

Pink in the Rink: The Decline of Women Coaches in College Ice Hockey  
Post-Title IX

by

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## **Introduction**

Since the nineteenth century, women have been participating in organized sports; however, throughout the twentieth century, as sport became an institution within American society, women's participation in sport was marginalized and in many ways prohibited. As participation and popularity of amateur and professional sports in America grew, like most public activities, sports were and continue to be male dominated—a location that produces and upholds masculine norms. Women's participation in sport was minimal until the passage of Title IX in 1972 which ensured that: "No person in the United States shall on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (US Code 1972: Section 1681). Title IX has had the greatest impact on women's high school and college athletic programs, initiating exponential growth in women's participation and funding for women's athletics.

Despite these gains in opportunity for women, sport has maintained its position as a male dominated institution. Women have struggled to gain support and respect for their athletic endeavors in areas of sport not covered by Title IX, such as professional leagues, leadership of sports teams, and media representation of women athletes and sports. After the passage of Title IX, the percentage of women coaching women's college sports declined steeply, from 90% before 1972, when Title IX was passed, to 58.2% in 1978 (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). An initial decline in the percentage of women head coaches in the years following Title IX was to be expected, when the pool of college-experienced women athletes was still relatively small compared to the demand for coaches due to the growth of women's participation in sport. However, the continuous decline in the percentage of women head coaches in college athletics,

from 58.2% in 1978 to 42.6% in 2010, is troubling (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). Considering we are 40 years removed from the passage of Title IX, as the pool of college-experienced female athletes has grown, one would expect to see an increase in the percentage of women head coaches, although such an improvement has not occurred.

This essay focuses on the further and equally confounding finding that the decline in the percentage of women head coaches has been inconsistent between sports: in Women's Division I College Ice Hockey, for example, 31.3% of head coaching positions were held by women in 2010 while Women's Division I College Basketball had 69.1% women head coaches (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). When other scholars attempt to explain the decline in the percentage of women head coaches after Title IX, they looked at overall percentages across women's college sports, beginning with the popular statistic that before the enactment of Title IX 90% of women's college sports teams had a women head coach, and by 2010 that percentage had dropped to 42.6% (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). Although this type of examination highlights the overall problem of a decline in women's presence in leadership positions at the college level, it ignores the individual situation of each sport. To illuminate some of the conclusions that I come to regarding the large gap between the percentage of women head coaches in Division I Women's College Basketball and Ice Hockey within the larger context of the continued overall decline in the percentage of women's head coaches in all women's college sports, I rely heavily on Acosta and Carpenter's longitudinal study which has been conducted annually 1977-2010<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This study is the major data set used by scholars who write about the decline in the percentage of women's head coaches in college sports. The study is comprehensive in that it includes all sports offered at the collegiate level and looks at various positions within women's college sports: participation rates for female student-athletes, percentages and numbers of women head coaches, assistant coaches and athletic directors. The absolute number of coaches is a less important figure than the percentage because each sport has a different number of teams at the Division I level, and these numbers vary significantly between sports and changed considerably for each sport between 1992 and 2010.

Although my paper focuses on the discrepancy in the percentage of women's head coaches in Women's Division I Ice Hockey compared to Basketball, it is important to recognize the situation of other sports, such as Lacrosse, Softball, Soccer and Field Hockey, to highlight the inconsistencies in the decline in the percentage of women head coaches. As Table 2 indicates (See Appendix), Division I Lacrosse (91.7%) and Field Hockey (91.1%) had an extremely high percentage of women head coaches in 2010, yet still experienced a decline from 1992<sup>2</sup>, when 96.4% of Lacrosse coaches and 98.1% of Field Hockey head coaches were women. Division I Softball (71.6% in 1992 and 65.7% in 2010) has a frequency of women head coaches more on par with Basketball (72.2% in 1992 and 69.1% in 2010); whereas Division I Women's Soccer, with 27% women head coaches in 1992 and a slight increase in 2010 at 32.7%, is more similar to Division I Women's Ice Hockey which in 1992 had 29% women head coaches and in 2010 had slightly increased to 31.3% (See Appendix, Acosta and Carpenter 2010).

The conclusions I come to regarding the gap between women in head coaching positions for Basketball and Ice Hockey are not intended to explain the variety seen between Field Hockey, Soccer, Lacrosse and Softball; however, the analytic framework I use to understand the discrepancy between Ice Hockey and Basketball is broad enough to be used in a comparison of other sports. This essay is an individual case study that will show that although the factors affecting each women's sport are similar, the discrepancy is created between sports, by *the degree* to which each factor—historical, structural or cultural—affects an individual sport.

To explain and understand what has led to the gap in women's representation in head coaching positions between Women's Division I Ice Hockey (31.3%) and Women's Division I Basketball (69.1%) I begin with a history detailing the opportunities for women in basketball and

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<sup>2</sup> The first year Acosta and Carpenter recorded data by Division I, II and III (See Appendix).

ice hockey throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. I continue with an analysis of the structural factors within the organization and governance of these two sports and within the labor market that may affect women in the profession of coaching, and I end with an examination of the cultural significance of women's entrance into sport, and the specific cultural stereotypes affecting women in ice hockey and basketball, as well as the profession of coaching. Most important to my analysis is the effect that traditional notions of masculinity and femininity have had on cultural perceptions of women's entrance into sport and specifically into ice hockey due to the idealization of ice hockey within sports as a location of hegemonic masculine norm production and achievement.

## **Literature Review**

### **Sports**

The phrase "sports mirrors life" is understood and used frequently within American society by sportswriters, fans, athletes, coaches and anyone else that has ever participated in or come into contact with sports. Sports' status as an institution within American society (Williams 1970: 37) is complete, with established norms that are "widely known, accepted and applied" as well as "internalized in individual personalities" (Edwards 1973: 84). Sports have become such a large part of American culture and society that, without careful consideration of the implications, Americans proclaim that sports mirrors life. There are positive aspects that people see reflected in sports, such as the values of hard work, athletes overcoming obstacles to succeed, teamwork and the pursuit of excellence; however, the oppressive ideologies within American society that lead to social inequality—racism, sexism, unequal distribution of wealth and homophobia—are all also reflected in sports, from the lowest level of organized youth sport up through professional leagues.

Sport is not merely another institution in which society's ills are reflected: "it has primary functions in disseminating and reinforcing the values regulating behavior and goal attainment and determining acceptable solutions to problems in the secular sphere of life" (Edwards 1973: 90). One of these values, traditionally associated with the division of labor within society, at one time justified in terms of biological difference linked to sex, and now understood through feminist critiques as an attempt to maintain longstanding notions of masculinity and femininity, is the traditional exclusion of women from athletic opportunities and current devaluation of women's sports in society. This exclusion of women is marked by lack of professional leagues for women (Theberge 1985), sexualization of female athletes in media representations (Messner 1988, Theberge 1985), lack of women in leadership positions within sports (Theberge 1993, Acosta and Carpenter 1977-2010, Stangl and Kane 1991, Knoppers 1987), and significantly less media coverage of women's sports than men's sports (Messner 1988, Theberge 1985).

### **Gender and Sports**

In considering the hurdles women faced initially in their participation in sports and currently with the struggle to maintain and gain leadership positions within college sports and respect for athletic performances, it is necessary to go beyond an understanding of women's appearance in sports as a transgression against traditional femininity. For sport to remain an institution in which men can accomplish masculinity, the exclusion of individuals that are considered unable to achieve traditional forms of masculinity, women, must be maintained (Whitson 1990, Willis 1994, Theberge 1997). Dunning (1986) and Whitson (1990) argue that sport has been established as a "male preserve," a site where masculine norms are reinforced, spread and achieved by individual boys and men (Whitson 1990: 20). In the onslaught of feminist critiques of sport (as a sexist institution that marginalized and excluded women) that

gathered momentum within the 1980's and 1990's, came a similar barrage of criticism from scholars interrogating sports' promotion of a hegemonic notion of masculinity. Scholars such as Whitson (1990, 1994) and Messner (1988) recognized that the current production of masculinity within sports led to the denial of an existence and possibility for alternative forms of masculinity in sport and society, creating a restrictive environment for both women and men (Whitson 1990, 1994).

Even within sports there is a hierarchy of activity and competition based on the level of traditionally masculine behavior required. Team sports that involve physical contact, "direct personal confrontation," aggression and "dominating and subduing" one's competition, such as ice hockey and football (Whitson 1990, Whitson 1994, Messner 1988), are regarded as ultimate locations of masculine achievement. Despite women's movement into and increased participation in many sports, such as basketball, swimming and soccer (Acosta and Carpenter 1977-2010), there has been very little of women's participation in football and an entirely different set of rules created, most notably the prohibition of body checking, for women's ice hockey. "Ice hockey as a 'man's game' is somehow ruined by the enforcement of the rules against physical intimidation and violence;" (Whitson 1990: 22) therefore, for ice hockey to maintain its high status within the hierarchy of masculine sports, women are excluded from equal participation through the creation of separate rules, effectively distancing women from men and allowing ice hockey to remain a male preserve. Separate rules for women have the dual effect of devaluing women's participation as well as reaffirming men's ice hockey as the ideal because it allows bodychecking and fighting.

Rebecca Lock's examination of the rule differences between women and men's ice hockey posits the creation of a female version of ice hockey as an attempt to regulate gender and

enforce traditional and acceptable forms of sexuality. In Lock's focus on women's ice hockey she explores the effects that rule differences, such as requirement of a face mask for women, as well as the prohibition of body checking, have on, "actually materializing the female hockey player as different from the male" (Lock 2006: 167) and leading to "women hockey players think(ing) of themselves not as hockey player per se, but as 'female hockey players'" (Lock 2006: 165). Although this analysis lacks an interrogation and understanding of the importance of hegemonic masculinity within men's ice hockey, and the production of gender separate from sex and sexuality, Lock provides context for the significance that sex-based different versions of ice hockey has both socially and in sports.

Theberge tackles the pieces missing from Lock's analysis, the production of gender in both men and women's ice hockey, in "It's Part of the Game: Physicality and the Production of Gender in Women's Hockey" (1997). Through her ethnographic research on an adult, Canadian women's ice hockey team, Theberge explores the various ways gender is produced within women's ice hockey, as well as how individual participants internalize playing with different rules than men's ice hockey, specifically the lack of body checking. Theberge has a similar finding to what I have observed and experienced playing women's ice hockey: some women are proud of playing a different game and try to use these differences to show how the women's game is in some ways superior (Theberge 1997: 75) while other women would rather be able to body check, or at least see more physical contact allowed in women's ice hockey. Although Theberge acknowledges that having different rules for ice hockey based on gender norms does nothing to "challenge traditional ideologies of gender" by positioning women's ice hockey "as a milder version of the sport that 'really counts'" (Theberge 1997: 84), she concludes that for women to gain empowerment within ice hockey and other sports is effectively impossible.

Theberge suggests that women should look elsewhere for empowerment: to individual sports, such as running or aerobics (Theberge 1997), or to less competitive, safety-conscious feminist alternatives of team sports like the women's softball league described by Susan Birrell and Diana M. Richter (1987) in "Is a Diamond Forever? Feminist Transformations of Sport."

Theberge assumes that women will be unable to gain empowerment in male dominated sports like ice hockey because the version of the game women play will always be considered the lesser version; furthermore, the traditionally masculine notions within sport such as playing through pain, winning without consideration for opponents' safety, as well as the seriousness with which it is assumed men take competitive sports, prevent the success of women within athletic environments. However, creating female-friendly alternatives to the current sporting culture within society, which reinforces and disseminates a hegemonic masculine ideology, only leaves sports intact as a male preserve. Furthermore, this feminist transformation alienates women who desire to participate in these especially masculine sports, as well as excluding the possibility that men who enjoy non-contact sports are not achieving masculinity, and assuming that competitive, team contact sports is the only avenue to achieve masculinity. Birrell, Richter and Theberge's proposal is an appropriate alternative for some, but it ignores the complexities of gender production within sport, as well as the participation patterns of women in sports.

Thus far sport has been considered mostly as a monolithic entity, a bastion of male privilege and masculine hegemony, reflecting and maintaining social inequalities. However, throughout the development of organized sports in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and especially since the passage of Title IX, women's participation in all levels of amateur athletics has consistently grown (Women's Sports Foundation 2008; Acosta and Carpenter 1977-2010). Despite these encouraging trends in amateur participation, the lack of women in leadership

positions, as coaches and athletic administrators, is discouraging and demands further examination (Knoppers 1987, Stangl and Kane 1991, Theberge 1993, Acosta and Carpenter 1977-2010).

### **Gendered Employment**

To understand the decline in the percentage of women college coaches since the passage of Title IX, it is necessary to approach coaching beyond its connection to sport and to consider its position as an occupation within the larger context of gender relations in the labor force. Roos and McDaniel (1996) argue: there is both a sex composition for occupations, “the representation of men and women in particular occupations,” as well as a gender typing “process through which occupations come to be seen as appropriate for workers with masculine or feminine characteristics” of any given profession (Britton 2000: 424). On the most basic level, a male occupation may be defined as one in which more men than women are employed. To go beyond that, one might also see a job typed masculine as one that, similar to confrontational, body contact sports, has particular notions of hegemonic masculinity attached to it, professions where conventional masculinity are reinforced and achieved. However, similar to sports, although men may numerically and ideologically dominate certain professions, this domination has not stopped women from seeking entrance.

There are three basic approaches to understanding the relationship of gender typing and sex composition between workers and work environments, occupations or organizations. First, an individual model “assumes that the worker shapes the workplace” as the workers bring their already gendered characteristics with them: second, an organizational model assumes that “the structure of the workplace shapes the worker” (Knoppers 1987: 9). Third, an interactional model assumes a symbiotic relationship between the organizational and individual levels of an

occupation, asserting that occupations are “gendered to the extent that they are ideologically and symbolically conceived in these terms by workers themselves and the culture at large” (Britton 2000: 426). Given the status that sports have within American society, as a “male preserve” and location of masculine achievement, women who choose professions linked to athletics in any way—as an athlete, coach, reporter, or trainer—run into the problem of not fitting into the organizational or individual gender typing or sex compositions of their occupation.

Kane and Stangl (1991) have attributed the overall decline in the percentage of women head coaches after Title IX to *homologous reproduction*, an application of Rosabeth Kanter’s work in *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977): “the process of choosing and promoting the ‘right kind of person’ is referred to as homosocial or homologous reproduction in which the dominant group systematically reproduces itself in its own image” (Kane and Stangl 1991, 50). Within an athletic context the responsibility of hiring and promoting coaches generally falls on the athletic director. In their study of several hundred high school athletic departments, Kane and Stangl found that athletic departments with male athletic directors had a higher percentage of male coaches, even for women sports compared to when women were athletic directors, and the athletic department had a higher than average percentage of women coaches. Homologous reproduction is a problematic practice in any sort of employment situation and will lead to the marginalization and discrimination of any group that belongs to a different social group than whoever hires new employees; however, it is especially problematic in the case of women in coaching.

Prior to Title IX, similar to the high percentage of women coaches of women’s sports, over 90% of athletic directors for women’s athletics programs were female, and by 1980 that percentage had plunged to 20% women athletic directors of co-ed athletic departments. Despite

the growth in women's participation in athletics since 1980, the percentage of women athletic directors has remained steadily low. In 2010 women accounted for 19.3% of all athletic directors in intercollegiate sports, and particularly low at the Division I level, where only 9% of athletic directors were women (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). Using Kane and Stangl's theory of homologous reproduction, the disappearance of women's presence in athletic director positions has directly impacted the decline in the percentage of women coaches. Although homologous reproduction explains the overall decline of women head coaches across all sports, it cannot account for the variety between sports experiencing different percentages of women head coaches.

The inconsistency in percentages of women head coaches in each women's sport complicates an attempt to understand the overall decline of women head coaches after Title IX. Britton points out that although certain professions have been organizationally, culturally or discursively gendered, the experiences of individuals or groups of individuals within these professions may not follow general trends; therefore, there is a need "to be utterly clear about the levels of analysis at which we are applying the concept of gendering and to recognize that the process at one level does not follow from, or dictate in any clear or predictable fashion, the ways in which occupations and organizations are gendered at other levels" (Britton 2000: 429). Attention to the nuances of gendering within professions, as well as gendering within sports, is necessary to understand why the percentage of women head coaches varies so significantly within the ranks of Division I athletics and specifically women's Division I Ice Hockey and Basketball.

My research examines the historical, structural and cultural factors that can help explain why in 2010 31.3% of women head coaches in Division I Women's Ice Hockey were women

compared to the 69.1% of women head coaches in Division I Women's Basketball (See Appendix). I ask to what extent historical differences in women's opportunity and participation in these two sports are involved in this gap? What are the structural factors within the labor market and the organization and governance of women's basketball and ice hockey that have led to these differences? What does the role of gender relations within each sport as well as gender relations within the labor market play? What effect does women's participation in sports as athletes and coaches have on its position within American society as a traditionally male preserve and an institution in which masculinity can be achieved? And, most importantly, what can attention to the nuances between particular sports tell us about the effect of gendering processes within the labor market and in sport more generally?

### **Section One: History of Opportunity**

The gap between the percentage of women head coaches in Women's Division I Basketball and Ice Hockey can be partially understood through a historical comparison. Although women have been documented playing ice hockey and basketball since the late nineteenth century, the organization and participation rates of women in these sports have taken different trajectories. In the 2010 season women's basketball was the intercollegiate sport offered most frequently, with 99.1% of colleges that offered sports for women fielding teams, compared to ice hockey that was ranked 14<sup>th</sup> and offered by only 9.8% of colleges (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). The number of women's opportunities in basketball is also more on par with men as there were 345 Division I Women's Basketball teams and 347 Division I Men's Basketball teams in 2010. Ice hockey programs are, of course, fewer for both women and men; nonetheless, the 36 Division I Women's Ice Hockey teams in 2010 represents only 58% of the number of men's

programs which had 62 Division I teams, in contrast to basketball's near parity for men and women (NCAA College Sports Statistics 2010).

Moreover, it was not until 1998 that women's ice hockey appeared in the Olympics; whereas, women's basketball made its Olympic debut in 1976. The first women's college hockey team was established at Brown University in 1963 (ECAC Hockey Women's History 2011), only six years before women's basketball held its first national championship in 1969 (Women's Basketball Hall of Fame 2011). Women's college ice hockey did not have a national championship until 1984, and at this time only included schools that were part of the East Coast Athletic Conference (ECAC Hockey Women's History 2011). Whereas women's college basketball came under the organization of the NCAA in 1982 (Women's Basketball Hall of Fame 2011), Women's college ice hockey was first sanctioned by a nationwide league, the American Women's College Hockey Alliance, from 1997-2000, and was not absorbed by the NCAA until 2000 (Alaska State Hockey 2011).

Women began playing basketball in 1892, only a year after James Naismith invented the game. In the next 30 years there was a proliferation of women's basketball throughout the United States with the formation of various levels of amateur competition: the first intercollegiate game was held as well as the first amateur basketball championship (Women's Basketball Hall of Fame 2011). Throughout the early twentieth century women played various forms of basketball. Some used the exact rules of the men's game while others employed varying modifications regarding the number of players on the court, how many times a player could dribble, play defense and where players could move on the court. In 1921, however, the Spalding Rules were created and became the most commonly used rules for the next 50 years. In these rules, there were six players from each team on the court, compared to the five allowed in men's basketball.

The court was split into halves, and three members from each team were restricted to separate sides of the court, essentially breaking the court down into two smaller games of 3-on-3. Rules also restricted how much contact players could have, prohibiting women from stealing the ball out of their opponent's hands and limiting the number of people that could play defense against an opponent. Players were also limited to two or three dribbles (Festle 1996).

These restrictive rules were based on notions of what women's bodies could endure in terms of physical exertion as well as how women should engage in physical activity. Movement was limited to a small space and the length of games shortened because it was assumed that women were too weak and did not have the fitness level to run the length of the court. Women were also prohibited from coming into physical contact and over-guarding opponents, limiting how aggressively and competitively women could play. The early rules were intended to *feminize* the version of basketball girls and women played, ensuring that the traditionally masculine ideologies within sport remained intact.

Beginning in the 1960's, these restrictive women's rules were challenged. In 1966 the Division of Girls and Women in Sports (DGWS), the predecessor of the AIAW, adopted the unlimited dribble that existed in the men's game. By 1971, the DGWS lowered the number of players on the court from each team to five and allowed players to go on both sides of the court (Fields 2005). The 30-second shot clock introduced at this time quickened the pace of the game (Women's Basketball Hall of Fame 2011). The evolution of the women's game brought the rulebooks of men and women's basketball closer together.

On the other hand, women's ice hockey the rules have changed to further differentiate the sex-based versions women and men play. In 1990 after the first International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) Women's World Championship was held in Canada, it was decided that

checking would be removed from the women's game to increase the parity in level of play between North American and all other foreign nations competing. The argument was that players from other countries such as Russia, Sweden and Japan were not the same size as North American (American and Canadian) players and removing body checking would allow for better international competition (USA Hockey 2011). Twenty years later after the decision to universally eliminate body checking from women's ice hockey, the biggest rule difference between men and women's ice hockey remains the inability for women to body check; however, international competition still experiences extreme disparity between North American and all other European and Asian nations. The US and Canadian Olympic team have won all four Olympic gold medals in women's ice hockey since its inception in 1998.

Although there has been intercollegiate hockey since the 1970's in the United States, only in the last 15 years has it been organized by a national, governing body, initially by the American Women's College Hockey Association from 1997-2000 (The Docherty Family 2011) and eventually becoming an NCAA championship for the first time in the 2000-01 season. Formal organization within college level women's ice hockey coincided with the first time women's hockey appeared in the Olympics, in Nagano in 1998. The appearance of intercollegiate and Olympic women's ice hockey occurred roughly two decades after the appearance of these opportunities for women's basketball.

Over the past twenty years, female participation in USA Hockey has grown significantly: in the 1992-93 season USA Hockey, which governs amateur hockey for both males and females in the US, had just over 10,000 girls and women registered in its program, while by the end of the 2010-2011 season, this number had surpassed 65,500, an increase even from 2008-2009 when there were 60,000 girls and women registered (USA Hockey 2011). Women's participation

in ice hockey may be growing, but increasingly women are playing a sex-based different version of ice hockey. Previously girls would grow up playing boys' hockey and then make the shift at some point in their teens to playing girls' ice hockey; however, as girls' participation increases, so do the leagues and teams for girls' hockey. The growth of women's participation in hockey has also opened up a new market for equipment companies, who attempted to carve out a niche selling *pink* sticks, gloves, skate laces and tape, as well as pants and shoulder pads intended to fit the curves of a women's body.

The legitimatization of women's ice hockey, through its inclusion in USA Hockey, the Olympics and NCAA, as well as an increase in participation, led to the same outcome as earlier histories of women's college sports: institutionalization was followed by a decline in the rates of women filling head coaching positions. The percentage of women head coaches at the Division I level peaked at 71.6% in 1996, two seasons before the ACHA held the first national championship, and since the NCAA began holding championships for women's ice hockey, the percentage of women head coaches has rapidly declined from 58.8% in 2002, to 31.3% in 2010 (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). With the growth and acceptance of women's ice hockey, as well as an increasingly qualified pool of women with experience playing college ice hockey, one would expect that the percentage of women head coaches would be increasing, rather than decreasing, which is why a comparison of historical trajectory and opportunity is not enough to understand or explain the gap in percentages between women's head ice hockey and basketball coaches.

## **Section Two: Structures within Sport and the Labor Market**

My analysis of structural factors that have led to the gap in percentages of women head coaches in Division I Women's College Ice Hockey (31.3%) in 2010 compared to Division I Women's College Basketball (69.1%) looks at coaches' organizations in both sports, as well as

the effect that the legitimization of women's college sports by Title IX and governance by the NCAA has had on the situation of women head coaches in college sports. I also look at trends in women's employment in the labor market that are relevant to understanding why there has been a decline in women head coaches as women's participation in sports has grown, and specifically why the percentage of women head coaches in Division I Women's Ice Hockey is significantly lower than the percentage in Division I Women's Basketball.

Understanding the condition of women's sports pre-Title IX is integral in an examination of the current gap in college head coaching between men and women. The year before Title IX passed, although the number of girls that participated in high school athletics was just under 300,000, compared to almost 3.7 million boys, (National Federation of State High School Associations 2006) more than 90% of women's teams were coached by women and more than 90% of women's athletic programs were led by a female head administrator (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). The structuring of sports and women's sports especially during this pre-Title IX era was extremely different than what is currently seen in high school and college athletic departments. Before Title IX was passed, women physical education instructors would coach women's teams, a responsibility not necessarily in their contract or required by the athletic department, but done by volunteering their time (Knoppers 1987). Participation numbers were low, and women's athletic programs in high schools and colleges had budgets that represented small fractions compared to their male counterparts; nonetheless, women were involved with governing, organizing and coaching female athletes.

In 1970, the DGWS and National Association for Physical Education of College Women (NAPECW) directed the members of the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (CIAW) to form a new national membership organization that became the American

Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) and represented the culmination of decades of growth and organization within all levels of women's amateur athletics (Festle 1996). The AIAW held its first national championship in 1972, the year that Title IX was introduced; however, the success of a women's organization governing women's college sports was short-lived.

Starting in the early 1970's, with the birth of the AIAW and the introduction of Title IX, the NCAA, which had previously only run men's college athletics, became interested in the organization and direction of women's athletics. Part of the NCAA's fear, especially in regards to Title IX, came from potential legal issues regarding sex discrimination, so in 1971, it proposed a NCAA-AIAW affiliation (Festle 1996). However, the AIAW wanted to maintain the power that it enjoyed as a women's organization governing women's athletics and feared what would happen if the NCAA, an entirely male organization, began organizing women's athletics. During the debate over Title IX the AIAW hoped that schools would be allowed to keep men's and women's departments separate, due to the worry that "female employees could lose job security and influence" (Festle 1996). However, in 1981-82 the NCAA began offering women's championships for a few sports, and in 1982 the AIAW lost an anti-trust hearing allowing the NCAA to continue expanding their offerings for women's sports. Colleges and universities, whose presidents and athletic directors were mostly male and whose men's athletics departments the NCAA already regulated, left the AIAW, which shut down soon after (Festle 1996). Since the governance of women's sports came under the direction of the NCAA, an all male organization when it took over women's sports, women have been unable to maintain or regain leadership positions within women's sports evidenced by the initial and now continuous decline in the percentage of head coaching positions filled by women (See Appendix, Table 1).

Title IX and the NCAA have positively affected the participation rates of women in college athletics: in the first year that the NCAA held championships for women's sports, there were only 75,000 female student athletes on 4,800 teams, and by 2007-08 those numbers had grown to 175,000 female-student athletes competing on 9,400 teams (History of Women Coaches Issues NCAA 2011). However, the take over of women's athletics by an all male organization has had detrimental effects on the percentage of women leaders within athletics. A recent study of 450 coaches of women's college athletics examined various explanations of the low number of women head coaches and came up with three types of barriers: "adverse stereotypes; in group favoritism in hiring, mentoring, and support networks; and work/family conflict." The study's "more general findings about problems in equal opportunity enforcement structures also bear relevance for women professionals in fields other than athletics" (Rhode and Walker 2008). The legitimization process of women's athletics through Title IX brought women's sports more in line with men's sports, at least from a legal stand point: the NCAA took over governance of women's sports, coaching women's sports became a paid profession, and scholarship money was required to be offered to women college athletes.

The legitimization and standardization of professions has historically created obstacles for women in the US labor market, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the professions of medicine and law, the onset of credentialism—increase in certification to perform a task which previously required little or none, as well as a higher degree of education or in this case, formation of specific schools for these professions—led to the exclusion of women (Lerner 1979). Women's experience with midwifery and other medical techniques was not considered enough to be admitted into a program that certified one for medical practice (Lerner 1979). This trend within law and medicine experienced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century for American women is similar

to the experience of women coaches and athletic directors after the passage of Title IX and co-optation of power by men's organizations in administration of women's sports. Once legitimized by the federal government (Title IX), male athletic directors oversaw the now unified men's and women's athletics department, and men were drawn towards coaching women's sports now that the positions were paid. Women's experience playing women's sports was downplayed as a qualification for coaching women's sports, similarly to the way that women's experience in supporting the birthing practice was marginalized by medical schools and state licensure in favor of men with the schooling and certification.

The phenomenon of legitimization and recognition of professions leading to women's exclusion may also apply to the current gap between Women's Division I Ice Hockey (31.3%) and Women's Division I Basketball (69.1%). As Reskin and Roos (1990) found in their study of labor force trends in the 1970's and 1980's, "most of the occupations or specialties experienced a shortage of male workers...not because they grew dramatically but because their rewards or working conditions deteriorated relative to other occupations for which male workers were qualified, making them less attractive" (Reskin and Roos 1990: 42). The working conditions for nearly all women's sports pre-Title IX were of unpaid, volunteer positions and, furthermore, unsanctioned by the NCAA, a male sports organization which assumed the power of standardizing and governing all college level sports. Women's Basketball has been sanctioned and governed by the NCAA for 30 years; whereas, Women's Ice Hockey has only been under the auspice of the NCAA for 10 years. In the 20-year gap between when Basketball and Ice Hockey experienced their shifts to the NCAA, women's sports became increasingly supported financially and socially, making the profession of coaching women's sports an even more acceptable and appealing option for male coaches in 2001, when Ice Hockey came under the

NCAA's leadership, than in 1981 when the NCAA offered its first championship for Women's Basketball.

Due to the longer tradition of women's college basketball, the network and support system for coaches is currently more established than for women's ice hockey. The Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) has existed since 1981. Although serving all levels of women's basketball, many of the initiatives and opportunities created by the program focus on college basketball. Membership within the organization is open to both male and female coaches; however, programs such as "So You Think You Want to Coach" are designed to purposefully target current female college basketball players who want to become coaches (Women's Basketball Coaches Organization 2011). The mission of the WBCA is to "foster national and international sports through competition and to develop a reputable identity for women's basketball through the development of the game of basketball, in all of its aspects, as a sport for women" (WBCA 2011). The WBCA regularly publishes *Coaching Women's Basketball Magazine*, *Compliance Corner*, *Compliance Now* and *Fast Break*, a monthly e-newsletter, and its website offers assistance with career development (WBCA 2011). This long established organization focusing on women's basketball, with career and basketball specific resources, may also be helpful in recruiting and retaining women coaches throughout their careers. An established support network and easily accessible resources would seem to be an integral part of women maintaining a presence within a profession, especially one like college coaching in which they have been increasingly marginalized.

Women's ice hockey coaches, male and female, lack this formal support network. Before the American Women's College Hockey Alliance disbanded in 2000 and women's college ice hockey came under governance of the NCAA, the affiliated coaches association was the

American Women's Hockey Coaches Association (AWHCA). The AWHCA was eventually absorbed by the AHCA, the American Hockey Coaches Association, which had previously only been associated with men's ice hockey. Established in 1947, the AHCA now sees itself as a resource for all college ice hockey coaches, male and female, coaching men or women's ice hockey. On the AHCA website there is no separate space for women's hockey. There are references to men's division and women's division awards; however, unlike its counterpart USA Hockey, the organization governing American amateur participation in national and international competition, there are no separate links for women's hockey.<sup>3</sup>

The AHCA website press releases that date back to 1999 refer to "college division" and "women's college division," in effect positing men's ice hockey as the *real* version of college ice hockey, and constructing women's college ice hockey as a deviation from the *real*. That is, college ice hockey meant men's ice hockey and women's entrance represented an intrusion. In 2001 the AHCA stopped assuming "college division" signified men, and began distinguishing between "men's division" and "women's division" in press releases regarding coaches and players. This shift in gender modifier, from men's ice hockey being the general subject, and women's ice hockey posited as *the other*, was small yet significant. However, this linguistic shift did not indicate necessarily that the AHCA met the needs of women's ice hockey coaches, which is why women coaches are now attempting to break off from the AHCA and organize under the name American Women's Hockey Coaches Association once again. Similar to the WBCA, the re-formed AWHCA would include both men and women coaches of women's college ice hockey. As their vision and mission they assert: "to be a leader in the development and promotion of girls and women's ice hockey through the implementation of effective coaching

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<sup>3</sup> I was unable to access the coaches' membership page and am basing my analysis from research on the public webpage only.

development programs, by sharing information with an active and involved membership, and by embracing excellence in everything we do” and “to build, maintain, promote and advocate for the sport of girls and women’s ice hockey. Within the scope of a person’s involvement, our goal is to have them maintain a lifelong commitment to the sport and to become ambassadors for the values which our organization represents” (Hudak et. al 2011).

Women’s college basketball has experienced a decline in the percentage of women head coaches since the passage of Title IX and governance of the NCAA in both Division I and across all divisions; however, the decline has not been as steep as in women’s ice hockey at the Division I level (See Appendix, Table 2). A separate coach’s organization is a step in the right direction for women’s college ice hockey, but it remains to be seen whether this step will impact positively the percentage of women filling head coaching positions. An established mentoring network for former women’s players, as well as women’s assistant coaches, as seen within women’s college basketball may improve the situation for women coaches in ice hockey, especially if the AWCHA is successful with its goal of encouraging women’s “lifelong commitment” to ice hockey.

It is important to note that women entering the field of coaching have not followed the trend of other occupations, in which women coaches are attempting to enter a male dominated occupation because at one point coaching women’s college sports was a female dominated position (See Table 1, Appendix). When I say male or female dominated occupation I am using Roos and McDaniel’s concept (1996: Britton 2000) and am referring only to the sex of workers that occupy positions. I am not yet problematizing or considering the added feature coaching has of connoting masculinity and thereby coded both male and masculine, aligning both sex and gender of the occupation. I will explore the cultural connotations of coaching in the next section

and for now will apply general labor market trends regarding women's employment force to the occupation of coaching.

Men's overrepresentation within the occupation of head coaches of women's college sports, 57.4% of positions in 2010 (Acosta and Carpenter 2010), is more complicated than women choosing not to enter the profession of coaching or blatant sex discrimination within college athletic departments. As we have seen previously, there are sports such as Women's Lacrosse and Field Hockey in which women fill the overwhelming majority of head coaching positions (See Appendix). Reskin and Roos' (1990) frameworks for understanding labor force patterns within the United States labor market, especially based on trends they studied looking at women's entrance into previously male-dominated occupations and breakdown of workers by sex and occupation, are applicable in an analysis of women coaches in women's college sports.

Reskin and Roos focus their examination within *Job Queues, Gender Queues* (1990) on a comparison of the census data from 1970 and 1980, which shows that throughout the 1970's women increasingly held jobs within traditionally "male" occupations; however, the success women were enjoying in the labor market were only in a select few occupations, such as clerical work, that men were moving out of for more prestigious positions (Reskin and Roos 1990: 13). In many ways, women's struggle to make gains within the labor force is similar to the experience of women in sports, as well as women within the specific context of coaching. Even though women's participation in sports has increased exponentially, as well as the opportunities and sheer number of sports in which women frequently play, the number of professional opportunities in sport remains much lower for women than men. The situation of women head coaches in college sports fits into the overall labor force trends Reskin and Roos found because, although women have maintained a high percentage of coaching jobs in some Division I sports,

like Basketball, the same has not been experienced for all sports, like in Ice Hockey (See Table 2, Appendix).

### **Section Three: Cultural Assumptions of Women in Sport and Coaching**

Thus far the structural and historical explanations I have provided for the continuous decline and significant gap between the percentage of women head coaches in Division I Women's Basketball (69.1%) and Division I Women's Ice Hockey (31.3%) have focused on how the number and percentage of women participating in each sport, as well as their governing bodies, have affected women's position as head coaches of basketball and ice hockey. At this point, the factors I discuss explain what Reskin and Roos would describe as the sex composition of the gap between women head coaches for ice hockey and basketball. However, in American society, sex composition and gender typing of an occupation or activity are inextricable, much like structural and cultural factors explaining the decline in women college head coaches, and the discrepancies between each sport, are impossible to analyze as completely separate entities.

A deeper look at the meaning and effect of women's entrance into sport, especially contact sports like ice hockey, has had within society and sport culture, may explain the gap in percentages of women's head coaches in women's Division I Basketball (69.1%) and Ice Hockey (31.3%). Most important to this examination is an understanding of gender relations within sport: achievement, reinforcement, and production of gendered norms and ideals of both masculinity and femininity. The gap between percentages of women coaching basketball and ice hockey, as well as the overall decline of women college coaches after Title IX, is representative and indicative of the larger problem women have faced in society of overcoming sex and gender based assumptions of their abilities. Women's increasing participation in sports has led to a longstanding and ongoing battle within sport in how women's participation is conceptualized.

Often women athletes and women's sports are marginalized and in some ways accepted only in terms that fit into traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, in an effort to maintain masculine hegemony and sport as a location of male achievement.

One important way in which sport has persisted as a location that reinforces traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, despite women's high rates of participation in a variety of sports, is the rhetoric of biological essentialism and sex-based segregation of teams and competitions. Even at the lowest and youngest levels of competitions, at the point of development in which girls and boys' bodies have similar heights, weights and abilities, children are separated by sex when possible and put on girls' and boys' teams. Sex segregated competition becomes stricter as age and level of ability increases, throughout high school, college and any professional competition. Further reinforcing sex segregation are sports that have different rules for men and women, such as ice hockey and lacrosse, sports that have different size balls, such as basketball, sports that enforce different endurance levels, such as tennis with its best-of-five for men and best-of-three for women, or entirely different sports for men and women, such as baseball and softball.

Biological assumptions leading to sex segregated sports and competition also effectively reinforce and produce the gendered ideals of traditional notions of masculinity and femininity that are attached to their sex categories—male and female. As Theberge highlights: “Cole and Birrell (1986) argue that the very presence of women in sports is an example of what they call ‘leaky hegemony’ or the inability of dominant groups to maintain total control over subordinate groups. The leaks are particularly significant when women make a claim to one of the most exclusive masculine sanctuaries—team contact sports” (Theberge 1998: 184). Women's

involvement in ice hockey is a particular threat to ice hockey's position within sport as a location of masculine achievement.

One response to women's presence in sports has been the segregation of women and men in sport, as well as the attempt to regulate women's sport in such a way that traditional notions of femininity are reproduced. Women's ice hockey forbids body checking and requires facemasks to protect women's fragility and beauty, as well as prevent them from acting masculine by using their bodies to exert power and dominance over other players on the ice (Lock 2006). There are also efforts to sexualize athletes, such as rules in women's indoor international volleyball competition that require uniform shorts to be no longer than five inches (Cantelon 2010), as well as efforts to accentuate female athlete's reproductive abilities, such as the emphasis of the WNBA to show their women coaches surrounded by their children (Muller 2006), and ESPN the Magazine placing WNBA star Candace Parker on its cover, five months pregnant, in a floor length, tight, white dress (Glock-Writer 2009).

Efforts made to accentuate traditional feminine traits of prominent female athletes are an attempt to mold these women into a specific social and athletic narrative, in which sex and gender are combined categories. As Willis asserts: "as the athlete becomes even more outstanding, she marks herself out as even more deviant. Instead of confirming her identity, success can threaten her with a foreign male identity... the female athlete lives through a severe contradiction. To succeed as an athlete can be to fail as a woman, because she has, in profound symbolic ways, become a man" (Willis 1994: 36). American culture assumes that male-bodied individuals must perform masculinity and female-bodied individuals must perform femininity. Female athletes transgress this assumption and, therefore, challenge traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity as hegemonic, rigid categories linked to an individuals' sex. Female

athletes are forced by media representations and audiences to either adapt to conventional femininity or face being ostracized with questions of their sexuality, accusations of homosexuality, or in the case of South African runner Caster Semenya, endure suspicions of not being female and undergo genetic testing to prove her sex.

Femininity and masculinity are especially regulated through compulsory heterosexuality, and the threat of such a stigmatized label for female athletes is especially prevalent within ice hockey: “Many parents of female players in Canada objected to the roughness and masculinity of the game, and there were rumors of lesbianism. To counter these ‘unfavorable’ insinuations about women’s hockey, the representative colors for Canada were pink and white” (Lock 2006: 167). Although the colors of Canadian hockey have since been changed to the traditional Canadian national colors of red and white, the presence of *pink* within hockey has been pervasive with the sale of *pink* sticks, gloves, skate laces, jerseys, socks and tape. There are those girls and women who embrace this accommodation and buy *pink* tape for their *pink* stick that they wear with their *pink* gloves, and those women and girls that scoff at these *pink* products, feeling mocked by its presence in skate shops and on the ice.

Performance and production of gender within women’s ice hockey is contended mostly through the debate over whether women’s rules should include body checking. Currently in all levels of girls and women’s hockey body checking is forbidden, and the amount of physical contact allowed depends upon the referees within each game. As Theberge (1997) notes, and I have witnessed as a participant and spectator of women’s ice hockey, there are three different views of the lack of checking in women’s hockey: positive, negative, or moderate. What I call the positive view is that women’s ice hockey is better than men’s hockey for not allowing body checking because it emphasizes finesse playmaking, strong passing abilities, and defensive play

that requires skill rather than strength. This perspective rejects a view of the men's game as the standard that the women's game should adhere to in order to be validated. The negative view of women's ice hockey is that physical play and body checking are a major aspect of ice hockey that is lost when prohibited. Furthermore any sex-based difference, which has clearly been made in the case of women's and men's rules for ice hockey, is wrong because it assumes that women are not strong enough or tough enough to handle body checking, following outdated assumptions about traditional femininity and masculinity that insult women and valorizes men. The moderate view acknowledges that sex-based differentiation within ice hockey through regulation is wrong; however, the overly aggressive and violent culture that has grown within men's ice hockey due to the emphasis on body checking represents an impure form of the sport. In this view, women's ice hockey can allow more physical contact without losing the focus on finesse and playmaking that the men's game has lost. No matter what side of the line a participant, coach, parent, referee or ice hockey enthusiast comes down on, the existence of the debate points to the tensions about masculinity, femininity and sport and the unanswerable questions about the place of body checking and fighting within both men and women's ice hockey.

Contact sports like men's ice hockey and football are recognized as activities in which boys and men can participate to achieve traditional ideals of masculinity as well as an all male environment in which boys literally learn how to become men through exertion of their physicality (Whitson 1994). Despite the elimination of body checking within women's ice hockey, an attempt to distinguish the sport from the male version, ice hockey still remains a sport of which women are the minority of the participants: "The real game is epitomized by the aggressive physicality of play in the National Hockey League, the version that really counts...within elite level of boys' hockey, which serve as the feeders system for men's

professional hockey, the debate about body checking is over when—not whether—it should be introduced” (Theberge 1998: 186). Debate about which game is better, men or women’s ice hockey, is focused around whether one believes the game of ice hockey requires body checking. Due to its reputation within American sport culture, as an institution that supports violence through legal bodychecking and physical contact within the regulations, as well as unofficially supported, illegal violence in bare-fisted fighting, it is clear that ice hockey is defined by the presence of confrontational physical contact<sup>4</sup>.

The differences between women and men’s ice hockey, created through prohibition of body checking, highlight the emphasis of sex-based differences within sports more generally. However, ice hockey holds a unique place within sport as one of a handful of team sports in which opponents physically confront one another while attempting to overpower through body checking—an act of particularly masculine achievement and assertion. In basketball physical contact is penalized through a variety of fouls. To beat opponents in basketball players must either outrun and maneuver one another or use their teammates to pass around opponents. Unlike football and men’s ice hockey, players are prohibited in basketball from tackling, knocking over or checking opponents. The regulations against physical contact and other fouls in basketball are the same for men and women.

The only difference in rules between men and women’s basketball are the three-point line, which is further from the hoop in the NBA and men’s intercollegiate competition than in the WNBA and women’s intercollegiate competition, and the size of basketball women and men use. Rules mandating the use of a size six ball for women and size seven ball for men are made on

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<sup>4</sup> The positing of men’s ice hockey as *the real* version of the game and women’s ice hockey as a deviation from *the real* was reflected in the early press releases of the AHCA website discussed earlier.

sex-based assumptions of the difference between men and women's hand sizes. Rules regarding a shorter three point shooting distance for women suggest that women are not as strong shooters as men. However, the size of the ball and the minimal difference in arc size of the three-point line does not change the nature of the games that men and women's basketball play to the same degree that the prohibition of body checking within women's ice hockey impacts the style of play compared to the highly physical game of men's ice hockey.

Despite the sex-based differences between women and men's basketball, gender norms and traditional notions of femininity and masculinity are not as pronounced within basketball. Based on scholarship examining the WNBA (Muller 2006) and NCAA (Harden and Whiteside 2006), it is clear that women basketball players face similar challenges as other female athletes: questioning of their heterosexuality and overt homophobia, media emphasis on their roles as mothers and heterosexual wives, and sexualization of their bodies. However, these assumptions are based not on the specific sport that they play, but by the fact that they play sports at all. Women that play ice hockey are not only transgressing the norm of playing a sport, but they face the double bind of participating in one of the few team sports in which opponents in the men's version dominate one another through physical contact. In other such sports, such as lacrosse and football, women are either marginally visible and rarely participate such as football, or have an entirely different set of rules, equipment, and dimensions of field such as lacrosse. Women's participation in any version of ice hockey challenges sport's place as a male preserve, as well as masculine hegemony in ways that women playing basketball do not.

The challenge that women in ice hockey pose to sport and gender norms has made it difficult for women to maintain a high percentage of coaching positions because they are transgressing the gender typing of both their occupation and their sport (See Appendix, Table 1

and 2). Roos and McDaniel (1996: Britton 2000) distinguish between the sex composition and gender typing of an occupation, but the gender typing of coaching women's sports has yet to be examined. The transition for coaching women's college sports being dominated by females occurred with the passage of Title IX, the disintegration of the AIAW's governance over women's college sports, and the co-optation of that power by the all male organization of the NCAA. With the requirement of funding by Title IX, and the legitimization and increased acceptance of women's college sports due to increased participation rates, scholarship money and the threat of legal action by women athletes, coaching women's college sports became a viable and finally paying occupation attracting men to head coaching positions previously held by low-paid or volunteer women. Through a structural explanation of the reorganization of women's college sports governance, the influx of men into head coaching positions makes sense. However, understanding how coaching women went from being female dominated to male dominated only explicates the sex composition of the occupation.

Two potential hypotheses may explain how the gender typing of coaching women's sports either became or always was masculine thereby allowing men to maintain and achieve masculinity while occupying a head coaching position in a women's sport. The first explanation is that, although the sex composition pre-Title IX of women's sports was female, the position of head coach of an athletic team, even of a women's team, was gender typed masculine since at this time sport's position as a location of hegemonic masculinity within society remained unchallenged. Women's participation in sport pre-Title IX was still minimal, in numbers of participants and sports, allowing sport to remain intact as a male preserve. Men had avoided coaching women before Title IX because positions brought little esteem and more importantly little or no wages. Many women coaches during this time were volunteering their time. Second,

even if coaching women's sports pre-Title IX was both sex composition, female-dominated, and gender-typed feminine, the legitimization process of women's athletics through Title IX brought women's sports more in line with men's sports, at least from a legal stand point: men took over governance of women's sports, coaching women's sports became a paid profession, and scholarship money was required to be offered to women college athletes. These shifts could be interpreted as masculinizing women's sports, as well as the changing the gender type of coaching women's college sports.

Coaches, both male and female, must struggle with their gender performance within the workplace. As Britton heeds: "the gendering process at the individual and interactional levels is often much more flexible and even contradictory than the cultural construction of an occupation or organization" (Britton 2000: 429). Working within an athletic environment is especially difficult for female coaches because of the traditional notions of masculinity connected to sport. At the same time it may be difficult for male coaches of women's sports, because women's participation in sport poses a challenge to sport as a location where masculinity can be achieved in general and also either directly or indirectly, a challenge to the male coach's own perceptions of his masculinity. To maintain coaching as a site of masculine achievement, associations with coaching as an activity must be conceptualized very specifically: "if coaching is a job where coaches feel that athletes have the right to the undivided attention of the coach, then it could be defined as similar to domestic work, where children and male spouses claim undivided attention of women. Yet that has not been the dominant definition of coaching, regardless whether one coaches women or men" (Knoppers 1992: 220). The avoidance of using feminine characteristics to define the role of coaches is necessary to reinforce coaching as a male dominated occupation. There may also be a challenge to the gender typing of an occupation or individual when the sex

of an employee does not correlate to the sex composition of a workplace, such as the position of women head coaches within athletic departments.

When individuals enter occupations in which their individual sex or gender does not align with the norm of their occupation or organization, they must figure out a way to navigate this disconnect. As Leidner found, this is also true when the sex compositions or gender types of work places shift. In professions other than coaching, when men have entered female dominated occupations, they have had to reconceptualize some of the traditional feminine qualities attached to these jobs: “Leidner (1991, 1993) found that although success in insurance sale requires interpersonal skills that have been traditionally defined as feminine, male sales agents she studied reinterpreted their jobs in terms of stereotypically masculine attributes such as the love of competition and the possession of a ‘killer instinct’” (Britton 2000: 428). Male coaches of women’s college sports can focus their attention on the masculine aspects of their profession (sports, competition, winning, leadership) versus the aspects of their occupation that are traditionally feminine (managing a group of women, communicating with players, attending to players’ emotional and physical needs).

Individual female coaches may be able to navigate the contentious sex composition and gender typing of their occupation with an internalized understanding and conception of their own gender performance; however, individuals must overcome powerful, external cultural pressures. As seen in the discussion of gender relations and production within ice hockey, and the unique position men’s ice hockey has within sports of being particularly steeped in traditional achievement of masculinity, women head coaches, even in women’s ice hockey struggle with their transgression against the norms of their sport as well as their profession in ways that women head coaches in basketball do not.

Cultural conceptions and assumptions about what characteristics make a good coach, and who is assumed to embody these characteristics, are necessary to understand women's continuing decline in head coaching positions. Theberge's survey of head coaches of various sports in Canada found that "Attributions of male superiority were often located in accounts of physical differences between men and women. Some coaches spoke of a belief, erroneous in their view, that men's greater strength made them more qualified to coach" (Theberge 1993: 305). Two of the interviews Theberge conducted with women coaches highlight the issue of assumed differences in ability between men and women that could lead to differences in hiring practices of coaches:

Questioner: Are you saying that men can hit it (the ball) harder...

Woman Tennis Coach: Yes

Q: ...kids are assuming that men are better coaches?

WTC: Yes, absolutely. The better the player the better the coach.

Q: And better is harder?

WTC: That's right, or more powerful.

Q: So, what does that say for the prospects of women becoming coaches in tennis?

WTC: It's very hard. I've been successful because I play an aggressive brand of tennis. (Theberge 1993: 305)

Q: So there's a perception out there that a man would be a better coach because he's played men's basketball or because he's a man?

Women Basketball Coach: Not because he's played, but because he's a man (Theberge 1993: 306-07)

These female coaches raise two cultural assumptions that all female head coaches encounter. First, men are stronger and therefore better coaches; second, men are assumed to be better coaches just for being men regardless of their experience playing a sport. Both issues are connected to gendered and sex-based assumptions of difference between men and women within sport. Women have been historically marginalized within sport because it was assumed they would never be fast enough or strong enough to succeed, and sport has maintained its position as a male institution within society on the premise of male superiority in athletic endeavors.

These are two cultural notions and assumptions that women have been unable to erase even through continued growth in women's sports in participation and success. Although Title IX has carved out a space for women's participation in high school and college sports, it has not been able to change cultural attitudes about men's athletic superiority, guarantee women's positions in coaching, or mandate professional leagues for women's sports. The cultural assumptions regarding women head coaches impact women ice hockey coaches specifically because women's participation in ice hockey is distanced from *the real* version of the game through separate rules. Women basketball players on the other hand, playing with the same rules as men's basketball players, cannot be dismissed for not having played *the real* version of their sport. Ice hockey, as a sport in which players are supposed to physically overpower one another, compared to basketball, in which players are supposed to pass around opponents, may explain the pattern of women's success securing head coaching positions in basketball and the struggle for women in ice hockey.

There has been a trend within women's college sports in which women have had success in securing head coaching positions (Lacrosse, Basketball, Softball and Field Hockey) compared to those in which percentages of women's head coaches remain low (Ice Hockey and Soccer) (See Appendix, Table 2). The ability for women to maintain a strong percentage of head coaching positions in some sports yet not others may be linked to a caveat within rhetoric of gender and employment, which both Knoppers (1992) and Britton (2000) identify: "another interrelated dynamic in the gendering of an occupation is the dominant meaning we give to the activity itself. Hegemonic masculinity is enhanced through definitions of work that emphasize the jobs association with stereotypical characteristics assigned to men in a specific race and class" (Knoppers 1992: 200). Sport has traditionally been a location of masculine achievement,

as well as one that reinforces masculine norms in society. Ice hockey, especially as a contact sport, more than basketball may be considered a more masculine activity; therefore, playing and working within the sport of ice hockey has particularly strong associations within society and sport as being an activity appropriate for men. More so than basketball, women's participation in ice hockey, as players and coaches represents a transgression against hegemonic masculinity and sports' general position within society as reinforcing certain standards of gender appropriate behavior.

## **Conclusion**

Although I acknowledge many structural factors, as well as the difference in historical opportunities for women's ice hockey and basketball, I argue that the cultural perceptions of these two sports, and especially ice hockey's status in American sports, is most important in understanding and explaining the current gap in the percentage of women's head coaches in Division I Ice Hockey and Basketball. I assert in my introduction that to understand the variety in percentages of head coaches between all women's team sports (Lacrosse, Softball, Field Hockey, Soccer, Ice Hockey and Basketball), a detailed examination of the historical, structural and cultural factors that impact women's sports, will need to be done. After completing an analysis of Ice Hockey and Basketball, I would like to bring in a comparison with two aforementioned sports to highlight why it is important for each sport to be analyzed separately, or comparatively, instead of lumped together as many other scholars have done.

For example, Soccer, which is the third most popular sport for women to play in college and found at 96.5% of colleges and universities with athletic programs, had only 32.7% of its Division I head coaching positions filled by women (Acosta and Carpenter 2010). Despite the popularity of college and youth soccer in American sports' culture for women and girls, more on

par with Division I Women's Basketball (346 Teams) with 325 Division I Women's Soccer Teams in 2010 (College Sports Statistics and Records 2011), the percentage of women head coaches is more parallel to the percentage of women coaching ice hockey (See Appendix, Table 2). Further complicating the trends of women in coaching positions, is women's lacrosse, which ranked low on the list of popularity of women's intercollegiate athletics, 10<sup>th</sup>, compared to basketball's first place on the list, and ice hockey's 14<sup>th</sup>. Although closer in popularity level to Division I Women's Ice Hockey and similar in the way it has different rules for men's and women's lacrosse, women's Division I Lacrosse had 91.7% of its head coaching positions filled by women last year, a higher percentage than even basketball. These comparisons are intended to demonstrate that the popularity of a woman's sport, seen in Basketball and Soccer, does not necessarily lead to a higher percentage of women head coaches in that sport. Similarly, sex-based different rules, seen in Ice Hockey and Lacrosse, do not necessarily lead to lower percentages of women head coaches. These comparisons highlight the need to carefully examine the varying degree to which each sport is impacted by its history, structure and cultural significance to understand the percentage of women head coaching at the college level.

The persistent decline in the percentage of women head coaches since the NCAA took-over governance of women's college sport has been especially troubling because, as the participation rates of girls and women continue to grow and diversify nearly 40 years after the passage of Title IX, women's sports should have experienced an improvement in the presence of women in leadership positions. The variety of experiences between sports, such as Lacrosse, Field Hockey, Soccer, Basketball, Softball and Ice Hockey, in the percentage of women holding head-coaching positions, is both confounding and enlightening. Scholars studying the decline in women head coaches should get past the average percentages overall in sports (58.2% in 1978

and down to 42.6% in 2010), and focus instead on explaining the discrepancy between each sport, as I have done for Division I Women's Ice Hockey (31.3% in 2010) and Division I Women's Basketball (69.1% in 2010). Examining why the percentage of women head coaches in sports like Basketball, Lacrosse, Softball and Field Hockey are particularly high, may shed light on what can be done to improve opportunities and conditions for women coaches in sports that are particularly low, such as Ice Hockey and Soccer.

However, the biggest obstacle standing in the way for women coaching and playing all sports, and as I argue affects women's ice hockey more than women's basketball, is sport's continued existence as a male dominated institution and location where hegemonic masculine norms are produced and reinforced, which has led to the marginalization of female athletes and provided barriers for women head coaches. Women's participation in sport, especially in the role of a coach, is a transgression against sport, as well as society, because the gendered norms sports reinforces are rooted in social traditions of who and what connotes femininity and masculinity. Women's continued participation in ice hockey and the current social critiques of the culture of fighting and other injurious behavior pervasive in men's ice hockey may lead to a future reconceptualization of ice hockey's position within sport and society that allows for a greater acceptance and place for women's ice hockey—both on and off the ice.

## Appendix<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1: Percentage of Women Head Coaches in All Divisions of Women’s College Sports**

	Ice Hockey	Basketball	Soccer	Softball	Field Hockey	Lacrosse	All Sports
1978	37.5	79.4	29.4	83.5	99.1	90.7	58.2
1980	18.2	76.5	28	82.9	98.3	100	54.2
1982	21.1	71.2	33	74.6	99.6	96.9	52.4
1984	9.5	64.9	26.8	68.6	98.2	95	53.8
1986	46.7	61	30.7	68	97.1	89	50.6
1988	0	58.5	23	67.2	96.2	95.2	48.3
1990	12.5	59.9	23.1	63.8	97.8	95.1	47.3
1992	21.4	63.5	25.8	63.7	97	95.7	48.3
1994	35.7	64.6	32.9	66.7	97	93	49.4
1996	44.4	64.3	34	65	97.2	92.6	47.7
1998	36.6	64.6	31.9	64.3	97.1	76	47.4
2000	47.5	63.3	34	65.4	99.4	83.7	45.6
2002	40	62.5	30.7	65.1	96.8	85.9	44
2004	28.6	60.7	30.1	64.8	96.6	86.2	44.1
2006	35.2	60.8	29.9	61.3	94.2	82.5	42.4
2008	30.4	59.1	33.1	64.7	95.2	84.6	42.8
2010	32.7	57	32.5	63.8	96.1	87.5	42.6

**Table 2: Percentage of Women Head Coaches in Division I Women’s College Sports**

	Ice Hockey	Basketball	Soccer	Softball	Field Hockey	Lacrosse	All Sports
1992	29	72.2	27	71.6	98.1	96.4	46.6
1994	42.8	70	36.7	77.1	97.9	100	46.9
1996	71.4	68.7	39.3	75.2	98	95	47.5
1998	50	65.1	34.5	70.3	98.1	90.1	46.2
2000	54.3	66.7	36.8	74.8	98	88.9	46
2002	58.8	69	35.2	72.2	96.2	87.8	45.1
2004	38.5	69.9	33.5	71.2	94.2	91.7	44.9
2006	38.1	69.1	35.2	68.2	94.5	88.5	43.9
2008	36.8	64.1	34.4	68	92.7	89.7	44.4
2010	31.3	69.1	32.7	65.7	91.1	91.7	44

<sup>5</sup> These statistics come from Acosta and Carpenter’s longitudinal study from 1977-2010. Each year they have collected data regarding the opportunities for women in college sports based on number and percent of playing opportunities for female student-athletes, as well as percentage of women head coaches, assistant coaches, athletic directors and athletic trainers involved with women’s and men’s college sports.

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