

(De)Constructing the American Sport Hero: A Textual Analysis of Media Representations of
Vince Lombardi

by

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Abstract

Using the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity, this study seeks to investigate how Vince Lombardi came to embody the values essential to American society during the Cold War. By performing a textual analysis on historic sports media documents taken from the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, I argue that sportswriters constructed Lombardi in a fashion that celebrated characteristics of hegemonic masculinity that directly spoke to core American values during the Cold War. In doing so, Lombardi became a national icon, an American sports hero, and a purveyor of social myth, who transformed football into a metaphor for the American way of life within the Cold War period, where “winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.”¹ Although the role of the American sport hero has been investigated before, this is the first time a coach has been critically examined.

Keywords

Hegemonic Masculinity, Textual Analysis, American Sport Hero, Cold War America, Myth, American Football,

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Chapter 1

1: Literature Review and Methods

“The game itself—the game of football is a great game. It’s an American game. It’s a Spartan game. It’s got all the qualities that go into making a man—making a leader.”²

- Vince Lombardi

1.1: Introduction

The end of the 1950s marked the rise of professional football as America’s most popular spectator sport. In America’s Midwest, “a gap-toothed Italian Catholic coach” named Vince Lombardi emerged as a national sport’s hero after he took the Green Bay Packers from a franchise worst 1-10-1 record to 7-5 in 1959.³ In 1959, his first year as head coach and general manager, Lombardi was able to turn around the struggling franchise by leading them to their first winning season in over a decade, and effectively set them on the path to becoming the most dominant team of the decade in professional football. Over the nine seasons with Vince Lombardi at the helm, the Packers won five World Championships, including victories in Super Bowl I and Super Bowl II.⁴ Throughout his career, Lombardi came to exemplify “a certain kind of masculinity and a certain style of leadership among men.”⁵

Cold War tensions surrounding the growing threat to the American way of life by the Soviet Union during this period resulted in American men turning to figures who displayed strong

leadership and valued duty, honour, and country.⁶ Therefore, Lombardi was constructed as a national hero because it was believed that he personified these values. Lombardi's dedication to winning and relentless pursuit of excellence elevated him to sport's hero status, and in doing so, transformed him into a symbol of strong leadership, discipline, perseverance, and teamwork.⁷

During the Cold War, moreover, as the divide between the United States and the Soviet Union continued to grow due to conflicting political, social, and economic systems, the significance of the realm of sport began to grow within American society as well.⁸ With tensions at their height, and little middle ground to stand on, sport had become one of the few fields where the United States and Soviet Union could meet in physical and ideological battle.⁹ Even if the Soviet Union was not on the opposite sideline, sport had become an arena where America could display its superiority, and in doing so, defend and reinforce the American way of life.¹⁰ Therefore, during a period where nuclear war seemed a distinct possibility, and the social arena of sport had become an ideological battlefield where losing was not an option, and winning symbolized the superiority of the American way of life, Vince Lombardi came to embody the values essential to American society during the Cold War. In doing so, Lombardi became a national icon, an American sport's hero, and a purveyor of social myth, who transformed football into a metaphor for the American way of life within the Cold War period, where "winning isn't everything, it's the only thing."¹¹

While Lombardi's coaching history has been well documented, a critical reflection of his status as an American sport hero within the context of the Cold War is absent. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to critically explore and analyze the various meanings of the taken for granted assumptions of the American sports' hero. I argue that sportswriters in the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* constructed Vince Lombardi in a fashion that celebrated characteristics of hegemonic

masculinity that directly spoke to core American values during the Cold War. In order to examine Vince Lombardi in relation to the gaps discussed, historical sport media documents were collected and analyzed using the concept of hegemonic masculinity and the research methodology of textual analysis. The specific focus of this topic will be narratives from the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* newspaper between 1966-67. I narrowed the scope of my analysis to 1966-67 because those are the final two seasons of Lombardi's tenure as head coach of the Packers. It was in these years that Lombardi cemented his legacy in Green Bay, which culminated in victories in Super Bowl I and Super Bowl II. Furthermore, studying the foregoing is important because it provides a further window into how American sport is linked to political, social, gender and economic issues in American society. By illuminating and opening a further window into sport in regards to these facets, it will provide further insight into how sport heroes act to reflect and reinforce the dominant values of a society while simultaneously diminishing others.¹² While Lombardi is a popular iconic figure in American sports history, the proposed project is also novel because his history as a coach has never been critically examined with relationship to these links. Moreover, by drawing on previous works that analyze sports media documents, it becomes evident that drawing "critical attention to media representations constitutes an effort to challenge and alter problematic constructions" of sports' heroism.¹³

To accomplish the aims outlined, I first review literature related to the myth, construction, and role of the American sport hero, hegemonic masculinity, the role of sportswriters and mythmakers in sport, and contextualizing American football within Cold War America.

Following my literature review will be my methods and methodology, then a third chapter on the historical context and Vince Lombardi, a fourth chapter on results and discussion, and a final chapter of analysis and conclusions.

1.2: The Myth of the American Sports Hero

Essential to the dissemination of the dominant constructions of sports heroes is the role of myth. Since ancient times up to modern day, “myths provide meaning.”¹⁴ Myths have been used as a means for humans to make sense of the world around them; “People seek out myths to figure out what the world means.”¹⁵ Myths provide meaning to “why we are alive, what happens when we die, why we should marry and have children, what we should think of our neighbors, enemies, or friends.”¹⁶ Additionally, myths have allowed people the methods for understanding the complex notions of life, death and the creation of the universe, and serve as archetypes that have been molded into stories to provide further understanding to many notions of human nature.¹⁷ According to Crepeau, a myth “deals with the symbolic relations in the world of value, and myths are symbolic structures which express moral and esthetic values.”¹⁸ Myth provides a remedy for chaos; a manner in which humankind is able to grasp a sense of meaning and identify in a way that provides an understanding of the world around them.

By studying the role of myth in sport and society as a whole, it becomes apparent that it is not whether or not the myth is true or false; however, but rather how myths gain power through means of communication, and are continuously perpetuated by society. A myth has the power to shape the thought patterns “by which a group formulates self-cognition and self-realization, attains self-knowledge and self-confidence, explains its own source and being and that of its surroundings, and sometimes tries to chart its destinies.”¹⁹ Consequently, through the agency of myth, humankind “has lived, died – all too often—killed.”²⁰ This in turn provides valuable insight into myth’s astounding power to shape our identities and sense of existence. It becomes

evident that “a particular culture’s myths... give structure to its definition of social reality, the world ‘out there’ and at the same time the individual’s conception of self in that social world.”²¹ Essentially, myth “is the realm through which ultimate reality is mediated to man in life-arranging values and action,” and is therefore a powerful driving force within its inceptive environment.²² Furthermore, it is not uncommon that myths have become so ingrained within our social fabric that they become essentially indistinguishable from reality.²³ Considering myth’s critical role within the history of human society, it becomes evident that by examining the role of myth in modern society, it will provide valuable insight into the various ways in which myth provides meaning to our lives, relationships, and communities. And by doing so, it will illustrate the incredible power myths continue to hold in modern society.

Over the years, many scholars, including Hartman, Butterworth, Gee, and Crepeau, have attempted to define the complex nature of myth and sport.²⁴ The word “myth” is derived from the Greek word *mythos*, meaning a symbolic expression in the form of a word or a story.²⁵ Butterworth has stated that a myth “explains something,” and can also be used to resolve some sort of dilemma.²⁶ This notion of explanation is most commonly seen through the use of narratives, which allow morals, values, and meanings pertaining to a particular culture to be conveyed. Additionally, Hartman has argued that, “myths find structure and formation in three ways: through use of metaphors, narratives, and ideographs and ideologies.”²⁷ Metaphors provide a means for society to make sense of difficult complex concepts and “serve as one rhetorical construct of myth.”²⁸ Metaphors operate within popular discourse and as such, are used to capture, shape and even create cultural meanings and perceptions through the use of language. According to Foucault, *discourses* are “understood as shaping and constraining perceptions of reality, including understandings of self and others.”²⁹ Discourses “come from

particular places, and are developed, circulated and supported by groups of people who are both linked into a community in some way, and have some authority to introduce concepts into culture.”³⁰ The same can be said within the realm of sport, and more specifically within sport myth. Sport narratives are saturated with metaphors pertaining to warriors, heroes, and gods. These sporting metaphors utilize “war concepts,” and “offer comparisons between the “seriousness” of what happens on the court to battles of blood sweat and tears.”³¹ By creating correlations between two seemingly disparate notions, metaphors provide additional layers to a narrative, which in turn, strengthens its underlying meaning and supplies the narrative with greater influential power. More specifically, “Sport is not just sport, but through metaphors it becomes framed in a larger perception of good fighting evil, heroes overcoming adversity, and warriors battling enemies on the Warfield.”³²

According to Michael Oriard, the realm of sport is “the most important and quite possibly the sole repository for myth in American society today.”³³ Sport is such an integral part of American society, moreover, as the two act as mirrors for each other; constantly reflecting the other’s values.³⁴ This is especially true in regards to all-American sports, such as football where it was believed that anybody could play and succeed through hard work.³⁵ It becomes clear that the unity between football and American society is so intense due to the shared values and ceremonies that, over the years, football has been used as a metaphor for America and its way of life.³⁶ And arguably, the Super Bowl is the “the biggest and most anticipated shared experience in America culture.”³⁷

1.3: Investigating American Sport Heroes through Hegemonic

Masculinity

It has become evident that myths play a significant role within American society and American sport culture in how they can reflect each other's values. Therefore, the hero plays a critical role within myth because they personify and reflect the values of the myth and society.³⁸ Within American mythology, the role of the hero is especially apparent considering the individualistic character of American culture, which is centered on competition, capitalism, and the American dream of social mobility.³⁹ Within the social realm of sport, sport heroes often embody social myth, and become "purveyors of myth rather than heroes of Sport."⁴⁰ In any society, the hero "will embody some of the attributes of the myth."⁴¹ In doing so, the hero "will affirm the myth; he will illustrate its reality; he will, within the mythic framework, show the society its highest potentials."⁴² Furthermore, it becomes evident that these figures are constructed as heroes because they arguably personify the values of American society, and as such, become ideal representations of American character.⁴³

In order to fully understand the impact and influence of the American sporting hero, it must first be understood how various identities, such as gender, function within the social institution of sport. Historically, sports scholars have employed Gramsci's theory of hegemony and common sense.⁴⁴ Within this theory, Gramsci rejected the notion that power is a possession, but rather a relational concept that works through the actions of people.⁴⁵ Power is "produced from within systems and subsystems of social relations, in the interactions, in the microstructures that inform the practices of everyday life."⁴⁶ Relationships of power exist between every person and institution in society, and these operate with coercion and consent. Power relationships act to

produce social meanings, relations, and identities.⁴⁷ Individuals and groups are engaged in a continuous process of coercion and consent, which aid in shaping culture, and cultural institutions.⁴⁸ Hegemony, as Gramsci describes it, is:

the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.⁴⁹

Within the world of production, cultural organizations, such as mass media, serve as powerful sites for fashioning hegemony, and thus become “a platform for constructing and circulating discourses aimed at attaining consent and hence hegemony.”⁵⁰ It becomes clear that the media provides “a way of representing the order of things,” and by society buying in, it “makes them appear universal, natural and conterminous with ‘reality’ itself.”⁵¹ Therefore, by consenting and accepting the representations of reality by dominant groups and fashioners of hegemony, such as the media, marginalized groups who are constantly contesting the hegemonic order, actively aid in reinforcing and uphold the current dominant values and ideas.⁵² This is especially prevalent within sport, where the media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and social media) produce and reproduce symbolic representations of values, morals, and a specific type of order.⁵³ Most commonly, this is seen through various forms of media and the construction of sporting heroes, who become symbolic representations of dominant values, and therefore, act to fashion hegemony.⁵⁴

Furthermore, hegemony suggests that people do not have equal access to exercising power, and therefore create inequitable power relations, which are often problematic.⁵⁵ Therefore, it becomes clear that within these unequal power relations, the “dominating groups’ abilities to

exercise power or maintain their privileged positions are always subject to change and resistance.”⁵⁶ In America, and especially the American Midwest, the dominant group is “upper- and middle-class, white, heterosexual men.”⁵⁷ During the Cold War, the values of the dominant group are imbedded and reflected within the American way of life which is centered on capitalism, consumer culture, religion, and militarism.⁵⁸ Sport became an essential vehicle for producing and reinforcing the dominant group’s virtues of patriotism, patriarchy, courage, teamwork, hard work, and discipline.⁵⁹ By producing and reinforcing such a particular set of values and morals pertaining to the dominant group containing fundamental elements of class, race, gender, age, and sexual preference, while simultaneously ignoring those of other groups, hegemony marginalizes the non-dominant groups and creates problematic depictions of what is normal and natural.⁶⁰

It is clear the hegemony is a useful theory for understanding power relations between people and social institution. Within the socially constructed institution of sport, scholars have applied the concept of hegemonic masculinity in order to investigate and understand how power relations involving class, race, gender, age, and sexual preference are constructed.⁶¹ Scholars have determined that sport produces and reinforces dominant forms of masculinity within sport and society as a whole, and therefore marginalizes competing masculinities and feminism.⁶²

Hegemonic masculinity sheds light on how these elements have been celebrated and marginalized through constructions of idealized masculinity. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the culturally idealized form of masculine character.”⁶³ Trujillo describes that an “Idealized forms of masculinity become hegemonic when they become widely accepted within a particular culture, and when the acceptance reinforces the dominant gender ideology of the culture.”⁶⁴ Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity becomes a useful tool for understanding power

relations because it highlights the social ascendancy of a particular form of masculinity to the point of becoming ‘common sense’ and defining ‘what it means to be a man.’⁶⁵ By investigating sport and the role of heroes, moreover, it becomes apparent that sport is perhaps the most influential institution in creating our sense of masculinity within American culture, which justifies increased scholarly attention.⁶⁶

1.4: The Construction of American Sport Heroes

The investigation of heroic construction is paramount to understanding how sport reflects and helps shape core, dominant American values, in a particular manner. Before outlining the foregoing, it must first be understood how an individual “becomes” a hero within American sport and culture. Within American mythology it is largely taken for granted that the hero is typically male.⁶⁷ Hughson describes how “the very notion of hero suggests leadership, innovation and superiority in a way that places that hero above the common person” of their particular culture in which they exist within.⁶⁸ These individuals “do not exist apart from the societies from which they receive adoration.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, Hughson has determined two distinct yet related categories to help define sport heroism. According to Hughson, the hero can be the result of two formulas: the prowess hero and the moral hero.⁷⁰ In relation to sport, the prowess hero is one who accomplishes feats of abnormal and phenomenal proportions never before seen within the sporting arena, which catapults him to a mythical status. These amazing displays are relayed to the masses by whatever means of communication is available, for example—newspapers, radio, and most likely for modern sports fans, either as a spectator or through the television, or other forms of social media. The moral hero, on the other hand, embodies outstanding character

qualities and often personifies the morals and values of a culture.⁷¹ In doing so, these heroic figures “serve as a moral guide to proper action,” or role models within their society.⁷² In America, the moral hero becomes an ideal representation of American character, which in turn, reproduces hegemonic masculinity through sport.

At the end of the First World War, Americans turned their attention away from the horrors of the battlefield, and towards spectacle of sport. Armed with unparalleled physical abilities and a touch for the dramatic, names such as Red Grange, Jack Dempsey, Joe DiMaggio, and Babe Ruth became household names and were subsequently elevated to American hero status.⁷³ During this period, Americans cherished masculine strength because it was a necessary character trait to defend the nation from foreign threats.⁷⁴ Culturally constructed heroic figures were not only displaying their individual greatness on the playing field, but symbolizing the greatness of America as well. Therefore, in America, sport “still tells a story of the greatness of America,” and these stories are told by heroic figures of myth that embody the values that American identity is built upon.⁷⁵ In regards to American football, the accomplishments of Red Grange, or the “Gallop Ghost,” transformed himself into an American Sport Hero, and catapulted the game of American Football into mainstream American culture.⁷⁶ Due to Grange’s incredible accomplishments, the “soft-spoken pioneer,” and “self-made individual,” began to be constructed as an American sports hero who came to “symbolize older, more rural American values,” reminiscent of America’s “golden age of sport.”⁷⁷ The fashion in which Grange was represented directly relates to aspects of American mythology and hegemonic masculinity, including frontiersmanship, and occupational achievement.⁷⁸ Therefore, through physical prowess and exceptional accomplishments, sporting figures can become constructed as sports heroes who embody the values of America (e.g., upper- and middle-class, white, heterosexual

men).⁷⁹

By embodying core American values, or hegemonic values, athletes ascend to sports heroism and become role models within society. Heroic tradition can be comprised of many different values depending on the culture and era in which they belong. In the case of Cold War American society, discipline, duty, sacrifice, honor, hard work, and country, are just a few qualities traditionally valued by American sporting culture that aid in the construction of the sporting hero.⁸⁰ If a sports figure lacked physical prowess, yet was seen to possess hegemonic male virtues, it was still possible to ascend to sports heroism. For example, iconic Green Bay Packers quarterback, Bart Starr, who was “Lombardi’s field general,” during the era of the Lombardi dynasty, is celebrated as “America’s Quarterback.”⁸¹ Starr, however, was not a “force of nature,” or blessed with a powerful arm and fast feet, like other quarterbacks that have attained sports hero status, such as Johnny Unitas.⁸² He was, however, a “clutch player who delivered time after time, lifting the Packers with the power of his mighty will while setting a new standard for offensive leadership.”⁸³ Starr has been celebrated for his stoicism, modesty, discipline, dedication to excellence, and understated elegance and dignity, which propelled him from modest means, to the top of his profession, and in doing so, fulfilling the promise of the “American Dream.”⁸⁴ Within this construction are many aspects of hegemonic masculinity, relating to ideal values of American society. Therefore, Starr becomes a prime example of how, by embodying moral traits of hegemonic masculinity, he was constructed as an American sports hero.

Within American society and sport culture, it becomes apparent that frontier mythology has become a dominant discourse.⁸⁵ In his study on sport, heroes, and myth, Crepeau confirms the prominence of frontier mythology within American myth and identifies three themes: ‘Nature,’

‘Will,’ and ‘Providence.’⁸⁶ Both American mythology and sport are “driven by performance, the ability to conquer uncharted territory, and the prominence of individual acts of greatness.”⁸⁷ It is believed that sports heroes often express one or more of these three themes.⁸⁸ Furthermore, considering the individualist nature of American character, which is centered on competition, capitalism, and the American dream of social mobility, the role of the hero becomes paramount in its ability to connect to mythology specific to American values.⁸⁹ In regards to ‘Nature,’ the archetypal hero of frontier mythology is most commonly defined as a ““rugged individualist,” whose goal is to venture into—and conquer—“unknown frontiers.””⁹⁰ These heroic figures typically are portrayed in “larger-than-life” terms and superhuman in some sense.⁹¹ Paramount to the construction of myth is the undertaking of a journey, which will result in the hero being transformed, by conquering the untamed wildernesses; the rugged individualist will test both his resolve and fortitude, which will ultimately transform him into the mythical. Armed with only his strength of character, the rugged individualist, tests both his resolve and fortitude, and in doing so, we see the personification of ‘Will’—the second theme of American mythology. By examining the role of frontier mythology within American culture, and more specifically, American sport culture, it becomes evident and it plays a fundamental role in the construction of Vince Lombardi’s identity as an American sports hero.

Lombardi’s rise as a national icon has been well documented, which largely contributes to the construction and reinforcement of Lombardi as a mythical American sports hero. Within these works resides a dominant narrative of how Lombardi played the role of Butterworth’s “rugged individualist.”⁹² Lombardi came to the small Wisconsin town of Green Bay—the smallest town in America to possess a major sporting franchise, and commonly referred to as the “Serbia of the NFL,” due to the team’s dismal reputation and being an “unknown frontier”—and conquered it

by completely turning around a team in turmoil and setting them on a path to becoming the most dominant professional football team of the decade.⁹³ Furthermore, the label “Serbia of the NFL” possesses Cold War overtones, which further emphasize the undesirable and hopeless state of the Packers franchise. The fact that the Green Bay Packers franchise itself was in turmoil and on the verge of collapse, before Lombardi swept in saved it, references the third mythic theme of American frontier mythology—‘Providence.’ This theme refers to how Americans are seen as people of destiny, who are capable of saving the world, or in Lombardi’s case, Green Bay and America.⁹⁴

American frontier mythology also contains elements of race and ethnicity as well. In his examination of sports media representations, Butterworth describes how within this dominant American mythical archetype, the archetypical figure is not only a “rugged individualist,” but he is also presumed to be white.⁹⁵ Therefore, it can be determined that, “Whiteness is central to this mythology because it works alongside the assumption that white Christians represented a “chosen people,” charged with civilizing and taming the savage wilderness.⁹⁶ Historically, “whiteness” has been considered the cultural norm within American society, and therefore, has largely been taken for granted.⁹⁷ Therefore, in regards to analyzing media representations, it becomes apparent that “whiteness is privileged, normalized, deified and raceless”⁹⁸ This becomes problematic in the sense that “when whiteness goes unmarked anyone not white subsequently is defined as the “Other” and becomes “raced.””⁹⁹ This element of frontier mythology, and more specifically, mythology of American sports heroes, is significant due to Lombardi being “a gap-toothed Italian Catholic coach,” during a time where there was considerable racial prejudice against them.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the fact that Lombardi was considered an “Other” and did not necessarily fit the cookie-cutter mold of the archetypical American sport

hero, yet still was able to ascend to American sports hero status, is incredibly significant and presents a gap in the literature of how Vince Lombardi was able to become one of the most recognizable national sporting icons of the 1960s.

1.5: The Role of Sportswriters and Broadcasters as “Mythmakers”

Myth is a social invention, and as such, sportswriters can contribute to the creation and transmission of myth through the means of discourse.¹⁰¹ Sportswriters and broadcaster have long been examined for their role as “mythmakers” in American sport.¹⁰² Since the beginning of organized sport in America, newspaper writers for the daily press had made their livings by poetically crafting narratives that glorified the events themselves, the opportunities of sport, and the athletes that participated.¹⁰³ Sport writing legends such as, Red Smith, George Plimpton, Rick Telander, Grantland Rice, Rick Reilly, Paul Gallico, Roger Angell, Robert Creamer, Ring Lardner, and Stanley Cohen are a few who crafted glorified narratives, embedded with themes of winning, justice, teamwork, and purity, and in turn, catapulted star athletes to heroic statues in the eyes of Americans.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, sports commentators such as Vin Scully, Chick Hearn, Howard Cosell, Marv Albert, Tony Kornheiser, Mike Wilbon, Jim Rome, and Kevin Harlan, are also responsible for portraying sport in a light where patriotism, American values, hope, family, love, and unity, are all common themes within the sporting arena.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, it becomes clear that these “mythmakers” play a significant role in transcribing myths, and in doing so, portray sport in a certain light as to present “sports as symbolic representations of a particular kind of social order, so that in effect they become modern morality plays, serving to justify and uphold dominate, or hegemonic, values and ideas.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the fraternity of

sports broadcasting and journalism is largely dominated by white men who operate under the assumption that white sports fans want to read and hear about white athletes.¹⁰⁷ By only employing and privileging white male sports broadcasters and journalists, sports media acts to further perpetuate hegemonic discourse and practices.

Furthermore, it becomes clear that the “image of sports starts, questions of morality, of youth and of masculinity are all bound up together.”¹⁰⁸ Sport is still an arena where people can (re)produce heroic role models. In turn, the concept of the hero, when viewed through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, can become troubling, ambiguous, and problematic. Furthermore, the problematic nature of sports media’s heroic constructions becomes evident when sporting media’s representations of sporting heroes are constructed based on a heroic archetype that privilege various forms of masculinity, race, gender, and “whiteness,” while ignoring and marginalizing others.¹⁰⁹ In turn, social historians, such as Butterworth, Trujillo, and Whannel, have worked to expose the importance of examining media representations of sport and sporting heroes.

Trujillo, Whannel, and Butterworth have all acknowledged how sport media representations are an important site of investigation because sportswriters and commentators reproduce hegemonic masculinity through representations of sport and sports stars.¹¹⁰ Whannel states, “sport stars, in particular, being significantly structured by both masculinity and morality, provide a potentially productive field of study,” especially representations that are “political and ideological, and also about power relations.”¹¹¹

1.6: Contextualizing American Football in Cold War America

Following the conclusion of World War II, the United States underwent a series of significant transformations, which in turn, would help shape its future in the coming decades. One of the most influential transformations was America's entry into the Cold War with the Soviet Union, which would last for nearly half a century.¹¹² Cold War politics would play a critical role in shaping American society during the period as the divide between the United States and the Soviet Union continued to grow due to conflicting political, social, and economic systems.¹¹³ Americans saw their vision of society, or the "American Way of Life," with a foundation that was built on the principle of "freedom," as the pinnacle of human evolution.¹¹⁴ This vision also offered freedom in terms of the "American Dream" of social mobility, which gave individuals freedom of choice of action, and provided everybody equal opportunity to rise from humble beginnings to reach the peak of success through economic individualism and capitalism.¹¹⁵ Soviet Communism, on the other hand, cherished a differing view of freedom; one which valued the rights of the citizen. The Soviet Union focused on economic production, not for consumer goods, but for national defence.¹¹⁶

With political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union creating a growing divide separating the two world powers, the significance of the realm of sport began to grow as well.¹¹⁷ As the threat of communism grew, there was little common ground for America and the Soviet Union to stand on, which in turn, transformed the realm of sport into an arena to engage in physical and ideological battle.¹¹⁸ For Americans, sport became a primary vehicle in glorifying the values of the American way of life, while vilifying those of the Soviet Union.¹¹⁹ Sport was seen as a means to strengthening and defining the American way of life, even if the Soviet Union

was not involved.¹²⁰ During this period, American culture, and sport, was so heavily politicized, that “the values and perceptions, the forms of expression, the symbolic patterns, the beliefs and myths the enable Americans to make sense of their reality... were contaminated by an unseemly political interest...”¹²¹ Subsequently, sport became a useful tool in reflecting and enforcing national policy and, according to Massaro, a powerful international propaganda medium¹²² Mass media’s power of influence on society was clear, therefore, American government officials, such as Republican Senator John Marshall Butler, encouraged the media to utilize its medium to champion America’s message of superiority.¹²³ In doing so, mass media employed the use of Cold War American sports heroes, or “Cold Warriors.”¹²⁴ Soviet Communism was based on an entirely different vision of freedom than the American way of life.¹²⁵ According to Crawford, these Cold Warriors rejected the Soviet Communist theory, and embodied, and reflected, and shaped values contained in the American way.¹²⁶

Sport held a special place within the American way of life during the Cold War, especially all-American sports, such as football, because it “offered cold warriors powerful tools to employ against their communist foes.”¹²⁷ As sports’ significance within American society began to rise, professional football’s popularity steadily rose to the point where, towards the end of the 1950s, it eventually took over the coveted position as America’s “national pastime.”¹²⁸ Trujillo describes American football’s ascension to becoming America’s national pastime and replacing “the more pastoral baseball,” as a “hostile takeover,” because football “reinforced a form of masculinity which emphasizes sanctioned aggression, (para)militarism, the technology of violence, and other patriarchal values” relating to hegemonic masculinity.¹²⁹ Anderson and Kian have described American football as “the most masculine and violent team sport in US culture since the early part of the twentieth Century”¹³⁰ During the Cold War, professional football was

celebrated for it being “modern,” and the “most technically proficient, the biggest, the fastest and sleekest of everything,” and a symbol of professionalism.¹³¹ Professional football during the Cold War became a site for shaping and defining idealized forms of masculinity.¹³² Additionally, football possesses a unique ability to “make the heroic possible,” which provided sportswriter’s with a golden opportunity to create poetic tales of individual prowess and craft gripping narratives that grasped the public’s attention.¹³³ Football players, being “young, muscle-bound, and willing to commit violence to himself and others,” are situated at the apex of sports masculinity, and become ideal figures to be constructed as American sports heroes, or cold warriors.¹³⁴ Furthermore, men who play football are often referred to as “warriors” and the field as an arena or “battlefield.”¹³⁵ These become sites for “men to prove their manhood and rehearse masculine behaviors, confirm the distinct link between sport, physicality, and war.”¹³⁶

Hegemonic masculinity, as is football, is centered on “dominance, superiority, competitiveness, risk-taking, aggression, rationality, and the continuous quest for power.”¹³⁷ Therefore, the values of hegemonic masculinity are constantly being produced and reproduced by American football by its celebration of male aggression, violence, physical dominance, and physiological superiority.¹³⁸ By celebrating these masculinities, football culture “contributes to the subordination of women who are excluded from the sport and oppressed in a social order that venerates men.”¹³⁹ In turn, “all men become beneficiaries in this gendered order, whether they have the physical power of a 240 pound linebacker or not.”¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, these traits are not just shared by hegemonic masculinity and American football, but they are synonymous with America as a nation as well, and in fact, represent the American ideal.¹⁴¹

During the Cold War, as football began to embody hegemonic characteristics of core American values, Lombardi’s Green Bay Packers ascended to the top of the National Football League

symbolizing the “American Dream.”¹⁴² Over the course of nine seasons, Lombardi embodied many core American values, including leadership, discipline, perseverance, and teamwork, as well as an obsession with winning, which propelled him and his Packers to experience unprecedented success. Considering Lombardi achieved this success during a period where nuclear war seemed a distinct possibility, and the social arena of sport had transformed into an ideological battlefield where losing wasn’t an option, and winning symbolized the superiority of the American way of life, Vince Lombardi came to embody the values essential to American society during the Cold War. In doing so, Lombardi became a national icon, an American sports hero, and a purveyor of social myth, who transformed football into a metaphor for the American way of life within the Cold War period, where “winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.”¹⁴³

The purpose of this project is to critically explore and analyze the various meanings of the taken for granted concept, the “American Hero,” in sport culture. In doing so, I will examine how Vince Lombardi transcended the realm of sport to become a symbol of American virtues during the Cold War. In order to accomplish this, I will answer the following questions; 1. How was Vince Lombardi portrayed through the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* from 1966-1967? and 2. What do the representations and portrayal of Lombardi in the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* tell us about American society (i.e., what are the wider implications of the representations)?

Chapter 2

2: Methodology

In order to accomplish the purpose and answer the research questions of interest, historical sport media documents from the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, concerning the 1966-1967 NFL football seasons will be collected and analyzed, drawing largely on the concept of hegemonic masculinity, and the research methodology of textual analysis. The focus of the present project is the 1966-1967 seasons because those were the final two years that Lombardi coached the Packers, which culminated in his second and third straight NFL championships, and victories in Super Bowl I and II. Essentially, these were the two seasons that cemented his legacy that has become the subject of numerous works of literature, including this project, television specials, and even Broadway shows.¹⁴⁴

2.1: Textual Analysis

In regards to this study, newspaper articles from the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* will be collected and analyzed through textual analysis. Textual analysis has been positioned as a useful research methodology, and data gathering process for the purpose of gaining a greater understanding of how other human beings make sense of the world.¹⁴⁵ Textual analysis is a useful tool for “researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live.”¹⁴⁶

This methodology has been shown to be a useful tool for many researchers in the field of sports media studies, including McGannon, Curtin, Schinke, Schweinbenz, as well as Vincent, and Crossman, who utilize it for its ability to reveal the explicit and subtle meanings conveyed through various forms of media, such as newspaper narratives.¹⁴⁷ Essentially, a text is anything that we can make meaning from.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, whenever we as a society “produce an *interpretation* of something’s *meaning*,” such as a book, television programme, film, magazine, logo, art, a photograph—we treat it as a text.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, these texts are loaded with meanings of how people construct their identities and make sense of the world around them. It becomes evident that the theoretical views outlined in my review of literature, regarding the function of, myth, hegemonic masculinity, and the media, within Cold War society and sport aligns with the underlying assumptions contained in textual analysis. Considering my reviewed literature aligns with textual analysis’ view of the world, it is clear that it is an appropriate methodology in order to examine my research questions of interest.

Texts are useful for historical research because they have a “material reality” and physically endure over time, which provides historical insight into the period they were created.¹⁵⁰

According to Booth, “language determines consciousness, and ultimately being, by virtue of facilitating, or excluding from consideration, certain ways of thinking about experiences and by framing behavior.”¹⁵¹ Therefore, texts, such as newspaper articles, provide a “truer” indication of original meaning than other types of historical evidence such as artifacts or architecture.¹⁵²

Textual analysis uses texts to critically reflect, or “deconstruct” history. Deconstructionists endorse reflexivity, and therefore, reject all pretexts of objectivity.¹⁵³ Thus, there is no one accurate, true, or unbiased interpretation of a text, or of reality for that matter. Instead, when deconstructing history, there are always alternative representations and interpretations that are

equally accurate, true, or unbiased.¹⁵⁴ “Texts can say many different things in different contexts.”¹⁵⁵ Therefore, it is imperative to understand the texts conditions of productions; was the text “written as a result of firsthand experience or from secondary sources, whether it was solicited or unsolicited, edited or unedited, anonymous or signed, and so on.”¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, texts, and the words that construct them, possess practical, social, and communication functions, embedded within social and ideological systems.¹⁵⁷ Texts and contexts are in a constant state of tension with the other; constantly defining and redefining the other through time.¹⁵⁸ By placing texts within their proper historical context and understanding their conditions of production and reading, moreover, it allows researchers to discern the “original” or “true” meanings.¹⁵⁹ In doing so, textual analysis allows researchers to understand one meaning of the text based on a theoretical framework.¹⁶⁰

By investigating what the most likely interpretation of the text, further insight into how people make sense of the world is provided. Furthermore, by understanding how people make sense of the world, textual analysis researchers further insight into how various identities are constructed and evolve over time and across cultures.¹⁶¹ Therefore, by understanding the theoretical function of myth, masculinity, and media, it allows researchers the necessary foundation to examine texts that will provide further understanding of Cold War American culture. According to Booth, the field of sports history is undergoing a shift in focus from the study of sport as social practice towards the investigation of sporting identities and cultures.¹⁶² A major catalysis in this shift stems from “the assumption that texts have ‘no inherent or authentic meaning’, rather they ‘derive [their] effects from the power relationships in which [their] meaning is constructed.’”¹⁶³ In turn, this emphasizes the usefulness of hegemonic masculinity in order to understand power relationships within sport and in American society.¹⁶⁴ Deconstructionists, furthermore, are aware

of the persuasive, manipulative and controlling nature of language, and therefore, focus more on dissecting the narrative structure of texts.¹⁶⁵

The idea of sport being a text in itself has grown since its conception by Clifford Geertz in his 1972 essay on Balinese cockfighting.¹⁶⁶ In his analysis, Geertz discerns that the cockfight itself ‘provides a metasocial commentary,’ in which the event is treated as a rite or a pastime.¹⁶⁷ The cockfight as a text operates symbolically, as a metaphor for Balinese cultural experience.¹⁶⁸

Geertz determined that Balinese cockfight’s “dramatic shape,” metaphoric content,” and “social context” combine to form a dimension of a Balinese experience ripe with themes of “death, masculinity, rage, pride, loss, beneficence.”¹⁶⁹ In 1993, Oriard began applying Geertz model of the cultural text for understanding American Football. Rather than the focus being on the outcome and events of the game, analyzing Football as text places emphasis on football’s “meaning” in American society, by “reading” and interpreting the game.¹⁷⁰ When examining American football as a cultural text, moreover, it is imperative to acknowledge the power relations present within modern cultural production and the exclusion of marginalized identities veiled behind consent.¹⁷¹ Oriard acknowledges that previous revisionist cultural histories when examining American football have chronic tendency to represent modern American culture “as a monolithic “dominant” (or hegemonic) discourse.”¹⁷² Therefore, by critically reflecting and deconstructing history through textual analysis, and utilizing the concept of hegemonic masculinity to analyze sense-making practices, it will provide valuable insight into how different groups of people, or identities, are treated differently within society and how they change over time.¹⁷³ In regards to this study, moreover, the texts being analyzed will be historical newspaper documents from the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* in order to understand how mass media

constructed Vince Lombardi as an American sport hero who came to embody values shared by American Cold War culture.

2.2: Data Collection

The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* was chosen as the cultural site for textual analysis and to answer the research questions of interest because, along with it historically being Green Bay's source for Packer news, the newspaper has been tied to the Packers since the football team's conception on 11 August 1919.¹⁷⁴ Considering the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* took on its modern name and form in 1915, it is evident that the two organizations have been intimately intertwined for almost the entirety of the two organizations' existence. In the 1960s, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* was the only newspaper in town and the newspaper's editorial viewpoint skewed conservative, reflecting the community.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, during the Cold War, Green Bay was a small Wisconsin town, and the Packers were the townspeople's religion. At the time of Lombardi's arrival, Green Bay's population was just over 60,000 people. By the end of his tenure at Green Bay, the population had ballooned to almost 88,000 people in 1970.¹⁷⁶

According to current *Green Bay Press-Gazette* editor, Jeff Ash, the newspaper had three different publishers during Lombardi's tenure with the Packers; Andrew B. Turnbull throughout Lombardi's first season; John Torinus (1960-62); and Daniel Beisel (1962-69).¹⁷⁷ Additionally, there were two different editors during this time as well; Leo Gannon (1960-65); and Dave Yuenger (1966-69).¹⁷⁸ According to Ash, Gannon was a crusty old-school Irish newspaperman who had been editor since 1954.¹⁷⁹ Yuenger, on the other hand, started to modernize the paper's

appearance and reporting style, though its editorial voice remained conservative.¹⁸⁰ Coverage throughout the 1960s was traditional for the time.¹⁸¹ Art Daley was the lead Packers reporter from 1960 to 1968 but left the beat when Vince Lombardi stepped down as coach after the 1967 season.¹⁸² Yuenger was looking to modernize the paper's sports coverage as well.¹⁸³ Lee Remmel and Len Wagner replaced Daley on the Packers beat for the rest of the '60s, but Remmel's coverage also was rather traditional.¹⁸⁴

Along with being the smallest market in professional sports, the Packers were also a publicly owned non-profit organization.¹⁸⁵ Essentially, this sewed the Packer organization directly into Green Bay's social fabric. The *Green Bay Gazette*, which would later become the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* in 1915, was founded in 1866, and since then has been the key source of Packers news and history for fans and authors, such as Larry D. Names for his book *The History of the Green Bay Packers: The Lambeau Years Part One*, as well as for David Maraniss for his biography on Vince Lombardi, *When Pride Still Mattered: Lombardi*.¹⁸⁶

The process of my textual analysis consisted of a number of essential steps. Firstly, I gathered the 'raw data.' I accomplished this first step by combing through microfilm of the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* from the years concerning the 1966 and 1967 NFL seasons and then scanned any article that mentioned Vince Lombardi. In doing so, I found 198 articles that mentioned Lombardi. Secondly, I then transcribed the scanned articles into a Microsoft Word document. Thirdly, I read through all the data I collected, which provided me with a general sense of the information and provided me with an opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning.¹⁸⁷ In doing so, I was able to get a sense of the ideas and the sportswriters' tone expressed through the articles, which aided me during the coding process. Fourthly, I began the coding process by organizing the data by bracketing chunks of text and writing the code it pertains to in the

margin.¹⁸⁸ Considering the purpose of my study, the four codes used were: *Masculinity*, *Hero*, *America*, and *Other*. The first three codes are predetermined codes that I expected to find based on the literature, while the *Other* category was an open code used for any themes that emerged during the coding process that I did not expect.¹⁸⁹ For example, in the August 1966 article “‘Played Poor Game... Nothing Will Ease Pain’ – Vince,” the author, Lee Remmel’s reference to Lombardi as “the ex-Block of Granite” was initially coded as *Masculinity* because it seemed to reinforce Lombardi’s physical strength.¹⁹⁰ However, as my analysis continued, and the major themes, storylines, and narratives began to emerge and evolve, it became apparent, considering Lombardi’s role as coach rather than a player, that being referred to as a figurative Block of Granite said more about his strength as leadership than his physical prowess. Therefore, the text was coded as *Other* and exemplified the evolution of a substantial “Leadership” theme of my study. Furthermore, throughout all stages of my analysis it was important to relate back to the literature to further interpret and make sense of the coding of the texts.¹⁹¹

Additionally, throughout all the stages of my analysis, it was critical to be aware of how language was used to communicate one, or multiple meanings.¹⁹² For example, in the October 1966 article “Lombardi, Halas Salute Packers’ Defensive Play,” Lee Remmel’s reference to Lombardi as “the Packer generalissimo” was coded as *America* because of the of militarism of Cold War American society, and as *Other* because it referred to Lombardi’s leadership abilities, and also his Italian ethnicity.¹⁹³

Fifthly, as I examined the data, I further divided the codes into sub-categories. The *Masculinity* code, which comprised the bulk of my results, was broken down into four sub-categories; physical embodiment, occupational achievement, family patriarch/heterosexuality, and frontiersmanship. For example, in the January 1967 article “NFL Ball Catches, Kicks Better,

Lombardi Chuckles,” Remmel’s reference to Lombardi as “pro football’s most successful strategist” was coded as reinforcing Lombardi’s unprecedented success as head coach of the Packers and was first coded as *Masculinity* and then further sub-categorized within the ‘occupational achievement’ sub-category.¹⁹⁴

Sixthly, using the coding process, the codes were then fit into categories or themes for analysis. For example, in the January 1968 article “Casey Stengel Has Three Words for Vince: ‘Don’t Do It,’” Stengel’s quote: “A man like [Lombardi] provides a lesson to other people in all kinds of business” was coded as reinforcing Lombardi transcending the realm of sport and impacting American society as a whole, and therefore was initially labelled with the *America* code.¹⁹⁵ The *America* code fit into a theme of how Lombardi was able to connect with dominant American values during the Cold War and ascend to national stardom. Themes were then interrelated to build additional layers of complex analysis, which were then broken down into subthemes, and then fit into a storyline to uncover possible narratives within the texts.¹⁹⁶

Seventhly, how the themes were represented in the narrative to convey the findings of the analysis will be advanced.¹⁹⁷ In regards to my study, this involved interconnecting various themes and subthemes, and forming narratives as to how the media constructed Vince Lombardi. For example, Lombardi being depicted as a valuable commodity for the Packers and the NFL during the leagues rise to national prominence combined with his strength of leadership and masculinity, which allowed him to connect with the core American values during the Cold War and propelled him to American sports hero status. Lastly, the findings were interpreted and shaped into a results section by relating these findings back to my research questions.¹⁹⁸ My results were divided into four sections; physical force & control, occupational achievement, family patriarch/heterosexuality, and frontiersmanship.

Chapter 3

3: Historical Context

In order to contextualize the results section, it is first necessary to understand the history of Vince Lombardi. In what follows, I first outline Lombardi's family and early childhood, followed by his playing days and education, and finally discussing his coaching history that led to him taking the position of head coach and general manager with the Green Bay Packers in 1959. In order to fully understand the significance of the construction of Lombardi as an American sport hero during the Cold War, we must first understand who Lombardi was and how he became the man who would eventually transcend the realm of sport to be seen as the ideal representation of leadership in America and a "symbol of the virtues needed to succeed at anything."¹⁹⁹

3.1: The History of Vince Lombardi

In the 1960s, Vince Lombardi and his Green Bay Packers won five championships over a seven year span, setting a new standard for excellence that in the more than forty years after his untimely death, no other player, coach, or team has come close to matching.²⁰⁰ Over his nine-year tenure as head coach of the Packers, Lombardi achieved a standard of excellence that transformed him into a legend, and "the best example of a winner" in America, where winning symbolized the superiority of the American way of life.²⁰¹

Vincent Thomas Lombardi was born on June 11, 1913, into a large Italian-Catholic family from Sheepshead Bay, New York.²⁰² As per Italian custom, he was named after his paternal grandfather, Vincenzo.²⁰³ At the time of Vince's birth, Sheepshead Bay was largely an immigrant community residing in a small Southeast pocket of Brooklyn.²⁰⁴ Vince's father, Enrico "Henry" Lombardi, and his mother, Matilda "Matty" Izzo, were both members of families who had immigrated to America from nearby regions of Southern Italy.²⁰⁵ Enrico came to America when he was two years old, and ever since that day, he considered himself unconditionally American.²⁰⁶ Enrico adopted the more American sounding name of Henry, or Harry to his friends and neighbours. Harry, like the other millions of European immigrants that flooded the shores of America around the turn of the twentieth century, faced enormous prejudice and discrimination from born Americans.²⁰⁷ Subsequently, the Lombardis, and millions of families like theirs, were forced into small, overcrowded, dangerous and disease riddled urban slums.²⁰⁸ Despite the prejudice, Harry developed a strong love for his adopted country, while the tough living conditions only acted to harden him and instill him with many of his core-virtues, including a strong character, ambition, and a deep concern for the welfare of his loved ones.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, each core-virtue was symbolized by one of Harry's many tattoos that covered his body. Harry bore his tattoos with pride—proudly displaying his core values that he would eventually instill in his first-born son Vince, including his immeasurable devotion to his family, and love and loyalty for his adopted country, symbolized in a tattoo of an American bald eagle.²¹⁰

Vince's mother, Matty, on the other hand, hailed from the Izzo clan, and grew up in the middle-class area of Sheepshead Bay.²¹¹ Matty was just one of thirteen children of Antonio and Laura Izzo.²¹² The majority of her siblings remained in the neighbourhood, marrying and raising

families, which strengthened the family's size and fraternity and led many people around the community to regard the Izzos as "the first family of Sheepshead Bay."²¹³ Matty's parent's house became the central hub for the family and "throbbed with the daily rituals of a prodigious Italian Catholic family: engagements, weddings, birthday parties, picnics, feast days, Sunday dinner, comings, goings, births."²¹⁴ It was under the watchful and loving eye of this large extended family that Vince, the favourite son, grew up.²¹⁵

3.2: Early Childhood

During Lombardi's early childhood, the family was seen to be living the modern American life. Lombardi was raised to speak only English, but the Lombardis still maintained many Italian traditions that made the family resemble most other Italian-American families in many aspects, such as "the supportive, tight-knit family, the nearby relatives, faith in the Catholic Church, and the bitter taste of discrimination."²¹⁶ However, differing significantly from many other immigrant families, the Lombardis lived away from the slums in a two story wood-framed house behind a white picket-fence in a decent, ethnically diverse, working-class neighbourhood of Sheepshead Bay.²¹⁷ The neighbourhood's diversity aided in hastening their Americanization and helped foster an attitude that was impartial to other nationalities.²¹⁸

Harry and Matty had five children; sons Vince, Harold, and Joe, and daughters, Madeline, and Claire.²¹⁹ Harry and his brother, Eddie, ran their own business, a wholesale meats shop on the Hudson River waterfront named Lombardi Bros. wholesalers.²²⁰ The brothers became prototypical representations of the classic American immigrant success story.²²¹ Henry was a

self-made working man who would rise at four-thirty every morning to embark on his long commute to his place of business.²²² He was powerfully built, with keen street smarts—attributes that came in handy in his line of business, which consisted of lifting and selling meat all day.²²³ Harry’s uncompromising work ethic allowed him to provide a comfortable middle-class life for his family.²²⁴ Harry believed in hard work, and instilled the same sense of work ethic in his son Vince.²²⁵ Lombardi was often forced to help out at the meat shop whenever his father needed him.²²⁶ Harry was a perfectionist—a trait he instilled in his son. Things had to be done his way—the right way—all of the time, or Harry’s explosive temper would flare.²²⁷ When the job was completed to his standards, Lombardi would get paid in cash. Harry gave out no allowances—money had to be earned.²²⁸ Most importantly, however, Harry stressed to Lombardi the importance of having a strong sense of duty, respect for authority, and strong mental discipline.²²⁹

As much as work and a strong work ethic was central to Lombardi’s upbringing, religion was equally as significant. Maraniss argued that it is impossible to fully understand Lombardi without understanding the role of religion in his life by stating “The trinity of Vince Lombardi’s early years was religion, family and sports. They seemed intertwined, as inseparable to him as Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost.”²³⁰ To Lombardi, “The church was not some distant institution to be visited once a week, but part of the rhythm of daily life.”²³¹ The spiritual leader of the Lombardi family was their matriarch Matty.²³² Lombardi took a strong affinity to religion; much preferring the structure and discipline of the Catholic routine to lugging heavy meat around his father’s butcher shop.²³³ As such, he would often accompany his father to daily morning mass at St. Mark’s Catholic Church.²³⁴ Morning mass would become a fundamental aspect of Lombardi’s daily routine that would continue for the rest of his life.²³⁵ By the age of twelve, Lombardi

become an altar boy, and arrived early for every morning mass or special event.²³⁶ He strove to be the one in the place of honour—carrying the golden cross at the head of the procession as it entered the church.²³⁷ By the time he was fifteen, Lombardi’s faith was so profound that he decided to pursue the priesthood and subsequently enrolled in Cathedral Prep—a school the prepared boys for a career in the priesthood.²³⁸

While Lombardi’s faith grew, his love for sports grew as well. He played a wide array of sports growing up, but it had become apparent that nothing engaged him as much as football “where the mission was to hit someone harder, punish him, knees up, elbows out, challenge your body, mind and spirit, exhaust yourself and seek redemption through fatigue.”²³⁹ Lombardi was seduced by football’s mixture of physicality, strategy, and controlled violence, and similar to many other Brooklyn youths, would spend many long afternoons playing football on the sandlots of Brooklyn with his friends.²⁴⁰ Even from an early age, Lombardi’s leadership abilities and perfectionism were apparent on the sandlots to his family and friends.²⁴¹ Harry supported and encouraged his son in football, and taught him a great deal about sport and life. He would tell his son “No one’s ever hurt. Hurt is in your mind!”²⁴²

As Lombardi entered adolescence his faith and love of football grew together expeditiously. At Cathedral Prep, however, violent sports like football were discouraged as Lombardi was studying diligently to become a man of the cloth.²⁴³ Accordingly, he became immersed within the school’s steady day-to-day life—thriving under the Cathedral Prep’s ridged daily agenda. During his time at Cathedral Prep, moreover, Lombardi’s teachers instilled a deeper appreciation and understanding of the importance of discipline and rituals—lessons that Lombardi would carry with him into adult life.²⁴⁴ Lombardi understood that religion was as much discipline and ritual as it was devotion, and realized that success came with faith and obedience to superiors.²⁴⁵

Yet, as the years passed Lombardi experienced a growing sense of unfulfillment in his pursuit of the priesthood; he simply could not ignore his overwhelming passion for football.²⁴⁶ Therefore, before the end of his fourth year, with more than two years still remaining until he completed his program, Lombardi dropped out of Cathedral Prep.²⁴⁷

After leaving Cathedral Prep, Lombardi felt defeated by his decision to abandon his pursuit of the priesthood, but remained determined that he would still make something of his life.²⁴⁸ He turned his attention to a new and ambitious plan—to play football his senior year of high school and play well enough to win a college scholarship.²⁴⁹ During his time spent playing on the Brooklyn sandlots, Lombardi had caught the attention of school officials at the nearby Brooklyn high school, St. Francis Prep, where he enrolled in 1932.²⁵⁰ Immediately upon his arrival at St. Francis, his coaches and teammates were struck by his tenacity and determination, which he used to earn playing time over his more talented teammates.²⁵¹ At the games, Lombardi had his own cheering section comprised of the numerous Izzos and Lombardis who attended every game to support the family's favourite son.²⁵² After a 13-0 defeat to powerhouse Erasmus Hall, Lombardi sat slumped over in the locker room, stained with grass and muck, yet overcome with a rare feeling of joy.²⁵³ He was struck by the realization that nobody on the field intimidated him and, although he was not the best player, he was confident he could compete through sheer will and determination. He was exhausted, bruised, and battered, yet felt a complete yearning and sense of accomplishment for leaving everything he had on the field.²⁵⁴ It was in this moment where Lombardi's love, understanding, and overall appreciation for the game of football grew even deeper.²⁵⁵

3.3: Fordham University

In the fall of 1933, Lombardi accepted a football scholarship to play for the Fordham Rams, becoming the first Lombardi to attend college.²⁵⁶ Established by the Jesuits in 1841, Fordham was the first Catholic institution of higher learning in the Northeast United States, which Lombardi admitted was a significant factor in choosing it over Columbia.²⁵⁷ In similar fashion to his time at Cathedral Prep, he adjusted well to the strict discipline and ridged routine imposed by the Jesuits. Attendance was mandatory and tests came unceasingly, but Lombardi possessed a fine scholastic ability and strong work ethic which enabled him to handle the tough balancing act of football and academia.²⁵⁸ The Jesuits were rigorous academics, and pushed their students to strive to be the best they could be with what they had—be it in academia or in the world of sport.²⁵⁹ Striving for perfection and giving everything he had was one of the most significant lessons Lombardi took away from his time at Fordham.²⁶⁰

Undersized at barely 5’8” and weighing in at a generous 180 lbs., Lombardi impressed his teammates and his coach, Jim Crowley, through his aggressiveness, effort, and determination.²⁶¹ On the line, Lombardi used his toughness, aggressiveness, and tenacity to play bigger than his size; unleashing his forceful character on his opponents.²⁶² Once Crowley took over the reins of Fordham, he led the Rams football program to national prominence, infusing his players with the schools “We Do, or Die” philosophy bent on a complete effort and dedication to winning.²⁶³ This motto was forever cemented into the foundation of Lombardi’s personal philosophy on football and life.

To his teammates, on and off the field, Lombardi seemed mature beyond his years. On campus, he resembled a professional salesman; always sharply dressed in freshly pressed suits and

carrying a briefcase.²⁶⁴ In the locker room, however, Lombardi was confronted by racism. Sensitive to prejudice, he reacted violently towards a teammate who had directed an ethnic slur against Italian-Americans his way, which subsequently landed both parties in the infirmary.²⁶⁵ This incident, which at the time had Lombardi worried that he may be kicked off the team, ultimately resulted in further fueling his desire to excel.

On November 7, 1936, moreover, Lombardi and the rest of Fordham's dominant seven-man-line—known as the Fordham Wall, would forever be enshrined in football lore. The Rams faced fellow national powerhouse the University of Pittsburgh, who had fought Fordham to scoreless ties each of the past three seasons.²⁶⁶ The highly anticipated game featured one the nation's greatest offensives in Pitt, against the powerful defense of Fordham anchored by the Fordham Wall. Playing on the Polo Grounds of New York in front of fifty-seven thousand fans, the two teams played to yet another scoreless tie.²⁶⁷ The defining moments of the game came in the third quarter when Pitt pressed to break the stalemate. Pitt's forty-six-yard drive, the only scoring threat of the game, reached the three-yard line of Fordham. Lombardi had suffered a deep gash in his mouth earlier in the game, which would require 30 stitches after the game, but re-entered the game to aid in fortifying the wall against Pitt's final assault. On fourth down, with a yard-and-a-half to go, having not given up a rushing touchdown all year, the Fordham line held strong despite being exhausted and wounded, with Lombardi making the key tackle to preserve the stalemate.²⁶⁸ That final goal line stand was Lombardi's proudest moment as a football player.²⁶⁹ "Here, for Lombardi," Maraniss describes, "was the beautiful controlled violence of his game, holy war and bloody rite, refusing to yield, ignoring the body's fatigue. We do, or die."²⁷⁰ Covering the classic grudge-match, the *Herald Tribune* asserted "it is doubtful if better or more

savage football was played on any gridiron.”²⁷¹ Lombardi emerged as one the game’s heroes, while Fordham emerged as the finest unbeaten team in the East.²⁷²

Tim Cohane, the Fordham sports information director, built upon the “Fordham Wall” narrative and took it one step further, dubbing the line “The Seven Blocks of Granite,” in an effort to describe the line’s stone wall qualities.²⁷³ Starting at right guard, Lombardi became a figurative block of granite that became a cornerstone of the Lombardi mythology.²⁷⁴ Maraniss dissects Cohane’s “The Seven Blocks of Granite” mythology by stating:

Here... phrase and image converged in the creation of a mythology that transcended its athletic reality. The number seven at once represented good luck and evoked an ancient and permanent lineage: seven seas, seven wonders of the world, seven blocks of granite. That the image was a wall of stone, an inanimate object, gave it a pureness beyond the human capacity... There could be no better time for a perfect and permanent object than in 1936: dust storms rage in the American heartland, the Germans storm into the Rhineland, depression and totalitarianism threaten life all around, but the Fordham wall still stands.²⁷⁵

As being constructed as an essential member of “the Seven Blocks of Granite,” Lombardi was part of a group where his individual weaknesses, such as his lack of size or ability, became insignificant. “The Seven Blocks of Granite” represented a group working as one and acted to strengthen several core values of his personal philosophy, including singularity of purpose, unity, sacrifice, and teamwork.²⁷⁶

3.4: Early Coaching Career

In 1937, Lombardi graduated from Fordham with a Bachelor of Science degree.²⁷⁷ During the two years following his graduation, Lombardi struggled to find his calling. He played some

semi-professional football and reluctantly worked at his father's meat shop.²⁷⁸ He gave law school a try but quickly dropped out after just one semester.²⁷⁹ At 26, Lombardi was still looking for a career. He had met Marie Planitz while attending Fordham and they had been dating ever since.²⁸⁰ Marie was German Catholic on her father's side and Irish Catholic on her mother's side.²⁸¹ The connection was immediate, and soon after meeting, Marie became Lombardi's first and only girlfriend. Lombardi wanted to marry her, but felt the obligation of having to have a career first in order to provide for her.²⁸² Marie's father, Mortimer Planitz, on the other hand, was a successful stockbroker and objected to his daughter wanting to marry an Italian.²⁸³

As Lombardi continued to meander through life—frustrated and struggling to find direction—an unexpected opportunity presented itself which would dramatically change the course of his life.²⁸⁴ In August 1939, Lombardi was approached by Andy Palau, a former teammate and new head coach of the St. Cecilia Saints High School football team, who was desperate to find an assistant coach.²⁸⁵ Lombardi jumped at the opportunity to coach, but was even more excited about the teaching position that came with the job.²⁸⁶ Lombardi taught physics, chemistry, and Latin, and coached the basketball team for eight years.²⁸⁷ At St. Cecilia, Lombardi harnessed his pedagogical skills that would later separate him from his fellow coaches.²⁸⁸ He was considered a very good teacher because he was patient and took his time explaining the material until every student understood.²⁸⁹

As the years passed, it became clear that coaching was the life calling Lombardi had desperately been searching for.²⁹⁰ He was immediately fascinated by the coaching profession; the psychology of dealing with different personalities and the intelligence and dedication required in crafting a winning program.²⁹¹ More importantly for Lombardi, coaching presented him with the

opportunity to be a leader, where, unlike the priesthood, he was not forced to repress his emotions.²⁹² By 1942, he had ascended to the head coaching position.²⁹³ He became a master psychologist—an expert in how to connect with people and get every ounce of effort and ability he could from them.²⁹⁴ With every passing year Lombardi’s coaching style and philosophy on football and life continued to develop. He believed in fair play, yet equated a loss to a sin; being a good loser was just a way of living with defeat.²⁹⁵ Repetition was central to his philosophy; he felt it made players fearless and instinctual.²⁹⁶ Perhaps the most significant aspect of his philosophy, however, was how he stressed that football was a lesson in life—“they were going to get knocked down, but they had to drag themselves up and take another hit and do it right.”²⁹⁷

Lombardi worked tirelessly, working late into the night studying his favourite game.²⁹⁸ Religion remained a critical aspect in Lombardi’s daily life, and at St. Cecilia, football and religion was intimately intertwined in every facet of his life.²⁹⁹ Pregame preparations “resembled a holy rite,” which saw Lombardi lead his team to church to attend communion before every home game.³⁰⁰ Then, once at the field, Lombardi would gather his team on the sidelines before kickoff to recite the Lord’s Prayer.³⁰¹ Lombardi felt it was his responsibility to instill a value system in his kids. Lombardi believed that St. Cecilia Saints football taught discipline, subservience and teamwork, which he considered “the ideal demonstration of proper teenage behavior”—and Lombardi was “the purveyor nonpareil of the football philosophy.”³⁰²

With a steady job, Lombardi felt confident to propose to Planitz. The newlyweds honeymooned in Maine, “but Vince cut the trip short to return home in time for the September 3 opening of football practice, a decision symptomatic of his priority for the rest of his married life.”³⁰³ On April 27, 1942, Marie gave birth to Vincent Henry Lombardi.—named, in traditional Italian custom, after the grandfather, Vincent “Henry” Lombardi.³⁰⁴ Five years later, Susan was born.³⁰⁵

While Lombardi was preoccupied by his football, “Marie kept the family running.”³⁰⁶ As the marriage progressed, she struggled with his constant absence and developed a drinking problem. For the most part, Lombardi, consumed by work, was relatively unaware of the severity of Marie’s issues. He was aware his wife had a drinking problem, however, but told her she simply needed the will and discipline to either control her drinking, or abstain entirely.³⁰⁷

In his eight years at St. Cecilia, Lombardi amassed an impressive resume of success; he won six state championships, and had a thirty-two game winning streak—beating schools that were ten-times the size of St. Cecilia.³⁰⁸ Lombardi biography Michael O’Brien asserted that Lombardi’s time at St. Cecilia was “a crucial turning point,” in his life.³⁰⁹ Lombardi had “arrived as a bachelor, with dormant talents, no profession, and uncertain goals; he left with a young family, valuable teaching experience, an exciting new career, and a reputation for dynamic, successful coaching that won the admiration of almost everyone who met him.”³¹⁰

3.5: The United States Military Academy at West Point

By the time Lombardi was in his mid-thirties, he realized that he had bigger dreams than simply being a high school football coach.³¹¹ He returned to Fordham with aspirations of becoming the head coach but was passed over for the position and was met with more frustration.³¹² After two years, he left Fordham and went to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where he would become an assistant coach under the tutelage of head coach Colonel Earl “Red” Blaik.³¹³

Although it was not ideal to still be an assistant coach in your thirties, Blaik’s assistants were

constantly receiving head coaching opportunities, and therefore, accepting the position was a logical next step.³¹⁴

Blaik had constructed one of the most powerful programs in college football. He was equipped with natural instincts and polished leadership abilities acquired from a background of military training.³¹⁵ Blaik taught Lombardi organizational thinking.³¹⁶ Diagnosing game film was fundamental to Blaik's approach to the game, but Lombardi also learned about assigning grades to players, Blaik's innovative two-platoon system, and his method of taking in as much data as possible and then producing a simple and clear game plan.³¹⁷ Most importantly, Blaik believed that football was life, and, like Lombardi, was dominated by an overwhelming will to win.³¹⁸ At West Point, there was a heavy influence from Blaik's mentor—General Douglas MacArthur. And as such, Lombardi adopted MacArthur's "There is no substitute for victory" motto and apply it wholeheartedly throughout his coaching career.³¹⁹ MacArthur also believed war was like sport, and sport prepared you for war, especially football—the sport that most closely resembled war.³²⁰

Lombardi could be brutish—he pushed and pushed, yet, under Blaik's tutelage, his coaching persona matured, and it became apparent that part of his genius was knowing exactly how far each individual could be pushed.³²¹ Constantly driving his players towards perfection, Lombardi was a natural leader; he had high principles, he was dedicated, he was quick to criticize, yet quick to show praise as well.³²² Additionally, Lombardi displayed an unparalleled knowledge of the game. He had the ability to diagnose several events at once. He preached the philosophical importance of football and correlated tactics and strategy like a military general.³²³

3.6: The New York Football Giants

By 1954, it had become apparent that Lombardi had once again outgrown his post at West Point. Therefore, after five years at Army, Lombardi decided it was time to move on and took an assistant coaching position with the New York Giants.³²⁴ Lombardi's time with the Giants, which lasted from 1954-1958, coincided with an era of significant transformation for the National Football League.³²⁵ America was undergoing the cultural explosion of television.³²⁶ College football, baseball, horseracing and boxing were still more popular than professional football, but television was ushering in a changing of the guard.³²⁷ American culture was obsessed with the new and the modern; they desired the "the biggest, the fastest and the sleekest of everything," which facilitated the decline of the amateur and the rise of the professional.³²⁸ By 1956, the once brutish and primitive professional game "had grown complex and specialized," and was ready to explode into the consciousness of the American public.³²⁹ Furthermore, in 1956 the NFL negotiated contracts with CBS and NBC to broadcast all NFL games, which would bring the innovation and specialization of the modern professional game into the living rooms of millions of Americans.³³⁰

It was clear, the savage and rudimentary days of professional football were over. Football had become a sophisticated game for intellectuals.³³¹ As the offensive coordinator for the Giants, however, Lombardi struggled initially with the transition to the pro game.³³² He was unfamiliar with the professional game, which in turn only proceeded to make him work even harder.³³³ Lombardi was the constant professional—football was his life and he became even more preoccupied with his job.³³⁴ At practice, it became evident that Lombardi's harsh and almost brutish methods of coaching were more suited to the college game where he was dealing with

kids. At the professional level, however, he struggled to earn the men's respect. Consequently, Lombardi was forced to change his methods, and when he did, things clicked and his coaching abilities continued to grow and evolve.³³⁵

At the end of the 1958 season, across the country, the 1-10-1 Green Bay Packers were desperately searching for a new coach to change the fortunes of their once proud franchise. During their search, Lombardi's name kept coming up. Packer President, Dominic Olejniczak and Jack Vainisi, the Packers' personnel director were the two individuals charged with finding a replacement coach for recently fired Scooter McLean, and were intrigued by Lombardi because "Everyone spoke highly of his character, organizational abilities, football knowledge, and forceful personality."³³⁶ Subsequently, in 1959, Lombardi's dream of a becoming a head coach in the NFL came true when he became the head coach and general manager of the struggling Green Bay Packers.

3.7: Summary

From growing up in the ethnically diverse neighbourhood of Sheepshead Bay, Lombardi had learned the importance of family, religion, and developed a love for football, as well as an intense resentment against prejudice.³³⁷ At his father's meat shop, Harry Lombardi, the hard working, quick-tempered perfectionist, instilled in his son a relentless work ethic, a strong sense of duty, a deep respect for authority, and stressed the importance of having a strong mental discipline.³³⁸ Lombardi continued to build upon this early foundation of virtues at Cathedral Prep, where it became evident that religion was as much about discipline and ritual as it was

devotion.³³⁹ At St. Francis, Lombardi's determination, tenacity, and leadership abilities earned his teammates and coaches respect, which ultimately resulted in a scholarship to nearby Fordham University, where, as a figurative block of granite, and an integral piece in the mythical Fordham Wall, Lombardi was infused with the Rams "We Do, or Die" philosophy—instilling in him many values fundamental to his personal philosophy, including singularity of purpose, unity, toughness, sacrifice, and teamwork.³⁴⁰ From the Jesuits, Lombardi's learned the importance of character and gained an appreciation for duty, obedience, responsibility, and the exercise of free will.³⁴¹ Then, during the eight years coaching at St. Cecilia, Lombardi harnessed his teaching abilities, and realized that football was more than just a game—it was life—a notion that Lombardi would further develop under the tutelage of Colonel Earl "Red" Blaik while at West Point.³⁴² Under Blaik—the single most influential figure in Lombardi's life in regards to football—Lombardi's obsession with winning grew as he learned how to properly prepare and organize a winning program.³⁴³ Finally, with the Giants, Lombardi successfully adapted his methods and abilities to the pro game, which caught the attention of the struggling Green Bay Packers. It becomes evident that all the years of frustration, and perseverance had prepared him for this opportunity. Once at the helm of the Packers, moreover, he immediately transformed the culture of the team, the realm of sport, and ultimately American society as a whole, and subsequently set the Packers franchise "on the path to glory."³⁴⁴

Chapter 4

4: Results

In this chapter, using the concept of hegemonic masculinity, I will analyze historic sports media documents of Vince Lombardi taken from the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* that cover the Green Bay Packers' 1966-67 seasons. It was in these years that Lombardi's legacy in Green Bay was solidified, which culminated in his second and third straight NFL championships and victories in Super Bowl I and Super Bowl II. I argue that sportswriters in the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* constructed Vince Lombardi in a fashion that celebrated characteristics of hegemonic masculinity that directly spoke to core American values during the Cold War. I will outline how sportswriters at the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* represented Lombardi through hegemonic masculinity in four distinct ways; (1) physical force and control, (2) occupational achievement, (3) familial patriarchy and heterosexuality, (4) frontiersmanship.³⁴⁵ By representing Lombardi through hegemonic masculinity, I argue that the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* constructs him as an archetypal male sports hero, a successful capitalist worker, and a symbol of the American way of life during the Cold War.

4.1: Reproducing Hegemonic Masculinity through Vince Lombardi

Throughout his nine year tenure with the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi resurrected the struggling franchise on the brink of collapse and transformed the Packers, and arguably American football itself, into a metaphor for the American experience.³⁴⁶ Winning five championships and the first two Super Bowls, Lombardi's Packers were the most dominant team of the most storied period of the National Football League.³⁴⁷ As the expansion of television transmitted the Packers' success across America, Lombardi rose to national prominence to become the personification of the virtues needed for success in Cold War America and a symbol of his famous personal philosophy that equated football with the American way of life.³⁴⁸ By time Lombardi ended his historic run in Green Bay, he had transcended the realm of sport and transformed into a figure of myth, becoming seen as an "American legend," and an "American archetype, as closely connected to professional football as John Wayne would forever be to westerns."³⁴⁹

4.2: Physical Force & Control: Vince Lombardi as the Figurative 'Block of Granite' on the Sidelines

Many scholars, including Butterworth, Messner, Fogel, Trujillo, McDowell, and Schaffner, have outlined that physical force and control are fundamental aspects of hegemonic masculinity.³⁵⁰ Physical force and control contribute to male bodies becoming seen as an embodiment of power.³⁵¹ Physical power is seen as essential for winning, and therefore, success.³⁵² Trujillo outlines that the male body can come to represent power through "physical strength, force,

speed, control, toughness, and domination.”³⁵³ As men’s bodies come to represent power, men are inclined to view their own bodies as “machines,” and “instruments of power and domination.”³⁵⁴ Additionally, Butterworth acknowledges that a figure being represented as a physical embodiment of power is a prominent aspect in the media’s construction of sports heroism.³⁵⁵ It becomes apparent sports heroism was traditionally rooted in physical strength reflected in hegemonic masculinity and American mythology.³⁵⁶ Throughout the 1966-67 seasons, media representations of Lombardi reaffirmed the power of the male body by constructing him as a figurative “Block of Granite,” which evokes a sense of permanence, unity, physical strength and impenetrability.³⁵⁷ By constructing Lombardi as a block of stone, the sportswriters reinforced Lombardi’s physical strength and toughness. However, I argue, considering Lombardi was the head coach, that his construction as a figurative Block of Granite on the sidelines is more significant in what it says about his character and strength of leadership than his physical prowess. Lombardi was constructed as “the Block of Granite on the sidelines,” in control over his Packers.³⁵⁸

The sportswriters commonly referenced Lombardi as “the ex-Block of Granite,” a “former Block of Granite,” “the erstwhile Block of Granite,” and “the one-time Block of Granite.”³⁵⁹

Lombardi was portrayed in a position of authority and in control of his Packers. Hegemonic power is established and maintained through control.³⁶⁰ For example, Lombardi’s authority, control, and strength of leadership was reinforced when Rempel asserted,

Vince Lombardi’s forces were even more niggardly, although this hardly qualifies as a surprise, enroute to forging their seventh victory over the Monsters of the Midway in the Shrine series under the ex-block of Granite’s direction.³⁶¹

Here, Lombardi was described as a strong leader in control of his Packers. For example in another story, the world champion Packers are depicted as under Lombardi's control and leadership. Remmel asserted:

Once famed for pioneering the forward pass, the Packers have become renowned throughout the sports world for their ball control approach since the advent of Vince Lombardi upon the Green Bay scene. It was not true, at least, during the Pack's just completed 1967 pre-season schedule, although this fact failed to prevent the world champions from sweeping to their fourth perfect Grapefruit League record in nine seasons under Lombardi's leadership.³⁶²

Paramount to Lombardi's image as the figurative Block of Granite on the sidelines was his adoption of the tough Spartan philosophy, which can be traced back to ancient Greece.³⁶³ In ancient Greece, Sparta was a powerful city state, rivaled only by Athens.³⁶⁴ However, the philosophies of the two city states differed significantly—Athenian society was centered on education, while Spartan society was rooted in militarism.³⁶⁵ Spartanism was implanted in Lombardi during his time at Fordham and was further developed under the tutelage of Red Blaik at West Point.³⁶⁶ Lombardi's Spartan philosophy spoke directly to several core American values during the Cold War. Spartan mythology is famous for their militaristic society based on conformity, obedience, group solidarity, singularity of purpose, and above all, their vitality and physical prowess.³⁶⁷ The most commonly associated aspects of Spartan culture and mythology, and perhaps most significant in relation to Lombardi, is the celebration of Sparta as a warrior society, with forced military training and relentless obsession with excellence.³⁶⁸ From birth, the process of creating an invincible Spartan warrior began. The government had control whether the child showed the necessary vitality and physical prowess to become a Spartan warrior, and made the final decision whether the child would be raised or discarded. The education system, or *agoge*, supported principles desired to encourage conformity, obedience, group solidarity,

sacrifice, and military skills.³⁶⁹ Spartan warriors were cunning, and became renowned for their legendary ability to endure pain and hardships.³⁷⁰ Competition was promoted, and the Spartans who displayed the most physical prowess were groomed for leadership positions within military.³⁷¹

Throughout the 1966-67 seasons, Lombardi was depicted as a military leader who valued many aspects of Spartanism. Lombardi was commonly referred to as “the Packer generalissimo.”³⁷² A generalissimo is a high-ranking Italian military rank, or “the chief commander of an army.”³⁷³ Here, Lombardi was constructed as a strong military commander in control of his Packers. For example, in another article, when discussing team injuries, Rempel described how “the Packer generalissimo,” reported there was “no official word at this point on the Packers’ other manpower problems.”³⁷⁴ Here, Lombardi is clearly being referred to as a military leader in charge of man power. In Cold War American culture, as in Spartan society, military leadership was highly valued, which makes Lombardi’s construction as a military leader especially significant.³⁷⁵ Additionally, Lombardi was also referred to as “the Pack’s field leader.”³⁷⁶ For example, after Lombardi’s second Super Bowl victory, and rumors circulated surrounding his potential retirement, Rempel wrote, ““Will you coach?” [Lombardi] was asked, a quarry obviously stemming from recurring rumors that pro football’s most successful strategist will step out as the Pack’s field leader and devote himself to his duties as general manager.”³⁷⁷

Lombardi’s strength as a leader and ability to defend against invaders was reinforced when he was “Asked if he had been surprised by the performing of the invaders: 23-14 Packer victims, the ex-Block of Granite was equally emphatic. “No, I wasn’t,” was the crisp, incisive reply.”³⁷⁸ Here, Lombardi was portrayed as a strong, confident, and prepared leader, equipped with the

necessary ingredients to defend against his enemies. For example, in another article, following the Dallas Cowboys playoff win which landed them a meeting with Lombardi's Packers in the 1967 NFL championship game, Rempel asked Lombardi if he had watched the game. Lombardi replied,

“I saw enough to know the Cowboys have a real fine football team.” He had been surprised, it was assumed, at the size of the score (52-14, Dallas). Lombardi emitted a dry chuckle and replied, “No, I’ve been in this league too long to be surprised at anything.”³⁷⁹

Lombardi elaborated with confidence that the “Cowboys present no different problems”³⁸⁰

Clearly, Lombardi felt confident to lead his Packers to victory against the rival Cowboys.

Although Lombardi does not embody physical prowess himself, as a leader, he valued physical strength. Lombardi was renowned for being tough on his players. Football scribe, Mal Elliot stated, “They say Vince Lombardi is a tough man. Everybody in pro football accepts it as fact.”³⁸¹ Lombardi has been described as a “taskmaster,” who expects his players to “settle for nothing less than victory.”³⁸² Under Lombardi, training camps were brutal and grueling and described as “two months of Spartan conditioning,”³⁸³ For example, with the beginning of the 1967 season approaching, Rempel described how Lombardi had his players ready for the season:

Forty minds with but a single thought... This is how the Packers sleek and solid after two months of Spartan conditioning and six successful pre-season ventures, approach the hopefully historic 1967 season, now only 48 hours distant.³⁸⁴

Here, it is evident that Lombardi successfully infused his Packers with his Spartan philosophy, including singularity of purpose. Lombardi also expected his athletes to ignore and play through pain. Professional football features violent collisions on every play which makes injuries

arguably unavoidable. A team's success is usually dependent on its ability to persevere and play through pain.³⁸⁵ Therefore, it is not surprising that American football discourse is dominated by phrases such as "man up," "no pain, no gain," and "pain is temporary, pride is forever."³⁸⁶ Anderson and Kian assert that these phrases are problematic because they "encourage men to position their own bodies as an expendable weapon in athletic war," and "to conceal all fear in the pursuit of glory."³⁸⁷ Consequently, within American culture, the American football player becomes celebrated for his willingness to inflict and play through pain and injury.³⁸⁸ Under Lombardi's leadership, Rempel declared that the Packers have been "noted for their ability to avoid injury through Vince Lombardi's Spartan conditioning regimen."³⁸⁹ Additionally, Lombardi asserted "We don't make a big thing of injuries."³⁹⁰ Hall of Fame running back, Paul Hornung, sustained an injury late in the 1966 season that would end his playing career. When Rempel asked about Hornung's injury, Lombardi replied, "'It's nothing serious,'" and then added "He just wanted some rest."³⁹¹ Then, Rempel reported, "Queried about the condition of Paul Hornung, injured in the second quarter, Lombardi replied, with emphasis, "He'll be ready next week. All of our players," he smiled, "always are ready next week."³⁹² Here, Lombardi is reinforced as a leader who expects his players to play through pain and sacrifice their bodies for the betterment of the team.

4.3: Occupational Achievement: Vince Lombardi as Pro Football's Most Successful Strategist

Many scholars have outlined that success and occupational achievement are fundamental aspects of hegemonic masculinity.³⁹³ Trujillo argues that "masculinity is hegemonic when it is defined

through occupational achievement in an industrial capitalist society.”³⁹⁴ In modern capitalist society there exists a distinct parallel between sport and work.³⁹⁵ Considering sport is perhaps the most influential institution in creating our sense of masculinity, the construction of sport as work becomes a powerful signifier of hegemonic masculinity.³⁹⁶ Additionally, mass media plays a significant role in constructing sport as work.³⁹⁷ Trujillo outlined that mass media represents sport as work in three distinct ways; work ethic, quantifying success, and commodification. These aspects combined to reproduce Lombardi as a successful male worker in an industrial capitalist society. Firstly, through the media, sport reaffirms the concept of the Protestant work ethic, which contains “elements of hard work—typically meaning both physically taxing and overlong hours with little or no time for leisure, pride in work and a job well done, an orientation toward achievement as well as acquired wealth, along with frugality, thrift, and wise investments.”³⁹⁸ By embodying the Protestant work ethic, individuals tend to value their careers over their families.³⁹⁹ When applied to sport, athletes are seen as workers and labourers, and cease to ‘play’ sports. Instead, practices become ‘workouts,’ and the result of the game depends on their ability to out-work the other team.⁴⁰⁰

4.3a Vince Lombardi’s Tireless Work Ethic

Work ethic is a famed aspect of the Lombardi mythology and provided the foundation for his personal philosophy on football and life.⁴⁰¹ Lombardi believed “The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender.”⁴⁰² Although Lombardi was Italian-Catholic, he embodied the concept of the Protestant work ethic by tirelessly working at his profession and relentlessly pursuing perfection.⁴⁰³ Lombardi is quoted as stating, “I thrive on work. I’m restless, demanding,

sometimes impatient and hot-tempered.”⁴⁰⁴ Along with being a fundamental aspect of hegemonic masculinity, work ethic is also fundamental to the American way of life and the “American Dream” of social mobility.⁴⁰⁵ The American Dream gave individuals freedom of choice of action, and provided everybody equal opportunity to rise from humble beginnings to reach the peak of success through economic individualism and capitalism.⁴⁰⁶ There is the belief that everybody can succeed and reach the pinnacle of their profession through hard work, regardless of if your profession is business or football.⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, work ethic is a key ingredient in the reproduction of Lombardi as a successful male worker in an industrial capitalist society.

Lombardi was quoted as stating he considered a day off as a “nuisance.”⁴⁰⁸ Even after clinching the NFL’s Central Division championship with three regular season games remaining in the 1967 schedule, Lombardi refused to relax. Rempel subsequently reported “Relax? So long as a football season is in progress, that word is not to be found in Vince Lombardi’s extensive vocabulary.”⁴⁰⁹ Furthermore, Rempel reported, “The Packers faithful doubtless pictured Vince Lombardi stationed before a television set at his Sunset Circle residence Sunday afternoon,” to see who their NFL championship game opponent would be.⁴¹⁰ Rempel explained, “Such, however, was not the case.”⁴¹¹ Just a day after winning their first round playoff game, it was reported that “the indefatigable Packer headmaster and his staff already were hard at it.”⁴¹² When asked the reason for not watching the game, Lombardi stated, “We were working at that time.”⁴¹³ Here, Rempel emphasised how special Lombardi’s work ethic was. Even when everybody expected him to be relaxing, Lombardi was hard at work. Following the second Super Bowl, ex-MLB manager Casey Stengel, stated “I see the effect he has on his men and how he likes to work... that man Lombardi is such a hard worker and such a dedicated person to

everything he does that he really made me sit down and do some thinking.”⁴¹⁴ Here, Stengel, a Hall of Fame manager, holds Lombardi in the highest esteem due to his incredible work ethic and dedication.

Lombardi’s relentless preparation was reinforced by the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* labelling him as a “taskmaster,” and a “perfectionist.”⁴¹⁵ He had stated, “Nothing the Packers do is accidental,” and been described as “purposeful” and “not given to predictions,” but rather relying on his team’s hard work and preparation.⁴¹⁶ Stressing the importance of preparation, Lombardi asserted:

The most important thing in this game is that you have got to be ready to play. Seventy-five percent of it is being ready to play. I don’t think there is much difference between teams in this league – the difference comes in whether or not you are ready to play.”⁴¹⁷

Zeke Bratkowski outlined the reason for his success by asserting:

We work differently here in Green Bay. I think we prepare better before the season and we are better prepared for each game. We know exactly what we will do in a given situation in a given game but, at the same time, we remain flexible.⁴¹⁸

Porter acknowledges that taking pride in work and a job well done is an essential aspect of work ethic.⁴¹⁹ Pride was a central theme of Lombardi’s personal philosophy and he stressed to his players the importance of taking pride in their profession. Lombardi’s famous pregame speech before the first Super Bowl against the rival AFL, which would decide professional football supremacy, stated, “I want you to be proud of your profession. It’s a great profession. You be proud of this game. And you can do a great deal for football today—a great deal for all the players in the league.”⁴²⁰ Lombardi was often depicted displaying “pardonable pride,” when

discussing the performance of his Packers.⁴²¹ For example, Lombardi was quoted stating, ““Gentlemen, I’m as proud of this football team as I can be,” the one-time Block of Granite told newsmen.”⁴²² Lombardi becomes so renowned for his pride that arguably, “everybody has heard of the famed Packer pride.”⁴²³

4.3b Quantifying Vince Lombardi’s Success

The media represents sport as work in how success is defined and quantified in the form of team victories and individual records.⁴²⁴ Accordingly, sport becomes a vital arena for exhibiting successful and unsuccessful men, in Cold War capitalist America.⁴²⁵ During his tenure with the Packers, Lombardi experienced an unprecedented amount of success. He won five championships over seven years, which solidified his Packers as the most dominant and successful team of the 1960s and transformed Lombardi into “a symbol of the American obsession with winning.”⁴²⁶ In America, success is seen as the ultimate goal within the capitalist market economy.⁴²⁷ As such, success becomes a crucial aspect in the construction of men’s identity.⁴²⁸ Within the realm of sport, there can be no greater signifier of success than through winning. During the Cold War, moreover, winning took on special significance within American society and came to represent the superiority of the American way of life over Soviet Communism.⁴²⁹

Additionally, people who are invested in sport possess an obsession with statistics, records, and therefore, the quantification of success.⁴³⁰ According to Trujillo, moreover, qualifying success is a key ingredient in constructing a successful capitalist worker.⁴³¹ Throughout the 1966-67 seasons, the success of the Lombardi was quantified by way of records, victories, and the

ultimate signifier of success—championships. In regards to victories, for example, Art Daley asserted “In the Lambeau Field span, the Lombardis compelled 23 league wins and five losses, three championship playoff wins and seven exhibition wins.”⁴³² Daley then added, “The five games lost by a total of only 17 points – an average of 3.4.”⁴³³ Additionally, at the beginning of the 1967 season, the newspaper reported that “In eight years Lombardi has forged a football dynasty that is the standard against whom all other teams are compared. His 8 year record is 128-35 & 3.”⁴³⁴ Furthermore, “Since 1960, the Packers have finished no lower than second, winning at a torrid 76 per cent average.”⁴³⁵ Then, after a victory, Rimmel asserted, “The resounding triumph extended a pair of Packer winning streaks and added another impressive chapter to Vince Lombardi’s already glittering record as Green Bay’s generalissimo.”⁴³⁶ Here, the sportswriters reinforced Lombardi’s role as militaristic leader of the Packers, and also emphasized his incredible ability to win by labelling his tenure with the Packers as a winning “dynasty.”⁴³⁷ The media conveyed Lombardi’s frequent winning streaks, unmatched winning record, and historic winning percentage, which still ranks third best all-time amongst NFL coaches.⁴³⁸ In doing so, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* constantly quantified Lombardi’s success, which aided in his construction as a successful Capitalist worker and symbol of America’s obsession with winning.

In sport, championships are the ultimate signifier of success. The sportswriters reinforced Lombardi’s success at winning championships. Going into the 1966 season, for example, Rimmel stated the Packers were coming off “their third championship within a five-year span.”⁴³⁹ Later that year, after clinching the Western division championship by beating the Baltimore Colts 14-10, Ken Hartnett reported, “for the fifth time in seven seasons, the Green Bay Packers have won the National Football League’s Western Conference crown.”⁴⁴⁰ Following the

first Super Bowl, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* took the opportunity to summarize and quantify the success of Lombardi over the previous season:

The victory Sunday climaxed an amazing season record. It all began last September in the opening National Football League game against Cleveland and continued with 11 more victories against only two defeats by a total of four points. This record was enhanced by a victory over Dallas in the NFL title game. The Victory over Kansas City adds up to an over-all record for the grueling season of 14 victories against only two defeats. The record ranks the 1966 Packers as one of the greatest and most powerful football teams ever assembled. The final victory over the American League champions was the climactic achievement for a team which never failed to do what was necessary to achieve such outstanding success.⁴⁴¹

Before the beginning of the 1967 season, moreover, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* published an article entitled “The Lombardi Record,” which quantified Lombardi’s occupational success since coming to Green Bay in 1959.⁴⁴² The article begins stated, “From a dismal 1-10-1 record in 1958, Coach Lombardi forged a 7-5 record his first year and then proceeded to capture Divisional Crowns in 1960, 1961, 1962, 1965 and 1966 and World Titles in 1961, 1962, 1965 and 1966.”⁴⁴³ Here, the sportswriters conveyed Lombardi’s unparalleled ability to win championships. By, the end of his historic run with the Packers, Lombardi had reached the pinnacle of success in his profession more often than any other coach in the history of the NFL and the media constantly conveyed and quantified his championship pedigree.⁴⁴⁴

The most significant record, both in the amount of media coverage as well as in regards to the impact on football history, was Lombardi’s achievement of three straight NFL championships from 1965-67—an achievement that was reported as “something no team has ever done.”⁴⁴⁵ In December 1967, Lombardi was chasing his fifth and final NFL championship during “the Lombardi era.”⁴⁴⁶ The 1967 NFL championship marked five championships in a seven-year span and three straight titles. The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* publicized this achievement as the

“Top Record” in professional football.⁴⁴⁷ On December 29, for example, two days before the championship showdown between the Packers and the Dallas Cowboys, headlines read, “‘Three Straight’ Top Record at Stake.”⁴⁴⁸ Then, on the day of the game, the headlines read, “Packers Shoot For Historic Third Straight Title.”⁴⁴⁹ Additionally, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* sportswriter, Jim Zema promoted the game stating “Sunday’s championship game at Lambeau Field will afford the Packers, as a team to carve a deeper niche into the National Football League record book.”⁴⁵⁰ Following the Packers’ 21-17 victory in what became known as the ‘Ice Bowl,’ reports circulated highlighting the incredible achievement accomplished by Lombardi. Remmel reported that Lombardi, “the Packer headmaster paused briefly to reflect upon that third straight title victory, which assured the Pack of a lofty place in NFL archives.”⁴⁵¹ Len Wagner reported “A proud Vince Lombardi thus summed up one of the greatest moments in the Packers’ rich history,” which was described as “a pressure-ridden race against the clock which swept them into the National Football League record book at Arctic Lambeau Field Sunday afternoon.”⁴⁵²

As the 1967 NFL season came to a close, again Lombardi and his Packers found themselves at the peak of occupational success. Remmel’s headline declared “Super Packers Super Champs Again.”⁴⁵³ Lombardi had successfully achieved what was billed as the “Top Record,” and in doing so, reinforced his success through occupational achievement. Lombardi and his Packers had successfully obtained their third NFL championship in a row, and their second consecutive Super Bowl victory, which capped off an amazing run of five NFL championships and two Super Bowl titles in a seven-year stretch during Lombardi’s nine years as head coach and general manager, which became known as “the Lombardi era”—an era synonymous with success.⁴⁵⁴

4.3c Vince Lombardi as a Valuable Commodity

The media represents leagues, teams, and individuals as valuable commodities in a competitive marketplace within capitalist America.⁴⁵⁵ The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* represented Lombardi as a valuable commodity with instrumental impacts on the Packers, the NFL, and eventually, America. In 1958, the Green Bay Packers were the worst team in the NFL and the small Midwestern town was on the brink of losing their beloved franchise. However, the following year the fortunes of the Packers would drastically change once Lombardi was named head coach and general manager and immediately transformed the Packers into a winner. As such, Lombardi was seen as the integral catalyst and the driving force that transformed the Packers and set the franchise on the path to glory.⁴⁵⁶ Dunnivant commented on Lombardi's arrival in Green Bay, stating, "He was there to make the Green Bay Packers the greatest team in professional football—admired, emulated, feared—and anybody who was not prepared to be relentless in the pursuit of victory could head for the exit."⁴⁵⁷ Lombardi displayed a keen business sense in his administrative duties as general manager and an unparalleled football intellect as head coach, which combined with his strong character to become seen as the integral factor in the Packers rise to dominance. Being represented as an integral ingredient to success, moreover, is a fundamental aspect of being seen as a valuable commodity.⁴⁵⁸ Lombardi established a new standard of excellence and transformed the Packers franchise into the envy of the league, which ultimately led to a number of teams attempting to imitate, what was described as, the successful "Lombardi formula."⁴⁵⁹

Within capitalist America, there is a commodification of North American, male professional sports to the extent that individuals, teams, and leagues are "sold as commodities in a competitive marketplace."⁴⁶⁰ Considering the NFL was in the midst of an escalating battle with

the rival AFL for players, the American public, and professional football supremacy, Lombardi became a valuable commodity for the NFL as the ideal symbol of the superiority of the NFL game. According to Connell, moreover, sport has transformed into an essential cultural metaphor of America's industrial capitalist market society.⁴⁶¹ American Cold War society celebrated professional football players for their manliness, their patriotism, and their ability to sacrifice individual glory for the benefit of the team.⁴⁶² Subsequently, Lombardi transcended the world of sport to the point where he became a symbol, not just of the NFL, but of leadership and several core values embedded in his personal philosophy that were reflected in the American way of life during the Cold War.⁴⁶³

Therefore, as Lombardi rose to national stardom, he became a valuable commodity for the NFL as the ideal symbol of their product which contributed to the league's rise to national prominence and becoming a metaphor for the American experience.⁴⁶⁴ Considering the Packers and the NFL came to reflect the American way of life—where winning symbolized America's superiority—Lombardi also became a valuable commodity to America as an ideal representation of leadership and the symbol of the many core American values that were embedded in his personal philosophy. For example, Rempel quoted Lombardi, asserting “We're in the business to win. Any time I win I think it's sterling... I think it's gold plated,” which reinforced Lombardi's obsession with winning that became such a critical aspect of the American way of life during the Cold War.⁴⁶⁵ Furthermore, Daley published an article about the Packer's success claiming “it all goes right back to their dynamic leader, Coach Lombardi, who molds men into more than football players.”⁴⁶⁶

Before his arrival, the Packers had not experienced a winning season since 1945 and the town was in danger of losing the franchise to a bigger market.⁴⁶⁷ Daley, described that, “The big

switch to winning, of course, started when Vince Lombardi stepped foot on the field in 1959,” and put a stop to the franchise’s 11-year losing streak.⁴⁶⁸ The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* labelled Lombardi’s tenure with the Packers as “The Lombardi Era,” which was defined by winning.⁴⁶⁹ Remmel, furthermore, described how a victory over the Colts “brought the Green Bay record to five divisional titles since they turned over the Packers, the town of Green Bay and almost all of Northeast Wisconsin to Lombardi eight years ago.”⁴⁷⁰ Remmel also reflected the transformation by using the label “S.L.” in the same way that people ordinarily use the designations “A.D.” and “B.C.” to label years, only in Remmel’s case “S.L.” means “Since Lombardi,” which highlights the dramatic and immediate change of culture undergone by the Packers’ franchise once Lombardi arrived.⁴⁷¹ Here, the media depicted Lombardi as the critical element in the transformation of the Packers fortunes.

A significant aspect of how Lombardi was portrayed as integral to the Packers transformation was by him being constructed as a successful businessman. An individual’s business sense and earning power is instrumental in his construction as a successful capitalist worker.⁴⁷² The newspaper described Lombardi as “businesslike,” and as the “boss,” who was in complete control of the Packer organization.⁴⁷³ Additionally, it was reported that at the annual stockholders meeting following his first season in charge of the Packers, Lombardi “showed a net profit of \$75,203.”⁴⁷⁴ By the next year, “it had risen to \$115,728” and in 1966, moreover, the Packers “showed a net profit for of \$827,439.”⁴⁷⁵ By the end of Lombardi’s tenure with the Packers, he had become renowned for his businessman approach to football and life. Stengel described Lombardi by asserting, “A man like him provides a lesson to other people in all kinds of business. He shows them what hard work can do.”⁴⁷⁶ Lombardi’s keen business sense and unmatched success propelled him to transcend the realm of sport to become a significant

influence in the American business world. In turn, “The Lombardi Creed on discipline, respect for authority and the American zeal to win had become the anthem of the business world.”⁴⁷⁷

During his tenure with the Packers, Lombardi was depicted as the best of a new generation of coaches. By the 1960s, professional football had evolved into a modern sophisticated game for intellectuals.⁴⁷⁸ It was clear that football was no longer the senselessly brutal and violent game that characterized early-mid-twentieth century football, but rather a game seen as a “sophisticated science” rooted in strategy and analytics.⁴⁷⁹ Modern football resembled a militaristic chess match where success was determined not just by physicality, but by out-thinking ones opponent. On the football field, Lombardi “correlated tactics and strategy like a military general.”⁴⁸⁰ Lombardi was celebrated for his unmatched strategic abilities and football intellect and represented these qualities as fundamental aspects to his team’s success. For example, Wagner, described Lombardi as “The Bays’ strategist,” “The master strategist,” “The Packer strategist,” “The Packer head strategist,” and “the head tactician,” and “master psychologist” throughout the 1966-67 seasons.⁴⁸¹ Rempel referred to Lombardi as “the Packers’ resident genius,” “the Packers’ brain trust,” and “a shrewd judge of football flesh.”⁴⁸² For example, in the article “‘We Took the Gamble,’ Lombardi,” Wagner asserted,

Perhaps strangely but with the never ending reasoning of a master psychologist and strategist, Lombardi did not pour forth praise for his own team. In the back of his mind, and probably already moving to the forepart, was the fact that the Super Bowl is still ahead... the final step of a long road that began 22 games ago.⁴⁸³

Additionally, Rempel referred to Lombardi as “pro football’s most successful strategist,” which not only reinforced Lombardi’s superior strategic abilities, but his success as occupational achievement as well.⁴⁸⁴ Lombardi had been described as “methodical,” and “brilliant,” when

discussing his strategic abilities that were seen as integral in securing a Packers' victory.⁴⁸⁵ In his article, Wagner talked to Lombardi just "minutes after his methodically brilliant changes had shredded the New York Giants, 31-14, in a game far more one-sided than ever the score indicates."⁴⁸⁶

Throughout his tenure as leader of the Packers, Lombardi was portrayed as an innovative genius whose strategic ability and modern approach was seen to standardize the game.⁴⁸⁷ As such, Lombardi was seen as a champion of the modern game who ascended to reside on a level of excellence unmatched by his fellow coaches.⁴⁸⁸ Within the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, Lombardi has been described as "football's standard of coaching excellence," and "the dominant figure in pro football."⁴⁸⁹ Lombardi's unprecedented success spawned a number of imitators who attempted to adopt the "Lombardi formula" in an effort to replicate his success.⁴⁹⁰ Stengel asserted "He's awakened all the other franchises. They're all trying to catch up to him."⁴⁹¹ Rempel reported that the Packers "will be looking into a mirror at the cavernous Los Angeles Coliseum Saturday afternoon," in a game against the Rams.⁴⁹² Rempel then clarified "All of which means, of course, the world champions will be confronted by the latest in a series of imitations, all wholehearted converts to the eminently successful Lombardi formula."⁴⁹³ Bob Oates asserted, "In pro football, the Green Bay Packers have been the model throughout the 1960's," and that "Almost everybody has tried to play their game."⁴⁹⁴ George Allan, head coach of the Rams, reportedly used the Lombardi formula to model his own design, which was described as a "cousin to Lombardi's," and in doing so, was able to "establish the Rams as a winner."⁴⁹⁵ Oates then admitted that unfortunately "George now has the problem that has confounded Vince's imitators since 1960. Who can play Green Bay football better than Green Bay?"⁴⁹⁶ Additionally, Rempel reported, "It is their record for winning that discourages

innovators. Pro football has had a lot of them over the years, but not lately. Lombardi has standardized the game.”⁴⁹⁷ Here, it is clear that Lombardi became a symbol of excellence and set a standard that caused the league to either convert to his modern and innovative style, or be left behind during a time when the NFL was thrust into the American consciousness.

Along with being portrayed as the best coach of a new generation, Lombardi’s coaching philosophy was also able to be connected with core American values during the Cold War. Lombardi was successful in infusing his Packers with his tremendous discipline. During the Cold War, discipline was considered a necessary ingredient in creating strong men in what was seen as an increasingly dangerous world.⁴⁹⁸ Dunnivant proclaimed “The process of transforming the culture of the Packers started with a renewed focus on discipline.”⁴⁹⁹ Maraniss, on the other hand, described Lombardi as a “symbol of old-fashioned discipline and moral fortitude.”⁵⁰⁰ In the media, Lombardi’s Packers were portrayed as adopting the discipline of their coach and leader. For example, Rempel reported on the Packers upcoming playoff matchup with the Los Angeles Rams, in which Rempel stated, “Vince Lombardi’s highly disciplined troops feel they have a score to settle with the Rams.”⁵⁰¹ Then, on the eve of the historic Ice Bowl, Rempel asserted, “If Lombardi’s highly disciplined disciples are successful, they will become the first team to win three consecutive championships since the league adopted the divisional system in 1933.”⁵⁰² Here, Lombardi is portrayed as successfully infusing his players with his famed superior discipline.

The Packers are also reported as adopting Lombardi’s perseverance and determination. These values are central aspects to the “American Dream” of social mobility during the Cold War.⁵⁰³ Towards the end of Lombardi’s historic run with the Packers, President Richard Nixon wrote Lombardi congratulating him for his achievements by stating, “You have always demonstrated

on the field and off the qualities of faith and determination which are at the heart of true patriotism.”⁵⁰⁴ Furthermore, Lombardi believed “The greatest glory is being knocked to your knees and then rising again.”⁵⁰⁵ In the media, Lombardi was described as having an “iron will,” while determination was reported as his defining characteristic.⁵⁰⁶ For example, in an article discussing the NFL coach of the year candidates, Rempel made a case for Lombardi by asserting:

But a substantial case also could be made for scholarly Vincent T. Lombardi, who was the NFL choice in 1959 but, surprisingly enough, has not been so honored since, although he has directed the Packers to four championships in the last six years—a record unmatched in league history. His iron will and militant dynamism have prevailed over a staggering collection of injuries and miscellaneous misfortunes, which might have submerged a lesser man, in maneuvering the Pack to the Central Division championship.⁵⁰⁷

Additionally, in another article, Jerry Kramer discussed “the Lions great Alex Karras,” after a game against Detroit. Kramer praised Karras by asserting, “He’s got the quickness of Willie Wood, the strength of Ron Kisteinik and the determination of Coach Lombardi.”⁵⁰⁸

Furthermore, throughout the 1966-67 seasons, Lombardi emphasized determination and perseverance, which enabled his team to overcome adversity. For example, Rempel reported that he was “Reminded today of the Pack’s spectacular reaction to adversity as he surveyed an alarmingly substantial casualty report in preparation for Saturday’s Western Conference playoff against the Rams.”⁵⁰⁹ Then, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* declared, “Packers have a happy history of overcoming adversity while overpowering adversaries.”⁵¹⁰ Here, the sportswriters reinforce Lombardi’s successful infusion of his determination and perseverance.

Lombardi was successful in infusing his Packers with the importance of teamwork. Lombardi believed teamwork was the primary ingredient to achieving success.⁵¹¹ Lombardi diminished

individuality and stressed the relentless collective pursuit of a singular goal.⁵¹² During the Cold War, Americans believed that, as a society, they must function as a team and “put aside unimportant differences and have the courage to defend their freedom.”⁵¹³ It is evident, moreover, that throughout the 1966-67 seasons, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* reinforced Lombardi as a strong leader who preached the importance of teamwork. For example, Lombardi declared, “Everything is done as a team.”⁵¹⁴ Following their victory in the first Super Bowl, Daley asserted, “The Packers win or lose as a team.”⁵¹⁵ Daley asserted, “Packers maintained their team unity throughout the Lion game, Lombardi had a reminder himself: “We always play as a unit... we wouldn’t be where we are if we didn’t.”⁵¹⁶

Lombardi’s obsession with winning was constantly reinforced within the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*. Maraniss discussed how Lombardi has become a “symbol of an American obsession within winning.”⁵¹⁷ Additionally, Lombardi’s obsession with winning, or “American zeal to win,” as he called it, was not simply a personal quality, but to Lombardi, was a national necessity.⁵¹⁸ During the Cold War America, moreover, with sport transforming into an ideological battlefield, where winning symbolized the superiority of the American way of life, America’s obsession with winning took on even greater significance.⁵¹⁹ Furthermore, there is perhaps no greater example of a winner in American sports than Vince Lombardi, who became celebrated for his iconic quote that was seen as the essence of his personal philosophy, “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing,” which during the Cold War, became a metaphor for the American way of life.⁵²⁰ Lombardi is quoted as stating, “We’re in the business to win,” “I hate to lose,” and “winning is the only thing.”⁵²¹ Moreover, Lombardi is quoted by Rempel, stating: “You’re only in this business for one thing – to win championships.”⁵²² Then, after an exhibition loss Daley asserted, “It can be argued that this was an exhibition but you people have

been around here long enough that the Packers don't like to lose anything, anytime, anyplace."⁵²³

It becomes apparent, moreover, that Lombardi's obsession with winning had been successfully instilled in his team when veteran wide receiver, Carroll Dale, stated, "We're all human, but this is a professional business and there is no way to succeed except by winning."⁵²⁴

Lombardi was portrayed as having a keen business sense, unparalleled football abilities, and strong character, which combined to construct him as an integral ingredient in the Packers transformation. He was constructed not only as a valuable commodity to the Packers, but for the NFL as well. As the 1960s progressed, and the popularity of professional football increased, the NFL found itself in the midst of an escalating battle for professional football supremacy with the rival AFL.⁵²⁵ Although the majority of NFL players, coaches and personnel viewed their emerging competitor's product as vastly inferior, the AFL, with its flare and offense-oriented style, was fundamentally changing the world of professional football. Previously, the NFL had been the only game in town, and now was forced to compete with the young and aggressive AFL over America's growing fan base, as well as the nation's top college prospects, which subsequently drove player salaries to new and astonishing levels.⁵²⁶ The NFL's triumph was dependant on proving to the American public that their particular brand of football was superior to the AFL's. Furthermore, Lombardi's history for winning and personal philosophy constructed him as the ideal representation of the NFL brand of football. Therefore, Lombardi became a powerful commodity not just for the Packers, but for the NFL as an organization.

In anticipation of the inaugural Super Bowl, which would mark the first meeting between the rival leagues, it became apparent that the game would crown not just the best team in professional football, but symbolize which league was superior. The game itself was held on January 15, 1967, and saw Lombardi and his Packers handily discarded the AFL champion

Kansas City Chiefs, and in doing so, cemented their position as the greatest team in professional football. Furthermore, it became clear “By thumping the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl, the Packers proved their right to be called the best team in professional football,” and also that the product of the NFL was still vastly superior to that of the AFL challenger.⁵²⁷ Daley reinforced Lombardi and his Packers’ role as a symbol of the NFL’s superiority, and in doing so, portrayed Lombardi as a valuable commodity. Daley states:

The Chiefs played it to the hilt and they went down to defeat with no disgrace. But the game proved the superiority of the NFL over the young AFL and certainly displayed the magic of Vince Lombardi, who has now coached the Packers to five division titles and four “Worlds” in the eight years at the Green Bay helm.⁵²⁸

The newspaper then goes on to list the qualities in which Lombardi and his Packers personified and displayed throughout the season, and especially, within the final game against the Chiefs:

The qualities which have brought this success have been pointed out before but bear repeating: pride, hard work, individual effort and talent not selfishly contained by added to the talents and efforts of others in a spirit of unity and teamwork, and respect and appreciation for each other not always evident or practiced in the hard and sometimes cruel world of professional sports. The result of the blending and refinement of these qualities by all members of the team and coaching staff was abundantly clear during the season now history.⁵²⁹

The NFL viewed these values as a powerful commodity because they spoke directly to core American values during the Cold War. It becomes evident that the sportswriters represent Vince Lombardi through occupational achievement by collectively celebrating Lombardi’s hard work, character, achievements, and value—both to the Packers, and to the NFL. In doing so, the media reaffirmed his identity as a successful capitalist worker within an industrial capitalist society by embodying the values central to the American society during the Cold War.⁵³⁰ These qualities combined to reaffirm his success as occupational achievement, which contributes to

Lombardi's construction as the ideal representation of leadership and an American sports hero during the Cold War. Additionally, it was reported that "The Eyes of the World" were on Lombardi and his Packers as they defeated the Kansas City Chiefs. Considering the special significant professional football held within Cold War American society—and America's obsession with winning where winning symbolized the greatness of America—Lombardi's and his Packers' victory in the first Super Bowl represented more than just the NFL's superiority, but the superiority of the American way of life.

4.4: Family Patriarch and Heterosexuality

Many scholars, including, Connell, Messerschmidt, Trujillo, Vincent, Crossman, Gee, Pringle, Messner, White, Wright, Clarke, Anderson, Kian, Vincent, and Crossman outlined patriarchy and heterosexuality as fundamental aspects of hegemonic masculinity.⁵³¹ Connell outlines that hegemonic masculinity works to reinforce the dominant position of men over women in society.⁵³² White asserts, "Traditionally, hegemonic masculinity locates wealthy heterosexual men at the top of this hierarchy, subordinating other men (e.g., men of different sexualities, races and social classes) as well as women."⁵³³ Within American capitalist society, heterosexuality is normalized and largely taken for granted in American society and sport.⁵³⁴ Additionally, sport, especially male dominated contact sports such as football, has played a critical role in reproducing patriarchal values of hegemonic masculinity and "shaping and defining acceptable forms of heterosexual masculinity in Western cultures."⁵³⁵ Furthermore, since its inception, American football has been considered "the most masculine and violent team sports," in American culture.⁵³⁶ According to Trujillo, patriarchy and heterosexuality is reinforced within

hegemonic masculinity by depicting males as “breadwinners,” and “strong fathers,” while women, on the other hand, are depicted as “housewives,” “sexual objects,” and “nurturing mothers.”⁵³⁷ Lombardi is reinforced as a strong heterosexual family patriarch. Throughout the 1966-67 seasons, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* reaffirmed hegemonic representations of male-female relations while reporting on the relationship between Vince Lombardi and his wife, Marie. Not surprisingly, Lombardi has been represented as the ‘breadwinner,’ who worked tirelessly at his profession, and thereby supported his family, while Marie is portrayed as the beautiful woman behind the man who stayed at home. Additionally, Lombardi is portrayed as a strong symbolic father who provided leadership to the Packers’ family. Maraniss asserted, “His players called him “the old man,” and that is the image the name Lombardi evokes—the quintessential father-figure coach.”⁵³⁸ One of the most common terms designated to Lombardi was “major-domo,” which is defined as “the person who runs a large house.”⁵³⁹ For example, leading up to the 1967 NFL championship game, Rempel asserted “the Packer major-domo assured his world champions’ customarily conservative approach will not be altered against the explosive Dallas Cowboys on the Sabbath.”⁵⁴⁰ By referring to Lombardi as a “major-domo” it acts to reinforce Lombardi as a ‘strong father-figure’ and his patriarchal position of leadership as the head of the Packers’ household.

Lombardi’s heterosexual family patriarch status was reinforced when he was depicted as a ‘breadwinner,’ while his wife, Marie was constructed as a ‘housewife,’ ‘sexual object,’ and ‘nurturing mother.’ Lombardi’s breadwinner status is reinforced by juxtaposing him against his wife’s construction as the beautiful woman behind the man who stayed at home. Lois Karin, for example, who was reporting on the post-Super Bowl celebrations, referred to Vince and Marie as the “jubilant coach, Vince Lombardi, and his lovely wife, Marie.”⁵⁴¹ Marie is constructed as the

beautiful woman behind Lombardi by having her good looks reinforced and being depicted accompanying her husband on his work trips. Remmel, for example, outlined that “The coach’s spouse, who customarily accompanies him on all trips, remained behind to baby sit for Vincent Thomas Lombardi, first son of Vincent Junior.”⁵⁴² Lombardi then asserted “This is the first time since 1933 that Marie has not been on hand to see a game in which I have been involved.”⁵⁴³ Marie is portrayed as a ‘housewife’ when it is established how Marie customarily accompanied her husband to every game throughout their long relationship, it reinforced that Marie’s life revolved around her husband’s work schedule and that her family role was as housewife and nurturing mother.

4.5: Frontiersmanship: Vince Lombardi as an Epic Hero

Frontier mythology has become a dominant discourse within American society and sport culture.⁵⁴⁴ Frontier mythology in sport has been linked to hegemonic masculinity and the construction of sports heroism.⁵⁴⁵ Trujillo outlines how “masculinity is hegemonic as symbolized by the daring, romantic frontiersman of yesteryear...”⁵⁴⁶ In his study on sport, heroes, and myth, Crepeau confirms the prominence of frontier mythology within American mythology and identifies three themes: Nature, Will, and Providence.⁵⁴⁷ It is believed that American sports heroes come to embody one or more of these three themes.⁵⁴⁸ Additionally, both American mythology and sport are “driven by performance, the ability to conquer uncharted territory, and the prominence of individual acts of greatness.”⁵⁴⁹ Considering the individualist nature of American character, the role of the hero becomes paramount in their ability to connect to mythology specific to American values.⁵⁵⁰

In regards to Nature, the frontier is often depicted as residing on the edge of the untamed wilderness, where the foundation of civilization has taken root, but is a far reach from the decadence of overpopulated civilizations.⁵⁵¹ Crepeau asserts that “It is at this point of mediation, of which American has so much on its frontier, which gives American culture its strength. It is civilized and yet, still nourished by the spiritually renewing and cleansing power of nature.”⁵⁵² For Americans, the frontier represents a certain freedom and equality where the purist of societies can take root.⁵⁵³ The theme of Will, on the other hand, is personified by the archetypal hero of frontier mythology who is most commonly defined as a “rugged individualist,” who’s charged with the task of venturing into, and conquering “unknown frontiers.”⁵⁵⁴ The hero is armed with nothing but his superior moral character and “tremendous power of will,” which is depicted as his “primary tool in facing the wilderness and in facing life.”⁵⁵⁵ Success is achieved through will power, determination, effort, and superior moral character because “the world is a just and a fair one.”⁵⁵⁶ By undertaking the journey into the unknown frontier, and ultimately, conquering it, the rugged individualist will test his resolve and fortitude and transform into a figure of myth.⁵⁵⁷ Additionally, it is important that the figure displays control so his tremendous will is not seen as “a threat to social control and order.”⁵⁵⁸ Crepeau acknowledges that “The conquering of the self was the most important conquest of the will, and so, a high value is places on self-control.”⁵⁵⁹ The third theme of frontier mythology, Providence, refers to how America holds a special place in God’s plan. In American, there is an assumption that Christians represent a “chosen people” who are charged with civilizing the frontiers of civilization.⁵⁶⁰ Contextualized within the Cold War, Americas are considered special people whose destiny is “to save the world by taking it over.”⁵⁶¹ Throughout the 1966-67

seasons, Lombardi is depicted as embodying all three themes of frontier mythology, which in doing so, constructs him as an archetypal American sports hero and a figure of myth.

Lombardi was depicted as a frontiersman, or “rugged individualist,” and ultimately, an epic hero. Lombardi was depicted as a rural cowboy—a dominant figure in frontier mythology who symbolizes the frontiersmen of American history.⁵⁶² Art Daley framed Lombardi and his Packers as Western heroes, dressed in white and riding white horses, and referred to them as the “Good Guys.”⁵⁶³ Daley argued, “To us folks up here, the guys in the white hats next Sunday will be the Packers.”⁵⁶⁴ Perhaps the most significant example within the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* in regards to Lombardi being constructed as an American sports hero was when he was depicted as “an epic hero—a man who will always find a way to emerge triumphant.”⁵⁶⁵

At the time of Lombardi’s arrival, Green Bay was the laughingstock of the league, and considered to be “the Serbia of the NFL.”⁵⁶⁶ Therefore, Green Bay was depicted as the unknown frontier and Lombardi as the rugged individualist who ventured in and transformed Green Bay into the envy of the league and a symbol of the American Dream. Throughout the 1966-67 seasons, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* celebrated Lombardi for transforming Green Bay through his strong character and personal philosophy centered on hard work and the relentless pursuit of excellence. Daley, for example, proclaimed “The big switch to winning, of course, started when Vince Lombardi stepped foot on the field in 1959.”⁵⁶⁷ Once Lombardi tamed the frontier of Green Bay, moreover, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* labelled Green Bay as “The All-American City,” “Super City,” “The Birthplace of the Midwest,” and “Tittletown U.S.A.”⁵⁶⁸ Furthermore, Wagner clearly represented Lombardi’s Packers as a symbol of the American Dream when he stated:

When the legendary Horatio Alger was on his literacy rags-to-riches kick to prove that nothing is impossible, he failed to mention Green Bay. But while Horatio overlooked the small Wisconsin city of 75,000, perched two whoops and a holler north of Milwaukee, it is next to impossible for any sports follower to make the same error of omission. Where is there another franchise in the robust National Football League which can put two-thirds of its entire population (kids included) in its football stadium? Green Bay can... No city so small has a bigger record in professional football. Since 1960, two years after Vince Lombardi took over as a general manager-coach, the Packers have won Divisional Crowns five times and four World titles... While it is a success story unparalleled in the world of sports where success stories are a dime a dozen, it is a tale which good old Horatio Alger would have loved to write.⁵⁶⁹

Lombardi is also depicted as a conqueror of unknown frontiers, or ‘New Worlds’⁵⁷⁰ On January 16, 1967, following a victory in the inaugural Super Bowl, which marked the first meeting of the champions of the NFL and AFL, the headlined proclaimed “Packers Conquer New Worlds.”⁵⁷¹ Finally, Rummel asserted “A man with no more worlds to conquer, Vince Lombardi waxed sentimental and lighthearted by turns amid incredible chaos in the wake of his most historic triumph.”⁵⁷²

Finally, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* portrays Vince Lombardi as the ‘chosen one’ charged with the task to tame Green Bay and transform the Packers into the class of the league. In doing so, Lombardi embodied the third theme of frontier mythology—Providence—which works under the assumption that Americans are Christians and represent a ‘chosen people’ who are charged with conquering the unknown frontiers.⁵⁷³ The newspaper portrayed Lombardi and his Packers as “Christians.”⁵⁷⁴ After defeating the Chicago Bears and capturing the division championship, Wagner reported it is never easy “Playing in Wrigley Field, where the Packers are thrown to the Bears by the Chicago rabble much as the Christians were once thrown to the Lions by the Romans.”⁵⁷⁵ Additionally, Lombardi was portrayed as a Christian leader and the ‘chosen one.’ Leading up to a game in New York against the Giants, Rummel observed that the game marked

“the return of Vince Lombardi to his former football home, for the first time since 1962, when he shepherded the Pack to a repeat victory over his old team in the NFL title game, and incredible frigid affair in which the invaders outlasted the Giants 16-7.”⁵⁷⁶ Here, Lombardi was depicted as a Christ-like figure who led his followers to the pinnacle of success. This notion is compounded when Remmel refers to the Packers as “Lombardi’s highly disciplined disciples.”⁵⁷⁷ Here, Lombardi was reinforced as a religious leader, while his Packers, on the other hand, are constructed as his religious followers, whose success had been attributed to their adoption of Lombardi’s personal philosophy.

Lombardi was depicted as a religious leader and a ‘chosen one,’ while his Packers are portrayed as his devoted disciples and followers, and his personal philosophy that reflected many core values of Cold War America, became seen as Lombardi’s religious doctrine that is the secret to his, his Packers, the NFL’s, and ultimately, America’s success. Additionally, Lombardi was constructed as a rugged individualist whose strength of character enabled him to transform Green Bay from the “Serbia of the NFL,” into the envy of the football world. In turn, the newspaper reaffirmed Lombardi’s Packers as a representation of the America Dream in how they rose from the worst team in the league to the peak of success and the most dominant team of the decade. The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* constantly referenced the Packers dramatic turnaround and depicted Lombardi as the catalyst. For example, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* asserted,

Vince Lombardi prefaced his arrival in Green Bay in January of 1959 with the statement that he was “no miracle man,” yet within one year he brought a last place team into Divisional competition and then captured the Division Title the following season. From a dismal 1-10-1 record in 1958, Coach Lombardi forged a 7-5 record his first year and then proceeded to capture Divisional Crowns in 1960, 1961, 1962, 1965 and 1966 and World Titles in 1961, 1962, 1965 and 1966.⁵⁷⁸

In doing so, the newspaper reinforced Lombardi's and his Packers' fulfillment of the American Dream.

4.6: Summary

By examining articles in the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* it becomes evident that throughout the 1966-67 seasons, the sportswriters constructed Vince Lombardi in a fashion that celebrated characteristics of hegemonic masculinity that directly spoke to core American values during the Cold War. During an era where America was desperate for strong leadership, and sport and winning took on a special significance, the newspaper reproduced hegemonic masculinity through representations of Lombardi in four distinct ways; (1) physical force and control, (2) occupational achievement, (3) familial patriarchy and heterosexuality, and (4) frontiersmanship.⁵⁷⁹ Firstly, Lombardi was constructed as a figurative 'Block of Granite' which, although contributed to the male body becoming an embodiment of power, spoke more to his incredible strength of leadership. Secondly, Lombardi's unmatched and unprecedented amount of success contributed to him being constructed successful male capitalist worker and as a valuable commodity, not just for the Packers, but for the NFL and America as well. Thirdly, Lombardi was constructed a breadwinner and a symbolic father to his Packers. Finally, Lombardi was constructed as the 'chosen one' and 'rugged individualist,' who transformed Green Bay into the envy of Green Bay and the country. Collectively, the *Green Bay Gazette* constructed Lombardi as the ideal representation of leadership and an American sports hero—who personified many core American values embedded in his personal philosophy that equated

football to life—and transformed the Green Bay Packers into a symbol of the American Dream and football into a metaphor for the American experience.

Chapter 5

5: Analysis & Conclusions

Lombardi's rise to sports and cultural stardom coincided with a period dominated by Cold War tensions in America. Cold War politics played a critical role in shaping the American political, social, and economic landscapes for decades to come.⁵⁸⁰ As the presumed threat of Soviet communism destroying the American way of life, there was an increased significance placed on the realm of sport.⁵⁸¹ Sport transformed into an arena to engage in physical and ideological battle.⁵⁸² Sport became a powerful vehicle to symbolize the superiority of the American way of life, while simultaneously vilifying the Soviet Union.⁵⁸³ Subsequently, professional football's popularity skyrocketed because it was seen to produce idealized American men with the necessary ingredients to defend the nation against its communist enemy.⁵⁸⁴ The media played a significant role in constructing and celebrating the idealized American sports hero who rejected the Soviet Communist theory, and embodied, reflected, and shaped values contained in the American way.⁵⁸⁵

By examining the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* it becomes evident that the sportswriters constructed Lombardi in a fashion that celebrated characteristics of hegemonic masculinity that directly spoke to core American values during the Cold War, where “winning isn't everything, it's the only thing.”⁵⁸⁶ Throughout the final two seasons of Lombardi's tenure as head coach and general manager, the newspaper represented Lombardi as an ideal representation of leadership and evoked a mythical enactment of American heroism.

Posthumously, the legend of Lombardi still maintains a prominent position within the world of sport and popular culture. It is clear that Lombardi remains one of the most celebrated figures in sport with his many axioms on football, competition, leadership, discipline, perfection, authority, and character being still commonly used more than forty years after his untimely death.⁵⁸⁷

Lombardi “was a sterling model for leadership. He was intelligent and organized, persevering and enthusiastic, dedicated and dramatic, apologetic and forgiving, civic-minded and charitable. His character and integrity were exceptional.”⁵⁸⁸ Lombardi was a master psychologist who possessed a unique ability to understand and approach each player differently in order to find the best way to produce his maximum performance. Additionally, he was an inspirational teacher who instilled in his players the importance of professionalism and the many values embedded in his personal philosophy.⁵⁸⁹

Sportswriters reflected this image of Lombardi and contributed to his construction as an American sporting hero. In doing so, it allowed Lombardi to connect with predominately white middle and working class Americans. During the Cold War, moreover, “Football’s cultural power lay not just in the clash of teams on the field but also in the many ways it contributed to an ideal of middle-class America.”⁵⁹⁰ Football reflected the “cultural constitution of U.S. society,” and was considered to be “everything America is.”⁵⁹¹ Lombardi was the most dominant figure in professional football and became a symbol of the NFL during an era when the sport overtook baseball as America’s national pastime and transformed into a metaphor for the American experience.⁵⁹² In America, the primary consumers of sport culture were predominately white middle and working class Americans.⁵⁹³ Through the media, football and the core American values it reflected, was transmitted for middle and working-class American’s to consume.⁵⁹⁴ Green Bay, like the rest of Midwestern America, was a predominately white town.⁵⁹⁵ It was a

conservative “in-ward looking town whose cultural was rooted in the rituals of church, family, neighbourhood tavern and the Green Bay Packers.”⁵⁹⁶ The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* was the main source for all things Packers and was responsible for constructing and relaying the values embodied by Lombardi and his Packers to the people of Green Bay. Sport, and more specifically, American football, was a powerful vehicle for transmitting the superiority of the American way of life during the Cold War.⁵⁹⁷ Through the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, Lombardi sold the greatness of America to its readers. He was constructed in a fashion that spoke directly to white, middle and working class Americans during his tenure with the Packers. He was built up as an indomitable Block of Granite on the sidelines for the Packers who emanated leadership. Lombardi’s unprecedented success was overwhelmingly conveyed throughout the 1966-67 seasons, which spurred some in the media to refer to him as the “saint, known as Success”⁵⁹⁸ Lombardi was portrayed as the prototypical father-figure coach which reinforced his patriarchy and heterosexuality. Additionally, he was portrayed as a leader, a shepherd, and a savior to the people of Green Bay and American which evoked a mythical enactment of heroism and represented Lombardi and his Packers as a symbol of the American dream.

5.1: Lombardi’s Alignment with American Politics

It was clear that Lombardi was able to connect so deeply with American culture that he was able to transcend the realm of sport and became an American icon. Lombardi moral fortitude and many slogans on the obsession with winning transformed him into a powerful political symbol. In Congress, Hugh Carey, the representative of New York declared Lombardi “the coach of our generation.”⁵⁹⁹ It is evident that Lombardi’s socially constructed image that connected with

many core American values aligned himself more with the conservative Republicans than Kennedy and the Democrats. By the end of his tenure with the Packers, despite being a supporter of the Democrats, Lombardi was becoming drawn towards the conservative Republicans because of their “growing hero worship of him.”⁶⁰⁰ Both President Richard Nixon and his Vice President Spiro Agnew aligned themselves with Lombardi’s personal philosophy, most notably his approach to sports and importance of competition and winning.⁶⁰¹ Both Nixon and Agnew touted football and connected the sport to cherished American values.⁶⁰² Furthermore, they both used Lombardi as the ideal representation of American virtue to the extent that Lombardi transformed into a symbol of conservative Republican politics.⁶⁰³ Agnew publicly praised Vince and “aggressively championed Vince’s approach to sports,” especially his obsession with winning.⁶⁰⁴ Agnew emphatically stated that he would not want to live in a society where competition and winning meant nothing and everybody was headed in the same direction.⁶⁰⁵ President Nixon was so impressed by Lombardi’s leadership, character, and overall influence within American society that he approached him with an offer to become his vice presidential running mate on the Republican ticket.⁶⁰⁶ Throughout his career, however, Lombardi became friends with the Kennedys and expressed his support for the Democratic Party.⁶⁰⁷ Therefore, Lombardi would respectfully decline the offer but Nixon continued to hold Lombardi in high esteem.⁶⁰⁸

Lombardi’s mediated image’s alignment with conservative Republican politics caused many who opposed the politics of the Nixon administration—most notably liberals, members of the counterculture, and those who opposed the war in Vietnam—to criticise Lombardi and the values he symbolized.⁶⁰⁹ Following the Watergate scandal, for example, Lombardi’s many axioms on his American zeal to win and particular vision of success was criticised for promoting a

“dangerous win-at-all-costs philosophy.”⁶¹⁰ The Republicans were mocked through Lombardi inspired slogans, such as “Winning in politics isn’t everything, it’s the only thing,” while political observers asserted what America needed was “less Vince Lombardi and more Abraham Lincoln.”⁶¹¹ Furthermore, Lombardi’s critics objected to Lombardi’s image, philosophy, and slogans being relayed as ideal principals for Americans to strive towards and represented him as a “sadistic dictator,” who bullied, abused, and harassed his players.⁶¹² They portrayed Lombardi as a “Little Mussolini,” and a “Mafia man,” who was repugnant, rude, cold, vicious, tyrannical, and treated his players like children.⁶¹³ More importantly, however, was how Lombardi’s critics considered his personal philosophy on football and life as “dangerous, right winged nonsense,” and labelled his public image and the values it promoted as “hardly a model for anyone.”⁶¹⁴ Critics argued that Lombardi played a major role in the widespread abuses seen in sport and American society, and his techniques, values, and slogans ultimately set a poor example or youth and amateur coaches and American in general to follow.⁶¹⁵ Critics concluded that “To make America the Green Bay Packers and the NFL the planet Earth, is fascist rhetoric.”⁶¹⁶ It becomes apparent, however, that Lombardi’s methods, philosophy, and slogans have been misused and misinterpreted by critics arguing the dangerous extremes. O’Brien argued that “even Vince’s harshest critics conceded that Vince himself would have had the presence of mind to condemn excesses done in his name.”⁶¹⁷ It is evident, moreover, that the image of Lombardi can be a polarizing figure, which only acts to increase the need for the examination of his construction as an American sporting hero

5.2: Challenges of Investigating Vince Lombardi as an American Sport Hero

Investigating Lombardi's construction as an American sport's hero presented a number of significant challenges. Although sports' heroism and celebrity is a growing field of research, there has yet to be a study that examines the role of a coach.⁶¹⁸ To date, the literature examining sports' heroism and celebrity focused primary on individual athletes. Previously, there have been studies that examine the mediated image of the coach, but do not focus on the role of coach as sports' hero. For example, one study examined the college coaches and sport communication, image repair rhetoric, and audience analysis, while another examined the difference in media representations of newly hired football coaches in regards to race.⁶¹⁹ No study, however, has deconstructed the mediated image of a coach who had ascended to sports' hero status.

In America, sport, especially football, plays a central role in American culture. Additionally, sport, which historically is dominated and primarily consumed by men, is understood through various forms of representations.⁶²⁰ Through the media, sport stars become symbols of masculinity and how men should behave.⁶²¹ Therefore, sport heroism and celebrity is a powerful site for the investigation of discourses of morality and masculinity.⁶²² Whannel asserts,

The images of sport stars do function as both barometer and thermometer – as means by which the temperatures and pressures of social relations and practices can be gauged. The very centrality of their cultural presence ensures that the ways in which they are represented, and the discursive structures through which such representation are shaped, cannot help but reveal the complex and contradictory ways in which the tensions of identity, morality and masculinity are worked through.⁶²³

Therefore, the historical reading of mediated coach identities, and not just athletes, is important because it provides a different and unique perspective on sport celebrity that has never been explored before. For example, in regards to Lombardi, it became apparent that his role as leader and teacher is uniquely different than if he were an athlete. As coach, the importance of his physical attributes receded to the background while his moral qualities became more significant. Consequently, coaches, as leaders, provide a unique perspective in the investigation of how mediated image communicate how men are supposed to behave. Considering Lombardi is arguably the most famous and celebrated coach in American sport, he presented a unique opportunity to fill a gap in the literature in regards to coaching and sports heroism. Traditionally, sports' heroism has been rooted in physical strength reflected in hegemonic masculinity and American mythology.⁶²⁴ The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* did construct Lombardi as a figurative Block of Granite on the sidelines in control of his Packers, which reinforced his physical attributes. However, I argue, considering Lombardi was the head coach, that his construction as a Block of Granite reinforced his strength of character and leadership abilities more than his physical prowess. Therefore, considering Lombardi relatively small stature and was situated on the sideline, the data lacked a reflection of the necessary physical prowess required to construct him as a sport's hero in the traditional fashion.

The data did, however, reflect Lombardi's strength of character, which connected with American culture and mythology. Hughson argues that an individual can ascend to sports heroism through two ways; through the accomplishments of phenomenal feats, or by mirroring and influencing core cultural values.⁶²⁵ The former become viewed as "prowess heroes," while the latter become viewed as "moral heroes."⁶²⁶ In regards to moral heroes, Hughson used baseball hall of famers Christy Mathewson and Jackie Robinson as his examples of a moral hero. Mathewson embodied

the moral principles of his Baptist upbringing which led sports journalists to subscribe him the nickname “the Christian gentleman.”⁶²⁷ Robinson, on the other hand, displayed unbelievable courage and determination by breaking the racial segregation in baseball.⁶²⁸ Although both were incredible athletes who would have found themselves in the hall of fame on their physical prowess and success alone, their moral qualities allowed them to transcend the realm of sport and ascend to sports and cultural heroism.

Parallels can be drawn between Mathewson, Robinson, and Lombardi. Throughout his tenure with the Packers, Lombardi experienced an unprecedented amount of success that resulted in his bronze bust being enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.⁶²⁹ Throughout my examination of the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, furthermore, one of the areas I received the most amount of data was in regards to Lombardi’s unprecedented amount of success as head coach and general manager of the Packers. Lombardi’s success was constantly quantified through wins, records, titles, and championships which celebrated aspects of hegemonic masculinity. Many of the accomplishments Lombardi achieved during his brief nine-year stint with the Packers remain unmatched more than forty years after his historic run. Furthermore, in similar fashion to Mathewson and Robinson, Lombardi was able to connect with core American values of the period. Lombardi became a symbol of strong leadership and several core values embedded in his personal philosophy that were reflected in the American way of life during the Cold War.⁶³⁰ Therefore, it becomes apparent that Lombardi’s unprecedented amount of success would have landed in the Hall of Fame alone, but it was his moral fortitude and strength of leadership which propelled him to transcend the realm of sport to becoming an American sporting hero.

5.3: Lombardi's Italian Ethnicity

The mediated image of Vince Lombardi represents an important site for experiencing of race in contemporary American society. One of the most intriguing aspects of Lombardi's construction as an American sport's hero is the fact that he is of Italian heritage. Traditionally, sports' heroism works alongside the assumption that whiteness—in sport and American society—is largely a taken for granted concept.⁶³¹ Whiteness is considered to be a social norm and goes unmarked.⁶³² Subsequently, non-whites become labelled as “Others.”⁶³³ It has been argued that the construction of sports heroes within America's core sporting pastimes function to normalize and naturalize whiteness at the centre of American culture and society.⁶³⁴ When examining media representations of Vince Lombardi, this notion becomes especially significant because of his Italian heritage. Lombardi's parents both emigrated from Italy during the mass European migration that occurred in America around the turn of the twentieth century.⁶³⁵ Immediately upon arrival on the shores of America, Italians and many Europeans were classified as “not white,” and subsequently faced enormous prejudice.⁶³⁶ This ongoing struggle for Italian-Americans continued throughout the early part of the twentieth century and into the Cold War era. It was apparent that Lombardi battled prejudice along the road to sports heroism.⁶³⁷ Vince's reaction to prejudice was one of the driving forces of his life—he always felt like he had something to prove.⁶³⁸ Within the realm of sport, individuals who are not white are traditionally constructed as ideal representations of the American Dream.⁶³⁹ As such, an argument can therefore be made for Lombardi. It is evident that Lombardi ascended from humble beginnings—hailing from the ethnically diverse, working-class neighbourhood of Sheepshead Bay—to the pinnacle of success and transcending the realm of sport to becoming an American icon.⁶⁴⁰ In that sense, Lombardi becomes an ideal representation of the American Dream of

social mobility. Upon examining the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, however, Lombardi's Italian heritage largely went unspoken. The only reference to his Italian heritage was through Lombardi being labelled as the "Packer Generalissimo."⁶⁴¹ A generalissimo is a high-ranking Italian military rank, which reinforced Lombardi's race and strength as a leader.⁶⁴² In sports media, the American Dream and the commodification of sport work alongside each other. Capitalist American society is based on a "consumer culture predicated on the principle that anything... can be bought in the market. This includes the end of racism."⁶⁴³ By constructing non-white individuals as examples of the American Dream, the media acts to diminish racial issues within the United States. For example, Lombardi became a symbol that race was no longer an issue in America. If Lombardi—a non-white—could make it, why couldn't others? Therefore, media constructions of the American Dream become problematic because it projects that the racial issues within America are solved and no longer requires critical attention—which becomes especially significant when contextualized within the 1960s where the Civil Rights movement was raging.

In order to fully understand how Lombardi was able to ascend to sports heroism is by examining him alongside other "not white" individuals who were able to do the same, such as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods. Both Jordan and Woods become exceptions to the rule that an individual has to be white to ascend to sports heroism in America. Studies investigating the sporting celebrity of Jordan and Woods, however, argue that this is done by aligning themselves with hegemonic, or "white," masculinity.⁶⁴⁴ Jordan and Woods were described as 'a non-threatening, non-controversial black athlete.'⁶⁴⁵ Jordan was viewed as a leader amongst the "others," and Woods was viewed as his heir.⁶⁴⁶ Although non-white athletes are stereotypically depicted as arrogant, selfish, and showboats, Jordan's and Wood's public personas contested

such racial stereotypes and allowed them to “transcend traditional racial categories.”⁶⁴⁷ By aligning themselves with more traditionally white, or hegemonic values, Jordan and Woods became more marketable to the American public.⁶⁴⁸ As such, both Jordan and Woods became valuable commodities. Jordan, for example, reportedly helped Nike sell US\$5.2 billion worth of Air Jordan footwear.⁶⁴⁹ Jordan’s marketing strategy, which was later adopted by Woods, was summarized as “Get the money, don’t say anything substantial and for heaven’s sake, never offend white people.”⁶⁵⁰ Furthermore, Jordan was also aligned with the politics of his time. He “evoked and embodied the duplicitous racial politics of the Reaganite moment.”⁶⁵¹ Andrews argues that Jordan “spoke to the conjunctural iterations of race and racial difference” embedded in Reagan’s “racially blind ethos” through his construction in the media as a “racially idealized neoliberal embodiment.”⁶⁵²

By understanding Jordan’s ascendancy to sports and cultural celebrity, insight is provided into how Lombardi was able to accomplish the same feat. By examining Lombardi through a contextual lens, parallels can be drawn between Jordan’s ascendancy to sports and cultural celebrity and Lombardi’s. Both Lombardi and Jordan were racially classified as not white, or “Others.”⁶⁵³ Both were able to align themselves with traditionally white, or hegemonic, masculinity.⁶⁵⁴ Both were sold as valuable commodities in a competitive marketplace. And both aligned themselves with the politics of their given eras. Furthermore, Lombardi’s race went largely unspoken which works to construct Lombardi as an acceptable form of not white. According to Rhodes, despite lingering prejudice, ethnically Italian individuals were making significant advancements towards been considered white in American Cold War society.⁶⁵⁵ Heavy weight champion boxer, Rocky Marciano, for example, was largely constructed as white in the media.⁶⁵⁶ Marciano was constructed as “The Great White Hope,” and was considered an

“All-American” boy and was able to achieve “hero status,” despite his Italian ancestry.⁶⁵⁷

Rhodes argued that Marciano was an “embodiment of both Americanism and Whiteness.”⁶⁵⁸

Rhodes’ arguments shed light on how Lombardi was able to achieve sports and cultural heroism despite him being Italian. Considering Lombardi’s race largely went unspoken within the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, and the fact that Italians were inching closer to whiteness, Lombardi’s achievement of sports heroism placed him in a unique and rare category of non-white individuals who were able to achieve sports hero status.

It has to be noted, however, that despite Lombardi and other non-white individuals ability to ascend to sports and cultural heroism, race remains an issue in need of critical attention.

Scholars have outlined the problematic notion of degrees of race.⁶⁵⁹ Russell, Wilson, and Hall argue there is a “color complex” that, for example, where darker-skinned blacks consider lighter-skinned blacks to be “not black enough.”⁶⁶⁰ Furthermore, individuals, such as Michael Jordan, who have been able to ascend to sports heroism and been able to connect with hegemonic or white masculinity have been criticized by the black community for not being “black enough.”⁶⁶¹

Furthermore, Butterworth argued that “Only by revisiting and critiquing the rhetorical construction of race, especially in the ever-present sports media, can we hope to move beyond the currently limited conception of racial inclusion and representation.”⁶⁶²

5.4: Conclusion

During the Lombardi era, he was constructed in the media in a fashion that celebrated characteristics of hegemonic masculinity that directly spoke to core American values during the

Cold War. Lombardi's socially constructed image was held up as a shining example of moral fortitude which aligned him with the conservative Republican politics of the era. Throughout his tenure with the Packers, Lombardi was seen as a valuable commodity for his Packers, the NFL and Capitalist America. Additionally, his Italian ancestry was considered an acceptable form of non-white during an era where Italians were inching closer to being seen as white. Collectively, Lombardi was able to transcend the realm of sport and ascend to sports and cultural heroism. The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* was the primary mode for consuming sport for the people of Green Bay. The media plays a powerful role in the construction of these athletes' identities which facilitates a connection to a predominately white mainstream American audience.⁶⁶³ The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* was a newspaper who spoke to a traditionally conservative, predominately white audience and constructed Lombardi in a fashion that spoke to traditional American values. The writers' livelihoods were dependent on selling the mythology of sport as reality.⁶⁶⁴ The media functions to create a sense of belonging within a community. The population is assumed to be representative of their nation or state and is encouraged to view the news as part of their own identity.⁶⁶⁵ During the Cold War, football symbolized America's greatness, and Lombardi was a symbol of the NFL. By the end of his tenure with the Packers, Lombardi had transcended the realm of sport culture and transformed into a symbol of American superiority. Therefore, readers of the newspaper were invited to view Lombardi as an ideal representation of American character. The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* played a significant role in constructing, (re)producing, and reinforcing narratives and images, meaning, understandings, and values within American Cold War society. In doing so, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* contributed to portraying Lombardi—a heterosexual "white" male who buys into and represents Capitalist America—as normal.

It is critical to investigate the way sport culture functions and how sport is consumed within society. Sport is a powerful institution for the construction and reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity.⁶⁶⁶ Additionally, sports heroes play a prominent role in reproducing dominant forms of masculinity.⁶⁶⁷ Sports, and more specifically, sport heroes, offer more than a mere escape from reality, but rather an “immersion in the values and practices from which we attempt to escape.”⁶⁶⁸ Sports media is fundamental to the existence of sport culture because the writers and broadcasters provide meaning to the individuals, teams, leagues, and events that comprise sports culture.⁶⁶⁹ Sports media operates twenty-four hours a day and produces an overwhelming amount of material for consumption that acts to reflect dominate values of the wider society, but in doing so, also acts to promote problematic values as well.⁶⁷⁰ Trujillo argued “Hegemonic masculinity in mediated sport also has negative consequences for men which should be analyzed and critiqued.”⁶⁷¹ By (re)producing and reinforcing hegemonic masculinity, Lombardi’s construction as an American sports hero acts to marginalize women as well as other masculinities that don’t fit the hegemonic mold, which acts to restrict “access to socially valued resources such as wealth, income, social statues, and group membership.”⁶⁷² Recently, moreover, the dominant form of masculinity seen in professional sport has fallen under criticism by the study of women’s sport, gay and lesbian athletes and investigations of changes in racism in sport.⁶⁷³ Additionally, the increased awareness and research into head trauma in violent sports such as football has also contested dominant forms of masculinity in sport.⁶⁷⁴ By investigating how sport is consumed, moreover, it provides understanding to how the media is able to maintain hegemony.

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