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CRITICAL MANAGEMENT STUDIES

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**HISTORICAL  
FEMALE  
MANAGEMENT  
THEORISTS**

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*Frances Perkins,  
Hallie Flanagan,  
Madeleine Parent,  
Viola Desmond*

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**KRISTIN S. WILLIAMS**

# **Historical Female Management Theorists**

The appearance of Kristin Williams' exquisitely produced, and provocatively written book creates a true sense of excitement for all of us expecting feminist theorizing to continue as a legitimate research and theory development area in the field of organization studies. This book offers three important contributions to the field: first, it brings to visibility four female historical figures whose ideas, often unrecognized, are present in the field's lexicon. Second, it accomplishes this aim by developing a novel theoretical framework bridging feminist theory and critical historiography. Finally, a creative methodology – ficto-feminism – brings to the present these figures' lively voices, inviting all of us to partake in their conversations. An extraordinary accomplishment to work within extraordinary times!

**Marta B. Calás**

*Professor of Organization Studies and International Management  
Isenberg School of Management University of Massachusetts – Amherst*

How many times, when reading a biography of a woman who was no longer with us, we dreamt about a conversation we could have with her, asking her questions and receiving answers that could change our lives ... Kristin Williams has fulfilled this kind of dream. Introducing ficto-feminism to management and organization studies, she emboldens us to use a variety of methods and approaches heretofore unknown in our discipline. May the conversation with the feminists continue into history!

**Barbara Czarniawska**

*Senior Professor of Management Studies  
Gothenburg Research Institute, University of Gothenburg*

History brought to life. *Historical Female Management Theorists* is a must read for anyone wanting to learn about women figures in management history. A beautifully written and engaging book that houses historical archival research, feminist and historical inquiry in management, and fictional writing. This book is methodologically precise, representationally creative, and theoretically sophisticated.

**Alison Pullen**

*Editor, Gender, Work & Organization  
Professor of Management and Organizational Studies, Macquarie University*

This book feels the pulse of contemporary feminist thought, finds it to be lively and inventive and then, finding it/us receptive to new intellectual endeavours, takes us on a series of adventures. What adventures! Readers not only find a new methodology, ficto-feminism, but also a new way of writing that draws on the devices used by authors of fictional works. Along the way we are introduced to a new way of doing management history. Through the re-discovery of four pioneering female thinkers Kristin (the use of her given name is deliberate) invites us to explore the practices that erase women from history. She tracks the consequences of that invisibilization, notably the ways in which the academic discipline of management and leadership became constrained within an over-arching and stultifying way of thinking about how work should and must be done. By introducing

us to Frances Perkins, Hallie Flanagan, Madeleine Parent and Viola Desmond, Kristin offers us four proto-management theorists and feminist icons who open ways of thinking (and writing and dreaming) differently about management and organizations. This important and timely book invites us into a conversation in which we may find ways to dismantle those taken-for-granted structuring devices that have dominated the field of management and organization studies for far too long. It offers inspiration and guidance to anyone who wants to break free of the oppressive weight of much contemporary MOS thought.

**Nancy Harding**

*Professor of Management Strategy & Organization, University of Bath*

Kristin Williams engages in a genre-blending experiment that breaks the conventional framing of historical writing in management history in a highly creative and original way. This book will be of interest to all scholars and students of management who are interested in writing differently as a means of disrupting hegemonic modes of knowledge production and exploring alternatives.

**Emma Bell**

*Professor, Organization Studies, Faculty of Business & Law, The Open University Business School*

In this deeply personal and political book, Kristin Williams takes us into the remarkable lives of four North American women activists in labour, civil rights and the arts in the early twentieth century. Blurring the genres of history and fiction into 'ficto-feminism', she breaks patriarchal narratives to recover them as makers of history. Yet, as history is fiction, Kristin is not interested in truth claims. Her activist writing rather develops through engaging, intimate conversations, in which she interweaves herself, reflectively, into the text. Determined to 'challenge our understanding of what is worthy knowledge and where it can be found', she rewrites these brave, intelligent and complex women's pioneering ideas and work into management and organization studies. Thanks to her imagination, these women inspire us to transgress. I cannot think of any better reason to read this book!

**Patrizia Zononi**

*Professor, Organization Studies, Faculty of Business Economics, Hasselt University*

Journey with Williams as she bridges the historical divide and engages in conversation with proto-management theorists Frances Perkins, Hallie Flanagan, Madeline Parent and Viola Desmond. Using the fascinating activist method of ficto-feminism, Williams introduces us to women who have been ignored because they didn't meet the gender and ideological requirements of traditional management scholars. Her work opens a door that will draw you in to letting go of convention and illuminating the pluralities of histories in management theory.

**Patricia Genoe McLaren**

*President, Administrative Sciences Association of Canada  
Associate Dean, Lazaridis School of Business & Economics, Wilfrid Laurier University*

# CRITICAL MANAGEMENT STUDIES

The *Critical Management Studies* series covers topics from management style techniques, corporate culture and cross-cultural management to evaluation, organizational structure and management science and operations, drawing on a range of radical traditions that include feminism, critical theory, Marxism, post-modernism/poststructuralism, critical race theory, environmentalism, labour process theory, postcolonial theory, existentialism and applied critical management studies.

Books in this series aim to contribute to sociopolitical change, from authors who self-identify as critical management scholars, critical scholars of management, or those with practical experience in the field, encouraging us to rethink the fundamental relationships between working/organizing/managing and our sense of humanity.

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# **Historical Female Management Theorists: Frances Perkins, Hallie Flanagan, Madeleine Parent, Viola Desmond**

BY

**KRISTIN S. WILLIAMS**

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and

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This book is dedicated to my husband, David, and my children, Michael and Graham, for your love, support and encouragement. To my friend, Albert, thank you for believing in me.*



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# Preface

I love fiction, and particularly historical fiction! I have been surprised more than once with the inspiration I have found there. The historian and the fiction writer do not see themselves as doing the same thing, but there are occasions where figures like Margaret Atwood and her work could be confused for history. There were moments when writing this book where I felt like I was the author of fiction and other times where I revealed where fiction exists and has been taken as fact. To be candid, there are times where I need not necessarily know where the facts end, and the supposition begins; I just want to know the story.

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# Acknowledgements

I wrote this book in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the 'Treaties of Peace and Friendship', which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources, but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. We are all treaty people.

I would also like to recognize the over 400-year history of communities of African descent and the 50 African Nova Scotian communities located throughout the region today.