

The Journal of Values-Based Leadership

Volume 12
Issue 1 *Winter/Spring 2019*

Article 13

January 2019

Coaching Greatness: An Application of Authentic Leadership Development Theory to Wooden and Lombardi

Joseph Martino
josephmartino100@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl>

 Part of the [Business Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Martino, Joseph (2019) "Coaching Greatness: An Application of Authentic Leadership Development Theory to Wooden and Lombardi," *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 1 , Article 13.

Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22543/0733.121.1258>

Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol12/iss1/13>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Business at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Values-Based Leadership by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at scholar@valpo.edu.

Coaching Greatness: *An Application of Authentic Leadership Development Theory to Wooden and Lombardi*



JOSEPH MARTINO, J.D.
MINISTRY, ATTORNEY GENERAL
ONTARIO, CANADA

Abstract

Authentic leadership development theory is applied to examine the success achieved by two of the greatest coaches in the history of elite level American sports: John Wooden and Vince Lombardi. Authentic leadership development theory posits authenticity in the leader as a key ingredient in the success of corporate endeavours. Their authentic leadership fosters greater willingness on the part of followers to act in ways that serve the interests of a mutual vision of an organisation's values and mission. At its best, the product of this interplay – or authentic leadership development – is long-term performance that consistently exceeds expectations. Wooden and Lombardi were doubtless authentic leaders whose incredible record of achievement can be understood in significant measure through the lens of authentic leadership development theory.

Introduction

In 2009, *Sporting News* published its list of the 50 greatest coaches of all time (Day, Iyer, & Boswell). John Wooden was at the top of the list. Vince Lombardi came in as the highest-ranking football coach and number two overall. With both men managing to achieve legendary status during their coaching days – a status that has only grown to mythological proportion following their retirements and subsequent deaths – it is hard to argue with those names. Wooden's greatness was forged on the hard courts of UCLA basketball during the 1960s and early 1970s. The Bruins of UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) were, and remain, an elite level basketball program that competes in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in the United States. His record of success as UCLA's head coach is as remarkable today as it was back then – ten national basketball championships in 12 years, including seven in a row, during which time the team put together an unprecedented winning streak of 88 games (UCLA, 2006). Lombardi's mark was also made during the 1960s, as the head coach of professional football's Green Bay Packers. Between 1959, his first year at the helm, and 1967, his last, Lombardi's Packers won five championships, including three straight, losing only one of ten post-season games in the process (Pro Football, n.d.). The National Football League's (NFL) Super Bowl trophy is named in his honour.

No doubt, Wooden and Lombardi excelled at the fundamentals of their respective sports. Coupled with their ability to teach – both had been high school teachers in their early careers – they fashioned teams during their professional coaching tenures renowned for their technical proficiency and near flawless execution. But more than this, Wooden and Lombardi were regarded then, and are revered today, as great *leaders*. Michael O'Brien

(1987), author of a biography on Lombardi – *Vince: A Personal Biography of Vince Lombardi* – puts it well when he discusses Lombardi’s ability to motivate his players:

The most impressive feature of Vince’s coaching was the way he motivated his players. He scoffed at suggestions that he was a brilliant psychologist, but the way he motivated forty players week after week, year after year, knowing whom to goad and whom to flatter, bringing them to a fever pitch at precisely the right moment, yet maintaining their poise, required the delicate touch of a master psychologist (p. 25).

If popular opinion, their records of achievement, and biographical depictions are any indication, Wooden and Lombardi, aside from being great coaches, were indeed great leaders. The purpose of this paper is to explore how and why their leadership shepherding the UCLA and Packers dynasties proved to be so successful. The tool adopted for this purpose is a theory of leadership that is continuing to gain traction in the literature since its introduction in earnest in the first few years of this century – *authentic leadership development theory*. We begin by broadly profiling Wooden and Lombardi in historical context. A summary of authentic leadership development theory is then offered drawing on scholarship authored by several of its principal proponents. We proceed to apply the theory in an effort to make sense of Wooden and Lombardi’s success. Where does the theory fit? Where does it fall short? In the author’s view, there is much in the lives of Wooden and Lombardi – and the success they achieved as coaches – to recommend authentic leadership development theory as an instrument of some explanatory force.

Vince Lombardi



Vince Lombardi with Green Bay Quarterback, Bart Starr (circa 1960-1967)

He said, ‘Gentlemen, we are going to relentlessly chase perfection, knowing full well we will not catch it because nothing is perfect. But we are going to relentlessly chase it because in the process we will catch excellence.’ He paused for a moment, got up even closer to those of us sitting up front, looked us in the eye and added, ‘I am not remotely interested in being just good.’ Wow.

– Bart Starr, Green Bay Packers’ quarterback (2011, p. 5)

Lombardi was born in 1913 in Brooklyn, New York. He died in 1970, a year after his single season stint as the head coach of the NFL’s Washington Redskins in 1969. In 1959, Lombardi accepted the head coaching position in Green Bay following the team’s worst ever showing in the previous season. He would go on to achieve an incredible winning percentage at the helm of the Packers. Setting aside exhibition games, Lombardi amassed a record of 105 victories, 35 losses and six ties, for an overall success rate of .740 (Pro Football, n.d.).

Lombardi's touch was anything but light as he drove his players relentlessly through a combination of punishing fitness regimens and verbal tirades, constantly imploring his players to push beyond their limits. While some came to resent Lombardi's tactics, few questioned the unflinching team solidarity that those same methods seemed to produce. O'Brien (1987) captured the irony well in his interview with one of Lombardi's former players, Ray Schoenke:

A six-year veteran offensive guard, Schoenke thought Vince was a paradox: a demented genius, an object of both loathing and admiration. Schoenke took personal pride in being a self-starter, a man with his own reasons for wanting to excel. Yet Vince drove, harassed, and badgered him. Early in the 1969 season Schoenke suffered a painful separation of his rib cage, and Vince's callous reaction to his physical agony shocked him. 'That's a nothin' injury Schoenke!' Vince bellowed. 'If you're not ready, I'm getting rid of ya! You hear me! I'm getting rid of ya!' Although deeply and permanently resentful, Schoenke struggled to return quickly to action: 'I was gonna show that son-of-a-bitch.'...Concluded Schoenke: 'As much as I hated the guy - and I did - I hated him! - I had tremendous respect for him. Tremendous. I played some of the best football of my life under him ... It is a paradox' (p. 21).

Much to the chagrin of his wife and children, Lombardi's family always was of secondary importance to his life on the gridiron. His wife, Marie Planitz, realized the family's subordinate position very early on when Lombardi truncated their honeymoon in 1940 so he could return to his coaching duties (O'Brien, 1987). His son, Vince Jr., and daughter, Susan, were the frequent recipients of verbal abuse levied by their father, who shouted out directions at them as if speaking to one of his football players. In the case of Vince Jr., the abuse extended to repeated bouts of corporal punishment (O'Brien, 1987). Though today both Vince Jr. and Susan express love and respect for the man - with Vince, Jr. even penning a book lauding his father's leadership skills - they acknowledge and lament the distance that characterized their relationship with him (O'Brien, 1987).

And yet, it is clear that Lombardi was not without personal virtues. By all accounts, he was a devote adherent of his Roman Catholic faith, attending mass daily (O'Brien, 1987). He could also be very compassionate, if not with his family, then with his football players. O'Brien (1987) recounts the story of Lombardi's personal interventions with a former player of his at Fordham University, Langdon Viracola. Viracola's troubles with the law as a young man landed him in reform school in New Jersey. Though he had left Fordham for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, by that time Lombardi made it a point to visit Viracola every month at reform school. He was also instrumental in convincing Fordham's administration to accept Viracola following his suspension from the school and the completion of his reform school sentence. Viracola went on to graduate and lead a productive life as a businessman in Dallas, Texas. Today, he credits Lombardi with playing one of the "biggest parts in my life" (O'Brien, 1987, p. 22).

John Wooden

[Success is] peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable.

— John Wooden (Edelhauser, 2007)

Born in Martinsville, Indiana in 1910, Wooden would always be faithful to his Midwestern



John Wooden, Coach UCLA (circa 1960)

roots though his legend was constructed in Los Angeles, where he passed away in 2010. Wooden began his tenure as UCLA's head coach in the 1948-1949 season, during which time the team went 22-7 *en route* to a Pacific Coast Conference Southern Division title (UCLA, 2006). Though the team continued with winning seasons throughout the 1950s, earning several more conference titles in the process, it was not until 1964 that UCLA won its first national championship (UCLA, 2006). The rest is history. By the time of his retirement following their 1975 national title victory, Wooden's UCLA Bruins had accumulated 620 wins in 27 seasons (for a winning percentage of .808), including four perfect 30-0 seasons, 98 straight home wins and (worth repeating) ten national titles in the last 12 years of Wooden's reign (UCLA, 2006).

Unlike Lombardi's fiery persona, Wooden was a modest and quiet man whose mantra was self-control. He preached against exuberant shows of emotion, warning his players that wallowing in failure or exalting in success would eventually make them vulnerable to their opponents (Wolff, 1989; Puma, 2007). It is an ethic he abided by during his lifetime. Lavished and praised for his basketball success, it would have been easy for pride and arrogance to demarcate his persona. But Wooden would have nothing of it. On the contrary, his greatest pleasures in life were away from the limelight – his steadfast devotion to his family, faith, and religion (he was a daily Bible reader) (Sage, 1974). When it came to basketball, it was the practices he most enjoyed, and most missed after retirement, as those were the occasions where he could truly wield his influence on his players and develop a rapport (Wolff, 1989). Winning was important, but far more important for Wooden was how his team played (Edelhauser, 2007). As one of his former players, John Vallely explains that he could not recall Wooden ever talking about winning or losing basketball games during their practices; his focus was predominantly on teaching fundamentals and working on execution as well as on persuading members of his team that success would flow naturally if they concentrated on the process (Edelhauser, 2007). More important still was his spiritual faith. As he self-characterizes in his autobiography of 2003:

I have always tried to make it clear that basketball is not the ultimate. It is of small importance in comparison to the total life we live. There is only one kind of life that truly wins, and that is the one that places faith in the hands of the Savior (Wooden, 2003, p. 95).

Authentic Leadership Development Theory

Among the first to articulate an integrated and comprehensive framework, Avolio and Gardner (2005) describe authentic leadership development theory as a “root construct,”

underlying all forms of positive leadership theories including those relating to transformational and charismatic leadership. For Avolio and Gardner, the key to an *organisation's* long-term performance lies with leadership that is open and transparent, cultivates an inclusive and strength-based environment, and promotes an ethical orientation in its relations internally with members and in its dealings with external stakeholders. Borne of disenchantment with the destructive and morale-sapping scandals plaguing corporate America at the time – Enron and WorldCom, for example – the authors set out to chart a course for genuine leadership founded on an openly moral footing. Central to their conception of authentic leadership is the notion of authentic followership – a mutually reinforcing relationship between leaders and followers in which the authenticity of the one promotes the authenticity of the other in a process that empowers both, increases their trust of one another, and fosters increasing levels of job commitment and performance.

Citing Harter (2002, p, 382), Avolio and Gardner (2005) define *authenticity* in the following terms:

[Authenticity] refers to “owning one’s personal experiences, be they thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs, processes captured by the injunction to ‘know oneself’” and “further implies that one *acts* in accord with the true self, expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings” (p. 320).

Extending the notion, Avolio and Gardner (2005) borrow from Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa (2004, p. 4) to define *authentic leaders* as “those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ value/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character” (p. 321). *Authentic leadership* takes the theory one step further to describe how authentic leaders interact with progressive *organisational* contexts to produce “both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 321). A key component in this dynamic is the ability of leaders to impart their positive psychological capacities on their followers through modeling and other social processes such that, over time, leaders and followers begin to act in ways that serve the interests of a shared vision of the *organisation's* values and mission (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Ideally, the product of this interplay – the *development* part of the authentic leadership development model – is “sustainable, veritable performance” on the part of the *organisation*, which Avolio and Gardner (2005) describe as follows:

A firm’s competitive advantage is normally inferred from sustained periods of above-average performance. Drawing on this definition, we view sustained performance as the *organisation's* ability to achieve persistently high performance and growth over a long period of time. The qualifier using the term “veritable” refers to the genuine and ethical values used to attain sustained performance and growth, even at the sacrifice of more immediate performance or financial gains. Veritable sustained performance is defined to include financial, human, social and psychological capital returns [in text citations omitted] (p. 328).

Having set out the nature and workings of the mechanisms that drive the phenomenon, Avolio and Gardner (2005) set out to unpack what they see as the essential components of authentic leadership development theory:

Positive Psychological Capital

- The authentic leader is possessed of a range of positive psychological capacities – confidence, optimism, resiliency, etc. – which facilitate the process of self-awareness and self-regulation.

Positive Moral Perspective

- Authentic leadership involves conduct on the part of leaders that is rooted in a moral compass and ethical standards.

Leader Self-Awareness

- The point of departure for authentic leadership development theory is heightened self-awareness on the part of the leader, achieved in an “emerging process where one continually comes to understand his or her unique talents, strengths, sense of purpose, core values, beliefs and desires” (p. 324), in turn setting the stage for authenticity within and between leaders and followers.

Leader Self-Regulation

- The means by which authentic leaders seek to align their intentions and conduct with their internal values and motivations, in the process “making their authentic selves...transparent to followers” (p. 325). According to Kernis (2003), self-regulation of this nature is assisted when leaders consider information in an unbiased and balanced fashion, approach associates and followers in an open and honest fashion, and engage in authentic behaviour, that is, behaviour that is a genuine reflection of how they – not others – see and appreciate themselves.

Leadership Processes/Behaviours

- Authentic leadership development rests in large measure on the ability of authentic leaders to promote authenticity within their followers. The theory suggests that this is accomplished via several social and psychological processes, including leaders’ positive modeling of elements of their own authenticity (e.g., self-awareness, self-regulatory behaviour, positive psychological traits and robust moral outlook), and positive social exchanges whereby leaders interact with followers fairly, openly and with personal integrity in ways which build trust and “foster greater value congruence and follower reciprocation in the form of behavior that is consistent with the leaders’ values” (p. 326).

Follower Self-Awareness/Regulation

- Essentially, the flip-side of the preceding element, follower self-awareness and self-regulation, describes the process by which followers absorb the lessons from their leaders’ example, becoming themselves increasingly aware of their authentic selves and regulating their behaviour in line with values and goals that converge with those of the leader as their relationship grows in authenticity.

Follower Development

- Meant to connote the fluid and organic nature of the process whereby followers and their leaders achieve increasing levels of authenticity as the relationship between them evolves and matures.

Organisational Context

- The emergence of authentic leadership shapes and is shaped by the context in which leaders and their followers interact. In particular, the following features of the environment directly impact the self-awareness of leaders and followers: uncertainty, and an inclusive, ethical and positively oriented strength-based culture.

Veritable and Sustained Performance Beyond Expectations

- The ability of an *organisation* to leverage its ethical values to consistently exceed expectations in the long run, occasionally at the expense of short-term performance or financial targets.

Application of Theory to Wooden and Lombardi

No one ever accused Lombardi or Wooden of being phonies. Though their methods and personalities were not universally admired, it could not be said that their players did not know exactly where they stood with their coaches. In this sense, at least, Lombardi and Wooden were authentic individuals and leaders, suggesting at first blush the explanatory utility of authentic leadership development theory vis-à-vis their coaching success. That said, it should be noted that there are important differences between the worlds of amateur and professional sports in which Wooden and Lombardi, respectively, rose to fame, not least of which is the comparative prevalence of a “win” orientation among professional athletes whose incomes are dependent on athletic success (Skordilis, Gavriilidis, Charitou, & Asonitou, 2003). While not the subject of the present study, these differences may well mediate to one degree or another the extent to which authentic leadership development theory explains performance. With this cautionary note in place, the author proposes to explore a hypothesis in further detail by examining the evidence along the following three dimensions of authentic leadership development theory: positive moral and ethical perspective, positive psychological capacities, and leader authenticity.

1. Positive Moral and Ethical Perspective

The biographies of Wooden and Lombardi and the personal memories of their former players amply attest to the strict moral and ethical codes by which each man lived his life. It is said, for example, that Lombardi turned down lucrative contracts to promote cigarettes and alcohol for fear of the harmful consequences occasioned on young people drawn to these products because of his influence (O’Brien, 1987). He also passed on a deal to advertise a brand of shaving cream because it was not the brand he used (O’Brien, 1987).

Of much greater import, and perhaps the defining moral quality for which Lombardi earned the praise and admiration of his team, was his stand on racism. At a time when a concern for racial justice was not at the forefront for football executives, Lombardi led the fight to ensure his black players were not victimized by discriminatory treatment. He chastised local establishments with segregationist practises and warned them that his entire team would boycott their businesses unless his black players received equal and fair treatment (O’Brien, 1987). He had a zero-tolerance policy concerning racism within his own ranks, once saying his players were neither white nor black, but “Packer green” (Maraniss, pp. 240-241), and was ready and willing to kick people off the team if they ran afoul of that proscription. When the team travelled to Georgia to play exhibition games in 1961 and 1962, Lombardi had his players stay at an army base barracks to skirt the segregation laws that otherwise would have seen his players divided (O’Brien, 1987). Gestures like this and others, according to Willie Davis, a former player, cemented the affections and loyalty Lombardi’s African-

American players had for their coach (O'Brien, 1987). As Davis explains, "That was one of the reasons why I would do anything ... for the man" (O'Brien, 1987, p. 18).

Wooden's moral code was similarly uncompromising as the story that first brought him to Los Angeles to coach UCLA vividly demonstrates. If fate had not had its way, Wooden would have been the head coach of the University of Minnesota. Born and raised in the Midwest, both he and his wife would have preferred that destination as Wooden pondered his next move following his coaching stint at Indiana State University. Minnesota was interested and had in fact decided to extend Wooden an offer; however, they were unable to reach Wooden by telephone owing to technical difficulties until after their agreed upon deadline by which time Wooden had accepted an offer by UCLA (Puma, 2007). Though Wooden had not signed anything with UCLA and was under no legal obligation, he had given his word and could not be deterred from living up to his commitment notwithstanding Minnesota's entreaties (Puma, 2007).

Klenke (2007) argues that the moral and ethical perspective characteristic of authentic leadership often springs from a leader's deep and abiding spiritual identity. In fact, according to Klenke, "spiritual development and spiritual identity are central to authentic leadership development" (p. 86) and contribute to behaviour on the part of leaders that affirm "a higher purpose/moral principle/inner God and [deny] societal norms/authority structures/laws that get in the way" (p. 86). There is little doubt that Wooden and Lombardi's deep devotion to their Christian faith greatly impacted their lives as well as those around them. Wooden was a daily Bible reader who once said of his religiosity: "If I were ever prosecuted for my religion, I truly hope there would be enough evidence to convict me" (Fussman, 2010). As previously noted, Lombardi attended church on a daily basis and even tried his hand at the priesthood at a prep school for the seminary (Vince Lombardi, 2016). In both cases, it is apparent that their moral and ethical principles sprang from their religious convictions. Indeed, in addition to the sting of anti-Italian discrimination that sensitized him to issues of prejudice from a very young age, Lombardi's inability to tolerate any form of racism with respect to his players came from his faith, once rebuking a man who had made a racist comment at a social event in the following terms: "How can you, as a good Christian, feel that way?" (O'Brien, 1987, p. 17).

2. Positive Psychological Capacities

By most if not all accounts, Wooden was the quintessentially positive figure whose focus was building upon the strengths of his players. His positive persona contributed to a collaborative team culture in which players and members of his coaching staff believed they could express their views and opinions, and have their sentiments taken seriously (Wolff, 1989). Wooden understood the importance of genuine communication to his players' commitment, explaining, "Decisions are more apt to be accepted when you've listened to suggestions first. I wanted them [his players] to see the reason behind what I asked of them, not to do things just because I said so" (Wolff, 1989). This is not to say that Wooden led his team by committee. On the contrary, Wooden's vision of where he was going and how he wanted to get there was always crystal clear, and some things were beyond negotiation, as in the high standards he expected of his players regarding work ethic and dedication to the team. The point is, his players and coaching staff were more apt to adopt that vision if they genuinely believed their voices were being heard – and they did.

Lombardi's style stands in stark contrast. He was notoriously bad tempered and verbally abusive both on and off the field (O'Brien, 1987). He did not hesitate to use fear as a motivator, often threatening to kick players off the team if their performance fell short of his expectations (O'Brien, 1987). And it would appear he was gifted at maligning and bullying his troops to get what he wanted (O'Brien, 1987). As Ken Bowman, one of his former players, recalls, "He was fond of calling me stupid ... I didn't like him. I guess I'm too much of a humanitarian. I thought degradation of ball players was belittling ... I didn't think it was necessary. I thought in many ways he was too harsh" (O'Brien, 1987, p. 21).

Lombardi's methods have been questioned by critics following his success on the field. While acknowledging the impact of those methods in producing the dynasty that was the Green Bay Packers, these critics take issue with Lombardi as a role model to be admired and emulated. Writes social commentator Murray Kempton, "Lombardi's special skill in developing men appears to have been for keeping them high school boys" (O'Brien, 1987, p. 23).

If Lombardi is not altogether the ideal for what Avolio and Gardner (2005) had in mind when they addressed positive psychological capacities, it is perhaps going too far to completely dismiss the man and his methods concerning demonstration of authenticity. In what they describe as "tough empathy," Goffee and Jones (2000) argue that the positive psychological currency authentic leaders offer is not in giving followers what they want, but what they need:

Unfortunately, there's altogether too much hype nowadays about the idea that leaders *must* show concern for their teams. There's nothing worse than seeing a manager return from the latest interpersonal-skills training program with "concern" for others. Real leaders don't need a training program to convince their employees that they care. Real leaders empathize fiercely with the people they lead. They also care intensely about the work their employees do (pp. 54-55).

Though he was often ruthless in technique, many who bore the brunt of his heavy hand came to appreciate that Lombardi cared deeply about them as individuals. As Lombardi demonstrated in his anti-racist rhetoric and efforts to assist with personal problems, players were not simply instruments ensuring the team's success; rather, they were persons deserving of individual respect. O'Brien (1987) writes in his biography of Lombardi:

Many players claim to have matured under Vince's fatherly guidance and some were profoundly influenced by him. They sensed that he genuinely desired to improve their character and values, and they appreciated his efforts. "More than anything else," said Bart Starr, "he wanted us to be great men after ... we'd left football." "I don't think he ever taught me any football," said defensive tackle Henry Jordan. "What he'd do three times a week was preach on life" (p. 25).

3. Authenticity in the Leader

Hypocrisy is anathema to authentic leadership. Followers may accept a leader's message if they believe that the leader's behaviour genuinely reflects their personal values and convictions; conversely, there is little hope for commitment when followers perceive their leader to be disingenuous (Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, & Sels, 2015). Wooden and Lombardi genuinely believed what they preached and behaved in ways that were consistent with the core of their beings. Regarding Wooden, this often manifested itself in the ways in which he

took a genuine interest in the lives of his players. As Edelhauser (2007) aptly states in her assessment of Wooden:

Judging from his relationships with former players, perhaps the greatest business lesson to be learned from Wooden is how leaders should treat the people around them. “Make those under your supervision understand that you really care for them,” Wooden says. “I think anyone in a supervisor position has to do that.” For him, that meant letting his players know they weren’t playing for him, but with him as they worked toward a common goal (From the Court to the Boardroom section, para. 2).

Lombardi’s tack may have been different, but, like Wooden, he was true to himself. He cared passionately about winning – famously once saying, “Winning isn’t the most important thing; it’s the only thing” – but not at the expense of the values he held most dear: integrity, honour, obedience, loyalty (Skrhak, 2010). On the contrary, Lombardi arguably won *because* of his steadfast adherence to these values (and his ability to impart them on his players), not *despite* them. That his teams embraced and reflected those very same values – in spite of the unorthodox and oftentimes questionable methods – is testament to the man’s authenticity. His tireless exhortations and verbal tirades from the sidelines were never empty gestures; if Lombardi went too far in demanding perfection, hard work, perseverance, and loyalty from his players, it was only because he demanded and expected those things of himself.

Conclusion

This examination of two of the most successful coaches in the history of elite North American sports suggests there is much in authentic leadership development theory to commend itself to understanding the success of Wooden and Lombardi – and their teams. Wooden, in particular, emerges in this analysis as the archetypal authentic leader posited by the theory. He was an honest broker when it came to what he believed, how he behaved, and what he expected of his players. His players responded in kind, internalizing those very same values and sharing in their coach’s vision. What materialized was a history of dominance in American collegiate basketball that is unlikely to ever be rivalled – *veritable sustained performance* indeed – and then some.

Lombardi’s legacy is less easily reconciled with authentic leadership development theory. He was clearly an authentic individual, with deep-seated moral convictions and strict ethical standards who in his own way cared deeply for his players. Concerning this analysis of the theory’s three components the difficulty appears to be the relative absence of positive psychological capacities in his style of leadership. In fairness, the “positive” in the element of positive psychological capacities suggested by authentic leadership development theory is far from the ingratiating and saccharine qualities eschewed by Lombardi. Nonetheless, it remains fair to say that his authoritarian – and at times demeaning – treatment of his players does not correlate well with the constructive traits that are said by many proponents of authentic leadership development to be a pivotal part of the theory. While many, if not most, of his players came to respect him as a leader, there were and are those who resented his methods. And yet, the record of success speaks for itself.

Perhaps, as suggested in the discussion of “tough empathy,” there is room to accommodate Lombardi’s particular psychological dispositions within authentic leadership development theory, but “tough empathy” is at best a partial answer. The fact remains that far from building on the strengths of his players in a collaborative and inclusive manner, Lombardi

was prone to bursts of anger and was not averse to attacking his players' egos – not exactly the hallmarks of the sort of positive psychological capacities prescribed by the theory. To the extent this element of authentic leadership development theory is concerned, further research is needed to test its prescriptive power in the context of elite level sports. If Lombardi is any measure, it may well be that a coach's positive psychological capacities are far less important a factor to long-term performance in the sporting context than the other elements of the theory that combine to produce authenticity within and between leaders and their followers.

References

- Avolio, B. J. and Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 315-338.
- Avolio, B. J., Luthans, F., and Walumbwa, F. O. (2004). *Authentic leadership: Theory building for veritable sustained performance*. Working paper: Gallup Leadership Institute, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Day, P., Iyer, V., and Boswell, J. (2009). Sports' greatest 50 coaches. *Sporting News*, 233(16), 32-45.
- Edelhauser, K. (2007). John Wooden's Pyramid Still Standing. *Entrepreneur*. Retrieved on November 29, 2018 from <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/176282>
- Fussman, C. (2010). John Wooden: What I've Learned. *Esquire*. Retrieved on November 29, 2018 from <http://www.esquire.com/sports/interviews/a1900/learned-john-wood-0200/>
- Goffee, R. and Jones, G. (2000). Why Should Anyone Be Led by You. *Harvard Business Review*, September-October, 49-59.
- Harter, S. (2002). Authenticity. In C. R. Snyder, & S. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 382-394). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Kernis, M. H. (2003). Toward a conceptualization of optimal self-esteem. *Psychological Inquiry*, 14, 1-26.
- Klenke, K. (2007). Authentic Leadership: A Self, Leader, and Spiritual Identity Perspective. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 3(1), 68-97.
- Leroy, H, Anseel, F, Gardner, W. L., and Sels, L. (2015). Authentic Leadership, Authentic Followership, Basic Need Satisfaction, and Work Role Performance: A Cross-Level Study. *Journal of Management*, 41(6), 1677-1697.
- Maraniss, D. (1999). *When Pride Still Mattered, A Life of Vince Lombardi*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- O'Brien, M. (1987). In Search of Vince Lombardi: A Historian's Memoir. *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 71(1), 2-26.
- Pro Football Hall of Fame. (n.d.). Hall of Famers – Vince Lombardi. Retrieved on November 29, 2018 from <https://www.profootballhof.com/players/vince-lombardi/>

- Puma, M. (2007). SportsCentury Biography: Wizard of Westwood. *ESPN*. Retrieved on November 29, 2018 from http://espn.go.com/classic/biography/s/Wooden_John.html
- Sage, G.H. (1974). Nation's Winningest Coach Shuns 'Winning is Everything' Approach. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 56(2), 151.
- Skordilis, E. K., Gavriilidis, A., Charitou, S., and Asonitou, K. (2003). Comparison of Sport Achievement Orientation of Male Professional, Amateur, and Wheelchair Basketball Athletes. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 97, 483-490.
- Skrhak, S. (2010). Greatness beyond the gridiron. *SUCCESS*. Retrieved on November 29, 2018 from <http://www.success.com/article/greatness-beyond-the-gridiron>
- Starr, B. (2011). Foreword. C. Havel, Lombardi – An Illustrated Life (p. 5). Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications.
- UCLA (2006). UCLA's Championship Tradition (PDF). Retrieved on November 29, 2018 from http://grfx.cstv.com/photos/schools/ucla/sports/m-baskbl/auto_pdf/MBBGuide57-78.pdf
- Wolff, A. (1989). The Coach and His Champion: John Wooden struggles after losing his wife. *Sports Illustrated*, 70(14), 94-98.
- Wooden, J. (2003). *They Call Me Coach*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
-

About the Author

Joseph Martino is a lawyer in the province of Ontario (Canada) and the deputy director of the Special Investigations Unit, the province's civilian agency responsible for the independent investigation of incidents in which the police have caused serious injury or death, or are the subject of a sexual assault complaint. He leads a team of legal, communications and outreach professionals at the SIU. He is also part of the senior executive with shared responsibility for the general administration of the office. During times of the director's absence from the office, he exercises the director's statutory powers and duties under the SIU's governing legislation.

Mr. Martino is a graduate of the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law (1997) and the Public Policy, Administration and Law graduate program at York University (2016). He has published articles in the areas of policing practices, disclosure/production in criminal cases, and children's rights. He is also the co-author of *Salhany's Police Manual of Arrest, Seizure and Interrogation*.

Joseph Martino can be contacted at: josephmartino100@gmail.com.