as John Kaag, Scott Pratt, and Amrita Banerjee have pointed out Follett's pragmatism.[5] This essay more fully develops the pragmatist and feminist elements of Follett's philosophy, even though Follett may have resisted categorizing herself as either a pragmatist or a feminist. As we will see, she rejected placement of her ideas in a particular school of thought, interested as she was in that creative liminal space between categories. However, her writing—particularly her concept of integration—can be clarified by reading it through a pragmatist lens. This essay attempts to do that, connecting Follett's concept of "integration" with Dewey's writing on experience, with James on pluralism and Addams on the creative power of diversity.

Clearly, these pragmatists were not the only, or even primary, influences on Follett's thought. As John Kaag (2008, 2011) has pointed out, Follett was influenced by Royce's idealism and by her friendships with Richard and Ella Lyman Cabot and her teacher Anna Boynton Thompson. While it is true that what Follett studied was influenced by the Cabots, she doesn't have a sense of truth as transcendent as the Cabot's did. Follett's more pragmatist epistemology is based on the idea that "truth emerges from difference . . . from all the countless differings of our daily lives" (1924, 208).

Follett also was in dialogue with psychologists, particularly Edwin Bissell Holt, whose writing can be seen as a strong influence on Follett beginning in 1919. This essay does not take up the issue of the idealist influence on Follett, but rather it demonstrates the ways that Follett identified with pragmatism while developing her theory of integration. Developing the continuities between her work and Dewey, James and Addams allows us to see Follett's work through a different perspective. The latter part of this essay discusses Follett's contemporary relevance in feminist thought and integrative education. Mindful of how American culture and education doesn't prepare us well for creative integration, Follett addresses the type of education needed to prepare for integrative work which has implications for contemporary pedagogical practice.

Follett's academic training was primarily in political science which she studied with Albert Bushnell Hart at Harvard/Radcliffe, and as noted above, she also studied with Royce and was clearly influenced by James at Harvard.Yet, like Jane Addams and many of the feminist pragmatists of her era, her philosophy was also developed out of her own engagement with community issues. As she said at a Harvard graduate seminar in 1927, "I am giving my experience. I am not

giving philosophy out of a book." Instead, she said, her ideas came from watching and participating in the ways that people were "interacting, unifying and emerging" (Tonn, 201–2). However, her activism is also thoroughly grounded in her study of philosophy and political theory, in particular the pragmatists and idealists.

***Biography and Education***

Follett's family came from a line of influential Bostonians, but her father's ability to support his family was deeply affected by the trauma he experienced in the Civil War, and later his alcoholism. Although Follett had a somewhat chaotic family life, she was a serious student and was able to pass the rigorous entrance exams to Boston's Thayer Academy at age 11, two years earlier than the usual required age. At Thayer she studied with Anna Boynton Thompson, who was a student of Royce, Hart and Santayana.[6] Follett completed the exacting academic program in three years. Her father's death when she was 17 required her to spend more time at home caring for her mother and younger brother, so Follett continued her studies with the Society to Encourage Studies at Home. In 1888 she enrolled for courses at the Harvard Annex for Women (later Radcliffe). At Harvard she studied political history with Hart and began to write her first book on the history of the Speaker of the House. In the summer of 1890, Follett was invited by Thompson to spend a year studying at Newnham College in Cambridge, England, where she continued studying history, economics and political philosophy (Tonn, 38–52). She returned to Boston and continued her research in what could have been a Ph.D. if that were a possibility for women in this era. After her time in England, she did not return to school but continued to be engaged in academic dialogue with philosophers and historians. For part of the 1890s she supported herself by teaching political science in high school and later by doing legal research for a Boston attorney who represented corporate interest taking over public transit. In these two positions she began to see the interconnected interests of various aspects of the community, businesses, and social organizations. Her first book on political theory, *The Speaker of the House of Representatives*, was published in 1896. When Radcliffe got permission to award degrees in 1898, Follett graduated *summa cum laude*.

In the early 1900s Follett turned her primary energy to community work, first starting a debate club for boys and men which grew into the Highland Union, a non-residential settlement-style community center in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. In 1908 she became chairperson of the Women's Municipal League's Committee on Extended Use of School Buildings and in 1911 helped open the East Boston High School Social Center. In 1917 she was elected vice-president of the National Community Center Association. By this time, however, she had turned most of her attention to writing for a wider public

regarding what social centers had taught her about democracy. Follett's second book, *The New State: Group Organization, the Solution of Popular Government* (1918) describes a new approach to democracy, beginning with the integrated individual building a larger conception of democracy based on the work of local community groups.[7]

Follett continued her academic work throughout this time, publishing in several fields, including philosophy, psychology, history, and political science. *The New State* was positively reviewed by several leading philosophers, including James Tufts, Harry Overstreet and Hartley Burr Alexander.[8] Her article "Community as Process" was published by Overstreet in the *Philosophical Review* in 1919. In 1920 Follett was appointed to the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board, which signaled her new interest in businesses and labor negotiations. Her 1924 book *Creative Experience* went into more detail about the methodology of a broader application of community integration, as well as methods to develop the individual capacity for integration. This book resonated with business leaders as they saw a way to better work with employees and they began to consult with her to resolve labor issues. As she worked more with organizational culture, she became well known as a ground breaking theorist in management. After the mid-1920s her published work is mostly in the field of business and organizational management as she refined her integrative process as a clear series of action steps for problem solving.

***Integration***

Integration is a central philosophical concept in the work of Mary Parker Follett. For Follett, integration is an ontological principle—it describes the nature of being and it offers a method for growth. Integration is also the foundation of her political theory which is based in community groups.[9] In her later writings, the integrative process becomes central to her conflict resolution process and it provides the method for negotiation and problem-solving working with various organizations and businesses.

Follett's theory of integration is based on her understanding of the person as continuous with community. Or as Banerjee says, for Follett, "things are in constant relation to each other, acting on and being acted on at the same time" (2008, 4). This transactive nature of human experience is a fundamentally pragmatist principle.[10] Drawing on her pragmatist background, Follett critiques the dualism of individualism claiming "(t)he group and the individual come into existence simultaneously" (1918, 127). Rather than seeing the environment external to the self, Follett understands our being in the world as a process of "progressive integrations" with others and with the world around us, a process of "ceaseless interweavings of new specific responding" (1924, 134). She understood that whenever one engages with others, the

person as well as the other have been mutually influenced, similar to the process of reconstructing that Dewey envisions. The process of being in the world is necessarily a process of circular response, influencing and being influenced.[11] "When you get to a situation it becomes what it was plus you; you are responding to the situation plus yourself, that is, to the relation between it and yourself" (1924, 133). Integration is a basic human need, in fact she says "(o)ur happiness, our sense of living at all is directly dependent on our joining with others. We are lost, exiled, imprisoned until we feel the joy of union" (1918, 194).[12]

There are clear parallels between Follett's integrated individual and Dewey's philosophy of experience.[13] According to Dewey, experience is the way we interact with and are radically related to our social and natural environment; through the concept of experience we understand the individual as continuous with one's environment. In experience, both the experiencing person and that which is encountered play active roles, disclosing and changing or adjusting. Like Follett, Dewey rejected subject/object dualism and the knower/known dichotomy, but postulated a relational way of knowing through his concept of experience. As he said, experience "recognizes in its integrity no division between act and material, subject and object" (LW 1:18). Both subject and object become integrated in the active and relational *process* of experiencing. For Dewey as well as for Follett, the ongoing and relational process of integrating or experiencing is significant. Experience for Dewey is "an affair of the intercourse of a living being with its physical and social environment" (MW 10:7) and the knower is part of that engagement as the "agent-patient, doer, sufferer, and enjoyer" (MW 6:120).

According to Dewey, dualism results when we abandon the primary interactive nature of experience (the undergoing/suffering). We then erroneously conceive of ourselves as unrelated to the object, we see the self as complete and self-enclosed, separate and possibly unchanging in the encounter with the material subject matter (LW 1:23). For Dewey, experience is the human permeating both nature and society through relationality. Follett would agree with this understanding of self as permeating nature and society, as she said, "the truth is that the self is always in flux, weaving itself out of its relations" (1919, 577). For Dewey, this continuity of self and world through experience does not make the object or event internally subjective, or private. "Banks, stores, factories . . . remain as external to the organism and to a particular mind as ever they were . . . But we get a new leverage, intellectual and practical" by seeing our relationships with them, which include "knowledge of dispositions and attitudes" (LW 1:183). Dewey does not deny inner subjectivity, the realm of "the private and incommunicable." Rather, he objects to making the subjective the basic or defining "substance" of experience, and also objects to conceiving that this private aspect "exhausts the self" (LW 1:187).

Experience as interaction includes the possibility of adjustment or change on both sides of the experience, thus opening the door for personal and social reconstruction and evolution. In an experience the self is called into question; there is an element of "taking in" from the encounter which potentially changes us, a theme echoed often by Follett. Dewey points out that in aimless or mechanical acts this mindful quality of engagement is missing, and therefore the experience cannot change us, because we are not bringing ourselves to the encounter; it is too superficial. "There is . . . an element of undergoing, of suffering in its large sense, in every experience . . . Otherwise there would be no taking in of what preceded . . . (Taking in) involves *reconstruction* which may be painful" (LW 10:47–48).

Dewey's "experience" and Follett's "integration" overlap in interesting ways but are not parallel terms. Dewey's conception of experience as the engaged encounter with that outside of oneself, as "doing and suffering" extends to all objects, including, for example, the natural world. Follett only describes integration in terms of humanity—it describes the human condition and extends to the social environment. Follett's conception of the integrated individual perhaps more radically denies individualism than does Dewey's experience. Like Dewey, Follett conceives the individual as necessarily part that which they encounter, but goes so far as to say that "there is no such thing as a separate ego . . . individuals are created by reciprocal interplay" (1918, 19) and "there is no such thing as the "individual," there is no such thing as 'society,' there is only the group and the group-unit" (1918, 21). Follett's sense of integration encompasses but goes beyond intellectual rationality. This is perhaps why she doesn't want her use of integration confused with the Hegelian "reconciliation of opposites which is a logical process" (1918, 29). Follett says that the integrative process is in "a different universe from that of thought . . . Minds can blend. . . . They transfuse one another while being each its own identity" (1918, 77). Follett uses the term "psychic" twenty times in *The New State* to refer to the integrative process. At times it appears that she means psychological when she says psychic, but at other times psychic seems to encompass to indicate something more transcendental, as in the "interpenetrating of psychic forces" (1918, 75).[14]

Although Follett quotes Dewey occasionally, William James is more clearly identified as an influence in Follett's writing. James' philosophy was part of conversational milieu of the time in Cambridge, what she referred to as "the wireless" (1918, 12). Although she particularly references James' pragmatism in regard to pluralism as we will see, one can also see the influence of James on Follett's conception of the continuously integrating individual. As James wrote, "Every bit of us at every moment is part and parcel of a wider self, it quivers along various radii like the wind-rose on a compass, and the actual in it is continuously

one with possibles not yet in our present sight" (1907/1977, 131). This sense of connectedness with a "wider self" is echoed in Follett's continuing integration of self and society. Similar to James' stream of consciousness, Follett said "My individuality is where my centre of consciousness is." She goes on to advocate then for a wide perspective when she says "From that centre of consciousness, wherever it may be, our judgments will always issue, but the wider its circumference the truer will our judgments be" (1919, 581). She doesn't entirely embrace James's view of the self, because she wants to emphasize one's role of creator of this self. Always looking for the in-between space, she says, "Our alternative is not between Royce's finished Absolute and James's strung-alongness. We create the beyond and beyond and so to be sure produce strung-alongness which, however, exists only as part of the unifying process" (1919, 582). In a conference discussion following her essay published in the *Philosophical Review*, Follett clarified this creative process further, saying "we become pragmatists as we see the responsibility for this is process (integrating/unifying) is ours, that there is no *a priori* One (Hegel and Royce)" (quoted in Tonn, 321).[15] However, even the pragmatist view of testing of ideas through experience was too static for Follett, for she understood that there is no way to step outside of experience to test it, since "whenever you 'test' you assume a static idea" (1919, 584). Life, she says, is a series of "progressive integrations" or a "ceaseless interweaving" (1924, 134); ideas and experiences are "woven into the tissue of my life" and so cannot be tested empirically or discarded since they have become part of us."[16] Instead, she says "We verify through the process of creating: no dualism, no *Dinge an sich*, no static moment" (1924, 143). This concept of continual growth is a tenet of pragmatism. As Pratt says, "pragmatism is committed to the broad normative standard of growth that informs the trajectory of organism/environment interaction" (2011, 80). Follett's commitment to "progressive integrations" continually creating the person and the society is central to all of Follett's philosophical work.

In *The New State* Follett extended this idea of progressive integrating to her vision of society and politics. Democracy for Follett should not be based in majority rule, nor the rule of leaders, but instead it should grow from what she calls a "third option": the process of decisions made by a diverse community people coming together for creative deciding.[17] The deliberative process is essential for her vision of democracy, but the process cannot stop at deliberation. She wants democratic action to start with neighborhood groups and centers, making these smaller organizations "the basis of the new state," (1918, 255) but she also notes that these groups must be diverse, composed of individuals who don't give up their particularities. Instead, differences should be integrated with others around specific problem-solving actions. She saw the local organization as the arena that gives the individual a place to act. Her

ideal of freedom also grows from the concept of the integrated person, as she says,"(a) man is ideally free only so far as he is interpermeated by every other human being; he gains his freedom through a perfect and complete relationship" (1918, 69).

Like Jane Addams, Follett understood the community or group as growing from the joint effort of all. Early in her writing, Addams talked about the "social organism" of which individuals were an interdependent part. As she said "life has become incredibly complex and interdependent . . . (the worker) must have a conception that will include not only himself and his immediate family and community, but the industrial organization as a whole ([1902] 2002, 94).[18] In her work, Addams stresses interdependence and relatedness of diverse groups rather that the formative/mutually-creating nature of the self with society that Follett describes. Addams took up issues of economic class, race, gender, and immigration—areas that Follett doesn't address, as Follett was more interested in integration within groups that contained diverse perspectives. She was focused on the newness, what was emerging, rather than what was already present in groups.Follett may be critiquing Dewey when she says that some thinkers posit an existing functioning "social mind" built on communicated ideas.[19] Instead she says that common ideas aren't merely "held in common" but instead must be actively "produced in common" (1918, 33–34). Follett's requirement that ideas are produced though mutual common effort echoes Jane Addams who, in 1902, said that "unless all men and classes contribute to that good, we cannot even be sure that it is worth having" (97).

***Diversity, Gender, and Pluralism***

Follett was first and foremost a political theorist and like her pragmatist contemporaries she wrote often about democracy.[20] In her 1918 theory of an integrated democracy and her later integrative problem-solving processes, Follett stresses the importance of diversity and difference. She even says that "(t)he hope of democracy is in its inequalities" (1918, 139). This may seem to be an odd statement given that equality is often considered a core principle of democracy, but by "inequalities" here she means differences. Importantly, in integrating differences Follett does not intend to make differences disappear. She is deeply committed to integration that doesn't assimilate difference. She says, "(d)ifferences must be integrated, not annihilated, nor absorbed." In a footnote she lists the "bad" words that should *not* be equated with integration: "fuse, melt, amalgamate, assimilate, weld, dissolve, absorb, reconcile (if used in the Hegelian sense), etc." (1918, 39). She extends this valuing of differences to international relations, saying "war can never cease until we see the value of differences, that they are to be maintained not blotted out . . . tolerance is intolerable" (1918, 344).

Given her commitment to difference and her analysis of power, it seems odd that Follett doesn't formally take up race, gender or class

issues in her work. Some of her community work was sponsored by suffrage organizations so we can perhaps assume her support for women's suffrage, but her work in those organizations was not focused on women's voting or employment rights. Her biographer, Joan Tonn, believes there are reasons to think that Follett was not an advocate of women's suffrage (2003, 129). In any event, for Follett, voting was insufficient for the participatory democracy that she envisioned which was based on integrated public decision making and action. "The ballot box! How completely that has failed men and how completely it will fail women" (1918, 5). Yet, even without advocating voting rights, given her training in history and political science, one may expect an argument regarding the equality of women or their roles somewhere in her writing. But Follett saw individual rights as an outmoded concept; she relegated the principle of women as equal under the law—an individual with rights—as an idea belonging to the 19th century (1918, 171). In her discussion of freedom in *The New State,* Follett says that thinking that freedom would result from the removal of a barrier is "childish" and then she continues: "Some women-suffragists talk of women as 'enslaved' and advocate their emancipation by the method of giving them the vote. But the vote will not make women free. Freedom is always a thing to be attained" (1918, 71). Throughout this chapter she portrays freedom as something that cannot be granted to one, instead we "win" freedom "through fellowship," the result of becoming fully alive through participating in and integrating with community (72). While the ability to vote may not be sufficient to create community integration, it would seem that Follett would more clearly acknowledge voting as one basic method of participating in and being responsible for community. As she says earlier in her discussion of loyalty, being loyal to a collective that we haven't help create "is slavery. We belong to our community just in so far as we are helping to make that community. . . ." (1918 58–59). Follett was speaking from her position of deep engagement with social issues in her Boston community and had experienced many avenues of social responsibility even without voting. Yet although she doesn't provide philosophical or political arguments for women's suffrage, she understood the deep motivation for the women's movement. Writing with passion and eloquence near the end of *The New State*, Follett interprets the underlying desire that has spurred both the woman's suffrage movement and the labor movement as "the desire for one's place, for each to give his share, for each to control his own life—this is the underlying thought which is so profoundly moving both men and women today" (1918, 338).

It is surprising that Follett does not reference Jane Addams either directly or indirectly in her work. Although Follett was not in a settlement house environment, her work as vice-president of the National Community Centers Association would most likely have brought her into conversation with settlement house workers and community

activists. She was also a close friend of Elizabeth Balch, whose sister, Emily Greene Balch, co-authored *Women at The Hague* with Jane Addams.[21] We don't know if Follett read Addams, but if she had, she would have found support for her valuing of diversity and difference. In her first book *Democracy and Social Ethics*, Addams says that we have an ethical duty to understand the lives of diverse others and "at least see the size of one another's burdens." She, like Follett, understood that "diversified human experience and resultant sympathy" are "the foundation and guarantee of Democracy" (1902/2002, 7). Because of her deep experience with her immigrant neighbors, Addams came to look for divergent opinions and attempted to integrate differing cultures and perspectives at Hull House and in her writing.

Although we don't find any mention of Addams in Follett's writing, Addams clearly did read Follett's work and references it in *Second Twenty Years at Hull House* (1930). Calling *Creative Experience* a "remarkable book," Addams says that according to Follett, "All diversity . . . may lead to the something new which neither side possesses, whereas if one side submits to the other or a compromise is made, we have no process in the end" (1930, 202). Citing Follett's point that integration "occurs in the sphere of activities" not in ideas, Addams goes on to describe five experiences where resolutions occurred in the process of mutual action, where the "integrating value of a common effort was illustrated" (207) in international work. She carries Follett's same point into her own intergenerational work, where she says "a mutual purpose coalesced best through action and . . . there was no other basis for genuine understanding" (208). Addams of course could have cited herself here, as she made a similar point about the need for joint action in her own writing as early as 1892.[22] It seems that Follett could have found Addams' work useful as a resource or to illustrate some of her points.

Surprisingly, Follett had objections to the pluralism of her day. Examining Follett's position on the women's rights movement is instructive in understanding what she means by diversity and differences and pluralism. We have seen that Follett understands the individual as integrated with others, or as Pratt says of Follett's ontological position, "individuals are relations—they emerge not in self-action but in co-action with others" (2011, 89). One would think that Follett could understand the women's rights movement as a co-acting integrated group, but perhaps she saw the suffrage movement as too homogenous for integrative work. Follett shied away from the then popular political pluralism which advocated "intermediary groups that would provide individuals a sense of community while shielding their members against undue state power" (Tonn, 292). Follett sees the political pluralists of that era as attempting to return to what she equates with a medieval doctrine of representation by guilds or occupational groups (1918, 267–68). This may be how she conceives the women's groups. Instead she is interested in what individual women bring to the table as speaking from different

perspectives, rather than as a group. Strangely, Follett does not address issues of how cultural, racial or gender prejudices can distort community dialogue, but she may later resolve that though her "power-with" methodology discussed below. Instead of identity groups, Follett calls for integrated neighborhood groups that do not represent any particular interest but would contain in themselves very diverse opinions and would work within the group to integrate and solve problems, rather than be representative of a common perspective.[23]

In critiquing the political pluralism of her time, Follett was not rejecting pragmatist pluralism and in fact, she critiques the pluralists who "do not accept the latest teachings of pragmatism, for pragmatism does not end with a distributive pluralism" (1918, 263). She later says that James had "found the secret of federalism" and urged "our neighborhood groups to live James' philosophy" (265). She then goes on to recommend that the "political pluralists" carry their "discipleship" of James "a step further." She asks of them "have they not with James a wish for a world that does not fall into 'discontinuous pieces" and for a "flowing sort of reality which we finite beings [now] swim in" ( 266). Then she goes on in the next paragraph to critique the "misunderstood Hegelianism" of the idealists and monists as well. Follett's biographers and intellectual historians point out that Follett was reading both pragmatism and idealism and that neither of these worked for her. Historian James Hoopes laments the fact that Follett did not know Peirce's work, which he thinks would have a given her a new way to think with the pragmatists. Without Peirce as a reference, he said Follett was "left" with "no recourse but an untenable mixture of weak pragmatism and idealism" (1998, 153). But Follett also found much to admire in both pluralism and in idealist monism.[24] What Hoopes calls "fence straddling" is exactly the goal for Follett—the creative resolution is never one side or the other. She saw her philosophic task in *The New State* partly as an attempt to integrate pluralism and monism—as always, to find a new approach or what she says is a "third position."

This third position, the creative step, whether it be in democratic politics or in organizational or labor disputes always needs to be based in valuing of differing, even conflicting, viewpoints as a way of growth, as a way to create the new. As she says "it is equally to be hoped that we shall always have conflict, the kind which leads to invention, to the emergence of new values" (1925/1973, 72). Integration is not either/or and neither compromise nor coercion, it is discovering a creative new way to that works for all parties—constantly evolving resolutions based on the continual integrating of differences.

### *Effect of Power on the Integrative Process*

Although Follett does not directly address the distortion of dialogue caused by cultural, racial or gender prejudices, she understood that the integrative process is fraught with issues of contested power, whether

in terms of political theory, community activism or in organizational problem-solving. Per Follett, real integrative group processes require a "power-with" rather than "power-over" environment. In power-with situations, all parties come to the discussion as equals in terms of responsibility, voice and authority. The power develops together as they take action together. This power-with action breaks down hierarchies in workplace and society. The coercive power of "power-over" is per Follett "the curse of the universe." Power-with, what she thinks is "genuine power" is "co-active power, the enrichment and advancement of every human soul" (1924, xiii). Yet, this categorization of the two types of power isn't a dualism, or an either-or situation; according to Follett, power-over can at least partially turn into a power-with situation via integration, when all participants understand and work to enhance the circular nature of their relationship—that each is always influencing the views of the other (1925, 105).

The integrative process of searching for a new solution is a way to move toward power-with. "One way of reducing power-over is through integration. . . . If either side had won in the fight, there would have been power-over, but by finding a solution by which the desires of both sides were satisfied, by integrating the desires of the two sides, power-over was prevented" (1925/1940, 104). For Follett, desire isn't merely an emotion, or wishful thinking. As Pratt points out, when Follett talks about desire, she is talking about "a goal-directed disposition that marks an agent and has its meaning in action" (2011, 84). Power-over may be changed to power-with when people engage in action together toward goals.

Follett's advocacy of "power-with" resonates with feminist and pragmatist thinkers. As Jane Mansbridge says, "one of (Follett's) central insights on democracy and conflict, an idea she called 'power-with,' has become a working part of feminist theory" (1998, xvii). Follett's conception of power is feminist in its relationality and pragmatist in its conception of individual growth in and with community. As Follett says, "when you and I decide on a course of action together and do that thing, you have no power over me nor I over you, but we have power over ourselves together" (1924, 156). Or as Pratt says in his comparison between Follett's and Foucault's conception of power, for Follett in "the process of integration . . . the desires of individuals interact in a way that evolve new desires and new agents that include the original individuals but which are also more than a 'mere sum' of its parts" (2011, 85). Integration for Follett is always about creating something new, something that wasn't there before. It is a progressive movement forward beyond the options that already exist. It is interesting that we don't find Addams or Dewey directly addressing power per se, even though Addams certainly struggled with political power issues. As noted above, Pratt, in his essay on Follett's power, turns to Foucault for comparison rather

than one of Follett's contemporaries. In her analysis of power, Follett may once again have been ahead of her time.

Yet, what Follett does *not* do in her analysis of power is describe a way of that those disadvantaged by traditional structures of power can challenge existing power structures. The concept of a change in power structure through challenge or resistance does not show up in her work. Rather, in Follett's pragmatist model, change happens by moving forward toward community and personal growth.[25] But there are limitations to this method. Her prescription of "power-with" requires that all parties show up at the table in a good faith effort to solve a problem though a power-with methodology, requiring some to abandon their traditional hierarchical power. Some employers or community/political leaders may in fact do that—she provides good rationale to do so—but history tells us this is rare either in organizations or in personal relationships. Here is where Banerjee's example of using a "power-with" model to resolve the damage of domestic abuse can be instructive and can show us what may be useful as well as problematic when putting Follett's analysis into practice.

Banerjee uses the illustration of domestic abuse as an example of power-over in a personal relationship, where the power of violence is used as a means of control. Banerjee, referencing Follett, says that rather than the isolated partner duo, integration situates the domestic relationship in "a larger context where the extended family, friends, people from the neighborhood, and other aspects from what was formerly the outside can be brought into the situation" (8). This changes the power dynamic. This shift may result in the abused partner being able to leave the relationship due to integration, relying on the community others as co-creators. Yet Banerjee goes on to talk about this formerly abused partner then getting involved in groups, such as feminist movements like Take Back the Night as an example of Follettian integration. This may be where Follett fails us, since, in her objection to what she calls pluralism, or communities of like-minded groups (like women's suffrage groups), she may have been opposed to victim support groups. For her, integration required individuals of varying differences, not similarities, coming together in good faith to solve problems, not similarly disempowered people joining together to challenge power-over situations. Follett's integrative process requires people committed to solving a problem and educated in integration coming together with the intention of solving a problem, and it may fail when people choose not to participate in the process.

### *Integration as Organizational Problem-solving*

It is perhaps surprising that Follett, who never worked in a business setting, would gain a reputation as a management consultant, yet this is the arena where her work on integration had the most success—both

in her lifetime and throughout the 20th century. *The New State* was received well and reviewed in several academic fields, but Follett may have been disappointed that her ideas were not taken up in actual political practice. Desiring to bring her ideas to the realm of practice, and again learn from life experience, she turned her attention to group studies, which led her more deeply into organizational studies. Her appointment to the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board in 1920 allowed her to participate in employer-employee discussions and group decision making in practical detail. Her 1924 book *Creative Experience* is the result of her investigation into studying group processes. After its publication she was called upon to assist in employee relations in the workplace and she became a very successful speaker on management issues. She brought her philosophy of individual/community integration to her work in organizations, where she assisted managers in resolving workplace conflict and finding creative solutions. Even in contemporary writing on business, writers such as James Hoopes said of Follett: "No one has better described a corporate job than as an experience of being integrated into a larger whole" (Hoopes 121).

How then does this process of integration occur in actual practice? According to Follett, people's joint thinking and acting together to solve problems is the basis for the integrated individual and the integrative community, as described in *Creative Experience* (1924) and in later writings. "Genuine integration occurs in the sphere of activities, and not of ideas or wills," (150) Follett said, stressing the fact that for integration to result in real change, "behavior must be changed through experience" (200). As such, the process of integration is goal-oriented, action based and ideally should result in a new resolution that wasn't apparent before the process started. Follett is emphatic in her rejection of domination or compromise as methods of solving disputes; she thinks that both result in continued animosity. Her third, and most time-consuming approach, takes the various proposed solutions or demands and works to find an alternative inventive solution that integrates the objectives of all parties. In this way, Follett's work continues to foundational to the field of conflict management; finding a *new* resolution rather than compromise is still the goal of contemporary mediation and conflict resolution practice.

Follett codified the integrative problem-solving process into a series of steps or rules that can be applied to most disputes. She outlined these steps in a presentation on "Constructive Conflict" to a Bureau of Personnel Administration conference in 1925.[26] The first step is to enter the process with self-knowledge and honesty, to "put your cards on the table, face the real issue, uncover the conflict, bring the whole thing into the open" (1925/1995, 75). Follett says that this requires knowing oneself, uncovering our "sub-articulate egoisms." This open approach is the opposite of a debate mentality, of trying to defeat one's opponent. Instead, one must come to the table in good faith and honesty.

Careful dialogical and listening skills are also needed. While listening, the participant needs to understand that what either party is demanding requires "a careful scrutiny of the language" which should include "the examination of symbols" contained in the position that different parties bring to the table (1925/1995, 78). One must break up the demands to see the parts and differing aspects of the conflict, but it is also important to look at the whole demand—the essence of it when not obscured by minor points. Follett herself was known to be a careful listener, someone who was "immensely interested"[27] in other people, a skill that she shared with Addams and other community activists. She most likely developed this in her community work, working with those in the neighborhood as well as negotiating with politicians and school boards for after-school space for her programs.

Those entering into the integrative process should remember their own role as creator in the relationship, what she calls "circular response." This is similar to what she said earlier about "becoming pragmatists" in taking responsibility for being the creators of community (Tonn, 321). As she says, "I can never fight you, I am always fighting you plus me. . . . I respond not only to you, but to the relation between you and me" (81). The actions that we do and the attitudes we exhibit (for good or for bad) create the situation to which we find ourselves responding.

Important to the integrative process is the goal of a "new whole" which does not grow out of an either-or mentality, but instead utilizes a "both/and" approach. This is a process that requires openness. Follett talks about the new whole as that which is always in process, as a "whole a-making" and by this she means both the person is in process as well as the situation. And again consistent with her pragmatism, Follett calls for participants to reject either/or dualism in favor of a creative new solution that "involves invention . . . to not let one's thinking stay within the boundaries of two alternatives which are mutually exclusive" (1925b/1995, 70). As noted above, this creative process of integration means finding and embracing differences and contradictions. Follett is explicit about transformation of the person as well as the individual in the process of integration; individual growth is part of the integrative process.

### *Educating for Integration*

Follett understood that successful integrative work required a specific type of education, one that stresses collaborative skills and reflective practices which connect with and expand meaning in the students' lives. Now, as in her time, our educational leaders may talk about integration, synthesis and reflection, but most schools don't intentionally educate for them. Follett called for a pragmatist approach to educating for integration in a way that echoes both Dewey and Addams. Follett understood that integration was very difficult; it required a "high order of intelligence, keen perception and discrimination, more than all, a

brilliant inventiveness" (1925/1995, 45), along with a rich imagination and freedom from manipulations of those who may be in positions of domination. Instead of teaching cooperative thinking, Follett lamented that educators taught competitively as "(i)n our college debates we always try to beat the other side" (1925/1995, 48). Once again Follett could have found support in Addams for her critique of the competition in education, particularly in Addams' *Newer Ideals of Peace* where she critiques the remnants of competitive militarism in so many aspects of society, including education. One would think that Follett might have had James' essay on "The Moral Equivalent of War" in mind when she wrote that for those who wanted the thrill of the battle and conquest the integrative process can seem like "a tamer affair" (1925/1995 45). Yet, she saw in her own community work that integration is difficult and rigorous. It requires a heightened sense of self-reflection, understanding the ways that one's own behavior is helping to develop the situation to which one is responding (1925/1995, 45) and so requires the ability to engage in active problem-solving based on self-reflection. Self-reflection is a skill that can be developed, particularly through philosophic training. However, for Follett education must go beyond reflection to actual engagement. In education today as well as then, issues are often theorized instead of taken up in practice; we don't often ask students to exercise judgment and take action.[28]

Follett never taught at the college or university level, but she was engaged in faculty discussions at Harvard and was invited to the School for Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University on multiple occasions to give lectures and talk with the faculty. In 1928 she was asked to address the faculty on the teacher-student relationship. In the paper she addressed learning integrative skills in the classroom, as "beyond what can be taught directly through the subject, the class itself may be a training ground in joint thinking" (1928, 314). In the process of learning to think jointly, she says that "our purposes, our interests, desires, satisfactions often take on new aspects when compared with others." This process "liberates us from the purely personal" and increases one's "spiritual energy and vision" (315). In education, according to Follett the role of teacher is to facilitate a "joint search for meanings" between the teacher and the students (319). Addams too saw education as a meaning-making activity, as building connections across differences. For example, she urged education for industrial workers that would "reveal to him the purpose and utility of his work" (1902/2002, 91) and for an education where children could learn "the joy of association" and "the life of mutual trust, forbearance and help" (1907/2007, 95). Beyond finding meaning, Follett also told teachers that the student is responsible to translate learning into action, to use their experiences and understandings to find ways to live effectively and harmoniously with others. Education which integrates personal meaning and community

life results a process of growth, "the realization of our creative function" in which we come to "the realization of our responsibility in a universe which is being created anew at every instant" (312).[29]

Writing in the same time period as Follett, Dewey argues for a similar approach to education. As he said in 1931, "Education must cultivate the social spirit and the power to act socially even more assiduously than it cultivates individual ambition for material success in the past" (LW6, 98). Like Follett, Dewey also stressed learning to think together, as he said in this same essay: "Competitive motives and methods must be abandoned for cooperative . . . Instead of imbuing individuals with the idea that the goal is to sharpen their powers so they can get on personally, they must be trained in capacity for intelligent organization so that they can unite with others in a common struggle against poverty, disease, ignorance, credulity, low standards of appreciation and enjoyment" (LW 6: 97). The parallels here with Follett are striking, writing this within three years of each other.

Practicing integration for social change and problem-solving is a slow process, particularly in its commitment to working in a power-with rather than a power-over environment. The educational process to learn these capacities is a life-long process. As Follett says "it takes time and education and training to develop (power-with); it cannot be got by revolution, it involves a process and a slow process" (1924, 188). In our fast paced world where quick decisions are often privileged, the current resurgence of interest in Follett's methods provides a counterbalance, a call for leadership and learning based in careful listening, relationality, and the art of integration.

Grand Valley State University
*whippsj@gvsu.edu*

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NOTES

1. The phrase is from Charlene Seigfried's 1992 essay, "Classical American Philosophy's Invisible Women," although Seigfried did not reference Follett in this article. Seigfried's work, including her 1996 book *Pragmatism and Feminism,* opened the field of feminist studies in pragmatist philosophy.

2. Note the Mary Parker Follett Award given annually since 2001by the Association for Conflict Resolution. http://www.acrnet.org

3. Follett was given the 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award by the International Leadership Association. See also the chapter on Follett in Preskill and Brookfield, *Learning as Way of Leading: Lessons from the Struggle for Social Justice.*

4. Cabot wrote a short piece about Follett after her death, reprinted in Cohen (1971) p. 34. Follett was clearly influenced by idealist and Hegelian thought. Her early mentor, Anna Boyton Thompson, studied with Royce, and her good friend Ella Lyman Cabot was also an idealist influence. See Tonn 119–120 and Kaag 2011, p. 54–57.

5. See for example Amrita Banerjee 2008, John Kaag 2008 and 2011, Scott Pratt 2011, and Judy Whipps 2012.

6. For more on Anna Boynton Thompson's teaching at Thayer, see http://www.thayer.org/uploaded/About_Thayer_Menu/Thayer_History/Thayer%E2%80%93100_Yrs. pdf/ pp 10–12.

7. For more about Follett's theory of democracy see Kevin Mattson "Thinking Democratically: The Political Thought of Mary Parker Follett" in *Creating a Democratic Public;* See also Whipps, 2012.

8. See Tonn 304–5.

9. See Whipps 2012 and Hejny 2012

10. Seigfried 145.

11. Banerjee notes that "circular response" is a psychological notion related to "Gestalt theories (p. 4). This may be the case, as Follett was also in communication with psychologists such as Edwin Bissell Holt.

12. This intriguing desire for union shows up in many writers in the era between the world wars.

13. Follett's writing on integration has been compared to Dewey (for example see Tonn 2003 and Hoopes 1998) but I have not found any direct reference to Dewey in Follett's writing. She more often references William James and occasionally Royce.

14. Although Follett and Dewey clearly share many of the same philosophical commitments, for some reason Follett was not impressed with Dewey's work. In a 1926 letter to R.B. Haldane Follett says that Dewey's work is "not original" and she continues that "I never got a single idea from Dewey" (Tonn 377). The fact that she says Dewey is "not original" can be interestingly contrasted with her writing in 1918 when she critiques the entire notion of an "original" person as one of the "fallacies of individual invention" (Follett, 1918, 94–95).

15. Following the publication of their papers in the *Philosophical Review*, Harry Overstreet invited Follett, Harold Laski, James Tufts, Wilber Urban, Morris Cohen and Roscoe Pound to respond to each others' papers on community. This quote is from Follett's unpublished response read at the conference. See Tonn, 315–321.

16. In her conception of self as continuously evolving and circular response, Follett was also drawing on the work of Harvard philosopher/psychologist Edwin B. Holt. See *Creative Experience* (1924) pp. 53–77.

17. A more detailed discussion of Follettian democracy can be found in Whipps 2012.

18. For more on Addams' conception of social interdependence see Whipps 2004.

19. See Hoopes 152–3.

20. See Whipps 2012 for a more thorough discussion about Follettian democracy.

21. Emily Greene Balch also succeeded Addams as the president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946.

22. In 1892 Addams wrote that "action is the only medium for man has for receiving and appropriating truth." The 1892 essay was published in *Philanthropy and Social Progress,* and an excerpt was reprinted in *Twenty Years at Hull House*, p. 73.

23. According to Hoopes (2003), Follett was a "little guilty" of "inadequate suspicion of power" (121).

24. After the publication of *The New State*, pluralist and monists both thought she had contributed to their side.

25. In his discussion of Peirce and James in relation to power and growth, Pratt says, "Growth marks new possibilities and experience and not just resistance to or acceptance of possibilities already provided for by the principles of conduct given by systems of power" (2011, 80).

26. "Constructive Conflict" in *Mary Parker Follett, Prophet of Management*. 67–95

27. See letter from Lt. Col. Lyndall Urwick, Cohen, 179.

28. This point is taken up in the recent Carnegie Foundation book, *A New Agenda for Higher Education: Shaping a Life of the Mind for Practice.* The authors rely in part on Dewey in their call for a new commitment to help students develop the skills of reasoned judgment exercised through practical action.