DEMANDS, CONSTRAINTS, CHOICES AND DISCRETION: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK OF ROSEMARY STEWART

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Article:

A few years have passed since the Leadership Classics feature last appeared in the Leadership Quarterly and so it seems appropriate to revisit the purpose of this feature. The Leadership Classics feature is designed to revisit a seminal scholarly work or line of research. The selection criteria reflect: prior contribution to the development of the field and ongoing potential to inform leadership research. The focus of the current feature is on the work of Rosemary Stewart of Templeton College, a specialist management college within the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

From her seminal book Managers and Their Jobs: A Study of the Similarities and Differences in the Ways Managers Spend Their Time (1967) through the third edition of The Reality of Management (1997), Professor Stewart has broadened our understanding of what managers actually do. Her work, spanning five decades (Stewart 1965, 2002), stands as a testimony to the benefits of a truly cumulative and programmatic research program focused on systematically exploring a phenomenon layer-by-layer, nuance-by-nuance. Her research methods were (and remain) innovative, exhaustive, and cutting edge. Using a battery of techniques such as structured interviews, diaries, structured observations, group discussions, case analyses, and critical incidents, Stewart was developing grounded theory work and implementing method triangulation before those approaches had fashionable labels. Among the many important contributions emerging from this work are the demands–constraints– choices framework and the notion of managerial exposure, useful models for defining differences in managerial work and discretion across jobs.

There is something for almost everyone in Professor Stewart's research. Her insights and observations span the micro to meso to macro perspectives. Leadership scholars interested in dyadic interactions, group level phenomena, organizational culture, national culture, and the impact of technology on the practice of management will all benefit from reading this feature's "twenty thousand feet" view of Professor Stewart's work. One persistent theme, that the demands, choices, and constraints in managerial work vary more dramatically across jobs than across hierarchical levels or organizational functions, has important, but largely ignored, implications for the samples scholars select and the generalizations they make and infer from the results.

Human resource scholars interested in more effective utilization of the performance appraisal process, improving managerial development processes, and for an alternative perspective on person–job–organization fit will be informed by this body of work. Her discussion of the ability of managers to (not) see choice in situations as a determinate of (in)effective leadership is both a lucid and promising area for future research. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of the transformational leader may be the ability to identify choice in situations where others perceive little or none. Professor Stewart suggests that the ability to see a wider set of choices in a situation can be developed in individuals. This ability to see a larger choice set may in part explain the utility of less system ensconced organizational consultants.

Readers of The Leadership Quarterly, especially younger U.S. scholars, may be relatively unfamiliar with the work of Rosemary Stewart. This may be due to the effects of time on the ardor for a particular body of research

or to a regio-centric "crowding out" effect when research agendas appear, on casual inspection, to be similar. Another contributing factor may be the tendency for U.S. scholars to treat "leadership" research as distinct from "managerial work" research. While leadership research has progressed considerably in recent decades (House & Aditya, 1997; Hunt, 1999; Lowe & Gardner, 2000), a comparison of Stewart's (1982) chapter in Leadership: Beyond Establishment Views with the current state of the art reveals that the convergence of "leadership" with "managerial work" research remains substantially neglected.

Non-U.S. readers of The Leadership Quarterly tend to view Professor Stewart as quite "famous" (cf. Henry Mintzberg's reference to Stewart's work in a recent interview; McCarthy, 2000) and many of the more seasoned U.S. readers will be quite familiar with her work. Whether acquainting one's self with this body of work for the first time or revisiting the body of knowledge through a fresh set of eyes, the following pages identify that much remains to be done to fully leverage the research of Rosemary Stewart.

Speaking of those fresh eyes, I am especially pleased with this set of feature contributors. They embody the rich cultural diversity and scientific training that are brought to bear on the topic of leadership in the pages of The Leadership Quarterly. The feature contributors' hail from three continents, five countries, range in professional training from industrial– organizational psychology to engineering to anthropology, vary in career stages, and include both prior and new contributors to The Leadership Quarterly. Their reviews and reflections reveal the important influence that Rosemary Stewart's work has had on the field and the equally exciting prospects for future research.

Our feature opens with a personal reflection by Rosemary Stewart on how her interests in social research, training at the London School of Economics, and the prevailing tenor of the times converged to make her an accidental management theorist. She describes how her research methodology was influenced by the pioneering work of Sune Carlson (1951) and contemporaries such as Leonard Sayles, John Kotter, Tom Burns, Joan Woodward, and members of the Tavistock Institute.

This was clearly an exciting time to be a management scholar. Rosemary and her contemporaries were involved in asking a variety of fundamental and important questions regarding the nature and practice of management. This research was conducted in an era characterized by a greater tolerance for programmatic research progress and relatively less emphasis on narrower lines of inquiry designed to improve publication "hit rates" within shorter time frames. Readers will enjoy reading her description of the logical evolution of her research agenda from what managers do, to developing a typology of jobs, to an interest in cross-cultural and health care management. Her description of the challenges and privileges of being a female researcher, especially early in her career, ring of both past and present.

Following Dr. Stewart's retrospective are five commentaries on her work. Each of these authors considered the significance of her body of work both in the context of the time and for the insights that will continue to advance the field. Although there are some commonalities across the commentaries, the diverse interests and training of these authors provide quite different lenses on her contributions.

Galen Kroeck of Florida International University provides a broad review of Professor Stewart's "managerial anthropology." Kroeck states that though some might criticize Stewart's predominately qualitative techniques as potentially too subjective, these methods hold the greatest promise for a true understanding of the phenomena. He admonishes scholars to review her techniques for "the clarity of scientific analysis she brings to developing grounded theory." Kroeck highlights methodological implications for Stewart's proposition that jobs cannot be properly classified by function or level. Implications of Stewart's work for the current practice and investigation of management generally, and leadership specifically, are outlined.

Ken Parry of Victoria University of Wellington points out that Stewart's work, reflecting the anthropological and sociological roots of Stewart and her contemporaries, is about the "who," "how," "what," and "when" of managers with relatively little emphasis on the "why." Parry offers the latter point not as a criticism but rather

to identify that this "managerial phenomenography" line of research provided the groundwork for the current generation of scholars to be more concerned with the why (cause and effect) question. Parry notes some missing elements in Stewart's research that reflect the prevailing zeitgeist including a discussion of ethics, affect. and intent. He concludes with a call for increased attention to qualitative research of the type conducted by Rosemary Stewart. Such methods have been increasingly crowded out in recent years by a cohort enamored with computer-enabled quantitative techniques.

Next, Deanne den Hartog of Erasmus University describes her reactions as a student to reading Stewart's work. She identifies that Stewart's thinking was prescient on a number of conceptual fronts. These include leadership as a shared rather than individual responsibility and the importance of context to leadership effectiveness. Den Hartog leverages the importance of context to provide a discussion of the cross-cultural implications of Stewart's broad body of work. She then reviews the cross-cultural focused contributions made by Stewart in more recent decades.

Asta Wahlgren, of Jyväskylä Polytechnic, highlights the theoretical and practical utility of Stewart's model. Wahlgren states that for scholars the elegant simplicity of the model offers the opportunity for easy integration with various theoretical ideas. The model provides a clear rationale and method for categorizing the variety in managerial work, a useful lens for contemporary research design and data analysis. Wahlgren points out the practical utility of the choices–constraints–demands (CCD) model by showing how college students might reevaluate their perceived and real impediments to effective coursework performance. Faculty members and trainers reading these words should welcome a tool that would simultaneously improve student efficacy, critical thinking, and personal productivity. Wahlgren also provides a useful description of how she has used the CCD model in her own published research on managers.

Completing this feature, Tony Ammeter of the University of Mississippi focuses on a different aspect of Stewart's work, her How Computers Affect Management (1972) text. The publication date identifies that Stewart was once again early to anticipate the forces influencing managerial work. With the rapid and voluminous changes in computer technology over the last three decades, it might be tempting to conclude that this work is outdated. Ammeter dissuades us of that concern. He concludes that several aspects of the work remain impactful and that this topic remains understudied in the leadership literature. Ammeter suggests that the framework Stewart developed, and the case study analysis approach she employed to investigate the framework, should be redeployed in the current context. This approach would be useful to assess the current impact of computers on managerial work and to assess the evolution of that influence over time.

The thumbnail sketches above fail to capture the depth and breadth of ideas offered in the commentaries that follow on Rosemary Stewart's work. My hope is that this introduction has enticed you, The Leadership Quarterly reader, to "just dig in." For readers who believe they do not have the time to read further, I offer one clear piece of advice from Rosemary Stewart's seminal work. Reconsider your demands and constraints, you may see more choice in your circumstances than initially perceived, and you will be more effective as a consequence.

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