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Venus and Leadership: Women Hospitality Leaders

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Venus and Leadership: Women Hospitality Leaders

Abstract

The authors report on a survey of 234 women executives in the hospitality industry using factor analysis to discover the seven underlying dimensions of women leaders: perseverance, trust, inner values, responsibility, stewardship, communication, and vision.

Venus and leadership: Women hospitality leaders

by Bonnie J. Knutson, Raymond S. Schmidgall and Ronald F. Cichy

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I f a thousand people were asked to define a leader, chances are there would be a thousand answers.

How individuals respond to that question primarily depends on three factors. First, one's personal understanding or definition of leaders and leadership comes from reading about the accomplishments of prominent people. But it's hard to extract the essence of leadership from these writings, or films, or other media.1 Secondly, one's direct and indirect experiences with people who are thought of as leaders color the perception. Finally, one's view of leadership depends on the context in which the leader operates.² For example, the

president of the U.S. is often referred to as the "leader of the free world." A young Girl Scout might think of her troop leader. Soldiers in the Persian Gulf War probably thought of General Colin Powell or General Norman Schwartzkoff.

Even the dictionary doesn't agree on the definition of leadership. Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language defines a leader as a person who, by force of example, talents, or qualities of leadership, plays a directing role, wields commanding influence, or has a following in any sphere of activity or thought. In other words, it defines leadership as that ingredient of personality that causes others to follow.3 Another edition of Webster's simply says that a leader is a directing, commanding, or guiding head of a group or activity.4

Leaders defined

While there is likewise widespread variance in how business, in

general, and the hospitality industry, in particular, characterize leadership, there seem to be five common threads that run through most writings:

- Leaders must have a compelling vision for their organization.
- He or she must effectively communicate this vision to others so that they will follow.
- A leader earns the trust of others by demonstrating credibility, responsibility, reliability, and accountability.
- Leaders also persevere through thick or thin—to solve problems and reach the goals of the organization.⁶
- Most studies have been based on male leaders since, until recently, men held most leadership positions. Consequently, the dimensions commonly associated with leadership are based on studies and observations of male leaders.

Modern statistics indicate that women are making progress in gaining executive or leadership positions in a myriad of organizations both in and out of the hospitality industry. The shifting demographics of the executive suite have led to an increased interest in and focus on women leaders. Most of the attention, however, has been on career development aspects such as qualities essential for promotion, the dimensions of the glass ceiling, and the various strategies that can help or hinder women's advancement into leadership positions.

Leadership styles vary

Beginning with Men Are From Mars. Women Are From Venus,6 a spotlight began illuminating the differences between male and female leadership styles. Studies began to show "the leadership qualities that women have developed ... are now central to the kind of leadership Americans are looking for."7 For example, a 1999 survey by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation found that people's views on leadership are undergoing a marked transition. They now see leadership as centered on motivating and bringing people together rather than on control and power-traits commonly associated with women.8

In her definitive book on women in management, Judy Rosener expands on this thesis, calling women America's secret competitive advantage.⁹ She describes the unique contributions of female leaders and posits that they cope well with ambiguity, are comfortable sharing power, and tend to empower others—leaderships traits that she contends lead to increased employee productivity, innovation, and profitability.

Expanding further, business journalist Esther Wachs Book states that today's most successful female corporate leaders succeed for three reasons: their self-confidence, their keen sense of customer demands, and the fact that they tap into their "feminine side" to lead.¹⁰

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To support this contention, Book profiles the working styles of 14 top women executives. There has been some skepticism as to Book's thesis, however, because the "female qualities' of these executives are never clearly defined..."¹¹

This shift in perception about women as leaders is not unique to the United States. As demonstrated by studies in other countries. women are rated higher than men on the most effective leadership qualities and on contingent reward, and lower than men on some of the transactional qualities of leadership.¹² Parry's research concludes that because women demonstrate more transformational leadership, which has been positively correlated with desirable leadership outcomes, they may achieve better leadership outcomes than men. He further suggests that this finding reflects the notion that women are better able to identify and empathize with the various messages they receive in their interactions with coworkers-both male and female. Moreover, subordinates rated female leaders as having higher levels of work effort and more effectiveness than their male counterparts. In spite of the results, Parry cautions us not to jump to the conclusion that women make better leaders than men: "Each person must be evaluated on merit."

Industry research sparse

Although the literature on leadership is rather extensive, research specifically related to identifying the underlying dimensions of women's leadership is sparse in both general business and in hospitality business. The objective, then, was to uncover the fundamental leadership traits of women leaders, as perceived by women executives in hospitality.

This study was the second part of a two-pronged survey of 1,228 executive women in the hospitality industry. The first part of the survey focused on women's careers and included questions about the qualities women need to succeed in business, the strategies they use to advance their professional careers and balance their personal lives, and the strategies companies use to further women's professional advancement.¹³

This second part of the study looked at the leadership attributes used by Cichy, *et al.*, in their studies of leaders in various segments of the hospitality industry.¹⁴ Specifically, the 24 characteristics of effective leaders as adapted from Bennis and Nanus,¹⁵ the seven keys to leadership taken from Labich,¹⁶ and the 15 secrets of leadership put forth by Roberts¹⁷ were incorporated. A seven-point Likert scale was used to measure each variable in the three sets of items.

The female respondents were also asked how important they felt each of the four foundations for leadership previously identified by leaders in the hospitality industries—perseverance, vision, communication, trust—is to women's leadership in their organization.¹⁸

The survey was mailed to

female members of the Hospitality Financial & Technology Professionals, formerly known as the International Association of Hospitality Accountants, which represents various segments of hospitality. A total of 234 valid and usable questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 19.1 percent. Nearly all the respondents are in high management positions-with 7 percent at the top and another 83 percent within one or two levels from the top post in their company. They are well educated and well paid. Almost two out of every three have either a college or graduate degree, and their annual compensation package (salary and bonus) averages between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Typically, these women indicated that about a quarter of the officers in their organizations are female, and they don't see that percentage changing much over the ensuing five years.

Underlying factors extracted

Separate factor analyses were run on each the three sets of questions in the survey: the 24 qualities of effective leaders as adapted from Bennis and Nanus,¹⁹ the seven keys to leadership taken from Labich,20 and the 17 secrets of leadership put forth by Roberts.²¹ Since the primary objective of this research was to identify the root underlying characteristics of women leaders in the hospitality industry, however, a factor analysis was then run on the combined 48 items. For purposes of identification, these four sets of questions will be called Qualities, Keys,

Secrets, and Combined.

To determine whether the data were appropriate for factor analysis, the four data sets were individually examined to ensure that the sample size was sufficient, that the variables are not inter-correlated, and that the variables were, in fact, grouped appropriately.22 First, according to Zikmund, the sample size of 234 was adequate to represent a population of 1,228, as designated by the mailing list.23 Second, to test for inter-correlation, Barlett's test of sphericity (using a chi-square test) was applied. Third, to make sure the variables were properly grouped, the Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used. For data to be appropriate for factor analysis, the result of the Bartlett's test should be significant and the KMO value should be at least .50. As shown in Exhibit 1, the chi-square of the variables in both the separate sets and the combined set are significant at p < .001 and the KMO statistics are robust, ranging from .726 to .884., indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis.

The factor-analytic technique allowed the identification of underlying patterns of relationships embedded in the combined data sets. Initial factors were extracted, then rotated to become terminal factors using Kasier's varimax rotation method. This is a method of orthogonal rotation that centers on simplifying the factor matrix by maximizing variance and producing conceptually pure factors. Thus, the rotated solution is easier to interpret and understand.

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	Bartlett	КМО	Chi-square (df)	Significance (p < .001)
Characteristics				w see y
of leadership				
(Bennis &				
Nanus,1985)	1555.854	829		<.001
Keys of leadership (Labich,1988)	199.581	726 .	21	<.001
Secrets of leadership (Roberts, 1985)	1432.113		105	<.001
Combined measures of leadership	4035.223		1081	<.001

Exhibit 1 Results of the Kaiser-Mever-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests

All variables analyzed

In this preliminary phase of the analysis, all 48 variables were submitted to the exploratory factor analysis. The 13 eigenvalues with values greater than 1.0 were initially retained in this first step. A value of 1.0 is the generally accepted level for retention of a factor since those with eignenvalues below the 1.0 level would be considered nearly meaningless.²⁴ Loadings above .71 are considered excellent, .63 very good, .55 good, .45 fair, and .32 poor.²⁵ Based on these criteria, and because this was an exploratory effort, all those variables that loaded at the .40 level or above were preserved.

To begin the next phase of analysis, each of the 13 original factors was submitted to an initial scale reliability test using Cron-

bach's alpha. Those items that loaded on two of the dimensions at approximately the same level were specifically examined to see where they best fit. Their correlations with the other variables in each factor as well as with the factor score itself were also examined. If a variable had similar loadings on more than one factor. an alpha was computed for each of the factors with and without that variable. If a factor's reliability (alpha score) could be improved by removing one or more of the original items, that item was eliminated and a new alpha computed. This process continued until no further improvement in alpha scores could be made on each respective component. This process resulted in vielding the seven final factors identified in Exhibit 3.

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Exhibit 2 Summary of Factor Dimensions							
	Number of initial items	Number of final items	Number of factors	Range of alpha scores	Percent of variance explained		
Characteristics of leadership (Bennis & Nanus,1985)	24	24	7	.5022 to .7733	61.8		
Keys of leadership (Labich,1988)	15	15	2	.4294 to .6464	49.9		
Secrets of leadership (Roberts, 1985)	7	7	3	.7372 to .8000	58.0		
Combined measures of leadership	48	42	7	.6063 to .8844	65.5		

Leadership essentials defined

As demonstrated in Exhibit 2, the combined set produced the highest range of alpha scores and explained the largest percent of variance, yet it didn't generate any more factors than the characteristic set. Furthermore, four of these seven factors reflect the four foundations of leadership cited by Cichy, et al.²⁶ The other three alpha scores point toward what might be newly identified components of women's leadership. For these reasons, the discussion will be focused on the combined set which will be called the essentials of leadership.

Exhibit 3 shows the seven components that constitute the essentials of leadership for women in the hospitality industry. The seven components are named based on the character of the variables that form those factors. Factor 1, called "perseverance," involves having both the emotional and physical stamina to persist in difficult circumstances. Leaders can't be afraid of a minor setback. They need to set the appropriate course and stand firm, but they also have to keep an open mind. If new information or details suggest modifying the path, leaders can have a change of tactics or strategy or even goals, but they hold true to the ultimate direction, true to their hearts. Perseverance likewise involves having the desire, competitive spirit, and courage to confidently

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take the appropriate action. Leaders are able to keep their eyes on the target and not stop until the goal is achieved. This essential is exhibited in the tenacity to "hang in there" when the going gets difficult.

Vision is important

The next factor is labeled "vision" because it encompasses the ability to look ahead, see where the organization needs to go, and clearly articulate the direction and mission so that others will follow. Vision is the big-picture component of leadership; it helps identify compelling opportunities that no one else has thought of, and that others simply cannot not follow.

Vision allows leaders to see what everyone else sees, but see it differently. Visionaries in the hospitality industry are such people as Conrad Hilton, Walt Disney, Ray Kroc, and J. Willard Marriott (Jr. and Sr.). Without vision-and passion for that vision-Disney World wouldn't be the cultural icon that it is today. Hilton Hotels would not have grown from one hotel in Texas to an international presence. J. Willard Marriott, Sr. could not have spent more than a half century reading guests' comment cards every day. And Ray Kroc could have never been "...able to see the beauty in a hamburger bun."27 Finally, vision includes making sure the organization's "members all know where the road is going, so they can help you devise the best way to get there."28

While these two factors, along with numbers six and seven,

parallel the four foundations of leadership first presented by Cichy. et al.,29 the next three are exclusive to this study of women. Factor three is also consistent with the core belief that leadership is first, foremost, and always an inner quest; one must understand self before attempting to lead self or others. Dubbed "inner values," it is supported by recent research on personal values: "...five milestones serve as the foundation for American lifestyles in the new millennium ... one of these indicators, in particular, focuses on understanding how personal values define and influence decisions ... in short, [people] are more outwardly continuing to make decisions based, in part, on their personal values."30

An increasing attention is being paid to personal values research in the literature. According to the values theory framework, values serve as general plans for resolving conflict, making decisions, and setting standards that guide ongoing activities. Values also serve "They motivational functions. [values] are in the final analysis the conceptual tools and weapons that we all employ in order to maintain and enhance self-esteem. They are in the service of what McDougal has called the 'master sentiment-the sentiment of self-regard'."31

This assumption lies close to the heart of this factor, which reflects the belief that values serve as internal motivations that influence peoples' leadership decisions. Indeed, some studies suggest that values actually serve as determinants of attitudes

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Exhibit 3 Component factors of leadership essential for women							
	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Emotional stamina (strength to							
persist in the face of seemingly							
difficult circumstances).	.745						
Desire (commitment to influence							
people, processes and outcomes).	.727						
Competitiveness (intrinsic							
desire to win).	.676						
Timing (of recommendations							
and actions).	.614						
Physical stamina (strength to			1				
persist in the face of seemingly							
difficult circumstances).	.600		1				
Courage (act with confidence							
and excel in times of uncertainly).	.593						
Anticipation (of thoughts, actions,	.000						
and consequences).	.561						
Self-confidence.	.493						
Decisiveness.	.437						
Maintain precise desired outcomes							
(their intentions are concentrated							
and clear).		.825					
Make their desired outcomes tangible		.020					
(their mission and vision are clear so	ļ						
that others can support them).		.687					
Provide a compelling message or vision.		.661					
Have a strong personal value or		.001					
belief system.		.638	1				
Develop a vision (people want to follow		.000					
someone who knows where he or she							
is going.).		.585					
Simplify (you need to see the big picture		.000					
in order to set a course, communicate it,							
and maintain it.).		.434					
Believe there is no such thing as failure,		.404					
only "next steps." mistakes are, in fact,							
opportunities.			.732				
Have a good sense of humor.			.680				
Know their strengths and nurture them.			.601				
Feel so good about their work that they			1001				
create systems that facilitate rather							
than control.			.527				
Have strong family values.			1				
Seek to create the circumstances			.465				
			400				
they desire.			.465				
Provide appropriate information,				Ì			
resources, and support to allow							
employees to become "empowered."			.462				

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	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Empathy (appreciation for and an							Γ-
understanding of the values of others)			.447				
Recognize that the ability to adjust is a							
necessity			.423				
Accountability (for personal actions and	[
those of subordinates).				.864			
Responsibility (to see that actions are	_					1	
carried out and directions followed).				.862]		
Credibility (words and actions must be			ļ			ļ	
believable to both friend and foe).		_		.864			
*Place a relatively significant emphasis							
on learning (training and development).					.765		
*Emphasize quality over quantity.					.694		
Stewardship (a caretaker quality that							
encourages confidence, trust, and loyalty).					.562		
*Surround themselves with people who							[
are not just like them.					.561		
Invite dissent (your people aren't giving							
you their best or learning how to lead							
if they are afraid to speak up.).						.758	
Believe in informality to enhance		-					1
communication.						.699	
Be an expert (from board room to mail							
room, everyone had better understand							
that you know what you're talking about.).						.623	
*Recognize that a firm's (inner values,			,				
rites, rituals) is less important than the							1
rational aspects of managing (cost							ļ
control, financial planning).	Í					.622	
Are inquisitive; they ask best questions.					 	.599	
Are excellent public speakers.						.543	
Encourage risk (nothing demoralizes the	7						[
troops like knowing that the slightest							ļ
failure could jeopardize their entire career.)						.462	
*Believe that trust, once lost, is		-					—
retrievable in a relationship.							80.
*Encourage and rewards risk taking.							.59
Are best judged in extraordinary							
circumstances (i.e. crisis, emergency,				Í			
stress).	ļ						.55
*Don't change their minds often (people							
know where they stand).							.43

Exhibit 3 Component factors of leadership essential for women

.8416 *In the questionnaire, these items were asked in the negative. Data, however, were entered to reflect the positive.

.8110 .7983

.8844 .7899

.6484

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Alpha

9

.6063

and behaviors, while others show that values represent an efficient, measurable set of variables that are more closely tied to motivation behavior than are demographic measures.³² In many ways, these inner values serve as the beacon to guide the actions inspired by the other essentials of leadership. They are the touchstone to which leadership actions are connected.

Stewards are guides

The fourth component, "responsibility," embodies the notion that the "buck stops here." In other words, leaders are held accountable for not only their actions, but those of their group members as well. They are also held accountable for the overall success of their operations. They must make sure that the job is done, and done well. And all with whom they deal-internal customers (staff members), external customers, stockholders, suppliers, and competitors alike-must deem them credible. In his *Leadership* Secrets of Attila the Hun, Wes Roberts points out that leaders are only necessary when someone is to be responsible to see that actions are carried out and directions followed.33 He contends that no leader should ever be allowed to lead who will not accept full responsibility for his actions. Leadership is not about rights, privileges or titles; it is about responsibility. Responsibility has dimensions of credibility (believability) and accountability embodied in it.

The dictionary defines a steward as someone who is

entrusted with the management of others.³⁴ The fifth component centers on this idea-i.e., that of the leader as caretaker. Thus, factor five is labeled "stewardship." This component of leadership involves encouraging others in the organization to do their best, to be significant rather than merely successful. It advocates the ability to guide, develop, and reward them for their performance, and has dimensions of being a mentor. To this end, leaders support a learning environment, provide appropriate training and development, and emphasize quality over quantity. Diversity is also rooted in this factor-not simply diversity in terms of race, gender, or ethnicity, but, rather, more holistically in terms of leaders surrounding themselves with a team of people who are different than they are and thus can bring a fresh perspective to the situation. Together, the people on the team use synergy to create a symbiotic (all benefit) set of relationships that result in significance (for the individuals as well as the organization). as opposed to success.

Trust is key

Factor six, "communication," embraces several aspects. First, of course, it means that leaders must "know their stuff," i.e., people must believe that their leader knows what she is talking about. Further, it means having the ability to effectively convey—through the spoken and written word—the vision and direction in which the organization needs to go. But communication is

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a two-way street. Most importantly, communication is active listening, asking the best questions and inviting dissent. A leader knows that people won't give her their opinion if they are afraid to speak up. Thus, the communication dimension requires setting an environment where people are comfortable taking calculated risks, giving their input, and significantly making a positive difference.

The final dimension is "trust"; it can be summed up in the admonition to lead by example and embodies two fundamental truths. The first mirrors the old adage that "when the going gets tough, the tough get going." Leaders can often be best judged by what they do in extraordinary circumstances, for example, the leadership shown in the Tylenol scare contrasted with the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Clearly Tylenol leaders demonstrated a higher level of trust.

The second foundation is built on integrity and honesty. Under its umbrella are believability, fairness, and one-on-one trusting relationships. People need to understand where they stand with leaders. They need to believe that their leader is fair and will treat all internal customers the same as the corporate officers, and the most valued external customers. While a leader may change her mind on minor things, she develops an environment in which relationships are built on a foundation of truthful openness. If co-workers and colleagues are secure in this belief. they will feel personally empowered to think outside the box because they know that the leader won't "shoot the messenger" or kill someone who has made a mistake. This last factor is "...the building block for successful relations in all dealings with people and in the level of success one achieves."³⁵

Foundations are ranked

Respondents were asked how important they thought each of the four previously identified foundations of leadership is to women's leadership in their organizations. Exhibit 4 establishes communication as nearly a universal winner. In second place is perseverance, followed closely by trust. interestingly, vision comes in at a distant fourth, with two out of three voting it important.

Initially, the chasm between the first three and vision was perplexing. Looking at the professional profiles of these women executives, however, illustrates that they may not be in positions in which they would help set the direction or vision for their respective organizations. Their responsibilities may be more functional or operational in nature; thus communication, perseverance, and trust would be of greater importance to their every day jobs. It may also be possible that, relatively speaking, vision is not easy to define and set. It doesn't need be done daily. By contrast, the communication, perseverance, and trust foundations require daily attention as relationships are established, built, and strengthened.

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Exhibit 4 Importance of the four foundations of leadership				
Importance (%) *				
94.4				
89.2				
88.4				
. 62.9				

* The percent shown represents the combined responses of 6 and 7 on a scale where 7 = Very important and 1 = Not at all important.

Some factors are unique

Several broad conclusions may be drawn from this study. To begin with, the factor analysis revealed seven discrete dimensions regarding the attributes that underlie women's leadership in the hospitality industry. Not surprisingly, four supported the foundations of leadership initially proposed by Cichy, *et al.*,—perseverance, communication, vision, and trust.³⁶

Also not surprisingly, the three factors that were unique to this study of women are synergistic with qualities of women executives and leaders found by Judy Rosener³⁷ and supported by the *Venus and Mars* dichotomy made famous by Grey—inner values, responsibility, and stewardship.³⁸ The inner values factor ties directly to the view that "leadership is first and always an inner quest," as proposed by Cichy and Sciarini in 1990.³⁹

Unfortunately, there were no leadership studies found that were based on samples of male leaders in the hospitality industry that used factor analysis to identify the underlying components of leadership. They were all descriptive in nature, reporting only means and percentages on the same sets of items used here. Therefore, it is only speculation if, how, and why the seven factors may differ from what would be found among male leaders. The researchers have confidence in such a difference, however, which is bolstered by the findings of others outside hospitality, principle among them Grey's *Venus and Mars* typology⁴⁰ and Rosener's⁴¹ extensive work documenting the disparity between the leadership traits of men and women.

This study reinforces the belief that leadership is multi-faceted; it is not uni-dimensional. Instead, there is the likelihood that a myriad of attributes must combine to produce a female leader in today's hospitality industry. And the level of importance placed on any one attribute is likely to change over time and from organization to organization. Some components, such as communication, can be learned and/or enhanced through training, education, and practice. Others, like inner values, are more inherent in nature, although they require a disciplined explanation of the inner self to understand. The rest probably have aspects of both. In other

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words, leadership is most likely a combination of heredity and skills/knowledge and behaviors and environment and begs the old questions: Are leaders born or made? Does the leader make the situation or does the situation make the leader?

Finally, to further validate these seven factors, this study needs to be replicated in two arenas. First, women leaders in other segments of the hospitality industry should be studied. This project is a pilot study, conducted with one sample of women taken from one membership list of one professional hospitality association. Secondly, both women and men have to be investigated as subsamples of the same study. In this way, it could be determined if and how the dimensions of leadership vary between Venus and Mars. Findings could assist in better understanding the dynamics between men and women in leadership roles and would have implications for recruiting, mentoring, networking, and retention.

These results are promising, however, because they show that the factors underlying leadership in women—and probably of men too can be isolated. If these factors hold up under further scrutiny, they will offer new insights into how hospitality organizations can best utilize America's "secret competitive advantage," and move the focus from success to significance.

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²⁹ Cichy, Sciarini, and Patton.

³⁰ Lisa Fall, Segmenting Pleasure Travelers on the Basis of Information Source Usefulness and Personal Value Importance. Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 2000.

³¹ M. Rokeach, The Nature of Human Values (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 14. ³² Fall.

³³ Roberts.

³⁴ McKechnie, 1786.

³⁵ Cichy and Schmidgall, 61.

³⁶ Cichy, Sciarini, and Patton. ³⁷ Grey.

³⁸ Rosner.

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