



Fads, stereotypes and management gurus: Fayol and Follett today

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Abstract

Purpose – The management profession has a long and well-documented history adopting and abandoning “fads” promulgated by a series of thinkers, practitioners, and opinion leaders who enjoy a “guru” like status. The purpose of this paper shows that stereotyping contributes to the existence of this guru-fad phenomenon.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper examines the characteristics of both management fads and the phenomenon of stereotyping with reference to two leading historical management practitioners and thinkers, Henri Fayol and Mary Parker Follett.

Findings – Drawing on the examples of Mary Parker Follett and Henri Fayol, it argues that the influence exerted by other management gurus and fads, such as Frederick Winslow Taylor's *Scientific Management* and Elton Mayo's *Human Relations Movement*, gave rise to a stereotyped view of both Follett and Fayol's work that prevented an accurate appraisal of their ideas.

Research limitations/implications – In addition, this paper notes that, while Follett and Fayol exhibited an extraordinary capacity to identify the very issues that have spawned many subsequent management fads, the contemporary management discipline's approach to both thinkers is quite different. While Follett has escaped her earlier stereotypes, allowing management thinkers a new opportunity to re-assess her work and value its contemporary relevance, Fayol remains misclassified as a European Taylorist who has little to offer the contemporary management practitioner.

Originality/value – This paper provides an interesting insight into the characteristics of both management fads and the phenomenon of stereotyping.

Keywords Management gurus, Management history, Management techniques

Paper type Research paper

The management profession internationally has had a long tradition of elevating particular management practitioners, thinkers and opinion leaders to almost “guru” status. Contemporary examples include Drucker, Peters and Waterman, De Bono, Porter and Covey. Such figures bring ideas to the management discipline that for various reasons resonate with their contemporary audiences. Their ensuing publications are often accompanied by personal appearances attracting large numbers of practicing managers paying commensurately high fees at conferences and seminars around the globe. They and their gospels invariably assume almost cult status in the management discipline. Some have lasting tenure stretching across decades of influence over management thinking and practice, while others' influence and popularity is of shorter duration. For whatever period, their ideas can develop into what might be termed management fads. These gurus' followers and subsequent writers in the management field often develop stereotyped of them and their ideas.

This paper examines the characteristics of both management fads and the phenomenon of stereotyping with reference to two leading historical management



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practitioners and thinkers, Henri Fayol and Mary Parker Follett. Each in their own day, and subsequently, achieved high profile, first in their own country and then on both sides of the Atlantic. With the elapse of time their currency waned, although Follett experienced rediscovery in the 1980s and 1990s, while Fayol's ideas continued to receive lip service in management textbooks throughout the twentieth century.

Accordingly, we revisit Follett and Fayol to evaluate their ideas that both became "fads" and endured, as well as the extent to which their ideas anticipated later emerging schools of management thought and practice. In addition, we critique the extent to which their work has been stereotyped by later writers and commentators, with a view to revealing the deeper and more complex characteristics of their thinking and its prescience for today's management theory and practice.

The paper proceeds to consider managers' susceptibility to fads in management ideas, and discusses the costs and benefits of this tendency. This paper also examines the concept of stereotyping as both a causal driver and product of the uptake of fads in management. In this context then, Follett's ideas are revisited and the degree to which her theories were stereotyped but subsequently rediscovered outside of their former stereotype, are outlined. Similarly, Fayol's ideas are re-examined to reveal their contemporary relevance that belies the traditional framework in which contemporary management writers have stereotypically presented them. Finally, the paper considers the relationship between "faddism" and stereotyping in the management discipline and reflects on its implications for management theorising and management practice.

Gurus, fads, and management

Many criticize the management discipline for its susceptibility to fads and its willingness to accept contradictions that other "scientific" disciplines would deem intolerable (Carson *et al.*, 1999). For example, Huczynski (1993) argues that the developed world has witnessed the recent emergence of a management guru industry characterized by a "hotchpotch" of actors and fads. We might define a management fad as "a managerial intervention, aimed at improving organisational performance, which appears innovative, rational, and functional" (Carson *et al.*, 1999, p. 321). Underpinning such a definition is the belief that those who advocate these fads have a genuine interest in providing practicing managers with valuable and meaningful advice (Micklethwait and Woolbridge, 1997; Burnes, 1998; Collins, 2000, 2001). However, others have expressed concerns about value of these management gurus' contribution to management practice (see for example: Hilmer and Donaldson, 1996; Fulop and Linstead, 1999). Indeed, Crainer (1998) suggests that the success of many management gurus, and the fads they advocate, stems as much from values drawn from the entertainment industry as it does from these gurus' capacity to supply meaningful advice and guidance to the practicing manager.

Characterizing new management theories and practices as merely "fads" promulgated by management "gurus" is common tactic employed by those who wish to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of new developments in management practice (see for examples: Abrahamson, 1991; Wilkinson *et al.*, 1991; Hilmer and Donaldson, 1996). To illustrate, Willmot and Wray-Bliss (1996, p. 62, emphasis added) noted that business process reengineering (or BPR) was "... set to become the most influential management idea *or fad* in the 1990s". Similarly, Coulson-Thomas (1996, p. 18), again writing about BPR, posed the following questions:

Is BPR a temporary gravy train for consultants? Or is it a management fad equivalent to a flu epidemic, quickly spreading and leaving people and organizations worse for wear when it passes?

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It is important to realize that until they have proven their effectiveness in a range of situations and circumstances, even long-lived and sustainable developments in management theory and practice must endure a period where skeptics might dismiss the development as yet one more management fad. Indeed, as Carson *et al.* (1999) point out, many contributions to management thinking appear to exhibit an inherent life cycle beginning with their adoption, followed by their adaptation and modification to fit organizational realities and circumstances, and finally, in the case of contributions that ultimately fall by the wayside, their abandonment.

An interesting feature of Carson *et al.*'s (1999) account of the management fad life cycle is its willingness to concede a role for socio-psychological processes in their analysis. For example, in the absence of clear and reliable information about a fad's utility, organizations might "... engage in social comparison and imitate the behaviors of others, spurring a domino-like effect" (Carson *et al.*, 1999, p. 321). In other words, organizations might simply mimic the behavior of others and adopt a fad as that fad's popularity grows, only to abandon the fad once its popularity begins to wane. Similarly, Carson *et al.* (1999) point to the existence of a "bandwagon effect" whereby organizations are driven to adopt fads by the fear of being "left out". Somewhat conversely, Carson *et al.* (1999) also draw on Abrahamson's (1996) observation that many early adopters of a fad often prove to be more likely to abandon that fad once its practice becomes widespread, which suggests that fads may also prove vulnerable when they no longer mark an organization out as "cutting edge" or "innovative".

This paper argues that stereotyping also represents an important socio-psychological process that contributes to the fad phenomenon in management. A complete account of management fads must take account of the way in which past practices, convention wisdom, and preceding fads become the subject of stereotypes that blind managers to their true worth and value. What is more, this paper also suggests that newly established fads become the subject of newly emerging stereotypes. It is to the nature of stereotypes, and the processes underpinning stereotyping behavior, that this paper will now turn.

Assessing the stereotyping phenomenon

Stereotyping involves the predisposition we have to grouping and classifying people we perceive as sharing some common characteristics. In doing so, we develop mental images or snapshots of them, as well as their behavior and communications, according to the category in which we choose to place them. In doing so, we might ground our image of such a person in certain characteristics we expect them to have because of the group to which we have assigned them (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004; Mullins, 2002). We commonly and frequently develop stereotypes about individuals and their characteristics, beliefs, behaviors and communications. Indeed, stereotypes can become a form of shared knowledge across groups such as practicing managers and management writers, and so, they can exert considerable influence (Castelli *et al.*, 2001).

Associated with stereotyping is the halo effect. This describes our tendency towards selective attention in our perception of people on first meeting them. Since at a first encounter we often receive an overload of new information and impressions and we

react by becoming selective about which information we process. As a result, we tend to formulate our initial perception based on one particular characteristic or impression (which may be favorable or unfavorable). In addition, we might exclude other characteristics or information, which may in fact be relevant and useful, from our initial perception. Thus, the halo effect often represents an error in our initial perceptions of an individual. If that first impression is favorable for example, we may ascribe to the person a positive halo, which if assessed in the light of the full set of available information and characteristics might prove to be quite inaccurate. Alternatively, we may ascribe a negative halo, which further information assimilation might well reverse. The halo serves as an early screening device which can simplify first stage information processing and evaluation, but which can also result in subsequent available information being ignored or rejected if it is inconsistent with our initial assessment and categorization (Friedman and Lyne, 2001; Mullins, 2002; McShane and Travaglione, 2003; Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004).

Of course stereotyping can have positive aspects and functions. It can serve as a productive approach to processing and categorizing large volumes of information, especially on first encounter. It simplifies individuals' perceptions and judgments of others and avoids the necessity of navigating multiple and complex stimuli. It presents itself as a potentially efficient way of coping with information overload and may save evaluation time and effort for an individual. As such, stereotyping offers a convenient response mechanism for busy managers. It short cuts their initial information processing, and appears to present them with a potential basis for making quick predictions and assessments in the future (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1993; Wood *et al.*, 2001; Mullins, 2002; McShane and Travaglione, 2003; Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004).

Stereotyping and its associated halo effect can, however, involve risks of significant dysfunctional consequences. Managers may misinterpret the information they perceive, such as management writers' concepts and arguments, and maintain that misinterpretation as a permanent block to a more accurate interpretation. Thus, they may rigidly adhere to inaccurate and simplistic understandings of a management writer or lecturer or of a management school of thought (Friedman and Lyne, 2001; George and Jones, 2002; Mullins, 2002). The effect this can have is that they reify inaccurate, distorted and dysfunctional versions of a management writer's profile, espoused beliefs and principles, and theories or recommendations. Alternatively, on occasions, the stereotyping tendency can result in the audience making partly accurate and partly inaccurate interpretations of a management writer or speaker. This combination of interpretations solidifies over time so that it becomes almost impossible to identify and separate the accurate from the inaccurate information and interpretations (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1993; Carson *et al.*, 1999; George and Jones, 2002; McShane and Travaglione, 2003). Thus, managers' reconstructed versions of these management writers' theories and arguments become quite divorced from the intentions and messages contained in the original writings and speeches (George and Jones, 2002; Biernat, 2003).

Stereotyped reinterpretations and representations of the writings and speeches of such management gurus as Fayol and Follett not only carry a heavy load of misclassification and misinterpretation, but also the resulting inaccuracies and distortions can survive for very long periods of time. Carson *et al.* (1999) and

Collins (2001) have argued that the longevity of such stereotyped fads and rhetoric can be attributable to a number of factors: Fayol and Follett today

- The extent to which managers identify the expounded theories and practices as consistent with their personal experience.
- The manner in which those theories and recommended practices reconstruct managers' worldviews and existing understandings.
- The way in which they interpret and re-present managers' own social constructions of their "realities".
- Managers' views on the ease of expounded theories' and recommendations' implementation.
- The extent to which management gurus originally promoted their own theories and recommendations.
- The extent to which such theories and recommended practices have been amenable to amendment and change over time.

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A number of disciplinary features encourage the persistence of at least some gurus' theories and recommendations and their associated stereotyping in the management discipline. First, the textbook through which contemporary authors present students with omnibus versions of management theory and practice, aggregated and simplified for ease of digestion today dominates management education. In a management textbook, the writer summarizes, classifies and reinterprets the works management gurus such as Fayol and Follett within a limited available space. Overtime, cumulative revisions and editions of many management textbooks reify these reinterpretations. These texts have a direct input to the contemporary education and training of both aspiring and practicing managers. In addition, professional management association journals, conferences and seminars may reinterpret and represent such gurus' ideas. Again, necessity may ensure that contemporary writers, frequently relying on secondary rather than primary sources, produce their representations in a brief summary form, thereby aggravating the risk of stereotyping and misinterpretation. Both ends of the contemporary communication process promote the summarization and simplification of such gurus' ideas. At the input/encoding stage, the writer must condense such information to fit alongside a wealth of other information and package all that information within the limited length of a text, a paper, or a speech. At the output/decoding stage, both students and practicing managers look for neat, easily digested and actionable solutions to contemporary problems. Both realities serve as powerful forces for reductionism in contemporary managers' interpretations of historical management figures such as Fayol and Follett (Parker and Ritson, 2005).

We shall consider the writings of Fayol and Follett as historical management gurus whose ideas have survived generations of managers to this day, but have both suffered stereotyping in the process of transmission and survival. In Fayol's case, a stereotyped misrepresentation, one that paints him as a fellow traveler of Taylorist *Scientific Management*, appears to continue to obscure the underlying meaning and value of his work (Parker and Ritson, 2005). In Follett's case, two stereotypes seem to have impeded up her ability to communicate to successive generations of management practitioners and theorists (Parker, 1984). The first misrepresented her as a contributor to Taylor's *Scientific Management* (see: Urwick, 1956a, b; Urwick and Brech, 1945). The second

portrayed her as an early participant in, or at least a precursor to, the *Human Relations Movement* (Child, 1969, 1995). The following analysis also presents the pattern of Fayol and Follett's durability over time, the contemporary relevance of some of their early ideas, as well as the contrast between their essential original messages and contemporary authors' and presenters' representations today. However, before exploring the works of both Fayol and Follett, this paper must examine Frederick Winslow Taylor's legacy with view to explaining why an association with and classification alongside such a powerful figure as Taylor can have a profound effect upon Fayol and Follett's legacy.

Frederick Winslow Taylor

Often referred to as "the father of scientific management", Frederick Winslow Taylor was born into a relatively wealthy Quaker and Puritan family from Philadelphia in 1856. Initially, Taylor pursued a career in engineering, beginning his working life as an apprentice pattern maker and machinist, before moving to Midvale Steel where he rose, in six years, from the position of machinist to that of chief engineer. At Midvale Steel, Taylor focused his energies on eliminating what he saw as excessive levels of inefficiency amongst the workforce. Taylor ascribed these inefficiencies to a number of causes including: outdated "rule-of-thumb" approaches used by workers to perform their jobs; the workers' natural inclination to "take it easy" in the workplace; an unfounded fear that increased productivity would lead to job losses; and, poorly designed wage systems that encouraged inefficiency. When he left Midvale Steel, Taylor devoted his entire career to refining and promulgating Scientific Management, an approach to management grounded in the principles he had used at Midvale Steel to improve employee productivity (Urwick and Brech, 1945; Duncan, 1989; Robbins *et al.*, 2000; Bartol *et al.*, 2001).

At its heart, Scientific Management is a rational scientific-engineering-based approach designed to maximize worker's productivity through the systematic analyses of work in minute detail (Robbins *et al.*, 2000; Bartol *et al.*, 2001). For example, at Midvale Steel even seemingly menial and inconsequential tasks such as the handling and shoveling of pig iron became the focus of "scientific" study (Morgan, 1986; Robbins *et al.*, 2000). Morgan (1986, p. 30) explains that the practice of Scientific Management rests on the application of five relatively simple principles:

- (1) Shift all responsibility for the organization of work from the worker to the manager – managers should do all the thinking relating to the planning and design of work, leaving workers with the task of implementation.
- (2) Use scientific methods (including time-and-motion study (Bartol *et al.*, 2001)) to determine the most efficient way of doing work; design the worker's task accordingly, specifying the precise way in which work is to be done.
- (3) Select the best person to perform the job thus designed.
- (4) Train the worker to do the work efficiently.
- (5) Monitor worker performance to ensure that appropriate work procedures are followed and that appropriate results are achieved.

Scientific Management's popularity in the early years of the twentieth century rested upon impressive increases of workplace productivity engendered by it and by its

logical offshoot Fordist mass-production (Morgan, 1986; Bartol *et al.*, 2001). However, Scientific Management is an inherently authoritarian approach that charges the manager with all responsibility for the “thinking”, whilst employees do all the “doing”, (Morgan, 1986, p. 30). Many have pointed to this authoritarianism to accuse Taylor of also having provoked industrial unrest and conflict, higher employee turnover and absenteeism, industrial sabotage, low employee morale, and a host of other managerial problems (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). Indeed, as early as 1911, the social and psychological problems often ascribed to Scientific Management caused so much concern that a House of Representatives committee called Taylor to defend his methods (Morgan, 1986).

Taylor’s legacy has always been, and will no doubt remain, a mixed one. On the one hand, his advocacy of rationality in the pursuit of organizational goals has guaranteed his place as one of the most influential management thinkers of the twentieth century (Bedian and Wren, 2001). On the other hand, Taylor is often condemned for pursuing an inflexible and universalistic approach in the sense that he advocated the application of the same principles in all organizations under all circumstances (Davidson and Griffin, 2000; Robbins *et al.*, 2000; Bartol *et al.*, 2001). More significantly, Taylor’s authoritarianism, coupled with his apparent disregard for the social and psychological realities of the workplace, have earned him a reputation as an “enemy of the working man” (Morgan, 1986). Today, one might say that Taylor is as one of the management discipline’s favorite “bogeymen” (Bedian and Wren, 2001).

Mary Parker Follett rediscovered

Born near Boston, Massachusetts in 1868, Follett became an exceptional woman of her time. A secondary student at an important and well-established Thayer Academy, she went on to study at Radcliffe College for women (an annex to Harvard University – women then being barred from study at Harvard University). During her six years at Radcliffe, she also undertook a year’s study at Cambridge University in law, history and political science. This was followed by postgraduate study in Paris. On her return to Boston she commenced social work, achieving prominence for her innovative provision of community social, recreational and educational services through to the early 1920s: her Boston community centers becoming regarded as benchmark models for other cities. At the same time, she also became prominent through service on the first Placement Bureau Committee for Vocational Guidance, the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board, and as Vice-President of the National Community Centre Association. Her social work career ultimately spanned 25 years and she became an authority to whom local and national organizations referred for advice (Graham, 1987, 1995; Parker, 1986, 1999).

Based on her prior studies and her field observations from her professional life, Follett became a successful writer and speaker. Her first book *The Speaker of the House of Representatives* (Follett, 1896) examined speakers’ use of power and influence in the political and legislative process. It was reviewed favorably by Theodore Roosevelt, and its favorable reception by commentators and readers established her as a significant political analyst and writer. She followed this with a second book *The New State* (Follett, 1918) advocating the substitution of networks of groups for bureaucratic institutions so that groups at the local level would be empowered to analyze issues and arrive at solutions. Through her increased work on public

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committees and tribunals, her work metamorphosed into industrial relations matters, which she reflected on in her third book *The Creative Experience* (Follett, 1924). This focused on exploration of issues and ideas, learning and teamwork, advocating the creative use of experience, by reflecting upon and critiquing the meanings of our experiences and thereby learning from them. This became the foundation of her reputation among the North American business community, further enhanced by her lectures at Metcalfe's Bureau of Personnel Administration in New York (1925-1932) and speeches at Oxford University's Rowntree lecture conferences, the British national Institute of Industrial Psychology, and the London School of Economics (1933).

It was at Oxford that Lyndall Urwick befriended her and became a follower. As executor to her estate following her death in 1933, Urwick compiled her lectures and published them in 1941 as the book entitled *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett* (Fox and Urwick, 1973). It is for this book of her collected papers that Follett is best known in the management literature. Her contributions ranged across management issues and practices, including individualism in a planned society, business as an integrative unity, responsible business management, business management as a profession, power, leadership, control, employee representation and the psychology of participation, conciliation and arbitration. For example, she saw conflict as being potentially constructive rather than automatically dysfunctional. Rather than parties aiming for domination or compromise, she advocated a third outcome of integration: one that delivered the basic objectives of all parties:

As conflict-difference is here in the world, as we cannot avoid it, we should, I think, use it. Instead of condemning it, we should set it to work for us (Follett in Fox and Urwick, 1973, p. 1)

She rejected notions of exercising power "over" people, arguing that a more productive solution can be the exercise of power "with" others:

[...] it seems to me that whereas power usually means power-over, the power of some person or group over some other person or group, it is possible to develop the conception of power-with, a jointly developed power, a co-active, not a coercive power (Follett in Fox and Urwick, 1973, p. 72).

Control for Follett, was best approached via collective self-control including lateral and vertical co-ordination of controls. Her position was that rather than manifest formal top-down authority and control, real authority and control reside in actual tasks and functional activities:

[...] Control is part of a process, a process which we see on biological, personal and social levels. Conscious control is the self-regulation of the biologist rising to consciousness. (Follett in Fox and Urwick, 1973, p. 171).

Consistent with this, she advocated replacement of leadership by command with a facilitating leadership that influenced and organized people at the group level. For Follett, management was an expandable notion that should incorporate not simply management's right to manage, but could productively incorporate the involvement, initiative and creativity of management and employees:[...] we are beginning to think of the leader not as the man who is able to assert his individual will and get others to follow him, but as the one who knows how to relate the different wills in a group so that they will have driving force (Follett in Fox and Urwick, 1973, p. 247). Thus, Follett offered an impressive spectrum of contributions to management thought that were well

ahead of the practices and theories of her day and which anticipated many subsequently emerging management theories and practices. Fayol and Follett today

It was around the age of 60 years when Follett really emerged as a management thinker, writer and speaker attracting business attention on both sides of the Atlantic. Her profile in the business community was notable given that she had not worked directly as a business organization executive or leader. Certainly it is said that her lifelong friend and companion Isobel Briggs who moved in wealthy and powerful circles in Boston, facilitated Follett's entrée to and acceptance in circles of politicians, writers, attorneys, philosophers, businessmen and the Boston 'aristocracy'. Such sponsorship clearly facilitated her access to information, audiences and business and government in general. Her book *The Creative Experience*, extended her audience beyond the realm of government, politics and social welfare, and brought her to the attention of businessmen who informally found her to be a ready advisor, thereby further enhancing her reputation in the business milieu. This new found stage provided the launch pad for her subsequent lectures, speeches and writings in both the USA and Britain as already outlined above. Her management ideas covered a considerable scope that traversed constructive conflict, power and authority, leadership, co-ordination and control, creative group processes, individuals, groups, business and society (Graham, 1987, 1995; Parker, 1984, 1999):

The businessman has probably the opportunity today of making one of the largest contributions to society that has ever been made, a demonstration of the possibility of collective creativeness (Follett in Fox and Urwick, 1973, p. 64).

She qualifies as one of the early management "gurus" of the twentieth century, promulgating management ideas that still draw comment today. How she and her ideas have been received, classified and represented over time will now be considered.

Clearly in her time, Follett achieved a considerable profile in government, social welfare and business circles on both sides of the Atlantic. Her ideas attracted attention through her own professional achievements, her board and committee memberships, her networks of connections, her writings and publications and her lectures and speeches (Parker, 1986, 1999; Drucker, 1995). Ryan and Rutherford (2000) suggest that one source of her appeal to a business audience may have been their mutual recognition that managers had to cope with complex questions that did not easily yield to simple answers. On the other hand, it is also arguable that the search for simplistic solutions to management problems of the day amongst practicing managers may also have induced managers' subsequent neglect of her ideas. For example, Drucker (1995) contends that in the USA in the 1930s, Follett became a virtual non-person in the world of management. Metcalf and Urwick (1941) and Child (1969) also argue that despite her British appearances and lectures, and Lyndall Urwick's support for her ideas, there was little uptake of the notions of behavior in organizations in British management during the 1930s. Hence in her final years and immediately after her death, her light had dimmed and her ideas begun to pass from fashion, and lay relatively dormant through the 1930s and 1940s. Why was this the case? Her ideas and recommendations represented a major break from the so-called scientific, authority-based, prescriptive principles conventionally promulgated by writers and conventionally sought by managers of her day. Instead, she offered a humanistic, dialogical, and negotiable approach to organizational management that recognized and embraced complexity,

flexibility, industrial democracy and change (Child, 1969; Drucker, 1995; Graham, 2002):

I think myself that collective responsibility should begin with group responsibility, that a form of departmental organization which includes the workers is the most effective method for unifying a business (Follett in Fox and Urwick, 1973, p. 52).

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Managers of her day still preferred to search for simplistic, easily implemented solutions to management problems. This tendency was aggravated by businesses' battle to survive the Great Depression, as well as by a lesser degree of intellectual management discourse in higher education in the 1930s (Fox and Urwick, 1973; Drucker, 1995; Fry and Thomas, 1996; Ryan and Rutherford, 2000). Of course, her impact may also have been restricted in the 1930s simply due to her being a woman (one of the very few) operating in a male-dominated world of government and business (Wren, 1979; Kanter, 1995). Added to this, her social welfare background and lack of direct business involvement may have also impeded acceptance of her ideas among many practicing business managers (Parker, 1999).

One further contributor to Follett's neglect in the 1930s was the rise to prominence of Elton Mayo whose approach to management rapidly eclipsed Follett's. Why was this? Child (1995) argues that Mayo's approach to human relations resonated with the managerial culture of the period, advocating a relatively simple, paternalistic, rational, authority-based approach to human relations (quite the opposite to Follett's more complex, interdisciplinary approach). In addition, Mayo achieved greater publicity through his famous Hawthorne experiments at the Western Electric Company and his position at the famous Harvard Business School. Nevertheless, arguably Mayo's success and recognition in leading the human relations school of thought may have paved the way for Follett's gradual resurrection so that her ideas began to resurface in the management literature in the UK in the late 1940s and 1950s (Child, 1969; Parker, 1984). In the 1960s, Parker (1984) reports the uptake of her ideas by writers such as Krupp (1961), Savitt (1962), Livingstone (1965) and Massie (1965).

Before examining Follett's recent resurrection as a management guru, we must examine one further important factor contributed to her temporary demise: namely, stereotyping. It is arguable that subsequent writers, including erstwhile supporters such as Lyndall Urwick (Urwick, 1956a, b; Urwick and Brech, 1945), incorrectly classified Follett as belonging to the scientific management school of thought. Subsequent management textbook writers reified this misclassification by referring to Follett via Urwick's numerous publications about her. Then during the human relations era of the 1930s, Follett's work was miss-interpreted in the shadow of Elton Mayo as her philosophy of industrial democracy became a license for managers to lead others to their own predetermined point of view, while her approach to control was represented as and reduced to a mere management technique (Child, 1969, 1995). Such stereotypes were completely at odds with Follett's fundamental philosophy and messages. It has been left to later management theorists to rehabilitate her and to repaint the portrait dulled by her longstanding stereotype.

After laying dormant for a considerable period, Follett and her ideas appear to have begun to resurface more consistently in the management literature from the 1980s onwards. Fry and Thomas (1996) conducted a citation search of social science, public administration and management literature covering the period 1969-1990. They found

that Follett was cited in nearly 150 articles in 96 different journals, and in almost every text reviewed. However most references to her work and ideas were superficial and compared to Mayo, Barnard, Simon and Waldo she was the least cited. Nevertheless, they noted that her rate of citation did climb significantly, the annual rate doubling between 1980 and 1990. At the same time we find that some management writers in the 1980s and 1990s began to pay Follett much greater attention, pointing to the depth and prescience of her work and advocating her rediscovery by the contemporary management discipline (Parker, 1984, 1986, 1999; Graham, 1987, 1995, 2002; Eylon, 1998; McLarney and Rhyno, 1999).

So as an early management guru, Follett had mixed fortunes. Particularly as a woman not directly involved in managing a business enterprise, she achieved a remarkable penetration of the business world of her day on both sides of the Atlantic. Her government- and business-related board memberships, publications, speeches and lectures clearly marked her out as a significant and challenging management guru of her day. Overtaken by her environment and competing management agendas, her ideas lapsed into the dark world of management fads that have had their day, only to resurface into the management literature decades later.

As writers gradually rediscovered Follett (especially from the 1980s onwards), her stereotype came under scrutiny and was found to be wanting. Wren (1979, p. 325) observed that while she lived during the scientific management era, philosophically she belonged to the “social man” era. Child (1969) too, noted that subsequent writers had reclassified her as part of the human relations school. However Child (1995) argues that Mayo’s brand of human relations was far more authoritarian than Follett’s. Parker (1984, 1999) sees her anticipating many aspects of the subsequently emerging behavioural and systems schools of thought. When Follett’s earlier stereotypical classification is dismantled in this way, the underlying cause of her neglect over the decades becomes more evident. As Bennis (1995, p. 181) puts it, her ideas and writing were seminal and a precursor of many management ideas and practices today. Not only were they “ahead of her time, but . . . at an angle to the time she was writing about”. Resonating with contemporary management theory are dimensions of her thinking on leadership, workplace autonomy and empowerment, organizational conflict and pluralism, control, group participation and co-operation (Parker, 1984, 1986, 1999; Graham, 1987, 2002; Fry and Thomas, 1996; Eylon, 1998; McLarney and Rhyno, 1999). The list does not end there. It includes elements of recent thinking in relation to:

- Strategic alliances:

Long before those of us studying strategic alliances and joint ventures . . . discovered the virtues of cooperation with competitors, Follett had analyzed when competition can turn into a kind of cooperation (Kanter, 1995, p. xv).

The formation of alliances is not a new idea derived from heightened global competition; it is a Folletian idea in a new form (Kanter, 1995, p. xv).

- Network organization structures:

We were convinced that because of the waning of the archetype of industrial bureaucracy a new model would be required for organizations of the next century . . . We placed our bets on what we called the “network” organization . . . Our unease about whether we were saying anything new led us to carefully reexamine the early literature

on organizations ... we found that every one of the features of the new organization that we (and so many others) were so giddily proclaiming as cutting-edge and revolutionary had been anticipated by Mary Parker Follett ... (Nohria, 1995, pp. 155-6).

- Stakeholder theory:

The similarities between Follett's ideas and many of the ideas being put forth in stakeholder theory (a contemporary management theory) are startling (Schilling, 2000, p. 224).

- Likert and McGregor's work on participative leadership (Child, 1995).
- Tom Peters' principles of effective teamwork (Child, 1995).
- Lawrence and Lorsch's organizational integration and differentiation (Child, 1995, p. 89):

... it is Follett who has stood the test of time ... her approach to participative problem solving, based on the concepts of constructive conflict and power-with, anticipated both the work of Likert and McGregor on participative leadership, and the principles of effective teamwork expounded more recently by Tom Peters and others. The lectures she gave at the London School of Economics in 1933 on coordination and the process of control in many respects foreshadow the analysis of integration and differentiation advanced by Lawrence and Lorsch.

- Contingency-based management:

Perhaps most fundamental of all, the "law of the situation" ... directly anticipates modern contingency analysis – still the most useful perspective on offer to practicing managers (Child, 1995, pp. 89-90).

In addition, holistic interdisciplinary critiques of rationalist quantitative management models, as well as the broader corporate governance responsibilities for social and environmental impact (Parker, 1995) have all been identified by contemporary theorists as anticipated by Follett's ideas. Her historical role and her later rehabilitation has been best summarized by George (1972, p. 139) when he wrote that she "was, in effect, a prophet in the management wilderness".

In Follett's case then, her rediscovery by contemporary management theorists has elevated her status and recognition and facilitated the rejuvenated currency of her ideas. These include Parker (1984), Graham (1995), Fry and Thomas (1996), Eylon (1998), McLarney and Rhyno (1999), Ryan and Rutherford (2000), and Schilling (2000). These authors have begun to dismantle her stereotype, liberating her material to be explored anew by and better understood by a wider audience. It is through their reinterpretations and writings that her messages have been reconstituted and replayed in the language of contemporary theory, management and business. Whether they maintain the growing momentum of her work's citation in contemporary literature remains to be seen. Nevertheless, they offer the prospect of reinvigorating attention to her theories and reasserting her recognition and referencing as a founder of today's management discipline.

The enduring Henri Fayol

Henri Fayol was born in France in 1841, educated at the Lycée at Lyons and subsequently he trained to be a mining engineer at the national School of Mines at

St Etienne. He then joined the Commentry-Fourchambault Company, a coal mining and iron foundry combine where he quickly ascended through the managerial ranks – from engineer aged 19, to manager of the Commentry pits at the age of 25, to manager of a group of coalmines at 31. At the age of 47 years, he finally became managing director of Commentry-Fourchambault and remained as Commentry-Fourchambault's chief executive until he retired in 1918 (Urwick, 1956b; Brodie, 1967; Pollard, 1974; Wren, 1979; Sasaki, 1995).

Following his retirement, Fayol undertook two further major ventures. In the 1916 to 1923 period, he published *General and Industrial Management* and he set up a Centre for Administrative Studies (CAS) to develop and popularize his management ideas. The centre became a forum for meetings attended by leaders in literature, philosophy, engineering, public sector, industry, commerce and the military. He and his followers also used the center as a base from which they could lecture, and publish pamphlets and articles. During the 1921-1926 period, Fayol also accepted consulting appointments and undertook investigations into the French public sector on behalf of government. This included work with the Post Office and the Telecommunications Department and a study of the French government's tobacco and match monopoly (Breeze, 1995; Cuthbert, 1970; Urwick, 1949).

Throughout his life, Fayol was an avid, detailed and meticulous researcher who published in many topic areas (see: Brodie, 1967; Breeze, 1995; Wren, 1995). Between 1874 and 1885, he published a number of papers on mineshaft design and safety. These covered diverse issues relating to alternative materials for pit props, mine after-filling, spontaneous combustion, firefighting, and mine hazards. He also conducted experiments on the problems of mine subsidence which engineering students studied in mining textbooks for a number of subsequent decades. When Commentry's collieries coal deposits appeared close to exhaustion, Fayol undertook detailed studies of the formation and extent of those deposits and then published a monograph on the Commentry coal basin published by the Society of Mineral Studies. Overall, Fayol's research approach could be characterized as often experimentally and field research based, employing detailed and disciplined observation, meticulously recorded and analyzed. This same approach, he applied to the development of his management ideas contained in *General and Industrial Management* and to his leadership of the Centre for Administrative Studies (Brodie, 1967; Breeze, 1995; Wren, 1995; Parker and Lewis, 1995).

During his life, Fayol earned many honors and distinctions in recognition of his contributions to the fields of geology, metallurgy, and management (Wren, 1972). These included The Delesse Prize of the Academy of Sciences, the gold medal of the Société d'Encouragement pour l'Industrie Nationale, the gold medal and medal of honor of the Société de l'Industrie Minérale, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour (1888), Officer of the Legion of Honour (1913), and Commander of the Order of the Crown of Romania (1925) (Urwick, 1956b).

Fayol's ideas were largely unread and unfamiliar to the English-speaking world until the translation of *General and Industrial Management* into English in 1949 (Fulop and Linstead, 1999). Nevertheless, he clearly achieved a considerable degree of success as both a management practitioner and theorist in the early twentieth century. In addition, Fayol's work exercised a profound influence over several subsequent management thinkers in the both the USA and the UK, including Lyndall Urwick and

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Chester Barnard (Lock and Farrow, 1982; Cole, 1984; Thomas, 1993). In *General and Industrial Management*, one finds a detailed and systematic analysis of management practice that has formed an important part of our contemporary understanding of the discipline (Bedian and Wren, 2001). Fayol's most well-known contributions to management theory include:

- His categorisation of all organisational activities as technical, commercial, financial, security, accounting, or management (George, 1972; Wren, 1972; Pugh *et al.*, 1981; Robbins *et al.*, 2000).
- His identification of five key managerial functions: *prevoyance* (forecasting and planning), organizing, co-ordination, command, and control (George, 1972; Cole, 1984; Robbins *et al.*, 2000).
- His advocacy of 14 principles of management: division of labor; authority; discipline; unity of command; unity of direction; subordination of the individual to the common good; remuneration; centralization; the scalar chain; order; equity; stability; initiative; and esprit de corps (Rue and Byars, 1983; Clutterbuck and Crainer, 1990; Robbins *et al.*, 2000).

Notwithstanding Fayol's apparent success and influence as both a management practitioner at Commentry-Fourchambault and thinker (Urwick and Brech, 1945; Robbins *et al.*, 2000; Davidson and Griffin, 2000), today he exists primarily as a somewhat shadowy figure in the "management history" section of contemporary management texts. In these texts, his ongoing relevance to the practice of contemporary management receives little acknowledgment (Parker and Ritson, 2005). The standard textbook treatment of Fayol portrays him as a fellow traveler of his contemporary Frederick Taylor (Bedian and Wren, 2001). Most commonly, Fayol, along with Taylor, receives credit for creating the "classical" school of management theory (Dessler, 1977; Robbins *et al.*, 2000; Davidson and Griffin, 2000). Indeed, most textbook treatments of Fayol do little more than evoke the spirit of Sheldrake's (1996) assertion that Fayolism both complemented and competed with Taylorism in the early half of the twentieth century. If any distinction is drawn between Taylor and Fayol's approach to management, then that distinction is often limited to nothing more than the observation that while Taylor sought to perfect the organization "... from the shop [floor] up", Fayol sought to perfect it "... from the board of directors down" (George, 1972, p. 111). In so classifying Fayol as a European Taylorist, contemporary textbooks blind the student and practitioner of management to Fayol's ongoing relevance in a number of ways.

1. Fayol and employee motivation

The standard textbook treatment portrays both Taylor and Fayol as "romantic rationalists" (Merkle, 1980) and "functionalists" (Norton and Smith, 1998) who viewed workers as nothing more than productive units who exchange their labor for monetary remuneration alone (Bartol *et al.*, 2001; Robbins *et al.*, 2000; Schermerhorn *et al.*, 2004). In other words, that Fayol shared Taylor's focus on monetary remuneration, at the expense of adopting a more holistic view of the employee, one that encompassed his or her higher needs (Robbins *et al.*, 2000). In so doing, these textbooks imply that as early as the late 1920s and early 1930s, when Elton Mayo conducted the Hawthorne studies, management theory had already begun to reject Fayol's understanding of employee

motivation. However, Fayol did recognize that the employee's motivation to participate in the workplace stemmed from more than the mere need to earn financial remuneration. Many students and practitioners might feel surprised to learn that in *General and Industrial Management*, Fayol used language that evokes the subsequent emergence of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory (Bartol *et al.*, 2001), when he wrote:

Whether wages are made up of money only or whether they include various additions such as heating, light, housing, [or] food, is of little consequence provided the employee be satisfied ... [T]here is no doubt that a business will be better served if its employees are more energetic, better educated, more conscientious and more permanent. The employer should have regard ... for the health, strength, education, morale and stability of his [*sic*] personnel (Fayol, 1949, p. 32).

2. Fayol and universalism

Classifying Fayol alongside Taylor creates an impression that, like Taylor, Fayol advocated a universalistic approach to management. That is, that Fayol prescribed a rigid and inflexible set of principles designed to suit all organizations, in all circumstances, at all times (Robbins *et al.*, 2000; Bartol *et al.*, 2001; Schermerhorn *et al.*, 2004). In so doing, the student and practitioner is encouraged to believe that Fayol has little or nothing to offer a world that values integrative approaches such as systems-based thinking and understands the importance of contingency in organizational life (Luthans, 1973; Robbins *et al.*, 2000). However, a reading of *General and Industrial Management* reveals a Fayol who is very different to this pseudo-Taylorist universalistic stereotype. The following excerpts, serve to illustrate Fayol's respect for the importance of contingency in the context of planning:

If decisions are made in the light of certain facts, and some of these turn out to be ill-founded, it is possible to modify the plan accordingly ... The act of forecasting is of great benefit to all who take part in the process, and is the best means of ensuring adaptability to changing circumstances (Fayol, 1949, p. xi).

The plan ... rests ... on future trends which depend partly on technical, commercial, financial and other conditions, all subject to change, whose importance and occurrence cannot be predetermined (Fayol, 1949, p. 43).

The plan should be flexible enough to bend before such adjustments, as it is considered well to introduce, whether from the pressure of circumstances or from any other reason (Fayol, 1949, p. 45).

The best plans cannot anticipate all unexpected occurrences which may arise, but does include a place for these events and prepare the weapons which may be needed at the moment of being surprised (Fayol, 1949, p. 49).

Fayol's respect for the importance of contingency extended beyond the planning or *prevoyance* function to encompass the entirety of management practice, as the following excerpt from *General and Industrial Management* illustrates:

[...] there is nothing rigid or absolute in management affairs, it is all a question of proportion. Seldom do we have to apply the same principle twice in identical conditions; allowance must be made for different changing circumstances ... Therefore principles ... [must be] ... flexible and capable of adaptation to every need; it is a matter of knowing how to make use of

them which is a difficult art requiring intelligence, experience, decision, and proportion (Fayol, 1949, p. 19).

3. Fayol, authoritarianism, and centralization

Classifying Fayol alongside Taylor also creates the impression that, like Taylor, Fayol advocated an “authoritarian” model of management that centralized all decision-making power in the hands of management (Huczynski, 1993). In a world where organizations now encourage participative decision-making under the auspices of techniques such as management by objectives and total quality management (Davidson and Griffin, 2000, pp. 738-75), Fayol’s perceived commitment to authoritarian and centralized management can seem hopelessly antiquated and dated. No doubt, Fayol’s inclusion of principles such as authority, unity of command, and centralization among his 14 principles does much to reinforce this authoritarian stereotype. However, students rarely see Fayol’s ideas regarding the importance of authority, centralization, and unity of command, in their proper context, presented alongside his clear regard for the value of initiative. For Fayol, the ideal manager appears to be one who guaranteed the organization’s operational integrity by asserting his or her authority whenever needed, whilst retaining the capacity to motivate his or her subordinates by trusting their capacity for initiative. The following passage serves to illustrate this point:

Thinking out a plan and ensuring its success is one of the keenest satisfactions for an intelligent man [*sic*] to experience. It is also one of the most powerful stimulants of human endeavour ... At all levels of the organizational ladder, zeal and energy on the part of employees are augmented by initiative. The initiative of all ... represents a great source of strength for business ... Much tact and some integrity are required to inspire and maintain everyone’s initiative, within the limits, imposed by respect for authority and discipline ... [*Nevertheless*] a manager who is able to permit the exercise of initiative on the part of subordinates is infinitely superior to one who cannot do so (Fayol, 1949, pp. 39-40, emphasis added).

In essence, Fayol (1949, p. 6) never believed that that the practice of management was the exclusive prerogative of senior executives, arguing instead that management “. . . is an activity spread, like all other activities, between head and members of the body corporate”. Indeed, Fayol was so committed to the idea that all members of an organization should participate in its management, that *General and Industrial Management* even outlines an ambitious agenda of educational reform. Fayol argued for the inclusion of management education in school curricular to afford every citizen the opportunity to develop and exercise their management capabilities “. . . first at school, [and] later in the workshop” (Fayol, 1949, p. 14). Fayol (1949, p. 14) continues:

Everyone needs some concepts of management; in the home, in affairs of state, the need for managerial ability is in keeping with the importance of the undertaking ... Hence there should be some generalized teaching of management; elementary in primary schools, somewhat wider in post primary schools, and quite advanced in higher education establishments.

As one reads *General and Industrial Management*, one encounters words written by a subtle and sophisticated management thinker who fully understood the need to integrate the demands of authority, order, and control with considerations for the

employees' welfare and morale, equity, and the value of employee participation in decision-making. What is more and most unlike Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management, General and Industrial Management* does not present a "one solution fits all" or "magic bullet" prescription designed to solve all organizational problems under all circumstances. Indeed, Fayol repeatedly warns the reader of the need to constantly adjust management practice to meet the demands of changing circumstances and to learn from past failures and mistakes.

Establishing exactly why Fayol came to be stereotyped as Europe's leading Taylorist is somewhat difficult. Certainly, if one were to read *General and Industrial Management* through a Scientific Management practitioner's eyes, as Lyndall Urwick did (see Urwick and Brech, 1945), one might find evidence of Taylorist thinking. Principles such as authority, unity of command, and centralization certainly have a Taylorist ring to them. However, to sustain such a classification one would also have to turn a blind eye to and marginalize Fayol's thoughts on the importance of initiative, the significance of contingency, and the need to consider the employee's sense of well-being and morale. Indeed, notwithstanding common misconception that Fayol shared much in common with Taylor, *General and Industrial Management* only contains one direct reference to Frederick Taylor and his work. In this one passage, Fayol (1949, p. 70) expresses his admiration for "... the great American engineer", but goes on to criticize the "Taylor System" for its tendency to promote functional organizational designs. In other words, *General and Industrial Management's* only reference to Scientific Management actually questions its value, arguing that it promulgates the belief that "... unity of command is unimportant and can be violated with impunity" (see: Fayol, 1949, pp. 66-70). Indeed, beyond the fact that Fayol and Taylor were contemporaries, there appears to be very little reason why their respective contributions to management thought should be so closely linked to in present day management texts.

It is interesting to note that unlike Follet, Fayol has, to date, failed to escape his Taylorist stereotype. Although one can find evidence that Fayol anticipated the emergence of a wide range of subsequent approaches to management, beginning with the emergence of the Human Relations Movement (Parker and Ritson, 2005), he has never been reclassified. Today management thinkers, students and practitioners continue to regard Fayol as an antiquated and out-dated figure who has little of relevance to say about contemporary organizational life. For example, in *The Nature of Management Work*, Henry Mintzberg dismissed Fayol's general approach to the nature of managerial work as "folklore", characterising his, Mintzberg's, own work as being "... as different form the Fayol's classical view as a cubist abstract is from a renaissance painting" (Mintzberg, 1989, cited in Lamond, 2004, p. 330).

By consigning Fayol to the "rubbish bin" of management history, the management disciple has left itself vulnerable to successive generations of management gurus, some of whom seem to merely repackage principles first advocated by Fayol into a bewildering array of fads. Not surprisingly, since many, though not all, subsequent management fads lack the subtlety and respect for contingency found in the work of an experienced, thoughtful, diligent, and meticulous thinker such as Fayol, many of these fads turn out, in practice, to represent nothing more than what Hilmer and Donaldson (1996) call "false trails". In addition, many contemporary management thinkers now see irreconcilable conflicts and contradictions between their work and Fayol's. By

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viewing Fayol's work in these terms, these contemporary thinkers miss an opportunity to further enrich their analysis of contemporary organizations because often these conflicts and contradictions prove upon closer and more detailed examination to be illusionary (see, for example, Lamond, 2003, 2004).

Conclusion

Management fads and the gurus who promulgate them are a characteristic of the management discipline. The popularity and fame of these fads and gurus often gains momentum through some intrinsic appeal to practicing managers' contemporary experience, their apparent ease of implementation, and through the active public profile and promulgation of their originators. The durability of a fad is also a function of the sophistication of their original formulation and specification, as well as of the adaptability of those ideas to later business and management environments. However, stereotyping which almost inevitably seems to accompany both the guru and their fad may also help to raise the founders' profile and assist the uptake of their fad. Frequently, this stereotyping produces a misinterpretation of these founders' core concepts and arguments, as well as an ignorance of the subtleties of intent and meaning contained in their messages and proposals.

All of these features are evident in both Henri Fayol and Mary Parker Follett. Both achieved early profiles for their ideas among their particular audiences, each promulgating these through writing, lectures, speeches and public appearances. However, competing gurus overshadowed both. Taylor, the management discipline's first and undoubtedly most tarnished guru, has always overshadowed Fayol's work. Both Taylor and a subsequent guru, Elton Mayo, have overshadowed Follett's. While these associations with other gurus may have initially attracted a wider audience for Fayol and Follett's work, both suffered stereotyping by followers, critics and commentators alike, being both classified as apostles of scientific/classical management, with their ideas reinterpreted, and recast into rigid, simplified moulds. Here, however, they part company. Fayol's name remains familiar to us thanks to the multitude of management texts published across the decades since his death. However, Fayol has never escaped his early stereotype and contemporary management writers still referred to him as if he was a rigid classical management thinker in the Taylorist mould. Follett, on the other hand became little referred to or remembered until several decades after her death. She was then rediscovered by a small cadre of management writers, somewhat in the 1960s, and particularly in the 1980s. That rediscovery also marked the breaking of her stereotype and the recognition of her as a far more multidisciplinary management thinker of long-term relevance than previously understood.

Our analysis of faddism and stereotyping in relation to these two significant historical management figures, offers a number of important implications. As is evident for the foregoing study, fads and stereotyping in relation to management ideas and concepts carry a severe risk of their true dimensions, depth, complexity and value being misunderstood and subsequently bypassed. This study also demonstrates that where this may have occurred, management historians and other researchers may be able to revisit and "mine" earlier misinterpreted or discarded ideas and concepts to reveal new understandings and uses of contemporary relevance and value. Such revisiting of historical gurus and their theories thereby offers the prospect of rewriting,

at least to some degree, the history of the development of thought in the management discipline. Fayol and Follett today

The rediscovery of the dimensions and contemporary value of Henri Fayol's and Mary Parker Follett's theories therefore demonstrate that at least some of the early gurus of management have indeed been undeservedly misclassified and subjected to damaging stereotypes, treated simplistically as fads that have had their day, and either become overshadowed or forgotten. We think it reasonable to suspect that many of yesterday's gurus would reward an exercise in revisiting and restoration, with many consequent benefits to our contemporary management discipline.

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