Washington: Transformational Leadership Profile

By

Timothy A. Dahlman

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Abstract

In the current social and post-COVID masonic environment, it will be necessary for leaders in our fraternity to practice transformational leadership. Freemasonry will have to adapt to a new normal. It is helpful to examine models of transformational leaders. This case study makes the argument that George Washington, Father of the United States of America, practiced what we know today as transformational leadership. It examines his background and leadership style. It also addresses whether or not he was a pseudo-transformational leader. It does this by reviewing examples of his leadership in the military before and during the Revolutionary War and his leadership as the President. The study then examines his impact on transforming a group of British colonies into an independent democratic republic. It also looks at how his followers likely perceived him and how his practices and principles changed the organization that he led. Finally, it examines advice that an executive coach may offer him and guidance for someone wanting to emulate his leadership style.

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It is not necessary to argue, but it is essential to emphasize that Freemasonry is finding itself in an environment much different than even five years ago. We are moving into a post-COVID-19 climate. That comment is not to state anything other than we are in an environment following the closing of the doors to masonic lodges for over a year. This change is commonly known as The Great Reset. People are doing life differently than they ever have. Freemasonry will undoubtedly survive, but it will be crucial for leaders in our fraternity to acknowledge that there will be significant changes. It will be essential to have adaptable leaders who understand transformational leadership. One way to develop these leaders is to study examples of transformational leaders. This case study examines qualities of transformational leadership that Brother George Washington displayed and ends with a series of questions based on the case study that addresses some practical applications.

In short, transformational leadership is part of the full range leadership model. It involves leaders who work with a team to identify needed changes in an organization and inspires them to make those changes.[i]. It is characterized by what is known as the four I's, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration[ii].

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Although Washington is typically categorized as a servant leader, after a thorough examination of his biographies and the components of transformational leadership (TL), he clearly should be classified as a TL. This is most evident in his idealized influence and inspirational motivation; however, he demonstrated all the components of TL in his role as the first General of the Army and as first and second President of the US. Also, we can see that Washington should be categorized as a TL through his results in the creation of the US military and his lasting influence on the US government. Although the concept of a transformational leader was not quantified until over two hundred years after his death, Washington, a founding father and first General of the Army of the United States of America, thoroughly demonstrated the practices and principles of a truly transformational leader and should be remembered as such.

Multiple leadership theory experts have labeled Washington's leadership style as visionary,[iii]charismatic, and a servant leader.[iv][v]Experts in personality theory have labeled his Myers Briggs personality type as ISTJ[vi]. The I in the ISTJ means that he was an introvert, meaning that he drew energy from being alone and that crowds of people drained his energy. The S indicates that he used his five senses to perceive data that he would use to make decisions and had a memory that was specific, detailed, and focused on facts. The T means that he prefers to draw conclusions based on his thoughts rather than feelings. Since he is an ST, his ideas would be based on data perceived by his five senses and made decisions based on a linear, logical thought process. The J means that he was judgmental, telling that he preferred to be systematic, was a detailed planner, was motivated by self-discipline, and was methodical. He never attended a university and developed his leadership style from the philosophical and ethical principles from his participation in Freemasonry, his Christian beliefs, studies in liberalism, and his deeply

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rooted personal political opinions in classical republican government systems.[vii]. The characteristics that these leadership researchers identify in Washington match the constructs of TL when examined collectively.

Background and Leadership Style

Washington used a leadership style that relied heavily on what we know today as idealized influence and inspirational motivation. Bass and Riggio describe the practice of idealized influence as behavior that promotes trust and a desire to emulate because of a high standard of ethics and moral conduct, extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination.[viii]. Washington unquestionably demonstrated this behavior as a military officer before the revolutionary War. He made several mistakes as an army officer early in his career but never the same ones twice. His hard work, creativity, and bravery under fire during the French Indian War earned him a reputation for being a strong military leader that the men trusted with their lives.[ix]Those actions and many similar to this developed his reputation as being in an absolute position to promote idealized influence in the early days of the revolution. He further demonstrated this when he arrived as a delegate to the Continental Congress dressed in his vision of the new republic's Army uniform. He was the only member of the delegation to arrive at the council prepared for War, in a military uniform. He was a role model that the founding fathers wanted to emulate. They knew others would like to emulate him when they selected him to be General of the Army during the Revolutionary War.[x]. This action of wearing his uniform to the delegation, with his preceding reputation for having high moral character, was the sole reason that he was unanimously nominated to become Commander in Chief of the proposed military[xi]! Then, during the War, after the battle of Trenton and the crossing of the Delaware River, the majority of his men were ready to leave because their enlistment was up but stayed because he appealed to them: individualized consideration. His presence stopped several retreats during critical battles[xii]. His reputation for possessing a high standard of ethics and moral conduct, extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination during the Revolutionary War led to him being elected unanimously for the office of President of the United States of America two terms in a row.

Washington was able to lead as President of the United States of America because of his idealized influence. Kouzes & Posner describe the process of idealized influence as modeling the way while defining idealized influence through the categories of clarification of values, setting the example, establishing a common purpose, and enlisting others to contribute to the implementation of this vision.[xiii]. Washington began his role as President by clarifying values and setting the example. The newly independent country wanted to establish him as King of Americas, which he absolutely declined; instead, he shared his vision of a republic and his vision for the future of the United States of America and accepted the position of President[xiv]. Washington had a detailed vision of a robust and autonomous government and identified specific goals to achieve this vision: Free-elected officials, a constitution that was put into writing, a consistent rule-of-law for the land, an executive branch with the power necessary to enforce the laws of the new government, congressional or national law that had authority over state laws, a permanent national military that would be

controlled by civilian rule. Washington was able to be effective as a leader because he practiced this principle. He previously established a base of followers because of his application of idealized influence, which allowed him to instill inspirational motivation. His followers were motivated by his vision of what America could become.

Bass and Riggio describe inspirational motivation as behavior that stimulates creativity, promotes enthusiasm and optimism because the leader has concisely communicated a vision for a future state with specific goals that are more appealing than the present[xv]. Washington practiced this frequently in his role as the senior military leader of the US Army during the Revolutionary War and his terms as President of the United States of America. First, as The Commander of the Army, he communicated his vision for the Army while understanding the challenges it would face but inspired and empowered subject matter experts to implement it.[xvi]. He let his followers know that they must first win the War to gain independence to establish a republican system of government for a new nation: The Great Experiment[xvii]. The communication of this vision proved to be necessary for the development of the logistical and financial systems required to support this Army and a training program: the most challenging aspects for winning the War[xviii]. There were several that wanted to quit and remain an English colony, but Washington's leadership and vision caused them to stay the course, which resulted in his Army defeating the tremendous military force of the day in both ground and naval warfare[xix].

Washington also practiced the concept of inspirational motivation as a president. Kouzes & Posner describe inspirational motivation as challenging the process and define the actions of inspirational motivation as searching for opportunities to seize the initiative through the exercise of outsight, also known as other's ideas, incorporated into the execution of the vision.[xx]. One specific way that Washington practiced this form of TL was through the establishment of the US's judiciary system[xxi]. Washington provided guidance that inspired the creation of the Judiciary Act of 1789, a constitutionally based system that established judicial districts, courts, and the office of the Attorney General, much of which is still in use today[xxii]. Washington communicated the government's and the people's roles through his vision of the future government. This motivation challenged those who followed him to rise to the challenge and begin implementing the change of the government's organizational culture that respected monarch rule to one that embraced the values of a democratic republic.

Not a Pseudo-Transformational Leader

Selfishness, narcissism, and overall moral corruption have been described as critical indicators of a pseudo-transformational leader[xxiii]. The evidence presented previously shows that Washington is not a pseudo-TL. He was known and selected in part for his high standard of ethics and moral character. Most notably, he established that he was not a pseudo-TL when he refused to accept to be appointed as King of Americas. He resigned his commission at the end of the hostilities of the Revolutionary War. He returned to his farm, where he lived as a private civilian for almost a decade before he accepted the position of President.[xxiv] (Chernow, 2010; Stazesky, 2000; Shy, 2005). He then only accepted the position of President because his followers appealed to him and stated that the country needed him to guide them in his vision of establishing

the new government model that America was attempting to develop. This evidence points to the conclusion that he was not selfish, not narcissistic, not morally corrupt, and not pseudo-TL.

What results did he achieve, and how did his followers perceive him?

Washington also practiced other components of TL such as intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration that resulted in his follower's having a very favorable opinion of him, to the point where he became unanimously elected twice as President of the United States, labeled as the Father of the Country, and identified in some cases as a demi-god[xxv]. The process of intellectual stimulation can be described as the process of challenging assumptions, reframing problems, and encouraging creativity to look for new solutions to old problems[xxvi]. Washington knew that he could not bring his vision to fruition on his own; his vision stimulated his followers to action. This leadership practice proved to be critical during the conscription period and training of the Army during the Revolutionary War, especially during the entire southern campaign and during Valley Forge[xxvii]. In military terms, he had a clear vision of what had to happen, the military knowledge, and the creativity to make it happen. He had the same ability to influence government officials and the general public in his role as President.

Washington also embodied individualized consideration. In military terms, he considered the input of his followers who were subject matter experts in their fields and adopted it where appropriate. The process of individualized consideration can be described as the process of recognizing individual contribution to work, ensuring that individuals receive proper

developmental training and experiences, and recognizing individual differences and needs, and in general, taking care of each individual member of the organization.[xxviii]. This led to the creation of many manuals that are still in use or influential in today military; most notably the Manual of Arms[xxix]. Another example where Washington used individualized consideration effectively is when he engaged the international legal community for the well-being of his captured soldiers. He demanded that the British Army treated captured American soldiers as prisoners of war rather than criminals and was forceful through the international courts and British courts to make sure this happened.[xxx]. This earned him a significant amount of respect among soldiers and the US civilian populace and established him as a powerful political force in the international community. This also furthered the vision in that it forced the British military to recognize the US Army as a powerful force from a legitimate nation and proved to be a political turning point during the War.

He provided inspirational motivation through his role as President. It was his creative vision, but he was only successful because he was able to motivate others to follow his vision and take ownership in it themselves—his vision during and after the war allowed for a considerable amount of intellectual stimulation. The US was creating a "grand experiment" in government that absolutely stimulated all who were following him in terms of military creativity, governmental leadership, and civic responsibility.

He also employed individualized consideration in his role as President, not only as General of the Army. This was critical to the US's transformation from a conglomeration of British colonies to a

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democratic republic. His followers wanted to make him king, but he had a different vision of what a president should be. One example of how he used individualized consideration in TL is that he instituted a policy of what is known today as staffing or routing documents through key stakeholders for opinions before making decisions – previously unheard of or unimagined in any form of government to that day.

Washington Stimulated Self-Leadership Among His Followers

Although Washington stimulated self-leadership among his followers in several ways, there are two techniques he used that stand out: modeling the way and inspiring a shared vision. Self-leadership can be described as leadership by an individual who has acquired leadership techniques that they can use independently outside of a formalized organizational structure. Kouzes & Posner explain that leaders must model the behavior they expect from their followers, especially if they are trying to transform organizational behavior.[xxxi]. Greenstein[xxxii] provides an example where Washington modeled a TL technique that he used to stimulate self-leadership in Thomas Jefferson. Washington was very methodical and shared with Jefferson part of his philosophy in leadership, stating, "System to all things is the soul of business. To deliberate maturely and execute promptly is the way to conduct it to advantage."[xxxiii]. Washington demonstrated an application of this philosophy to Jefferson in a TL technique by showing individualized consideration during the development of the Articles of Confederation; the process is what we know today as routing; Washington would have the final say but wanted his followers' input [xxxiv]. Jefferson later explained this process to his own followers,

who he was developing during his presidency[xxxv].

Washington also made use of following the technique of inspiring a shared vision to promote self-leadership in his followers. Kouzes & Posner[xxxvi] describe the process of inspiring a shared vision as enlisting others to take personal ownership of the leader's vision, which requires the leader to know his or her constituent's needs, desires, dreams, and values. Alexander Hamilton's leadership in the Federalist Program, which was foundational financial policies used from 1790 through 1792 and became foundational economic policies for the US, is a striking example of Washington's use of inspired vision to promote self-leadership. Washington enlisted Hamilton in his vision for the US, and Hamilton took ownership of the portion of the vision that dealt with national-level financial policies in regard to eliminating the national debt and establishment of a currency, which fostered domestic industry to reduce foreign dependency.[xxxvii]. Hamilton began as one of Washington's assistants but took ownership of this vision and eventually engaged in self-leadership as the Secretary of the Treasury (1789-1795) by taking the steps toward advancement in this vision through the seven laws known as the Federalist Program.

How Did Washington Demonstrate Credibility with His Followers?

Washington demonstrated credibility with his followers by having his words and actions confirmed by others. Miller[xxxviii] identified that trust and credibility are vital to a leader's long-term effectiveness and that a selfish unethical leader can quickly destroy trust and credibility. Kouzes & Posner[xxxix] describe the process of establishing credibility as a process integrating five

characteristics of exceptional leadership: modeling the way, inspiring the shared vision, challenging the process, trustworthiness, and enabling others to act. This process provides followers with feedback that the leader is credible. Washington used these techniques as a military leader during the French and Indian War to establish credibility among the common man and soldiery, which was a significant factor in his selection as the Commander of the Military for the Revolutionary War as was previously described. Washington further established credibility as a military officer and politician during the Revolutionary War which resulted in his selection as the presiding official over the Continental Congress.[xl]. There were two other significant ways that Washington established his credibility among his followers that resulted in his selection. First, he had the ability to listen as a politician and reconcile various and sometimes opposing views. Second, he also established his intellectual credibility in the area of constitutional philosophy through his speeches, actions, and published writings. "They knew that they could trust him not only because of his outstanding character but also because of his ideas in regard to constitutional government."[xli]. So Washington demonstrated credibility with his followers by having his words and actions confirmed by others in the areas of military leadership ability, character, as a politician, and in constitutional philosophy; they knew he was a leader with credibility who would use his knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead the newly independent republic of states to form a new Union based on constitutional philosophy.

How Did Washington's Leadership Principles and Practices Change the Organization He Was Leading?

Washington's leadership principles and practices made a significant change to the organization he was leading in that it caused a confederation of British colonies based on a Christian monarchy to transform into a free and independent democratic republic. His leadership principles and practices were very similar to what we know today to be TL. He relied heavily on idealized influence and inspirational motivation. Washington practiced idealized influence as a military officer in the early colonial days, prior to the Revolutionary War, which earned him the trust of many in the military and allowed him to begin leading. His reputation for possessing a high standard of ethics and moral conduct, extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination during the Revolutionary War led to him being elected unanimously for the office of President of the United States of America two terms in a Row. He also practiced this as President. His character caused his followers to be willing to listen to him and to elect him to office.

Washington also applied the practice and principle of inspirational motivation as a military leader and President to transform the organization from what they were to a democratic republic by communicating his vision. As an army officer, he shared his vision of what had to happen to win the War and the benefits of winning the War. He communicated this to soldiers, governmental leaders in the new Union and France, who were supporting him. He also shared this as President. He was charged with leading the development of what the US was to become and communicated this effectively.

Washington practiced the principles of intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration to transform the organization from what they were to a democratic republic. He practiced intellectual

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stimulation as a military leader during the Revolutionary War to transform the Army from a loosely organized group of conscripts into a well-disciplined, trained, and hardened fighting force that defeated the British military: He did this by challenging the process of how armies win wars by using creative tactics and a unique logistical system. His newly developed tactics and logistical and financial strategies directly contributed to the Army's ability to win independence.

He also used intellectual stimulation in his role as President. He challenged his follower's idea of what a national-level leader should be and look like. He accepted the position of President but not king. He challenged the process of justice and helped form our judiciary and electoral systems, created a single national currency, and much more. His intellectual stimulation challenged his followers to form the foundation of a democratic republic.

Washington also applied the practice and principle of individual consideration to transform the organization from a group of appointed members in a newly formed government with little direction into a group of influential leaders that became known as founding fathers by recognizing individual members' contributions to gain input from his followers and to developing future leaders. He used individual consideration to recognize individuals for their contribution as military leaders, which resulted in increased loyalty during the Revolutionary War, which further resulted in soldiers fighting harder than they thought they could and even volunteering to stay in the past their conscription dates.[xlii]. He used individual consideration to gain input from followers during his term as President to transform the organization into a democratic republic by routing documents through key staff members to gain their valuable insight as to how the government should be formed, organized, and led[xliii]. He also used individualized consideration to develop future leaders by investing his personal time to mentor and share his vision which aided in the transformation to a democratic republic in that these leaders took his ideas and mentorship, made them their own, and helped to develop laws and legal principles that our country still uses to this day[xliv].

What Are Some Areas That Washington Could Have Improved on That We Can Learn From?

Although most of the work on Washington's leadership style is favorable, there are criticisms. Many of these criticisms focus on a conflict avoidance issue: That he avoided conflict, and when it arose that he would look for quick resolutions to his followers' conflicts rather than legitimize any potentially valid but opposing points of view. This is especially interesting. Kroeger and Thuesen.[xlv] assessed his Myers-Briggs personality type as being ISTJ. One of the outstanding characteristics of this type is that during conflicts or stressful situations, they will likely appear to be calm on the outside but be experiencing great inner turmoil, fear of losing control, and imagine the worst possible outcomes; they will also likely prefer cognitive-based approaches to therapy and counsel and will stop seeking assistance once the situation has been resolved.[xlvi]. So someone today with the same issue could use a ladder of inference tool to help him overcome his conflict avoidance issues.

Stober & Grant[xlvii] describe the cognitive processes used in the ladder of inference. First, individuals are exposed to sensory data such as images or words; then they select particular data to focus on; next, the

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individual will make assumptions about the data they chose and then draw conclusions about this data; finally, they take actions based on their conclusions[xlviii]. Individuals begin to experience difficulties when they make incorrect assumptions. Their assumptions lead to erroneous conclusions and actions that do not maximize their potential. One example where Washington attempted to avoid conflict was on a politically hot issue of his time and involved competing theories of governance: Christianity, Liberalism, and Republicanism and their relationship to slavery.[xlix]. Christianity was viewed not only as a religion but as a form of governmental philosophy during the time of the Revolutionary War. This philosophy was considered as a force that controlled governments in much of the world and permitted slavery. Many citizens in the new Union who were of lower socioeconomic classes favored liberalism as it appealed more to their lifestyle and was intolerant of slavery.[l]. Republicanism was also very popular during this post-Revolutionary War period but tended to only be favored by intellectuals and the wealthy who stood to gain more wealth in this political system but relied on slavery to produce this wealth. Washington personally favored Republicanism but hated slavery – and even freed all his own slaves but wanted to maintain harmony in his relationship with the working class and military who favored liberalism; and the religious class in England that he was struggling to keep the peace. So rather than allowing the members of the opposing views to engage in conflict that might disrupt the new nation, he publicly wrote about the value of religion, in that it promoted virtues that produce better citizens in any country; and he promoted tax laws that enabled the production and purchase of domestic products that make Republicans wealthier and kept liberals employed. This kept the peace at the time and had a lasting negative impact on the country in that it allowed slavery to exist for over 76 years.

The ladder of inference model can be used to understand similar challenges in decision-making today. We should study this model to understand how the process works. For example, the ladder of inferences asks one to reassess his reasons for not wanting the parties involved to engage in conflict. Washington likely assumed and concluded that the new Union was not stable enough to withstand a debate about this issue because slavery was so deeply tied to the economy and its ability to pay off its debt. He also likely assumed and concluded that such a debate could cause a civil war or another war with England. This was arguably an accurate assumption. Much of the civilized society of the day thought of debate as a tool to promote harmony rather conflict than conflict during this period of history.[li].

Washington could have conversely examined this commonly held belief that the debate would likely be seen as promoting harmony. I would help him explore the possible positive outcomes of the debate, such as the abolition of slavery much earlier. He was one of the few men alive that might have been capable of facilitating that debate in a way that would ensure that it promoted harmony rather than conflict. Washington was in a position of influence at his time where he arguably could have ended slavery with the birth of the new nation. The practices and principles of TL encourage leaders to make bold choices such as that to lead organizations through change.

What advice would you offer to other leaders to help them emulate the principles and practices of the profiled leader?

Although there have been few studies profiling Washington's leadership principles and practices, it is clear that anyone desiring to emulate Washington's leadership style should start by studying TL. Washington demonstrated the application of the principles and practice of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration in his leadership roles in the pre-revolutionary colonial America, the Revolutionary War, and in the post-war era as the government of the United States was established. He cobbled his leadership style from the philosophical and ethical principles from his participation in Freemasonry, his

Christian beliefs, his studies in liberalism, and his deeply rooted personal political beliefs in classical republican government systems.[lii]. His Myers Briggs personality type was assessed as being ISTJ[liii]This personality type likely contributed to his leadership style as well. I would recommend it to anyone who wants to emulate Washington's leadership style to avoid emulating his conflict avoidance trait. His personality type likely contributed to his conflict avoidance tendencies. He sought to keep the peace amongst his followers when conflict may have produced a healthier outcome. It is often better to let others work out differences when they arise.

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End Notes

[i] (Odumeru and Ogbonna 2013).

[ii] (Kouzes and Posner 2002)

[iii] (Greenstein 2006) (Longmore 2007) (Stazesky 2000)

[iv] (Emrich et al. 2001)

[v] (Watson 2006)

[vi] (Kroeger and Thuesen 1998)

[vii] (Greenstein 2006) (K. 2005) (Stazesky 2000) (Emrich, et al. 2001) (Watson 2006)

[viii] (Bass and Riggio 2005)

[ix] (Chernow 2010) (Shy 2005) (Stazesky 2000)

[x] (Chernow 2010) (Stazesky 2000)

[xi] (Chernow 2010)

[xii] (Chernow 2010) (Stazesky 2000)

[xiii] (Kouzes and Posner 2002)

[xiv] (Chernow 2010) (Shy 2005) (Stazesky 2000)

[xv] (Bass and Riggio 2005)

[xvi] (Chernow 2010) (Greenstein 2006) (K. 2005) (Pollard 2004) (Stazesky 2000)

[xvii] (Chernow 2010) (Stazesky 2000)

[xviii] (Chernow 2010) (Greenstein 2006) (K. 2005) (Pollard 2004) (Stazesky 2000)

[xix] (Maass 2009) (Shy 2005) (Watson 2006)

[xx] (Kouzes and Posner 2002)

[xxi] (Nettles 1946)

[xxii] (Chernow 2010) (Nettles 1946)

[xxiii] (Bass and Riggio 2005)

[xxiv] (Chernow 2010) (Stazesky 2000) (Shy 2005)

[xxv] (Nettles 1946)

[xxvi] (Bass and Riggio 2005) (Kouzes and Posner 2002)

[xxvii] (Maass 2009) (Shy 2005) (Watson 2006)

[xxviii] (Bass and Riggio 2005) (Kouzes and Posner 2002)

[xxix] (Royster 2009)

[xxx] (Stazesky 2000)

[xxxi] (Kouzes and Posner 2002)

[xxxii] (Greenstein 2006)

[xxxiii] (Greenstein 2006)

[xxxiv] (Greenstein 2006)

[xxxv] (Greenstein 2006) (Romance 2011)

[xxxvi] (Kouzes and Posner 2002)

[xxxvii] (Greenstein 2006) (Nettles 1946) (Robert 2000)

[xxxviii] (Miller 2007)

[xxxix] (Kouzes and Posner 2002)

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[xl] (K. 2005) (Stazesky 2000)

[xli] (Stazesky 2000)

[xlii] (Royster 2009) (Shy 2005) (Stazesky 2000)

[xliii] (Greenstein 2006) (K. 2005) (Stazesky 2000)

[xliv] (Greenstein 2006) (K. 2005) (Stazesky 2000)

[xlv] (Kroeger and Thuesen 1998)

[xlvi] (Kaufman and Kaufman 2009)

[xlviixlvii] (Stober and Grant 2006)

[xlviii] (Stober and Grant 2006)

[xlix] (Romance 2011) (West 2010)

[l] (Romance 2011) (West 2010)

[li] (Greenstein 2006) (K. 2005) (Pollard 2004) (West 2010)

[lii] (Greenstein 2006) (Longmore 2007) (Stazesky 2000) (Emrich, et al. 2001) (Watson 2006)

[liii] (Kroeger and Thuesen 1998)

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